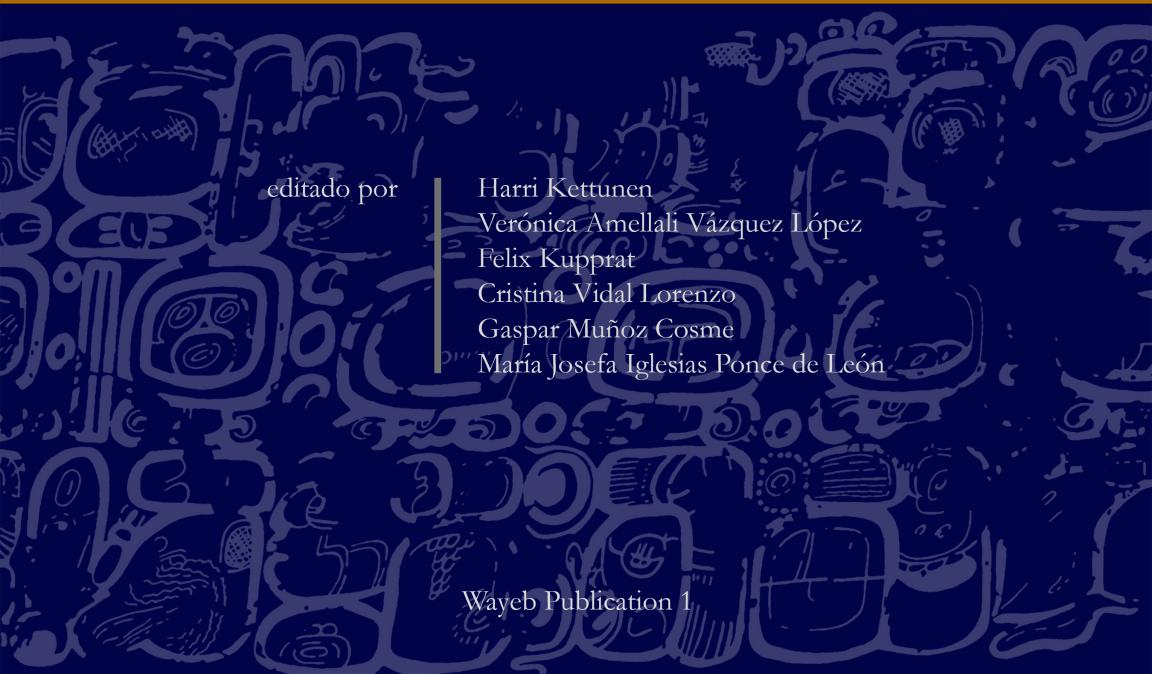




# *Tiempo detenido, tiempo suficiente*

Ensayos y narraciones mesoamericanistas  
en homenaje a Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo



editado por

Harri Kettunen

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WAYEB PUBLICATION 1

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## Prefacio

En el mes de julio de 2017 se divulgó entre los círculos más cercanos a Alfonso un hermosísimo escrito enviado por él mismo que se llamaba “La flecha de Zenón”, que hemos incluido a continuación de esta introducción. Como pueden ver en él, literalmente, derrama toda la filosofía que tenía sobre lo que suponía —en esos momentos en que era plenamente consciente de la gravedad de su enfermedad— el aprovechamiento de ese tiempo que le quedaba por vivir. Y empezaba un párrafo con esta frase: “Tiempo detenido. Un tiempo suficiente. Para descomponerse y recomponerse; para asustarse y serenarse...” Y es de esa frase de la que los editores hemos extraído el título de un libro que nunca hubiéramos querido hacer, pero que ahora se nos antoja como imprescindible.

Desde el primer momento se planteó como una publicación absolutamente libre en cuanto al contenido. Queríamos que fuera tan abierta y tan diversa, tan rigurosa y, al tiempo, tan entrañable como lo era Alfonso, y ojalá que, al menos en parte, lo hayamos conseguido. Somos conscientes que no están en ella todos los colegas y amigos que admiran y aman a Alfonso, pues queríamos que saliera a la luz en un espacio y un tiempo en el que él se implicó profundamente durante años: la Conferencia Europea de Mayistas (EMC). Pensamos que esta era una excelente manera de sentir que Alfonso estaba presente en la EMC de 2018. Alfonso fue uno de los principales impulsores de que esta reunión tuviera lugar en Valencia (España) y desde la proclamación oficial de esta sede hasta su fallecimiento no cesó de aportar ideas y todo su apoyo para que así pudiera ser.

Alfonso fue uno de los fundadores de la Asociación Europea de Mayistas Wayeb y un gran pilar de la misma. No solo coorganizó las dos conferencias en Madrid, en 2003 y 2010, sino también destacó por su compromiso académico y docente durante las reuniones anuales de dicha asociación y en otros eventos. Las numerosas ponencias que presentó en la EMC, entre 1997 y 2016, pero sobre todo los talleres, de los cuales nadie ha impartido tantos como Alfonso, han inspirado a colegas y estudiantes de distintos rincones de Europa y América.

Es por ello, que consideramos más que oportuno que un volumen dedicado a Alfonso sea el que inaugura la nueva serie *Wayeb Publications*. De acuerdo con el espíritu de Alfonso, de naturaleza

colaborativa, abierta y accesible, este libro se publicará en forma digital y de libre acceso en el portal de Wayeb para facilitar su difusión. Las contribuciones están escritas en español e inglés —los dos idiomas principales en los estudios sobre Mesoamérica—, pero las contribuciones nos han llegado de diversos y distantes lugares representando puentes, relaciones y amistades que Alfonso hizo a lo largo de su trayectoria académica.

No ha sido fácil editar en apenas unos meses un número tan elevado de contribuciones con unas variaciones temáticas tan estimulantes, pero Alfonso debe de estar feliz por ello. Tampoco ha sido sencillo agruparlas siguiendo un hilo conductor coherente, de modo que para facilitar su lectura hemos optado por distribuirlas en tres apartados, precedidos por el ya citado escrito de Alfonso y el emotivo texto de su familia, titulado “Alfonso, o como convivir con un sabio apasionado”.

Ese texto concluye con una frase de Alfonso que hemos utilizado para bautizar el primer apartado de este volumen: “Alfonso, mirando hacia atrás, todo culminación”, y que reúne una serie de escritos en los que se recogen sus aportaciones al campo de la investigación y la docencia, desde finales de la década de los ochenta hasta que nos dejó en el mes de febrero de 2018. La autoría de estos textos corresponde a aquellas personas que han tenido la dicha de poder compartir con él innumerables experiencias, tanto en trabajos de campo en sitios arqueológicos de México y Guatemala como en el día a día de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid y de la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, de ahí que en todos ellos abunden las referencias personales que hacen partícipes a los lectores de las anécdotas protagonizadas por Alfonso, tanto en el ámbito de los diversos proyectos en los que participó y en su carrera académica, como las inolvidables y siempre divertidas vivencias en congresos y reuniones.

Desde sus primeras contribuciones sobre la epigrafía de Oxkintok, hasta sus relevantes aportaciones a la historia de Ek Balam, Machaquilá, Naachtun o Chilonché (*K'anpat*), la carrera investigadora de Alfonso se ha visto enriquecida por sus crecientes avances en el ámbito de la escritura maya y náhuatl así como por su fascinación por otras disciplinas como la arqueología, la bioarqueología, la iconografía o el arte rupestre. Y todo el entusiasmo que volcó en esas investigaciones también lo trasladó al ámbito de la docencia, de

ahí que exista ya una generación de prometedores investigadores formados por él a ambos lados del Atlántico.

La segunda parte de esta publicación, en la que se incluyen las investigaciones de numerosos colegas y especialistas en Mesoamérica, engloba trabajos profesionales de temáticas tan variadas que habrían hecho las delicias de Alfonso, siempre atento a nuevas propuestas.

En primer lugar no podía faltar la publicación de la conferencia “New Research on the Aztec Script: A True Writing System” que Alfonso pronunció en octubre de 2011, en la Universidad de Harvard, cuando le fue concedido el premio Tatiana Proskouriakoff, del que todos que lo queríamos nos sentimos tan orgullosos como si fuera un logro propio nuestro y no solo de él.

A continuación, el lector encontrará textos sobre escrituras y lenguas mesoamericanas —especialmente la maya—, iconografía, creencias y prácticas rituales, historias del momento del contacto o legislación de época colonial. Algunos de esos textos se generaron a partir de largas conversaciones o trabajos conjuntos con Alfonso, otros exponen ideas que no siempre concuerdan con algunos planteamientos suyos, pero la mayoría coincide en destacar que el ámbito de las investigaciones mesoamericanistas ha perdido a un pensador brillante y a un admirado profesional.

El último apartado reúne un conjunto de recuerdos y anécdotas que sus autores, colegas y amigos de Alfonso, compartieron con él. Algunas son muy divertidas, otras francamente emotivas, pero todas ellas dejan traslucir la inmensa calidad humana que caracterizaba a Alfonso, así como su contagioso entusiasmo en cada actividad que emprendía, su apasionada forma de trabajar y sus dotes para el canto.

“Alfonso, se te echa de menos”  
(Diego Ruiz Pérez, en esta publicación).

**Agradecimientos:** Por último, para los editores es esencial agradecer, en primer lugar, a Laura Jack y a la familia Lacadena García-Gallo su inmensa generosidad al proporcionarnos textos, fotografías, información y todas las facilidades posibles en nuestra tarea de recopilación.

Gracias también a los colegas participantes que han contribuido, por una parte, a que conozcamos más y mejor a Alfonso y, por otra, a aumentar el conocimiento sobre numerosos temas que tanto le apasionaban. Además, agradecemos a Barbara Fash por proporcionarnos el permiso de publicar la conferencia de Alfonso en este medio.

Finalmente, muchas gracias a Wayeb por su apoyo con la publicación de este volumen, especialmente al consejo de Wayeb —Ramzy Barrois, Harri Kettunen, Céline Tamignaux y Jarosław Źrałka— y al consejo editorial de la nueva serie Wayeb Publications —Alain Breton, Andrés Ciudad Ruiz, Elizabeth Graham, Norman Hammond, Christophe Helmke, Harri Kettunen y Cristina Vidal Lorenzo— quienes han puesto todo su mayor empeño en hacer posible esta publicación.

Pepa Iglesias Ponce de León  
Gaspar Muñoz Cosme  
Cristina Vidal Lorenzo  
Felix Kupprat  
Verónica A. Vázquez López  
Harri Kettunen

# **La flecha de Zenón**

ALFONSO LACADENA GARCÍA-GALLO

Julio de 2017

**S**iempre hubo ese tipo de conversaciones. De pequeños y de mayores. “¿Cómo te gustaría morir?” “Si tuvieras que morir, ¿cómo preferirías que fuera?”. Era una pregunta que solía responderse con un complemento circunstancial, un adverbio o una subordinada de modo: “rápidamente”, “durmiendo por la noche”, “sin dolor”, “sin enterarme”...

Aparte de las muertes del héroe y del mártir que, por su generosidad (dar la vida por un alto ideal o a cambio de otra vida), se antojaban unánimemente gloriosas en el imaginario común y se consideraban moralmente superiores a todas las demás muertes posibles, desde que tengo memoria recuerdo que respondía “pues yo quiero enterarme” o “yo no quiero una muerte rápida” o “yo quiero ser consciente de que me muero”. La verdad es que siempre consideré que no quería perderme uno de los momentos más trascendentales de la vida, su final mismo. Y no por querer centrarme o regodearme morbosamente en la muerte, sino, precisamente, por querer prestar atención a los últimos instantes de la maravillosa vida.

En este sentido, el cáncer, por rápido que sea, no es especialmente malo, porque nos concede tiempo. El cáncer no es menos fatal que el accidente imprevisto, que el atropello fulminante, que el golpe del objeto que no se vio venir, que la bala o la explosión, que la muerte repentina y apacible durante el sueño. Pero quién no desearía que entre el comienzo del desencadenamiento del proceso que conducirá a la muerte irremediable y la muerte misma, en vez de décimas o de uno o unos pocos segundos, transcurrieran varias semanas o meses o incluso años, a cámara lenta, como en los efectos especiales de las películas, con la piedra o la rama o la bala o el vehículo o el duro suelo al final de la caída suspendidos, detenidos, sin alcanzarnos, sin tocarnos, sin moverse, como Aquiles y la tortuga o la flecha de las paradojas de Zenón, pudiendo tener la conciencia del momento, pudiendo ralentizarlo, ensancharlo, disponer de ese tiempo, permi-

tiéndonos volver nuestro pensamiento y nuestro corazón a cosas que importan más que esa muerte que se acerca.

Tiempo detenido. Un tiempo suficiente. Para descomponerse y recomponerse; para asustarse y serenarse; para llorar y arreglar a continuación el gesto sonriendo nuevamente, “aquí no pasa nada”; para hacer balance; para entender; para seguir buscando respuestas; para seguir siendo uno mismo; para sonreír agradecidos a los médicos que nos tratan y a los cuidadores que nos ayudan con cariño; para recordar a tanta gente que se cruzó en el camino y nos ayudó a hacernos como somos o nos dio en cierto momento un buen consejo o nos regaló un rato de risa o felicidad. Tiempo para disfrutar de una reunión o una compañía; para dar un beso o un abrazo; para pedir perdón; para leer un libro; para generar una idea; para formular —o escuchar encantado cómo se formula— una buena pregunta; para oír otra canción; para acercarnos; para tener otra oportunidad de hacerlo mejor; para dar mil gracias; para estar más tiempo con la gente que se ha querido, con los amigos, con la familia, con los hijos, con el amor de tu vida. Para decir adiós.

Acepto la muerte inevitable. Y agradezco al azar, inmensamente, esta forma particular de muerte que me llega.

# **Alfonso, o como convivir con un sabio apasionado**

JAVIER LACADENA GARCÍA-GALLO  
en nombre de la familia Lacadena

**L**a palabra sabio proviene en su etimología del latín *sapidus* aludiendo a todo aquello que resulta sabroso, gustoso al paladar. El adjetivo está formado a partir del verbo *sapio*, *sapere*, *sapii* [*sapivi*, *sapui*] cuyo significado es ‘tener sabor o tener gusto para las cosas y las personas y además, poseer juicio y prudencia, sentido común y conocimiento’. A esa raíz verbal se le suma el sufijo *-idus* que significa ‘provisto de, cualidad que se percibe a través de los sentidos’.

Sí, Alfonso era un SABIO, evidentemente no como los grandes sabios de la antigüedad o como los más modernos, pero sí compartía con ellos la inquietud, el gusto y la pasión por el saber, disfrutando casi más de la propia vivencia del camino recorrido durante una investigación, que del propio descubrimiento en sí. Cómo no verle reflejado en alguna de estas citas: “El hombre sabio es el que hace del saber una búsqueda constante” (Sócrates); “No el mucho saber harta y satisface el ánima, mas el sentir y disfrutar internamente de las cosas” (Ignacio de Loyola) o “No os obstinéis en descubrir algo práctico. Si no lo conseguís, los que os siguen lo lograrán. Vosotros sólo preocupaos en indagar y soñar” (John D. Rockefeller).

Alfonso era un sabio apasionado, y como los grandes sabios tenía el don de saber transmitir esa pasión y contagiar ese entusiasmo a las personas con las que compartía cualquier ámbito de su vida. Su destino como docente en el ámbito universitario estaba escrito en su herencia genética y en la labor de Maestro intrínseca a los verdaderos sabios. En boca de sus alumnos: “Las clases con este hombre son alucinantes. Se nota que de verdad siente pasión por lo que está explicando y que le gusta mucho”. “De verdad, elegid a este profesor, de los pocos que quedan que le apasione lo que da y te contagie su entusiasmo”.

Creo que todos estaremos de acuerdo en que convivir con Alfonso y su pasión desbordante por saber y gustar de cada momento ha implicado, en muchas ocasiones, vernos arrastrados a través de un torbellino de emociones y aventuras, compartiendo con él sus sueños, los imposibles y los hechos realidad. Porque su pasión le hizo

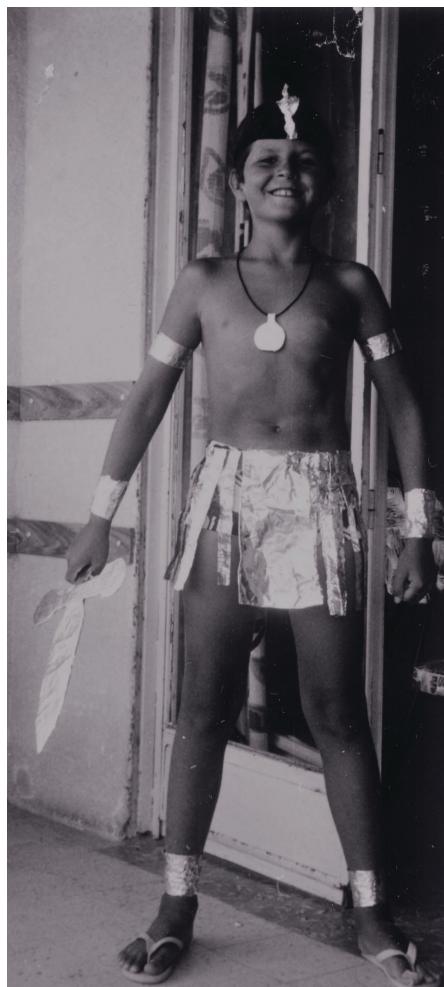


Figura 1. Ejercitando una de sus grandes pasiones: la música (Navalengua, Ávila, 2012).

vivir todo lo que abordó con un enfoque épico. En su labor como epigrafista sentía formar parte de una gesta, algo grande para la humanidad. Por eso a sus colegas siempre les consideró compañeros de aventuras. Nos sigue emocionando el cariño y la admiración con las que sus amigos y colegas habláis de él y de todo lo que compartisteis, tanto en lo profesional como en lo personal.

Esa pasión, ese querer saber y disfrutar de las cosas, le acompañó desde niño. Porque,... ¿un sabio nace o se hace?

Alfonso nació sabio, sólo necesitaba descubrir dónde y cómo enfocar su pasión (si es que eso es posible). Aragonés de nacimiento, y orgulloso de serlo, aprendió a bailar jotas, a hablar en fabla aragonesa y a lucir el cachirulo por todos los rincones del mundo. ¡Cuántas veces intentó convencernos para tratar de recuperar alguna casa familiar por la Jacetania! Mexicano de adopción desde que descubrió su México lindo, con su gente, su historia, sus lenguas y su música, afirmaba: “Méjico está en la geografía de mi alma”. Su pasión por la literatura podía llevarle a comprar el mismo libro en varios formatos o a incorporar a autores, que si bien no le gustaban no podían no estar en su biblioteca. Nunca logró entender que sus hermanos a los catorce años no hubiesen leído las obras completas de Dostoie-



a



b

Figura 2. Alfonso disfrazado de indígena prehispánico (Benidorm, 1974).

vski. Aunque con gustos a veces dudosos, disfrutó y sintió la música (Figura 1). De niño, con el cancionero familiar, luego con canciones protesta y latinoamericanas. Musicales, canciones de la Tuna y ¡cómo no! sus queridas rancheras y la trova yucateca, nos han acompañado en momentos de alegría y dolor.

Gracias a su pasión momentánea por la Tuna descubrió, menos mal, que lo suyo no era el Derecho. Allí, junto con antiguos amigos del colegio se embarcaron en la aventura de crear una revista, El



**Figura 3.** Belén indio realizado por Alfonso en su etapa escolar (1977).

Callejón del Gato, aunque luego implicarse esconderse para no tener que pagar por los ejemplares que regalaban. Fueron años de paréntesis de su verdadera vocación, pero que le dieron amigos de los de toda la vida. Y fue en esos años donde encontró al amor de su vida, Laura, apoyo incondicional, compañera y cómplice de su pasión desbordada.

Pero si ha habido una vocación y una pasión prácticamente constante a lo largo de su vida, ha sido el mundo indígena americano. Como el mismo dice, todo empezó con un libro: “Sabéis bien la historia del libro sobre indios que me regalaron los Reyes Magos a los nueve años y que cambió mi vida llenándola de estética, de ética y curiosidad por el Otro”. Desde ese día, en que sus ojos miraron al mundo de otro modo, el sabio que llevaba dentro despertó, haciéndole soñar con civilizaciones antiguas, ricas en tradiciones y costumbres. De su ansia de saber, disfrutar e imbuirse de todo lo relacionado con ese mundo, dan fe, el disfraz de maya (o azteca) que se hizo con papel de aluminio (Figura 2a, b) o un precioso nacimiento precolombino hecho de barro que fabricó (Figura 3), ambos durante su



**Figura 4.** Taller impartido a los jóvenes de la familia sobre fabricación de instrumentos prehistóricos (Villacastín, Ávila, 2013).

etapa escolar. Ya adolescente, su “gusto” por escenificar alguno de los rituales típicos en algunas culturas precolombinas supuso que su hermano no quisiese seguir jugando a guerras de soldaditos, donde sus soldados eran hechos prisioneros y sacrificados. También de esa época adolescente es un apodo familiar (*el indio...*), con cierto toque sarcástico, que le acompañó durante un tiempo y con el que llegó a firmar algunos de los correos que nos envió. Más adelante, ya en la Universidad trató de convencer a sus amigos para construir un iglú en Navacerrada, sin importar si en ese momento había nieve o no. Hará unos siete años, en un viaje familiar por Ávila (Figura 4), fabricó utensilios y armas para sus sobrinos: arcos y lanzas o propulsores mayas (*atlatl*), algunos de los cuales aún siguen en nuestras casas. Incluso durante su enfermedad nos animaba a organizar una visita al museo para enseñarles todas las piezas a los sobrinos.

Siendo estudiante en Historia, y ya absolutamente volcado en la cultura maya y en la epigrafía, hicimos un viaje familiar a México, en el que rivalizaba con los guías turísticos a la hora de transmitirnos todo tipo de detalle sobre la cultura, arquitectura o costumbres mayas. Previamente, ya había conseguido que los “glifos” fuesen un tema de conversación absolutamente habitual en nuestras comidas.



**Figura 5.** Viaje de Laura y Alfonso con sus padres, Isabel y Juan Ramón (al fondo), a sitios arqueológicos del Petén guatemalteco; aquí en Aguateca (2005).



**Figura 6.** La familia Lacadena García-Gallo al completo en Jaca 2014.

Su emoción al ver *in situ*, la primera estela con glifos, debió ser tan grande, como su decepción al ver nuestras caras una vez que nos tradujo el primer glifo. “Dos-turquesa”, dijo. Estoy seguro que fue capaz de perdonar nuestros comentarios fruto de la ignorancia. Ahora, es imposible no estremecerse al recordarle contando como se emocionó al descubrir y traducir una nueva estela, y como no pudo contenerse a abrazarla y besarla.

Convivir en el día a día con una persona excepcional es excitante y agotador a la vez. En el caso de los sabios, agotador, porque su mente y su cuerpo no están para las cosas mundanas, y porque su pasión y su vocación suele ser incompatible con la rigidez y requisitos de una vida laboral clásica. En la convivencia con Alfonso destaca lo excitante. Era casi imposible resistirse a su personalidad arrolladora, a su facilidad para abrirse y expresarse con palabras o sentimientos, a pesar de su “llorar feo”. Cómo decir que no a su pasión desbordada al organizar un viaje, aunque eso implique meter por la selva a sus



**Figura 7.** Alfonso volviendo de México y Guatemala y siendo recibido por Ignacio y Alejo en el Aeropuerto de Barajas, 2006.

padres (Figura 5). Cómo poner freno a sus sueños, aunque a veces nos pudiesen parecer absurdos. Cómo...

Suele decirse de los sabios que necesitan de un entorno especial para poder desarrollarse y que por eso en algunos casos se vuelven solitarios. En eso, Alfonso tuvo mucha suerte. Dije antes que Alfonso nació sabio, pero si pudo desarrollar su pasión, su entregarse sin límites, fue en gran medida gracias a las personas con las que creció y convivió (Figura 6). Alfonso, vivió de nuestros padres un ejemplo de entrega y amor incondicional, de honestidad y coherencia. De ellos aprendió la importancia de invertir en familia y de cuidar las relaciones. Siempre se sintió apoyado por nuestros padres. Muchas veces con apoyo entusiasta, otras comprensivo y en otras, seguramente, sólo tolerante (pero es que como decíamos en casa, Alfonso era... “inefable”).



Figura 8. Con Laura, Ignacio y Alejo celebrando su 52 cumpleaños, 2016.

Y llegó Laura, y en ella Alfonso encontró, su pilar, el sentido, la fuerza, la complicidad, el sentirse uno para crecer y desarrollar su vocación y su pasión: como padre (Figura 7), como sabio, como amante, como amigo, como epigrafista, como maestro... Sin el apoyo incondicional de Laura y, posteriormente, de Ignacio y Alejo, no hablaríamos hoy así de Alfonso. Los cuatro han sabido vivirse con pasión (Figura 8).

Quiero terminar con unas palabras que nos envió Alfonso en un correo, después de la fiesta sorpresa que se le organizó tras la concepción del Premio Tatiana Proskouriakoff en 2011:

Decía Steve Jobs en su célebre conferencia de Stanford que “si uno mira hacia adelante las cosas parecen inciertas y uno no sabe bien en qué parará todo, de qué servirá lo que uno hace. Pero mirando hacia atrás los puntos se unen y las cosas encuentran su explicación y todo lo hecho sirve de conocimiento al presente. Hay que atreverse y confiar.”

Y es verdad. Mi vida mirada de atrás hacia adelante ha sido una sucesión de despropósitos e imposibles: una vocación más que rara, unas cualidades en lo personal y en los estudios que nunca prometían nada especial, cambios de carrera, un Sistema nunca favorable, una nueva beca que quizás no hacía sino demorar un poco más lo que se anunciaba inevitable---que todo esto no iba a funcionar. Pero mirada mi vida de delante hacia atrás, los puntos se unen y todo encuentra su lugar: una vocación clara definida desde niño, una curiosidad obsesiva traducida en capacidad de trabajo, una carrera académica finalmente bien hecha, proyectos, una sucesión de becas y, finalmente, un contrato en la Universidad.

**Mirando hacia delante todo locura, mirando hacia atrás, todo culminación** (Alfonso, 2011).

Palabra de sabio apasionado.

## **Parte 1**

**ALFONSO,  
“MIRANDO HACIA ATRÁS, TODO CULMINACIÓN”**



# **Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, mesoamericanista<sup>1</sup>**

ANDRÉS CIUDAD RUIZ

Universidad Complutense de Madrid  
(andresci@ghis.ucm.es)

**Resumen:** En este texto se hace un breve repaso a la trayectoria académica y de investigación de Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, en el que se mezclan las actividades y avances científicos por él alcanzados con anécdotas de experiencia personal.

**Abstract:** This text takes a brief look back at the academic and investigative trajectory of Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, mixing the scientific activities and advances that he accomplished with personal anecdotes.

Una mañana, ya lejana, hacia el año 1985, se presentó en la Biblioteca del Departamento de Antropología y Etnología de América de la Facultad de Geografía Historia, Pedro Pérez Herrero, compañero de curso de Pepa Iglesias y mío y perteneciente entonces al Departamento de Historia de América de la misma Facultad. Estaba acompañado de dos alumnos y, tras presentárnoslos, nos comentó que estaban muy interesados en el estudio de la escritura maya, y nos pidió, a Pepa y a mí, que les ayudásemos. En aquellos momentos éramos Profesores Ayudantes de Clases Prácticas y la Universidad Complutense podía permitirse el “lujo” de dedicar a este tipo de profesorado (conocido como PNN, Profesores no numerarios) a cualquier clase de tareas: en nuestro caso, estábamos encargados de la Biblioteca del Departamento.

No conocíamos con los fundamentos necesarios la escritura maya, pero sí dominábamos bien la biblioteca de nuestro Departamento y les recomendamos, entre otros trabajos, el libro —para ellos mágico— *A Catalog of Maya Hieroglyphs* de Eric Thompson, publicado en 1962.

Alfonso, y su amigo José Miguel García Campillo, continuaron visitándonos, completaron sus estudios en la Especialidad en Antro-

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<sup>1</sup> Este texto fue confeccionado, con algunas apreciaciones que se han incluido para esta ocasión, con motivo del Homenaje a Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, convocado por la Facultad de Geografía e Historia de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, y celebrado el 30 de mayo de 2018.



## UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID

Año 1989 - 1990

Facultad de  GEOGRAFIA E HISTORIA  
 FILOSOFIA Y C. DE LA EDUCACION MATRICULA OFICIAL

Sección ANTROPOLOGÍA DE AMÉRICA Curso 5º

Asignatura ETNOLOGÍA DE AMÉRICA CENTRAL Grupo B

Apellidos LACADENA GARCIA-GALLO Nombre ALFONSO

Lugar y fecha de nacimiento ZARAGOZA, 21 agosto 64

Domicilio en Madrid VELAZQUEZ 8, 50C

Teléf. 3164196

Centro donde cursó el año anterior UNIV. COMPL. MADRID

### ASIGNATURAS MATRICULADAS EN ESTE CURSO

PALEOGRÁFIA

CULTURA AZTECA

ARQUEOLOGÍA II

ETNOL. AM. NORTE

ETNOL. AM. CENTRAL

ETNOL. AM. SUR

ETNOHISTORIA

### ASIGNATURAS PENDIENTES

Firma:

Fecha:

SA-89-FC107-60.00

**Figura 1.** Ficha de Alfonso Lacadena de la asignatura Etnología de México y América Central, curso académico 1989-1990.

pología y Etnología de América (Figura 1), con el tiempo presentaron sus brillantes tesis doctorales y ambos terminaron como profesores en nuestro Departamento.

Tuve la ocasión de tener a Alfonso como alumno en la asignatura de Licenciatura Arqueología de América II y en mi curso de Doctorado y, a mi entender, demostró rápidamente dos cualidades extraordinarias: por una parte, su absoluto compromiso con nuestras disciplinas, con los nativos americanos del pasado y del presente; por otra parte, su conocimiento y genialidad en el análisis y la crítica antropológica e histórica. Además, Alfonso venía de estudiar tres cursos de la Licenciatura en Derecho y, en consecuencia, llegaba a nuestra Especialidad con un aparato crítico bien formado. Me consta que, junto a ello, entre sus compañeros también derramaba un elevado grado de generosidad. En muchos momentos, a lo largo de estos 33 años, nuestras vidas, la de Alfonso y la mía, recorrieron caminos paralelos y de estrecha colaboración (Figura 2), y, a mi entender, estas cualidades que asomaban en los primeros años de su especialización no hicieron más que acrecentarse. Una cualidad añadida que se evidenció desde

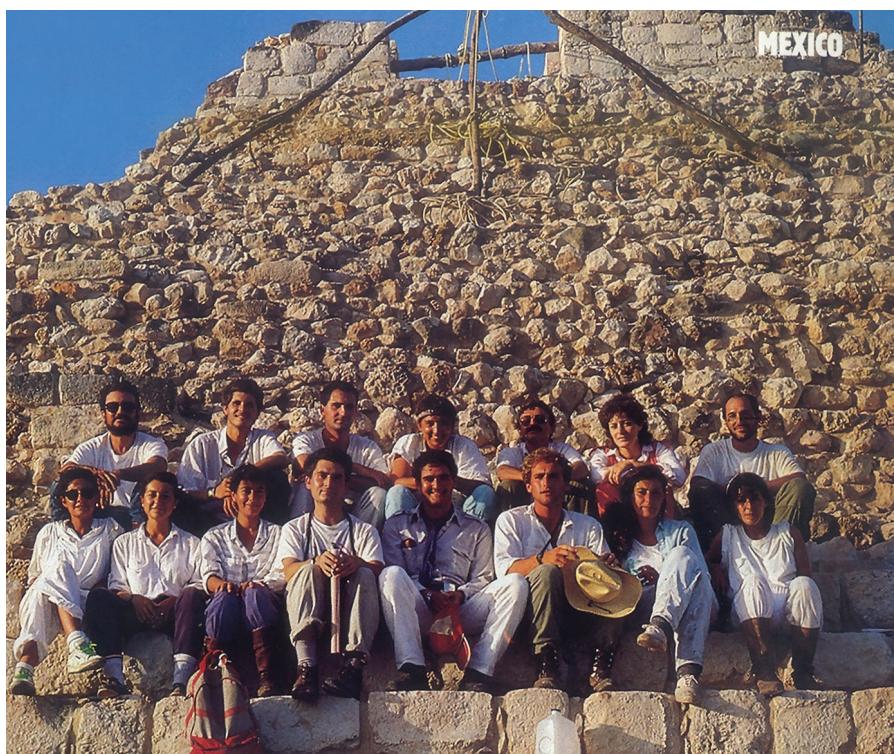


**Figura 2.** Alfonso y Andrés Ciudad en el despacho de Alfonso (2015) de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia de la UCM.

el inicio, y que debe encontrarse siempre en la mochila (Figura 3a) de un gran académico e investigador, es la capacidad para generar ideas y diseñar proyectos docentes, de investigación y de gestión de manera independiente, que permitan conformar equipos, que aglutinen y formen especialistas y avanzar en las respectivas disciplinas.



a



b

**Figura 3.** a) Alfonso camino de la excavación en Machaquila, Guatemala. b) Miembros del Proyecto Oxfintok, Yucatán, México.



Figura 4. Alfonso con sus padres, Isabel y Juan Ramón, en el Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología en Guatemala.

Y en el caso de Alfonso esa capacidad no sólo no decreció, sino que aumentó con el tiempo de manera exponencial.

Precisamente este positivo cóctel de potencias intervino en su incorporación al Proyecto Oxkintok (Figura 3b), con el que inició su pasión por la cultura y la historia de Yucatán que se mantuvo siempre. También intervino inicialmente en esta pasión un viaje que realizó con su familia a México; años más tarde sus padres, Juan Ramón Lacadena e Isabel García-Gallo (Figura 4), viajaron al Petén guatemalteco para conocer los espacios del pasado maya y a algunos de los protagonistas de la investigación de esta fascinante cultura. Los tempranos simposios de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala fueron un excelente lugar donde contactar e iniciar relaciones académicas con colegas, como Steve Houston (Figura 5)<sup>2</sup>, que con el tiempo desembocó en amistad y admiración mutua.

<sup>2</sup> No es mi intención hacer un registro minucioso de las innumerables relaciones que mantuvo Alfonso Lacadena con colegas y alumnos, no podría mencionar a todos y sería injusto con ellos. Solo pretendo incluir algunos datos e investigadores que, exclusivamente desde mi perspectiva, han jalónado su proyecto académico e investigador.



Figura 5. Alfonso con Steve Houston, David Stuart y Vera Tiesler en el Museo de América de Madrid.

Estas actitudes y aptitudes se observan con facilidad al consultar su historial académico y científico: si bien sus primeras publicaciones se desarrollan en un espacio nacional, en revistas y publicaciones españolas (Serie *Oxkintok* publicada por la Misión Arqueológica de España en México, *Mayab, Revista Española de Antropología Americana*), pronto aparece su nombre relacionado con otra de sus grandes admiradas, Linda Schele, publicando en las *Texas Notes on Precolumbian Art, Writing, and Culture*, que recogen los frutos de las reuniones mantenidas en los *Meeting* de Texas en Austin. La entusiasta opinión de Alfonso acerca de esas oportunidades, en un ambiente de ebullición y generosidad intelectual que por aquel entonces protagonizaban los grandes avances en epigrafía maya —muchos de ellos realizados por investigadores muy jóvenes—, espoleaba y, en muchas ocasiones, cambiaba paradigmas en nuestros supuestos teóricos como investigadores en Arqueología; una disciplina que requiere otros procedimientos de contraste, y un *tempo* diferente para construir sus diseños e interpretaciones. En esas reuniones dejó huella de su genio creador y de su conocimiento con multitud de colegas, algunos de los cuales,



Figura 6. Con su admirada Victoria Bricker en la Universidad de Tulane (2015).

como Victoria Bricker (Figura 6) o David Stuart, se encuentran entre los que más influyeron en su trayectoria intelectual.

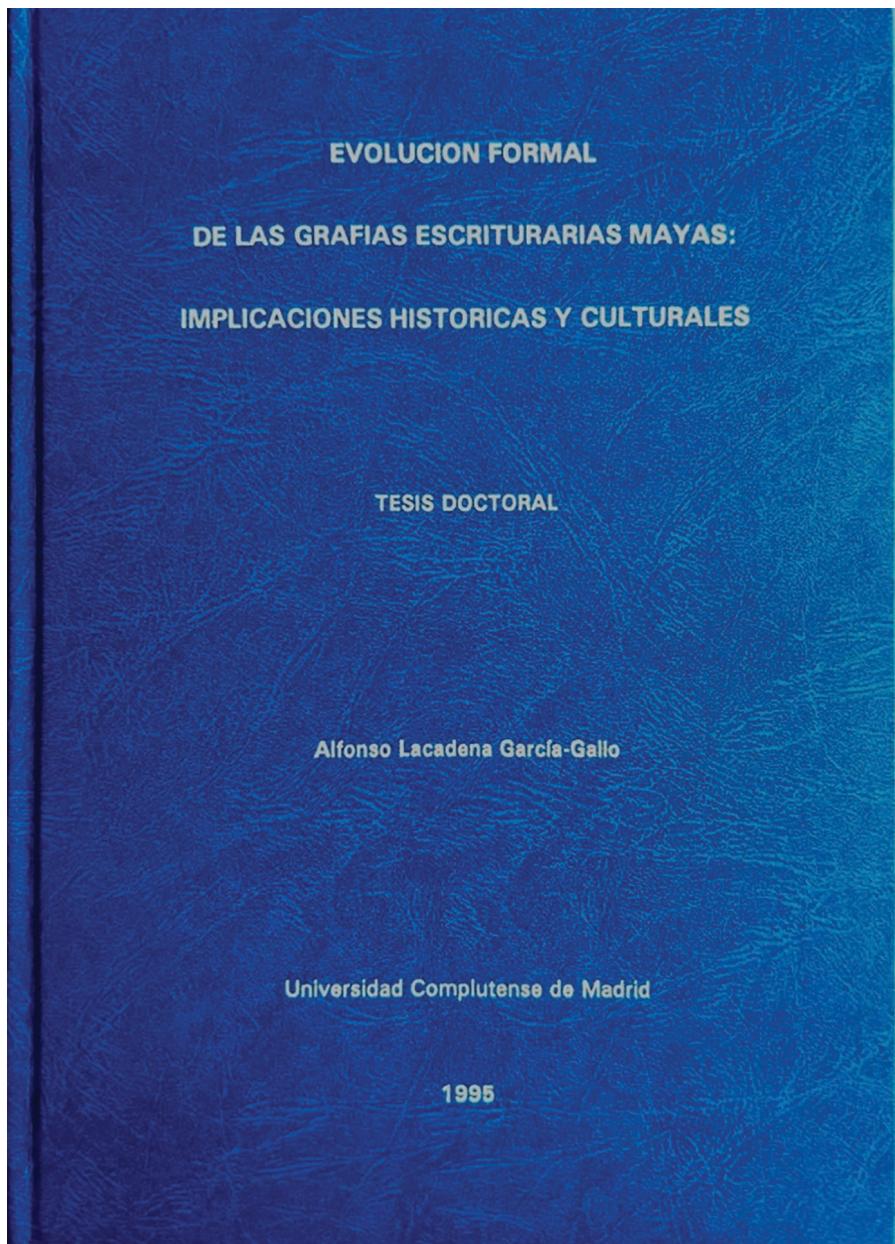
A veces, las instituciones no responden de manera eficaz y con los reflejos necesarios a las oportunidades que se les plantean. Alfonso era una gran oportunidad para la Universidad Complutense, que no supo aprovecharse en su momento. Así es que después de ser becario de Formación de Personal Investigador y de intervenir en dos importantes proyectos, se vio obligado —felizmente para él, pero con un gran sacrificio familiar— a desplazarse a la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán con sede en Mérida, México, donde fue contratado como Profesor Investigador en 1998 y de manera sucesiva en los años 2002 y 2003, y se encontró con la docencia, la investigación y el conocimiento de una gran cantidad de colegas, entre ellos Pilar Zabala, Vera Tiesler y Rafael Cobos. Desde entonces, su relación con esta Universidad y con sus profesores e investigadores se mantuvo y consolidó en multitud de actividades e intercambios.

Ese periplo exterior consolidó su formación y sirvió de caja de resonancia respecto de su excelencia académica como profesor y como investigador. Fue una oportunidad que aprovechó para participar en un estudio de la lengua Ch'orti' en Jocotán (Guatemala) junto con



Figura 7. Alfonso y Leticia Vargas en la bodega de Ek' Balam, trabajando con el deteriorado anillo del juego de pelota (2006).

su buen amigo Søren Wichmann, en el marco del Proyecto *Endangered languages: Ch'orti'*, y para incorporarse al Proyecto *Ek' Balam* en Yucatán, México, dirigido por Leticia Vargas y Víctor Castillo (Figura 7). Por supuesto, en la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán también aprovecharon la oportunidad pues para esos momentos Alfonso ya había hecho una aportación fundamental al conocimiento de la tradición escrituraria maya, y luego, por extensión, a la tradición escrituraria mesoamericana a través de su tesis doctoral titulada *Evolución formal de las grafías escriturarias mayas: implicaciones históricas y culturales* —por la que obtuvo la calificación de *Apto cum laude por unanimidad*, y más tarde el Premio Extraordinario de Doctorado (Figura 8)—, y que fue un estudio pionero de la paleograffía Maya que, entre otras muchas cosas, sirvió para conocer las fronteras lingüísticas y étnicas de los pueblos mayas, así como las manos y los estilos caligráficos de sus escribas y la mentalidad con la que los sabios del pasado mesoamericano se acercaban a sus narraciones y logros intelectuales. Sus excelentes calificaciones en la Licenciatura y el Doctorado, junto al mencionado premio, y la experiencia investigadora acumulada, se conjuntaron para que Alfonso obtuviera una beca



**Figura 8.** Portada de la Tesis Doctoral defendida por Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, por la que obtuvo la calificación Apto cum laude por unanimidad y recibió el Premio Extraordinario de Doctorado.



Figura 9. Miembros del Departamento de Historia de América II (Antropología de América) de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid (2012).

postdoctoral utilizada en el desarrollo del Proyecto *Banco de Datos Filológicos Mayas de Tierras Bajas: textos logosilábicos* en el Laboratorio de Hermeneumática del Instituto de Filología con sede en el Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.

Pero en muchas ocasiones esos momentos de crisis —expresados en la incapacidad de las instituciones españolas para aprovechar el talento de aquellos que ellas mismas habían formado, y en la necesidad de salir fuera para continuar su formación y su vocación antropológica— son también, a la larga, ventanas de oportunidad, y la excelente trayectoria internacional a la que Alfonso se vio obligado le permitió obtener un contrato laboral primero como Profesor Ayudante en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid en 2004 y después como Investigador Contratado Doctor del Programa Ramón y Cajal entre 2004 y 2009, que más tarde, y felizmente, se convirtió en una plaza de Profesor Contratado Doctor del Departamento de Historia de América II-Antropología de América de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid en 2009 (Figura 9); condición en la que permaneció hasta el pasado mes de febrero.

En una de las tantas reuniones de la Sociedad Española de Estudios Mayas (SEEM) (Figura 10), en las que Alfonso participó de manera



Figura 10. Participantes en la VII Mesa Redonda de la Sociedad Española de Estudios Mayas celebrada en Pamplona (2005), en un momento de relax.

muy activa a lo largo de los años, celebrada en torno a 2002, dos de nuestros queridos colegas franceses, Pierre Becquelin y Dominique Michelet, me preguntaron si conocía a algún epigrafista para que se incorporara a sus proyectos, entonces centrados en la ciudad maya de Río Bec. Por supuesto que yo le comenté que teníamos dos muy buenos epigrafistas, Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo y José Miguel García Campillo, y discutimos las características de cada uno de ellos. Nuestros queridos colegas franceses terminaron contactando con Alfonso, y se inició una muy fértil relación que ha continuado hasta el día de hoy en los proyectos *Río Bec*, *Campeche*, México y *Petén-Norte Naachtún* (2010-2014 y 2015-2019), con cuyos directores e investigadores, Dominique Michelet, Marie-Charlotte Arnauld y Philippe Nondédéo y sus asociados (Figura 11), mantuvo desde entonces una fecunda relación intelectual que se prolongó por unos 15 años.

Su incorporación a la Universidad Complutense de Madrid le permitió continuar participando y dirigiendo proyectos de investigación, colaborando con un equipo básico que empezó su andadura desde el año 2003, formado por el propio Alfonso, Pepa Iglesias Ponce de León, Jesús Adámez Pavón y por mí mismo, y al que recientemente se ha incorporado Ana García Barrios: primero el Proyecto



**Figura 11.** Fotografía del *VII Congreso Internacional de Mayistas*, Mérida 2007. Alfonso, en compañía de Marie Charlotte Arnould y Philippe Nondédéo escuchando a Nikolai Grube (de espaldas).

Códice Tro-Cortesiano del Museo de América de Madrid que se desarrolló en 1997, pero después los proyectos *La entidad política de Machaquilá durante el Clásico Tardío y Terminal (Guatemala)* (Figura 12), *La construcción social de la ciudad maya del Clásico*, o el que desarrollamos actualmente bajo el título *Estructura y dinámica de las élites intermedias de la ciudad maya Clásica de Palenque*, en el que desgraciadamente no se ha podido integrar. Paralelamente, también se incorporó al Proyecto *Arte y arquitectura maya. Nuevas tecnologías para su estudio y conservación* con investigaciones en los yacimientos peteneros de La Blanca y El Chilonché (Figura 13) dirigidas por Cristina Vidal Lorenzo de la Universidad de Valencia y Gaspar Muñoz Cosme de la Universidad Politécnica de Valencia. Ni qué decir tiene que en todos ellos su aportación ha sido esencial —no sólo en lo que se refiere a las lecturas de los textos pertenecientes a esas ciudades, sino a su reconstrucción histórica, política y ritual—. Por otra parte, su capacidad de generar ideas y de proponer desafíos han constituido un acicate constante en el avance y consolidación de los estudios mayas en España.



Figura 12. Alfonso con Jorge Chocón, Jesús Adánez y Andrés Ciudad en la Estructura 7-8 de Machaquila, Guatemala (2014).

De manera simultánea a esta actividad, entre los años 2006 y 2010 participó y fue el delegado nacional de España en el *Management Committee* en el Proyecto *Stability and Adaptation of Classification Systems in a Cross-Cultural Perspective*, dirigido por Thecla Wiebusch en el marco del programa COST Action-31.

Pero además de su aportación en investigaciones de decidida vocación arqueológica y antropológica, Alfonso protagonizó y participó en avances definitivos en el campo de la lengua, la gramática y la literatura mayas jeroglíficas, en particular en lo que se refiere a la sintaxis nominal de las inscripciones cholanas y yucatecanas, al bilingüismo en los códices mayas, las voces pasiva y antipasiva y los sustantivos verbalizados en los textos mayas, o el origen histórico del silabario abierto de los mayas, por citar solo unos ejemplos. Una aportación significativa en este sentido es la definición de una Escuela Yukatekana Oriental de escritura jeroglífica que tuvo su epicentro en Chichén Itzá y en Ek' Balam. En ese fértil y exitoso camino, investigadores como Otto Schumann, Victoria Bricker, Simon Martin o su admirado David Stuart, por citar solo algunos de ellos, han confir-



**Figura 13.** Alfonso trabajando en el Proyecto Arte y arquitectura maya. Nuevas tecnologías para su estudio y conservación, en La Blanca, Guatemala (Cortesía del propio Proyecto).



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**Regional Scribal Traditions:  
Methodological Implications for the  
Decipherment of Nahuatl Writing<sup>1</sup>**

**Alfonso Lacadena**  
*Universidad Complutense de Madrid*

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**Abstract**

After more than a century of research, Nahuatl writing is not yet completely deciphered. One reason is that scholars have imposed an artificial neglect of certain hieroglyphic texts. An important group of documents, including the Codex Santa María Asunción and the Memorial de los Indios de Tepetlaotzoc, has traditionally been taken to be unrepresentative of the Precolumbian writing system. Since these documents exhibit a more frequent use of phonetic compounds than others like the Codex Mendoza or the Matrícula de Tributos, they have been considered to be influenced by the alphabetic writing system brought by the Spanish. In this paper, I justify the full use of this group of documents, arguing that the higher frequency of phoneticism is not a consequence of Spanish influence, but rather an idiosyncratic characteristic of the Tetzcoacan scribal school. The scribes of Tetzcoacan in many cases favored more phonetically transparent spelling, but they used exactly the same spelling rules and orthographic conventions as the scribes belonging to the other contemporary schools.

There is an analogy here with neighboring Maya writing, where the differences between regional scribal schools have never been interpreted as evidence for the existence of different writing systems. Thus, for example, during the Terminal Classic the scribes of Chichen Itza favored a more frequent use of syllabic signs in glyptic compounds. This peculiarity, rather than being looked upon as problematical or as evidence that the inscriptions of the site somehow do not relate directly to the rest of the corpus of Classic inscriptions, has been exploited in the successful decipherment of several signs.

For a methodologically more correct approach to Nahuatl writing, it is important to incorporate the documents of the Tetzcoacan school into the corpus of Nahuatl hieroglyphic texts, using them in the process of decipherment. Only when we consider the script as a whole and the corpus in its totality will we be able to complete the decipherment and systematization of Nahuatl writing.

**Introduction**

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the French scholar Joseph Marius Alexis Aubin (1849) published an important work on the writing system of the Nahuatl language. Employing examples derived principally from a mid-sixteenth century document, the Codex Vergara, Aubin proposed the identification of more than a hundred glyphs and their corresponding readings. Glyptic compounds identified by Aubin, such as *itz-co-atl* for *Itzcoatl*,

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this work was presented at the 5th World Archaeological Congress, Washington, D.C., June 22, 2003, in the symposium "Written History and Geography in Central Mexico: Codices, Lienzos, and Mapas Linked to the Ground," organized by Lloyd Anderson.

The PARI Journal 8(4):1-22.

**Figura 14.** Portada del estudio de Alfonso Lacadena en *The PARI Journal*, que contiene algunos de los significativos avances logrados en el sistema escriturario náhuatl.

mado las teorías y avances metodológicos alcanzados por Alfonso y han jalónado la consolidación de una línea de investigación insólita en España que hoy, por desgracia, se ha paralizado sin que exista un atisbo de reemplazo a corto y medio plazo.



Figura 15. Alfonso junto a Marc Zender en la 20.<sup>a</sup> Conferencia Maya Europea de Bonn (2015).

Los especialistas en escrituras mesoamericanas han valorado desde hace tiempo estas definitivas aportaciones de Alfonso al conocimiento del pueblo maya, prehispánico, y de los primeros siglos de la Colonia, pero además han admitido con bastante consenso sus avances trascendentales en lo que se refiere al sistema escriturario náhuatl (Figura 14). Sus importantes contribuciones han permitido desplazar la tradicional consideración del sistema escriturario azteca como una proto-escritura, y transitar hacia una estructura logosílábica de comportamiento análogo a la maya. Reconocidos investigadores en ese ámbito, como Alfredo López Austin o Marc Zender (Figura 15), han aceptado sin reservas la actualización y la sistematización de los métodos de estudio de los jeroglíficos mayas y nahuas, proponiendo técnicas y refinamientos en la transliteración y transcripción de grafemas, detectando convenciones de subrepresentación (síncope y apócope) usadas por los escribas antiguos, recursos escriturarios propios de la región, y otros aspectos. De singular trascendencia han resultado sus avances en el análisis literario de los textos jeroglíficos y alfábéticos mayas, considerándolos como un solo y mismo corpus escriturario (ca. 100 a.C.-2018). En el marco de esta aventura intelectual, Alfonso identificó un elevado número de



Figura 16. Premio Tatiana Proskouriakoff concedido a Alfonso por el Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology en 2011.

recursos, tropos y figuras retóricas, como el difrasismo, la metáfora, el paralelismo, la anáfora, la epifora o la sinécdoque. Fue un decidido defensor de la existencia de una literatura maya clásica.

Esa ingente aportación, recogida entre otros medios en 93 artículos y capítulos de libro, su colaboración en tres libros y 95 participaciones en congresos y reuniones nacionales e internacionales, han merecido un gran reconocimiento internacional, como prueba la concesión, a propuesta de William y Barbara Fash, del Premio Tatiana Proskouriakoff el 13 de octubre de 2011 por el Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology de la Universidad de Harvard (Figura 16), “por las contribuciones hechas al desciframiento jeroglífico de las escrituras maya y azteca”. No menos importante fue para Alfonso el homenaje recibido en el marco del III Encuentro de Gramatología, *Homenaje a Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo*, celebrado en Ciudad de México entre el 9 y 13 de octubre de 2017, organizado por el Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, el Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas y el Centro Cultural Tlatelolco, de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Avances y reconocimiento que ha difundido, además de en las Universidades reseñadas, en cursos en España y en el continente



**Figura 17.** Alfonso junto a Mario Humberto Ruz en la *IX Mesa Redonda de la SEEM* celebrada en Granada (2009).

europeo en distintos centros de Alemania, Bélgica, Dinamarca, Finlandia, Francia, Polonia, Reino Unido, o Rusia; en México y Estados Unidos. Y sobre todo con su participación en el Programa de Maestría y Doctorado en Estudios Mesoamericanos que se imparte en la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, y que tiene como sede el Centro de Estudios Mayas, una institución con la que mantuvo una fértil y estrecha relación, iniciada en tiempos de Mercedes de



Figura 18. Alfonso junto a María Teresa Uriarte y Erik Velásquez.

la Garza, y que continuó con sus sucesivos directores e investigadores, entre los que se encuentran Mario Humberto Ruz (Figura 17), Carmen Valverde, Laura Sotelo, Ana Luisa Izquierdo y Maricela Ayala. Una colaboración que se extendió al Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas y a algunos de sus estudios como Teresa Uriarte y Erik Velásquez (Figura 18).

Su dinamismo académico y científico le llevó a fundar, junto a otros colegas, la Sociedad Europea de Mayistas —Wayeb— que, entre otras muchas significativas aportaciones, ha logrado dar cohesión y unidad a una especialidad como la de los estudios mayas que, en nuestro continente, transitaba de manera individual según las diferentes instituciones que se ocupaban de ellos: mayistas de Rusia o Italia, de Polonia o Suecia, Finlandia, Francia, Alemania, Inglaterra o España, deambulábamos de manera bastante individual por el territorio de la Antropología Maya en una relación intelectual muy desfavorable respecto de los estudios que se venían realizando en México, Guatemala o en Estados Unidos. Sin duda, el tesón y la genialidad de Alfonso, junto al esfuerzo de otros compañeros —muy pocos al principio—, ha resultado de gran ayuda para obtener carta de naturaleza a nuestra disciplina en Europa, de manera que puede



a



b

**Figura 19.** a) Alfonso con Dmitri Beliaev en la 21.<sup>a</sup>Conferencia Maya Europea de Moscú (2016). b) Alfonso Lacadena con Harri Kettunen en el monasterio de El Escorial (Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid).



a



b

**Figura 20.** a) Alfonso con alumnos doctorales y posdoctorales en la 19.<sup>a</sup> Conferencia Maya Europea de Bratislava, Eslovaquia (2014). b) Alfonso con Ana García Barrios, Florencia Scándar y Pepa Iglesias en pleno ritual de “desayuno con churros” establecido en 2017.



**Figura 21.** Alfonso con Nacho Cases y Philippe Nondédéo en Naachtun (2014) (Cortesía del Proyecto Naachtun).

competir sin complejos con la que se desarrolla en otras latitudes. Ha sido un foro muy querido y cuidado por Alfonso, mediante el cual tuvo la oportunidad de interrelacionarse y trabajar con una gran cantidad de colegas, cuyo número es tan amplio que es muy arriesgado enumerar, pero que pueden estar representados por estudiosos



**Figura 22.** Reinauguración del Museo de Arqueología y Etnología de América como Director (27 de octubre de 2015).

como Dmitri Beliaev (Figura 19a) o Harri Kettunen (Figura 19b), con quienes, además, mantuvo estrechas relaciones de amistad.

Una de las admirables virtudes de esa Sociedad Europea de Mayistas —Wayeb—, y yo creo firmemente derivada del impulso de Alfonso, fue dar voz a los estudiantes avanzados (Figura 20a), contar con ellos, demostrarles nuestra valoración respecto de los esfuerzos que estaban realizando en sus tesis e investigaciones; una actitud que se mantuvo igual con sus estudiantes en España. Algunos de ellos se encuentran ahora haciendo estudios de Maestría y Doctorado en México, o bien están ya situados en instituciones académicas y de investigación. Todos ellos, y quizá sea suficiente solo mencionar a Albert Davletshin, Ana García Barrios, Florencia Scándar (Figura 20b), Macarena López Oliva, Ignacio Cases (Figura 21) y Rogelio Valencia Rivera, mantienen una gran fidelidad y admiración por su querido maestro. Esta es sin duda una herencia fabulosa y, confiamos en que algún día tengan posibilidades de regresar y encuadrarse en nuestras instituciones; de manera que no sigamos perdiendo oportunidades que nos son muy necesarias, tal y como pasó en un momento dado con Alfonso.



Figura 23. Alfonso Lacadena y Laura Jack en Moscú, 21.ª Conferencia Maya Europea (2016).

En estos últimos tiempos, además de continuar brillantemente en estas labores a las que acabo de hacer alusión, Alfonso estaba dedicando un gran esfuerzo en la dirección del Museo de Arqueología y Etnología de América (Figura 22), del Departamento de Historia de América II (Antropología de América) en la Facultad de Geografía e Historia de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, un cargo que venía ocupando desde octubre de 2014. De nuevo su gran capacidad y tesón habían servido para impulsar las actividades y presencia de esta institución para los estudios americanistas.

No me extiendo más; me dejo muchas cosas en el tintero y espero no ser en exceso injusto y avaro con esta glosa acerca de su monumental aportación a la epigrafía, la iconografía, la reconstrucción del pasado maya y al patrimonio escrito de los pueblos mesoamericanos. Me disculpo con todos aquellos colegas y amigos a los que no haya hecho expresa alusión en este breve texto, y dejo para el final el reconocimiento de mi admiración personal por el genio creador de Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, pero también y de manera muy sincera por su generosidad y su amistad —que extiendo también a su esposa, Laura (Figura 23) y a sus hijos Ignacio y Alejo, y en realidad a toda su familia— en esta peripécia que llamamos vida y que en el caso de Alfonso, desafortunadamente, ha resultado ser demasiado corta.

# Alfonso Lacadena (1985–1996)

JOSÉ MIGUEL GARCÍA CAMPILLO  
(josemi1505@hotmail.com)

**Resumen:** Se hace aquí una breve semblanza sobre los primeros años de la carrera académica e investigadora de Alfonso Lacadena. Sus trabajos, sus gustos y sus objetivos, tanto en el ámbito académico como extra-académico, se relatan desde la óptica de uno de sus más estrechos colaboradores y amigos durante aquellos años.

**Abstract:** A short and personal account of the first academic years of Alfonso Lacadena. His work and aims in the epigraphic and extra-epigraphic realms are described here as seen from a very close friend and colleague during those years.

Conocí a Alfonso en septiembre de 1985, cuando ambos iniciábamos el primer curso de la carrera de Geografía e Historia en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Mantuvimos una sólida amistad y una fructífera relación intelectual que terminaron súbitamente en 1996, debido a graves desavenencias académicas y personales. Muy poco puedo decir de él antes y después de ese período, pero durante aquellos años fuimos inseparables en el ámbito profesional y en buena parte del personal (Figura 1), y habrá mucha gente interesada en saber cómo se inició la carrera de quien fue uno de los más grandes americanistas españoles y una autoridad mundial en la epigrafía maya.

Fue un auténtico golpe de suerte que coincidiéramos en la misma clase y el mismo curso dos estudiantes que poseyéramos tal pasión por entender y descifrar la escritura jeroglífica maya. Estábamos sobrados de entusiasmo pero no teníamos mentor ni maestro alguno que nos pudiera instruir en un campo tan específico, y todo teníamos que descubrirlo y comprenderlo solos, de manera que éramos uno profesor del otro.

Pasaron muchas semanas antes de que aprendiéramos a manejar con cierta soltura el calendario maya y lográramos convertir con confianza las fechas mayas en fechas cristianas, y viceversa, y sin más instrumentos que lápiz, papel y calculadora. Teníamos, no obstante, la certeza de que la escritura jeroglífica maya era de naturaleza logo-silábica, y disponíamos de la suficiente literatura para



Figura 1. Alfonso Lacadena y el autor. Altar de Sacrificios, agosto de 1989.

poder hacernos una idea adecuada de las características generales de dichos sistemas de escritura y tratar de aplicarlas al caso maya.

Nuestro aprendizaje era, pues, autónomo y casi por completo intuitivo, pero gracias a nuestro entusiasmo, desde el principio comenzamos a hacer investigación de la escritura jeroglífica maya al mismo tiempo que íbamos adquiriendo los rudimentos de lo que entonces se sabía. En 1985 no había aún muchos especialistas, y el estado general de conocimientos en la disciplina, aunque estaba a punto de dar un vuelco definitivo, dejaba todavía mucho que desear. Las ideas de Eric Thompson estaban ya ciertamente obsoletas, las propuestas de Knorozov no fructificaban, y la epigrafía práctica vivía casi exclusivamente aún del trabajo de Proskouriakoff y Berlin.

Como grandes libros de consulta, nosotros contábamos en la biblioteca del Departamento de Antropología de América con el Catálogo de Thompson, el *Deciphering the Maya Script*, de David Kelly, y el *Maya Glyphs: The Verbs*, de Linda Schele. Fue esta última obra la que más nos ayudó a avanzar, si bien en muchas ocasiones nos desorientara enormemente. Naturalmente, reuníamos también todos los artículos que podíamos, más o menos recientes, y más o menos relevantes, firmados por gente como Steve Houston, la

propia Schele, Mathews, Bricker y otros autores. Las cosas mejoraríán cuando empezaron a llegar a la biblioteca los *Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing*, y especialmente el artículo de David Stuart “Ten Phonetic Syllables”, trabajo que supuso un antes y un después en nuestras carreras, pues nos confirmó que, metodológicamente, viajábamos en buena dirección.

Pero la búsqueda más frenética y continua era la de dibujos, fotografías y calcos de inscripciones completas, una tarea que no resultaba muy fácil. A excepción de las publicaciones por entonces disponibles de Graham y von Euw en el *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions* (CMHI), de algunas Mesas Redondas de Palenque, de algún *Tikal Report*, de la edición de los Villacorta de los códices postclásicos y del *Maya Scribe and his World*, de Michael Coe, no disponíamos de gran cosa. La mayor alegría que podíamos tener en la semana era la aparición en el aula o en el bar de la Facultad de uno de nosotros dos gritando “¡Inscripción nueva!” y portando sendas fotocopias.

Quizá el mayor mérito de Alfonso en esos primeros años fue que enseguida tuvo plena conciencia de que la escritura jeroglífica no era sino el soporte de una lengua (o lenguas), sin cuyo conocimiento y estudio no se podría avanzar en absoluto en el desciframiento. De ahí que al rastreo de inscripciones y artículos sobre epigrafía añadiéramos la búsqueda de toda clase de materiales lingüísticos sobre la familia de idiomas mayas.

En el estudio de las lenguas progresábamos mucho más lentamente, pero la intuición y el genio de Alfonso eran soberbios y resultaron valiosísimos para nuestro auto-aprendizaje. Desde el principio, Alfonso prestó gran atención a la morfología verbal y a la gramática de las lenguas de Tierras Bajas, algo que le habría de reportar magníficos resultados más adelante.

Por supuesto, además de nuestra obsesiva dedicación a la escritura y las lenguas, no descuidábamos los otros aspectos que integraban el estudio de la cultura maya: la iconografía y la arqueología, sobre todo, pero también la antropología, la etnografía y la historia del período colonial. Y nos formábamos asimismo, aunque en menor medida, en las otras culturas mesoamericanas, especialmente en los desarrollos olmeca, zapoteca y mexica. Acerca de todo ello, leíamos y leíamos, estudiábamos y discutíamos todos los días. En todas estas materias, contábamos con mucho mejor consejo y ayuda que en

las cuestiones epigráficas; nuestros profesores del Departamento nos proporcionaron, desde el primer momento, mucho antes de iniciar los estudios de especialidad, valiosa bibliografía y no menos valioso apoyo. Nuestras carreras no habrían sido como fueron sin el concurso de Pepa Iglesias Ponce de León y Andrés Ciudad Ruiz; y también, aunque en menor medida, de Pedro Pérez Herrero, Miguel Rivera Dorado, José Luis de Rojas, Rafael Díaz Maderuelo y Emma Sánchez Montañés.

Fuera del ámbito de la escritura maya nos interesaban otras materias a las que consagramos muchas horas de lectura y discusión. Nos atraían especialmente la arqueología y los sistemas de escritura del Próximo Oriente y el Mediterráneo. A Alfonso le apasionaban los textos ugaríticos y, sobre todo, el sistema de escritura Lineal B de la Grecia micénica: quizás el libro que más le cautivó en aquella época fue *El enigma micénico*, de John Chadwick. Cuando nos apetecía descansar de tantos glifos y de tanta área maya, volvíamos repetidamente a cuestiones como la historicidad de los textos bíblicos, el encaje de las leyendas homéricas en los datos epigráficos y arqueológicos, o el desvelamiento de la lengua ibérica. En esto último, Alfonso estaba convencido de la hipótesis vasco-ibérica, y de que sólo merced a los dialectos vascos se podrían llegar a traducir los textos ibéricos, algo sobre lo que no estábamos muy de acuerdo.

Otro problema sobre el que leíamos y discutíamos mucho era el del origen y clasificación de las lenguas indígenas americanas, un tema muy complejo, y que en aquellos años generó mucha controversia. Alfonso era firme partidario —al menos en aquella época— de las sugerencias de Greenberg (*Language in the Americas*), mientras que yo veía más razonables las críticas de Lyle Campbell.

Pero nuestro pasatiempo intelectual favorito lo constituía, sin lugar a dudas, el estudio de las terminologías de parentesco, un gusto que nos transmitió nuestro profesor de Antropología Cultural, Rafael Díaz Maderuelo. Aunque siempre de manera especulativa y poco sistemática, disfrutábamos dibujando esquemas y cuadros, y analizando términos, matrimonios y generaciones. E intentábamos también reconstruir, o más bien imaginar, los proto-sistemas de parentesco en ciertas familias o grupos de lenguas. No sé bien por qué, pero nos obsesionaba localizar indicios de sistemas Omaha (o Crow) por todas partes.

Aunque Alfonso no era en absoluto militarista —y, ni mucho menos, violento— le encantaba la historia militar o, más bien, las anécdotas y episodios sobre batallas, ejércitos y campañas del pasado. A ambos nos divertía imaginar y comentar una y otra vez aquellos momentos decisivos en las guerras y enfrentamientos célebres de la Historia: las Termópilas, la Noche Triste y la toma de Tenochtitlan, la caída de Constantinopla, la Guerra de Castas en Yucatán, la batalla de Alcazarquivir o la guerra de Granada en el siglo XV, eran episodios que le apasionaban.

Fue Alfonso un profundo conocedor de la literatura universal, aunque especialmente de la española, como es lógico. Era también gran amante de la poesía y él mismo excelente versificador, como algunos de sus más íntimos amigos tuvimos la delicia de comprobar. En aquel entonces, los autores que más nos gustaban a ambos eran Borges y Valle-Inclán, así como la poesía de Rubén Darío y Edgar A. Poe. Alfonso disfrutaba al máximo con Bryce Echenique, Mario Benedetti, Garcilaso o Baudelaire. Las novelas históricas de Robert Graves nos fascinaban, así como el mundo de Tolkien, y teníamos debilidad por una poetisa española de aquellos años, Ana Rosetti. En los clásicos, éramos incondicionales de Homero. Alfonso no compartía del todo mi pasión exagerada por la tragedia griega aunque conociera todas las tramas y personajes; a él le gustaba más leer a Virgilio, Safo o Píndaro.

Con todo lo que leíamos y estudiábamos (había, además, que aprobar las asignaturas de la carrera y salir de juerga, de vez en cuando), nos faltaban horas en el día, por lo que no era infrecuente que pasáramos una noche entera investigando, dibujando inscripciones, preparando un examen o —más adelante, cuando ya formábamos parte del Proyecto Oxkintok— redactando un artículo. Nos reuníamos casi siempre en casa de Alfonso, donde su numerosa y amable familia me acogió desde el principio como a otro miembro más. A propósito de los artículos, conviene recordar que en aquel entonces no se disponía de ordenadores, y por ello, las contribuciones y ponencias en coautoría las realizábamos así: repartíamos los contenidos que cada uno debía confeccionar y escribíamos con la estilográfica —uno frente al otro— una serie de borradores plagados de enmiendas, borrones y tachaduras, fruto de discusiones continuas; una vez aprobado el texto definitivo, procedíamos a pasarlo

a máquina. El proceso, que muchos investigadores no habrán olvidado, podía durar una o más semanas, pero bastaba por lo general una noche —plagada de café y cigarrillos— para fijar las líneas maestras y las principales partes del texto.

Naturalmente, no teníamos tiempo ni intención de practicar deporte o ejercicio físico alguno, con la excepción del tiro con arco, una actividad que realizábamos cuando podíamos. Alfonso era un arquero entusiasta y me inició en la disciplina, cuando en 1991 compramos unos sencillos arcos y comenzamos a practicar. Supongo que en años posteriores, y debido a su absoluta entrega a la investigación, Alfonso no pudo seguir cultivando esta maravillosa afición, la cual yo sigo practicando hasta hoy.

Conocíamos bien los Evangelios, y nos los citábamos frecuentemente, cuando había que ofrecer consejo y, sobre todo, para fastidiar al otro (con frases del tipo “no lo digo yo, lo dice Nuestro Señor”). Con mucho, la cita que más repetía Alfonso era la de Mateo 6, 34: “Así que no os inquietéis por el día de mañana, que el mañana traerá su propia inquietud. Bástete a cada día su propio mal.” Y lo cierto es que, hasta donde yo sé, Alfonso observó esta máxima durante toda su vida. Tenía una capacidad pasmosa para no preocuparse sin motivo; e incluso cuando había un motivo de preocupación, conservaba la calma y sólo se inquietaba en la justa medida. En eso éramos completamente opuestos, pues mi carácter sombrío y previsor me llevaba a bloquearme anticipadamente en muchas ocasiones. Afortunadamente, el optimismo de Alfonso era contagioso, y los proyectos que desarrollamos en común se beneficiaban de ello.

Como sabe todo aquel que le trató en aquellos años, Alfonso era entonces —y supongo que hasta el final de su vida también— un hombre alegre, jovial y generoso. Era extraordinariamente sociable y se ganaba amigos en todos los ámbitos. Hacía bromas, burlas y chistes de continuo, los cuales a menudo eran de una procacidad sorprendente. Al lado de esto, Alfonso era una persona orgullosa y coqueta. Estaba orgulloso de lo que hacía y le gustaba hacer gala de ello, pero con su orgullo jamás afligía o molestaba a nadie. Y era coqueto porque trataba de sorprender y levantar admiración cuando explicaba las cosas. Por eso fue tan buen docente, porque en las ponencias o en las lecciones que impartía buscaba ante todo

generar interés y apasionar a su audiencia (y, de paso, obtener un justo reconocimiento). Habría sido un magnífico periodista.

Con el tiempo, Alfonso fue dominando todos los aspectos de la investigación en epigrafía maya. Todo lo analizaba, todo lo entendía y todo le interesaba. Y lo más importante, todo le interesaba en la misma medida, de tal manera que su conocimiento epigráfico comenzó a ser enciclopédico. Naturalmente, se vio obligado a seleccionar, como cuando empezó a desarrollar el objeto de investigación de su tesis doctoral, el estudio de las grafías y del estilo de composición de los signos para poder datar textos e inscripciones que no presentaran notaciones calendáricas. Se inspiró, desde luego, en el fundamental trabajo de Proskouriakoff que sistematizaba los estilos iconográficos en el arte clásico maya; y se basó en las técnicas de paleografía Medieval y Moderna, una tradición de estudio bien arraigada en España y Europa, y que él conocía bien.

Pero, como he dicho, a Alfonso le interesaban todas las materias epigráficas, y siempre fue, por ejemplo, un gran entusiasta de mi propia investigación de tesis sobre las inscripciones del Norte de Yucatán, en la que recibí su apoyo y consejo continuos.

Como es bien sabido, una de las grandes aportaciones de Alfonso a la disciplina fue la cuestión de la lengua concreta en la que se escribieron las inscripciones clásicas, así como el conjunto de propuestas sobre las normas ortográficas que pudieron regir la composición de los textos jeroglíficos. Ambos aspectos están estrechamente relacionados (al menos desde un punto de vista heurístico), y Alfonso comenzó a trabajar en ellos en fecha muy temprana. Siempre cultivó la hipótesis de que tras los textos jeroglíficos clásicos —incluidos los del Norte de Yucatán— había una lengua de raigambre cholana, una opinión en la que se reafirmó con el tiempo, y con la que yo nunca estuve en completo acuerdo. Respecto a la ortografía del sistema logo-silábico clásico maya, la (dis)armonía vocálica y las vocales muertas de las últimas sílabas, Alfonso había intuido su funcionamiento casi desde que comenzamos a estudiar epigrafía, y ya entonces buscaba en el sistema maya un recurso similar al empleo de las *matres lectionis* de los silabarios semíticos occidentales. En la cuestión ortográfica también mantuvimos siempre bastantes diferencias, diferencias que no llegaron a atenuarse ni a acentuarse, ya

que antes de que Alfonso consolidara sus propuestas dejamos de ser colegas.

En cuanto a la escritura azteca, fue una materia de estudio que Alfonso desarrolló en profundidad tras 1996. En años anteriores, me había expresado repetidamente su convicción de que la escritura postclásica del Centro de México no podía ser meramente “pictográfica”, sino que se trataba de un sistema plenamente logo-silábico. A mí no me atraía el asunto más que tangencialmente (me interesaban, desde luego, los glifos aztecas de topónimos y de tributaciones, pero no cómo estaban escritos), y no le prestaba mucha atención a sus ideas. Tengo, no obstante, el convencimiento de que sus premisas eran ciertas y que sus investigaciones posteriores así lo corroboran.

Alfonso solía decir que él tenía la suerte de César, en referencia a la proverbial fortuna del estadista romano Cayo Julio César. No sé si esto lo había leído en algún sitio o se lo había inventado, pero lo cierto es que lo creía de verdad. De lo que sí estoy seguro es que ambos tuvieron igual empuje, agudeza y éxito. Y, por desgracia, ambos tuvieron una vida no lo suficientemente larga.

Alfonso logró hacer prácticamente todo con lo que soñábamos cuando éramos estudiantes. Llegó a ser admirado y respetado por aquellos investigadores a los que venerábamos; participó en grandes y pequeños proyectos arqueológicos y fue maestro de epigrafistas. Me hubiera gustado haberle acompañado, claro está, en todo ello, pero aquellos años entre 1985 y 1996 yo no los cambio por nada.

# **De Oxkintok a *K'anpat***

GASPAR MUÑOZ COSME  
Universidad Politécnica de Valencia  
(gmcosme@upv.es)

CRISTINA VIDAL LORENZO  
Universidad de Valencia  
(cristina.vidal@uv.es)

**Resumen:** Desde las primeras investigaciones realizadas por Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, como incipiente epigrafista, a finales de la década de los ochenta en la Misión Arqueológica de España en México hasta sus últimas investigaciones de alto nivel científico, su vida ha estado motivada por la pasión por el descubrir, descifrar y conocer con más profundidad la escritura jeroglífica y la sociedad maya que la utilizó. En este artículo se muestran algunas pinceladas sobre los primeros momentos de su carrera de epigrafista, en Oxkintok, así como las últimas colaboraciones en el Proyecto La Blanca (Guatemala) que tuvieron lugar a partir de 2012 y que, con el rigor de su trabajo científico y su carácter extrovertido, hizo que nos apasionáramos todos los que tuvimos la suerte de poder colaborar con él en estos últimos momentos.

**Abstract:** From the early investigations carried out by Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, as an incipient epigrapher, in the late eighties in the Spanish Archaeological Mission in Mexico until his latest research on the highest scientific level, his life has been motivated by the passion to discover, decipher and learn more about hieroglyphic writing and ancient Maya society. This paper contains some comments on the beginning of his career as an epigrapher at Oxkintok, as well as the latest collaborations in the La Blanca Project (Guatemala) since 2012. His rigorous scientific work, as well as his extroverted personality, made us passionate for his work and we were lucky enough to be working with him in recent years.

**C**onocimos a Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo en Yucatán, a finales de la década de los ochenta. Éramos compañeros de la Misión Arqueológica de España en México (MAEM), que en aquellos años, bajo la dirección del profesor Miguel Rivera Dorado de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, excavaba la ciudad maya de Oxkintok. Formábamos un equipo interdisciplinar, en el que participábamos arqueólogos, arquitectos, restauradores, antropólogos, topógrafos y epigrafistas. Los epigrafistas eran Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo y José Miguel García Campillo, quienes comenzaban entonces a poner en práctica sus incipientes conocimientos sobre la escritura de los antiguos mayas, que en gran parte adquirieron de manera autodi-

dacta. Entre los compañeros era muy apreciada su labor y esfuerzo, y recordamos especialmente el regocijo compartido por todos, pero sobre todo por ellos, ante el hallazgo, durante nuestras excavaciones, de dinteles y otros monolitos repletos de prometedores textos y representaciones iconográficas, así como la implicación de todo el equipo y de los trabajadores durante el traslado de estas pesadas piedras al laboratorio de la MAEM, para su estudio y posterior exhibición en el Museo de Antropología de Mérida. Algunas veces organizábamos expediciones para acudir por la noche al sitio arqueológico con la intención de tomar dramáticas fotografías con luz rasante de los monumentos escultóricos que permanecían *in situ*, emocionados todos cada vez que Alfonso y José Miguel lograban descifrar aquellos textos susceptibles de aportarnos alguna información relevante sobre el pasado de la ciudad y de quienes la habitaron en la Antigüedad.

Los resultados de la investigación epigráfica en Oxkintok fueron objeto de las primeras publicaciones y participaciones en congresos de Alfonso y José Miguel, y ambos se doctoraron con tesis cuyo contenido fue el fruto de sus conocimientos adquiridos durante esos años, marcados por un intenso aprendizaje e inmersión en la cultura maya, al igual que para el resto del equipo.

Los textos epigráficos aparecidos en Oxkintok ofrecen, sobre todo, testimonios puntuales sobre el pasado, es decir, acontecimientos que no están conectados unos con otros y que imposibilitan el que se pueda establecer una genealogía completa de sus dirigentes u otros sucesos de carácter histórico acaecidos en la ciudad, algo que también es común en otras inscripciones del norte yucateco. Aún así, la información que proporcionaron fue muy interesante, especialmente para los que estábamos trabajando en el análisis y estudio de los edificios del Grupo Ah Canul, ya que la mayoría de las inscripciones fueron talladas en dinteles hallados en ese complejo arquitectónico de la ciudad. De hecho, bautizamos dos de sus principales palacios (CA-5 y CA-6) con los nombres de Palacio de la Serie Lunar y Palacio de la Serie Inicial, respectivamente, dado que en el primero se encontró un dintel esculpido con una inscripción de Serie Lunar y, en el segundo, otro dintel con una inscripción de Serie Inicial. Tanto estos dos dinteles como el hallado en la pequeña estructura CA-3 o Palacio Pop, y otros dos más procedentes también del Palacio



Figura 1. Alfonso Lacadena y Cristina Vidal con los trabajadores del Grupo Ah Canul de Oxkin-tok, durante la hora del "pozole", en el año 1989.

CA-6, fueron esculpidos en el último tercio del siglo V d.C. y reutilizados para ser colocados en esos palacios, tal como pudimos verificar durante la excavación de los mismos (Vidal Lorenzo 1989: 22, 1990: 21).

El dibujo y estudio minucioso de estos monumentos realizados por nuestros compañeros epigrafistas permitió concluir que se trataban de textos con información acerca del propio edificio en el que originalmente fueron colocados, sobre el dueño o promotor de la edificación y sobre las indicaciones calendáricas relacionadas con esta actividad constructiva, al tiempo que constituían ejemplares casi excepcionales del Clásico Temprano en Yucatán, poco pródigo hasta esa fecha en monumentos jeroglíficos de ese período (García Campillo y Lacadena García-Gallo 1990: 159). Lamentablemente, como decíamos, al no haber sido hallados en su lugar original, no podíamos saber a qué edificios se referían los textos y por tanto esa información se nos quedaba incompleta. Aún así, las largas conversaciones y debates vespertinos que manteníamos todo el equipo del Proyecto Oxkintok en la sede de nuestro laboratorio en el pueblo de Maxcanú, en los que cada uno desde nuestra disciplina poníamos en común los resultados de nuestras investigaciones e interpretaciones

preliminares, fueron de gran ayuda para lograr enlazar los sucesos del pasado contenidos en esas menciones escriturarias con los datos procedentes del registro arqueológico y del estudio de la arquitectura del grupo Ah Canul (Figura 1).

Dedujimos así que algunos de esos dinteles podrían haber pertenecido al Palacio Pop, concretamente a su crujía Norte, cuyo muro exterior se había vencido por completo y permanecía oculto por el derrumbe, de ahí que su rigurosa excavación y restauración, la cual llevamos a cabo en el año 1991 (Muñoz Cosme y Vidal Lorenzo 1995: 607–608), haya supuesto un auténtico ejercicio de aplicación de la técnica de la anastilosis. Además, los datos arqueológicos nos permitieron fecharla en la segunda mitad del siglo V d.C. coincidiendo con las fechas que exhiben esas inscripciones. De ser así, quedaba claro que CA-3 se habría constituido, junto al conocido como Satunsat (un singular edificio de planta laberíntica), en una de las edificaciones más simbólicas de la ciudad, en un momento en que imperaría en Oxkintok una organización política segmentaria. En este sentido, es de destacar la información epigráfica proporcionada por dos de esos dinteles y descifrada por nuestros compañeros acerca de la dedicación en 487 d.C. de un lugar denominado *sakunal* ('lugar del hermano mayor' o 'lugar de los hermanos mayores'), y que muy bien podría ser el Grupo Ah Canul, sin que figure ningún individuo como responsable (García Campillo 1994: 715; Rivera Dorado 1998: 50; Vidal Lorenzo 1999: 186).

Se concluyó también en que esa situación cambió sustancialmente a partir de la segunda mitad del siglo VII d.C., cuando empezaron a proliferar en Oxkintok los edificios de naturaleza palaciega paralelamente al crecimiento en tamaño e importancia de la clase "burócrata". Esa información fue proporcionada en gran medida por la excavación de los Palacios CA-5 y CA-6, que arrojaron datos irrefutables de su asociación a actividades de carácter residencial, al tiempo que constituyen uno de los mejores ejemplos del estilo Proto Puuc en la región (Muñoz Cosme y Vidal Lorenzo 1994; Vidal Lorenzo 1999: 134–135). Aunque en esos edificios se encontraron varios de los dinteles con escritura antes referidos, curiosamente en ese período se produce un vacío escriturario (*hiatus*). ¿Cómo explicar este hecho? Una vez más el trabajo conjunto de arqueólogos, arquitectos y epigrafistas permitió demostrar que esos dinteles fueron

reutilizados y colocados en las puertas de esos palacios doscientos años después de haber sido tallados. Estos datos apuntaban a la existencia de una posible crisis en la organización política de la ciudad que habría de concluir con “el surgimiento de una autoridad única, centralizada en torno a un solo linaje, dinastía o segmento político” (García Campillo y Fernández Marquínez 1995: 153).

Esa hipótesis explicaría la reanudación de la actividad epigráfica en los primeros años del siglo VIII de forma paralela al crecimiento de los proyectos arquitectónicos, especialmente relevantes en el Grupo Ah Canul, donde se construyeron varias plazas y en éstas edificios adscritos al estilo arquitectónico Puuc Temprano, entre ellos las primeras fases arquitectónicas de los palacios Ch'ich (CA-7) y Diablo (CA-8). Al Palacio Ch'ich se asocia una serie de monumentos escultóricos y otros elementos constructivos (estelas, dinteles, claves de bóveda y paneles) en los que fueron retratados diferentes personajes, siendo el más nombrado en las inscripciones *Walas* (¿Olas?), representante, según todos los indicios hallados a este momento, de una forma de gobierno unipersonal, ya que su nombre aparece también en otros monumentos de la ciudad (García Campillo 1991: 66; Rivera Dorado 2007: 18). En definitiva las interpretaciones realizadas por Alfonso y José Miguel de los textos tallados en esos monumentos, aunque estaban descontextualizados y sólo aportaban datos incompletos, al ponerlas en relación con los datos arqueológicos proporcionados por los que estábamos excavando y estudiando esos edificios y el urbanismo de la ciudad (Muñoz Cosme y Vidal Lorenzo 2002), sí fueron de gran ayuda a la hora de establecer algunas propuestas generales sobre el sistema de organización política de Oxkintok.

Otro de los hallazgos en el que Alfonso estuvo especialmente implicado fue el del famoso anillo del Juego de Pelota de Oxkintok (edificio DZ-10). Apareció fragmentado en cuatro partes, las cuales fueron reutilizadas como sillares para la confección de los muros Este y Oeste de esta estructura. Tres de esos fragmentos fueron hallados durante la excavación del edificio en la temporada de campo 1990, pero el último trozo lo descubrimos casualmente en la temporada siguiente, cuando nos encontrábamos realizando tareas de consolidación de uno de los taludes del edificio: “en que apareció una pieza de piedra colocada en el arranque sur del muro y cubierta parcialmente por restos de derrumbe, en cuya parte inferior se apreciaban



Figura 2. Traslado del cuarto fragmento del anillo del Juego de Pelota de Oxkintok, tras su hallazgo en el año 1991.

algunos signos glíficos labrados. Una vez examinada comprobamos que se trataba del cuarto trozo del anillo del juego de pelota del que ya habían aparecido tres trozos en la campaña de 1990 (...) Las características de la pieza, que incluía la espiga de empotramiento, y el consiguiente peso de la misma —se calculó que sobrepasaba los 500 kg— dificultó las tareas de extracción y traslado al Museo de Antropología de Mérida, hecho que se realizó de forma inmediata” (Muñoz Cosme y Vidal Lorenzo 1995: 604) (Figura 2). Obviamente, ese fragmento contenía información relevante para poder completar la lectura epigráfica del anillo en la que estaba trabajando en Madrid y cuya publicación (Lacadena García-Gallo 1992) se encontraba ya a punto de entrar en imprenta, de modo que siempre quedó para el recuerdo la anécdota de que la cuarta monografía de la MAEM (*Oxkintok 4*) tuvo que retrasarse con el fin de que Alfonso Lacadena pudiera completar su aportación.

Pero nuestra estancia en el área maya no acababa al concluir las excavaciones en Oxkintok, sino que tras las temporadas de campo solíamos emprender un viaje hacia el sur, con el fin de conocer otros sitios arqueológicos, especialmente los del vecino país de Guatemala:

Entrábamos por la frontera de Melchor de Mencos, después de atravesar ese singular país que es Belice. Eran aquéllos unos años difíciles en los que Guatemala aún se hallaba sumida en el conflicto armado que asoló el país entre 1960 y 1996. Pero nosotros éramos muy jóvenes y la excitación por adentrarnos en el corazón de la selva del Petén en busca de abandonadas ciudades mayas pesó más que cualquier consejo acerca de lo peligroso que podía ser viajar por nuestra cuenta y por caminos poco transitados (Vidal Lorenzo 2015: 38).

Fueron viajes plagados de divertidas anécdotas muchas de ellas protagonizadas por Alfonso Lacadena, cuyo excelente sentido del humor era por todos conocido, y de amenas conversaciones con los pasajeros que nos íbamos encontrando en los autobuses atiborrados de gente en los que nos desplazábamos. Estábamos deseosos de conocer no sólo los sitios arqueológicos sino también de entablar conversaciones con los herederos de esa cultura que tanto admirábamos y a la que habíamos decidido consagrar nuestros estudios.

Cuando regresábamos a Yucatán después de esos largos viajes, nos sentíamos como en casa, pues a lo largo de esos años entablamos una sólida amistad con nuestros colegas y anfitriones yucatecos. Años más tarde, mientras nosotros participábamos en distintos proyectos en Guatemala, Yucatán se convirtió verdaderamente en su “casa” pues allí, entre 1998 y 2003, Alfonso Lacadena, ya como doctor, estuvo impartiendo docencia en el Dpto. de Arqueología de la Facultad de Ciencias Antropológicas de la UADY.

### **Investigaciones en La Blanca y Chilonché**

Exceptuando los habituales encuentros en congresos y otras reuniones académicas, no volvimos a coincidir con Alfonso Lacadena en un trabajo científico hasta veinte años después, cuando le invitamos a participar en el Proyecto arqueológico La Blanca y su entorno, patrocinado por el Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deportes de España. Además, a partir de 2014, se integró también como investigador en el Proyecto de I+D+i Arte y arquitectura maya: Nuevas tecnologías para su estudio y conservación del Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad, encargándose del registro, lectura e interpretación de los textos jeroglíficos plasmados en las pinturas murales halladas durante las excavaciones en La Blanca y Chilonché (Vidal Lorenzo y Muñoz Cosme 2014, 2016) (Figura 3).



**Figura 3.** Alfonso Lacadena con Miriam Salas y Cristina Vidal, tras concluir uno de los dibujos de la banda jeroglífica del “Cuarto de las pinturas” de la Acrópolis de Chilonché, en el año 2012.

La Blanca es un asentamiento urbano de la cuenca del río Mopán (Petén, Guatemala) cuya excavación habíamos iniciado en el año 2004; la ausencia de textos jeroglíficos en este sitio fue el motivo por el que Alfonso Lacadena se incorporara tardíamente al proyecto, en el año 2012, a raíz del descubrimiento de las pinturas murales en la Acrópolis de Chilonché, en las que una ceneta jeroglífica superior recorría todo el mural.

En el sitio arqueológico de Chilonché, situado a unos 17 Km al suroeste de La Blanca, llevábamos desde el año 2009 realizando trabajos de salvamento arqueológico y documentación, debido al descubrimiento accidental, por parte de nuestro equipo de prospección y documentación de arquitectura en peligro, de una enorme y espectacular escultura de estuco dentro de un túnel de saqueo. Este interesante hallazgo, conocido como el “mascarón de Chilonché”, motivó que a partir de 2010 se realizaran trabajos de consolidación y excavación extensiva en la Acrópolis de esta ciudad maya (Vidal Lorenzo y Muñoz Cosme 2014).

A principios del año 2011 uno de nuestros vigilantes nos informó que se había producido un intento de saqueo rompiendo una de las bóvedas de un cuarto situado en la parte norte del edificio más importante de la Acrópolis, y que los intrusos habían penetrado en una estancia interior que estaba rellena pero en la que se podían apreciar algunos restos de pintura en su bóveda. Ello motivó la organización de una expedición el día 5 de marzo de ese año, con el fin de comprobar e inspeccionar los daños producidos por el intento de saqueo.

Al penetrar en su interior comprobamos que se trataba de una sala, la cual había sido totalmente rellenada en la antigüedad por los mayas para clausurarla, dejando visible solamente la bóveda desde la línea de impostas. Estimamos que tenía unos 5 m de longitud en sentido norte-sur por unos 2 m de anchura, y se podía ver con total claridad una franja de escritura jeroglífica de unos 0,25 m de altura que se apreciaba en tres de los cuatro lados de la bóveda en su parte inferior (Muñoz et al. 2014: 107).

La estancia había sido rellenada intencionalmente para convertirla en el basamento de una construcción superior. El espacio interior de la bóveda había quedado vacío, salvo una acumulación de sillares que soportaba un apeo de la clave del extremo sur de la bóveda, y desde su reducido espacio interior podía observarse la franja jeroglífica con colores rojo, amarillo y negro, y en algunas zonas, por debajo del arranque de la bóveda, asomaban parcialmente algunas imágenes pintadas en los muros con vivos colores. Todos estos indicios nos llevaron a considerar que esta estancia podía tener unas pinturas murales que, a pesar de haber sufrido la clausura, podrían ser recuperadas.



**Figura 4.** Alfonso Lacadena documentando los glifos pintados a la entrada del Cuarto 4 del edificio 3E1 de la Acrópolis de Chilonché, en el año 2012.

A finales de ese año se realizó el vaciado de la estancia, entrando por la puerta de conexión con el cuarto situado al norte, que se pudo localizar debajo del agujero practicado por los saqueadores, y comprobando que había sido rellenada de forma sistemática por los antiguos mayas para clausurar este espacio. Una vez liberado el interior se observó que tenía una gran banqueta que ocupaba la mitad del cuarto y que tres de sus cuatro muros, que se correspondían con la posición de la banqueta, estaban cubiertos por pinturas murales que representaban diferentes escenas con un gran número de personajes con distintos atavíos. En esa misma temporada de campo se documentaron las pinturas fotográficamente y se clausuró la sala para preservarlas del medio exterior.

Fue al año siguiente cuando Alfonso Lacadena se unió al equipo de campo y junto al dibujante y restaurador Miguel Ángel Núñez, que ya había colaborado también con nosotros en Oxkintok hacía más de veinte años, consiguieron, tras una ardua tarea y muchas horas de trabajo en el sitio, una reproducción excelente de las pinturas murales y de los textos jeroglíficos que las acompañaban, mediante el calcado directo, especialmente de la escritura jeroglífica, y la reproducción fidedigna de las escenas del mural (Figura 4).



**Figura 5.** Miguel Ángel Núñez, Cristina Vidal y Alfonso Lacadena, durante la celebración del B'aktún 13 en Tikal, la noche del 21 de diciembre de 2012.



**Figura 6.** Alfonso Lacadena al inicio de la conferencia “Las profecías mayas y el mito del fin del mundo”, impartida en Flores el 19 de diciembre de 2012.

Dado que la temporada de campo de ese año concluyó a finales del mes de diciembre de 2012, tuvimos la ocasión de compartir con Alfonso toda la euforia que generó en el área maya la celebración del *B’aktún 13*, concretamente en Tikal, a donde se desplazó el equipo del Proyecto arqueológico La Blanca el día 21 de diciembre ya que inaugurábamos en el Museo de Estelas de Tikal la exposición *Tikal, más de un siglo de arqueología* (Vidal Lorenzo y Muñoz Cosme 2012) (Figura 5).

Alfonso Lacadena, al igual que todos nosotros, renegaba mucho de las noticias falsas que circulaban sobre este acontecimiento y que insistían en el advenimiento del “fin del mundo según los mayas”, hasta tal punto que decidimos que impartiera un conferencia en la sede del Proyecto La Blanca en Flores (Petén) con el fin de informar a turistas y otros curiosos sobre el significado de esta fecha para los antiguos mayas. La tituló “Las profecías mayas y el mito del fin del mundo” y con su gran locuacidad, empleando un lenguaje fácilmente comprensible para los asistentes, logró desgranar paso a paso el significado del cambio de *b’aktun*. Al concluir comentó: “siento haber desilusionado a muchos de los que habéis llegado hasta aquí para contemplar en directo el fin del mundo, pero les aseguro, señores, que eso no va a ocurrir...” (Figura 6).



**Figura 7.** Detalle de la reproducción del mural del “Cuarto de las pinturas” de la Acrópolis de Chilonché en el que aparece una dama ataviada con huipil identificada por Alfonso Lacadena como Princesa de K'anpat (dibujo de Miguel Ángel Núñez, © Proyecto La Blanca 2013).

## A la búsqueda de K'anpat

Tras la primera fase de toma de datos de campo sobre los murales de Chilonché, se pasó a una segunda fase de identificación y dibujo pormenorizado de los textos, las imágenes y los motivos del mural para intentar realizar una interpretación completa del mismo.

Se obtuvieron unas excelentes reproducciones de las pinturas, realizadas por Miguel Ángel Núñez y una copia a escala natural de la cenefia jeroglífica dibujada por Alfonso Lacadena y elaborada sobre el calcado que él mismo había realizado *in situ*.

A partir de este material gráfico y contando con el apoyo de los levantamientos fotogramétricos y de escáner láser, se pudo empezar a trabajar en la elaboración del estudio iconográfico y epigráfico del mural. Alfonso redactó un primer informe preliminar en el que ya se apuntaban algunos aspectos interesantes (Lacadena García-Gallo



Figura 8. Alfonso Lacadena, Gaspar Muñoz, Cristina Vidal y Laura Jack en Valencia, el 15 de noviembre de 2017.

2013). Uno de ellos es el fechamiento más probable de lo que se narra en el mural que, partiendo de la fecha situada en el inicio de la cenefá y relacionándola con la aparecida en otro de los cuartos del edificio, nos indicaría el año 770 d.C., una fecha totalmente coincidente con los datos cronológicos obtenidos de la excavación arqueológica.

Además de la banda jeroglífica se habían identificado catorce textos jeroglíficos menores insertados entre las figuras de las diferentes escenas del mural. Alfonso realizó una primera descripción de los mismos y en dos de ellos aparecía el topónimo *K'anpat* que podría referirse al propio nombre del sitio que ahora llamamos Chilonché. El del muro sur está asociado a la figura de una mujer ataviada con un vistoso *huipil* que se encuentra de pie. Su cláusula consiste en un título de rango, que la puede identificar como *ix ajaw*, mujer de linaje real, de un lugar llamado *K'anpat* (Figura 7).

Las interpretaciones iconográficas de las escenas representadas en los murales, junto con los datos epigráficos que se habían podido extraer de la cenefá incompleta fueron el origen de largas discusiones y debates en las reuniones que entre 2014 y 2017 celebramos en Madrid y en Valencia. La última de ellas fue el 15 de noviembre de ese año 2017. Alfonso vino a Valencia con Laura, su mujer. No sólo estuvimos hablando animadamente de la publicación completa de este extraordinario mural —que esperamos que pronto vea la luz—, sino también de muchos otros proyectos futuros relacionados con el uso de las nuevas tecnologías para la documentación de la arqui-

tectura y los monumentos escultóricos, ya que tuvo la ocasión de revisar toda la información digital que estamos preparando de nuestros recientes trabajos en Quiriguá, Tikal y Uxmal. Estaba entusiasmado. Costó arrancarlo del despacho para ir a almorzar. Lo hicimos frente al Mediterráneo y allí se despidió del mar (Figura 8).

Su fallecimiento nos sorprendió cuando estábamos de viaje en La Habana, donde se nos desataron muchos sentimientos y emociones recordando tantos años de amistad y anécdotas compartidas. Imposible que no se nos vinieran a la mente aquellas canciones de los cubanos Silvio Rodríguez y Pablo Milanés que cantábamos hasta la saciedad en nuestros trayectos diarios a las ruinas de Oxkintok, en la antigua camioneta *Chevrolet* del proyecto. Alfonso no sólo era de los que mejor cantaba, sino el que siempre se sabía las letras...

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# Diálogos con Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo

VERA TIESLER  
Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán  
(vtiesler@yahoo.com)

**Resumen:** En este ensayo deseo compartir una serie de reflexiones sobre Alfonso Lacadena y el legado que ha dejado como persona, brillante colega y generoso amigo durante los veinte años que tuve el gusto de conocerlo. Haré un escueto recuento del momento de su vida que lo llevó a Mérida, Yucatán, donde se desempeñó como profesor visitante en la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. Fueron años intensos, años preciosos y años inolvidables al ritmo de los descubrimientos en la selva maya, las temporadas de campo, los tiempos de aula, y el son de los convivios entre el círculo de estudiantes y colegas pronto vueltos amigos, amistades y diálogos que han continuado hasta la fecha.

**Abstract:** In this essay I wish to share a number of thoughts about Alfonso Lacadena and his legacy as a person, a brilliant colleague, and generous friend during the 20 years I knew him. I shall provide a brief synopsis of his time in Mérida, Yucatán, where he worked as a visiting professor for the Autonomous University of Yucatan. These were intense, precious and unforgettable years for Alfonso, which flowed at the pace of new discoveries in the Maya jungle, field seasons, workshops, and new long-lasting friendships, which I recount from my personal perspective.

*No me llores, no, no me llores, no,  
Porque si lloras yo peno,  
En cambio si tú me cantas  
Yo siempre vivo, yo nunca muero.*  
“La Martiniana”  
(Canción tradicional del Istmo de Tehuantepec, Oaxaca)

**S**i bien ha sido un gran privilegio y placer tratar y trabajar con Alfonso Lacadena a lo largo de los veinte años que nos conocimos, me costaría trabajo pensar de él como colega. No me equivoco en decir que más que académico, nuestro vínculo era primeramente personal y amistoso. De hecho, una amistad que todo psicoanalista aplaudiría estrepitosamente como sana forma de convivencia y trato. Una amistad no-tóxica más allá del fuerte insumo vinícola o el insomnio que solía acompañar nuestras reuniones en grupo. Sobra decir que Alfonso era un amigo sobradamente sincero y empático, a la vez que carismático y divertido al extremo gracias a su brillantez,

su talento como interlocutor y su profundo sentido de humor. Nunca se percibía en Alfonso la ostentosa pretensión que puede acompañar los logros profesionales y la fama internacional que tenía en el medio. De una deslumbrante sencillez, sentíamos que Alfonso o Alf, como algunos le llamamos, huía más bien del protagonismo de las altas esferas institucionales. Fuera de lo académico o, mejor dicho, sin distinción alguna, era la convivencia jovial y amistosa lo que llenaba a Alfonso, sin más motivos ni objetivos que la misma convivencia y la amistad, el canto, el cariño y el apapacho mutuo.

No he conocido a nadie que pudieran alcanzar estados de alegre flujo mental con la facilidad de Alfonso, la inmersión máxima que todos le conocimos, gratificante condición de goce, séase del momento, la conversación o las lenguas cuyo análisis fue su pasión. Pero su inmersión intelectual era más bien abierta; no solo se dirigía a los mayas y los nahuas sino igualmente incluía el Paleoindio y el poblamiento americano y tantos temas más de la historia y de la humanidad. De aquí en adelante me remito, desde el intersticio disciplinario, a su amor intelectual por los mayas.

En Mérida, el círculo de amigos de Alfonso se formó muy pronto tras su llegada e incorporación a la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán (UADY) en 1998. Fue ahí donde se desempeñó durante años como profesor de intercambio de la Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID). En las aulas de la UADY impartía con la misma soltura la asignatura de *Epigrafía maya* como la de *Osteología humana*, gracias a su capacidad de improvisación, su versatilidad intelectual y quizá también por su legado familiar. Su padre, el Dr. Juan Ramón Lacadena Calero, es reconocido y condecorado genetista que se desempeñaba en la Facultad de Biología de la Universidad Complutense. También Alfonso tuvo mucha injerencia en la formación de grupo y en los estudiantes, que incluye desde luego sus discípulos del sureste mexicano y del centro de México. No hablamos de su rol en la formación de la escuela mexicana de epigrafistas que hoy, a veinte años de distancia, cuenta entre las redes de peso mundial también gracias a los talleres de epigrafía y gramatología anuales que Alfonso ha impartido.



Figura 1. Grupo de profesores y estudiantes del Taller de Epigrafía, Tercera Mesa Redonda de Palenque (INAH), 1999 (fotografía de Vera Tiesler).

## De mayas y “la maya”

La forzosa compenetración de Alfonso con la “huesología” ante el requerimiento curricular de su curso de Osteología, dio para risas, ocurrencias y anécdotas de viva voz del propio Alfonso y de nuestro propio gremio de colegas y amigos. Pero sin duda, también fue punto de partida para muchos diálogos que los dos tendríamos a lo largo de los años. Nuestros discursos transitaban especialmente entre “la maya” y los mismos mayas. En tanto que yo me desempeñaba en reconstruir, a partir de sus restos esqueletizados, las muertes, vidas y rostros de los mayas, Alfonso les daba voz y habla. Desde que Alfonso y yo nos conocimos en el Congreso Internacional de Mayistas en Antigua, Guatemala (1998) fluyó un diálogo interdisciplinar que era un deleite intelectual.

En ese mismo año invitamos a Alfonso a la *Tercera Mesa Redonda de Palenque* (INAH). El evento se celebró en 1999, y esta edición integró un Taller Internacional de Epigrafía (que fue seguido por otros dos talleres más, realizados en Mérida y Villahermosa (Figuras 1 y 2). Fue en la Mesa Redonda en la que Alfonso y su colega Søren Wichman (2002, 2005; Lacadena 2000) dieron a conocer una nueva cartografía vernacular maya, o sea un mapa del habla popular durante el primer milenio de nuestra era. Las diferentes inflexiones en las inscripciones epigráficas locales, grabadas en la sola lengua franca conocida entre los cortesanos a lo largo y ancho de las Tierras Bajas, les



Figura 2. Alfonso Lacadena y un grupo participante durante el descanso de café del Taller de Epigrafía, Tercera Mesa Redonda de Palenque (INAH), 1999 (fotografía de Vera Tiesler).

hacían sospechar que debiera existir también una diversidad en el habla. Al juntar lo que comunicaban las inflexiones en un centenar de sitios arqueológicos, Alfonso y Søren llegaron a delimitar territorios donde la gente conversaba en yucateco y otros, más al sur, donde la gente se comunicaba en ch'olano occidental, ch'olano oriental y en tzeltalano.

A mí misma me resultó revelador reconocer que el caleidoscopio vernacular de la región maya, reconstruido por Alfonso y Søren, guardase coincidencias con la cartografía que yo había generado a partir de las formas cefálicas de sus hablantes. Existían patentes paralelismos sobre todo al comparar las siluetas cefálicas de las zonas de habla tzeltalan, ch'olan occidental y ch'olan oriental (Tiesler 2012: 132; 2014: 153–153, 170; Tiesler y Lacadena 2018; véase también Kettunen 2005). Aunque la variedad de las modificaciones craneanas se antoja extravagante a primera vista, no lo era en realidad al comprenderlas como prácticas realizadas en el seno del hogar y de la comunidad que reproducían en los recién nacidos la tradición, a la vez que les conferían las credenciales de pertenencia grupal, al igual que la lengua materna que aprenderían a hablar durante su infancia.

Más allá de los argumentos abstractos sobre identidad y etnicidad, Alfonso (Lacadena 2016) supo agregar una explicación más concreta y profunda al dar cuenta de la importancia de los portes cefálicos para los mayas. Sugirió a modo de proyección antropogónica de corte cognitivo que el arquetipo del ser humano debiera haber sido modelado a mano de los dioses (véase también Scherer 2018). Alfonso notó que en Mesoamérica hay una serie de narrativas nodales de creación humana que implican su confección manual a manos de los dioses. Para los grupos mayances, cuenta el sagrado libro k'iche del Popol Vuh que en los tiempos míticos los dioses labraban las preformas humanas. Numerosas escenas polícromas mayas confluyen con este imaginario de la creación humana. La franja glífica superior de una de estas escenas, leída recientemente por Beliaev y Davletshin (2014), describe concretamente el modelado de los seis primeros hombres aunque todavía no haya distinciones en su confección que pudieran hablar de su estatus social o siquiera del género. De ahí, Alfonso arguye que en este ideario no fueron los primeros hombres, sino las generaciones subsecuentes, quienes propulsaron jerarquía y diferenciación social. Al amasarlas a mano, las cabezas asimilarían las siluetas antropomorfizadas de sus distintos creadores divinos (véase también García Barrios y Tiesler 2011). Históricamente, esta práctica fue reproducida en prácticamente todos los hogares familiares por mujeres de segunda o tercera generación y consistía en comprimir la cabeza del bebé, aprovechando su plasticidad, ya fuera entre dos planos compresores, vendando la cabeza con bandas bien ajustadas o masajeándola repetidamente (Tiesler 2011, 2015).

### **De cortes, alcurnias y falanges**

Tras nuestras llegadas a Mérida en los años noventas, Alfonso y yo disfrutábamos plenamente las reuniones en grupo, tanto en congregaciones chicas como grandes. Desde mi propia integración al profesorado de la UADY a inicios del año 2000 ya participaba con regularidad en las rondas. Como sedes de encuentro nos servían el restaurante-bar *La Tratto* y una conocida casa departamental en la Avenida Itzaes. Ahí se platicaba, se comía, se bebía y a menudo se cantaba. Se contaban historias y se escribía historia. Al ritmo del son y de la canción se compartían novedades, chismes, penas, aventuras y romances, la noche se volvía día, el canto cargaba momentos de



Figura 3. Conferencia de Alfonso Lacadena durante el Congreso Internacional de Mayistas en Campeche, 2013 (fotografía de Vera Tiesler).

felicidad y trascendencia. Nos reuníamos al ritmo de los semestres, las vacaciones y las temporadas de campo. Tras su regreso a su hogar familiar en Madrid, Alfonso seguía muy presente gracias a sus visitas periódicas al sureste mexicano.

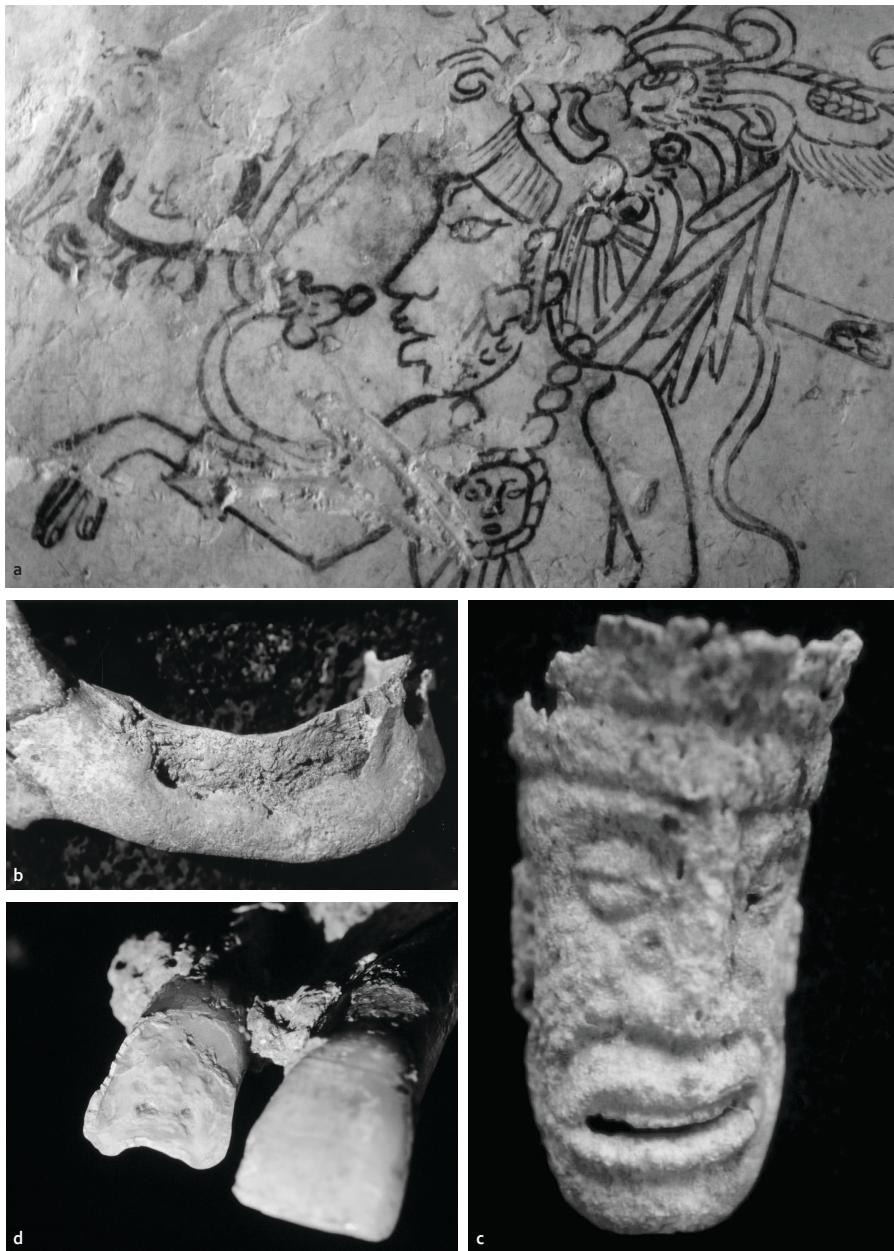
Fueron años intensos en la comunidad mayista, cargados de descubrimientos y de hallazgos que la jungla desvelaba en forma de tumbas y escrituras. Tal fue el caso del portentoso mausoleo de un difunto jerarca de Ek' Balam que tanto Alfonso como yo estudiamos en colaboración con la Dra. Leticia Vargas del INAH (Tiesler 2000; Lacadena 2004; Vargas y Castillo 2006). Tras su exploración y levantamiento inicial en 2000, Alfonso emprendió la tarea de transcribir y leer las inscripciones de Ek' Balam en el departamento de nuestra amiga vasca (Pilar Zabala, comunicación personal, 2017). A golpe de cafés y cigarrillos, cubriría las paredes de la casa con mantas blancas que llevarían los trazos a descifrar. Finalmente anunció que el difunto monarca era el rey Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' o Señor de las Cuatro Frentes de Pedernal quien gobernó el Reino de Talol por más de 35 años desde la ciudad de Ek' Balam. Por los avanzados cambios degenerativos en su osamenta y la prolongación de las menciones

escritas sobre el rey, confluíamos los dos en la longevidad del personaje mucho más allá de los cincuenta años.

Menos consenso y más debate hubo en la cuestión del origen geográfico del soberano de Ek' Balam, ya que las lecturas de Alfonso asocian el ascenso de Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' con su llegada al sitio que en otras capitales mayas denota la procedencia geográfica de tierras lejanas, aspecto que no encuentra verificación en su osamenta pero sí, una explicación semántica (Lacadena 2004; Price et al. 2004). Más tarde retomaríamos este debate en una sesión sobre dinastas mayas, uniéndonos a la celebración de la novena edición del Congreso Internacional de Mayistas en Campeche durante 2013 (Figura 3). En esta ocasión, Alfonso deliberó con dominio y tino sobre el potencial y las limitaciones de la Epigrafía y la Bioarqueología para trazar las procedencias geográficas de las personas de las alcurnias mesoamericanas y sus desplazamientos a través de la geografía mesoamericana. Filosofando a modo de Imre Lakatos (1983) y ejemplificando su argumento con el alegado tráfico de aristócratas entre Tikal y Teotihuacán (Stuart 2000; Wright 2005a, 2005b, 2012), Alfonso recapitula el estado del arte de ambos lentes de aproximación. Con miras a las usanzas matrimoniales del abolengo europeo del medievo rechaza todo determinismo o acaso diálogo cerrado que apoye una u otra versión en los ejemplos en que no existe sincronía entre la información bioarqueológica y la epigráfica. Aboga finalmente por un entendimiento más matizado de las narrativas biográficas y aquellas materializadas en huesos y dientes y concluye que **obviamente** [el énfasis es mío] la nobleza indígena debió haber transitado por los paisajes pan-mesoamericanos sin que sus lugares de origen o cambios de residencia determinaran su identidad o pertenencia.

Desgraciadamente esta magna conferencia, que tuvo mucha resonancia en el público, y desde luego sentó nuevas plataformas en el discurso actual de la movilidad prehispánica, quedó en el tintero, tal como muchas otras de sus brillantes cavilaciones sobre las aristocracias indígenas, todas las que tenían en común acercarnos a la antigua sociedad maya al otorgarle una realidad histórica y traérnosla a un plano actual y del ahora.

La historia maya y sus protagonistas deben haber sido muy vivos y palpables en el imaginario de Alfonso quien buscaba verlos, saludarlos, oírlos, cantarles e incluso tocarlos. Comentadas y recordadas



**Figura 4.** a) Retrato de Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' de Ek' Balam con doble labio superior, tapa de bóveda, Ek' Balam, Yucatán (fotografía del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia), b) lado derecho de la mandíbula de Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' con destrucción masiva del tejido periodontal por infección (fotografía de Vera Tiesler), c) rostro de personaje mostrando asimetría bucal, objeto confeccionado en hueso perteneciente al ajuar de Ukit Kan Le'k Tok', Estructura 1, Ek' Balam, Yucatán (fotografía del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia), d) maxilar con incisivo central derecho fracturado y otro remanente (fotografía de Vera Tiesler).

eran sus recurrentes peticiones de honrar los antiguos reyes mayas con un besamanos a la española. Con este propósito al menos acudía a nuestro Laboratorio de Bioarqueología en la UADY. Arrodillado y con la cabeza inclinada nos proponía acercarle a su boca falange o metacarpo que hubiese (aunque prefería los segmentos de la mano derecha) de aquellos dignatarios que estuviesen bajo estudio. Quería besarlos para luego retirarse con “gracia y galantería”.

A parte de la calidad física de la nobleza maya, Alfonso quedaba intrigado por las expresiones y significados de sus malformaciones físicas. Felices convergencias de datos se dieron en el caso del Señor de Ek' Balam, el Señor de las Cuatro Frentes de Pedernal, cuyos retratos mostraban una asimetría facial en extremo. Un artista incluso convino delimitar la boca del viejo rey con un doble labio superior, tal como se puede apreciar en una de las tapas de bóveda con su retrato (Lacadena 2004) (Figura 4a). La condición de labio leporino que habíamos sospechado en un inicio pronto se presentó como otro cuadro distinto aunque no menos severo: al fallecer, una serie de aparatosos abscesos ya habían destruido en un lado el tejido bucal del gobernante (Figura 4b), explicando la asimetría bucal que constatan sus retratos (Figura 4c) y de paso haciendo sospechar que, al hablar, de su boca emanaba un fuerte mal aliento (Tiesler 2000). Poco antes de fallecer, su problema odontológico se agravó aún más por un trauma. En este percance el jerarca sufrió una fractura completa de uno de sus incisivos centrales superiores que dejó expuesta la cámara pulpar (Figura 4d), impacto que le debió causar mucho dolor. La parte anterior de su maxilar se encontraba colapsada hacia delante, que en vida causó la protrusión del incisivo central contralateral.

Igual de intrigante que el tema de la salud oral de Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' era conversar con Alfonso, en fechas más recientes, acerca del caso del “singular personaje de Chilonché”, un ser con evidentes deformidades que muestra la narrativa retratada en un mural de la Cuenca del río Mopán, Petén, Guatemala. Hace poco fue descubierto y restaurado con gran acierto por el competente equipo de colegas de la Universidad de Valencia (Vidal y Muñoz 2016). El trabajo de lectura e interpretación sigue en pie pero ya promete hacer palpable —a la manera de Alfonso— las relaciones entre mito, rito y realidad histórica maya.



Figura 5. Momento en familia durante el homenaje a Alfonso Lacadena, Tercer Encuentro Internacional de Gramatología, UNAM, Ciudad de México, octubre de 2017 (fotografía de Vera Tiesler).

## Reflexiones finales

Diversos factores y personas, en especial Anita García, Erik Velásquez, Alejandra Martínez y Pilar Zabala, hicieron que en los últimos años se intensificara nuestro trato, lo que les agradezco profundamente. De cerca vivimos y festejamos con Alfonso los frutos de su excepcional carrera, lo cual incluye el Premio Tatiana A. Proskouriakoff que le fue otorgado a Alfonso por la Universidad de Harvard en 2011. Los homenajes y las dedicatorias por su destacada trayectoria culminaron con el Tercer Encuentro Internacional de Gramatología de la UNAM, celebrado en su honor en octubre del 2017 (Figuras 5 y 6). A la efusiva celebración de la obra de Alfonso se sumó su impresionante círculo de discípulos, allegados y seguidores de ambos lados del Atlántico, más su esposa Laura y sus padres, quienes vinieron para presenciar el acto solemne (Velásquez 2018).

Entonces aprendí que Alfonso era de una familia que cantaba. Cantar para sentir y compartir, festejar la vida y la compañía,



**Figura 6.** Foto de recuerdo con Alfonso Lacadena, Tercer Encuentro Internacional de Gramatología, UNAM, Ciudad de México, octubre de 2017 (fotografía de Erik Velásquez).



**Figura 7.** Grupo de colegas celebrando a Alfonso en el simposio 'Arte y Percepción Sensorial en la Antigua América', 56 Congreso Internacional de Americanistas, Salamanca, julio de 2018 (fotografía de Alejandra Martínez de Velasco).

flotar en la euforia que era la suya, en el cariño que llega de los seres queridos, la familia y los amigos, la mejor medicina (Figura 7). Tampoco durante los duros últimos meses, antes de dejarnos, Alfonso llegó a perder su humor, optimismo y ánimo; hasta su tránsito y hasta donde se pudo siguió celebrando la vida con los suyos y momentos cargados de eternidad. Ahora nos queda agradecer, disfrutar y celebrar su legado y transcendencia.

Gracias Alfonso.

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# **El Doctor Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo y Ek' Balam**

LETICIA VARGAS DE LA PEÑA

Centro INAH Yucatán

(lvargas.yuc@inah.gob.mx)

VÍCTOR R. CASTILLO BORGES

Centro INAH Yucatán

(muyjochak@gmail.com)

**Resumen:** En este trabajo presentamos un breve compendio de recuerdos tanto del trabajo como de cuestiones personales, así como de aventuras de Alfonso Lacadena ocurridas en Ek' Balam, donde tuvimos la fortuna de colaborar y convivir con él. Nosotros compartimos una amistad sincera y el amor por nuestro trabajo y por el sitio arqueológico, lo cual nos ha dado muchas satisfacciones. Por esto, queremos compartir y dar a conocer a otros algunas cosas sobre el genio investigador y la maravillosa persona que Alfonso fue, además de contar un poco sobre las experiencias en un sitio que él amó y donde realizó un trabajo de gran valor.

**Abstract:** This a small collection of memories of Alfonso Lacadena, both professional and personal encounters and adventures, at Ek' Balam, where we had the fortune to collaborate and share time with him. We shared a sincere friendship and our love for our work and the archeological site that has given us much satisfaction. Thus, we would like others to get to know some details about this magnificent researcher and fantastic human being who he was, and tell you a little bit about his experiences in the place that he loved and where he carried out valuable work.

Aproximadamente a inicios de 1998 conocimos al Dr. Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, en el Museo de Antropología Palacio Cantón, en Mérida, Yucatán, México.

Para ese entonces, estaba en marcha la tercera temporada de trabajo de campo del proyecto arqueológico titulado *Investigación y conservación arquitectónica en Ek' Balam*, del Centro INAH Yucatán<sup>1</sup>. Ya habíamos excavado y restaurado varios edificios de la Plaza Sur del sitio y emprendimos la tarea monumental de explorar, en la Plaza Norte, el edificio más grande e importante de Ek' Balam, la Estructura 1, a la que llamamos la Acrópolis y que años después hemos identificado como el Palacio Real.

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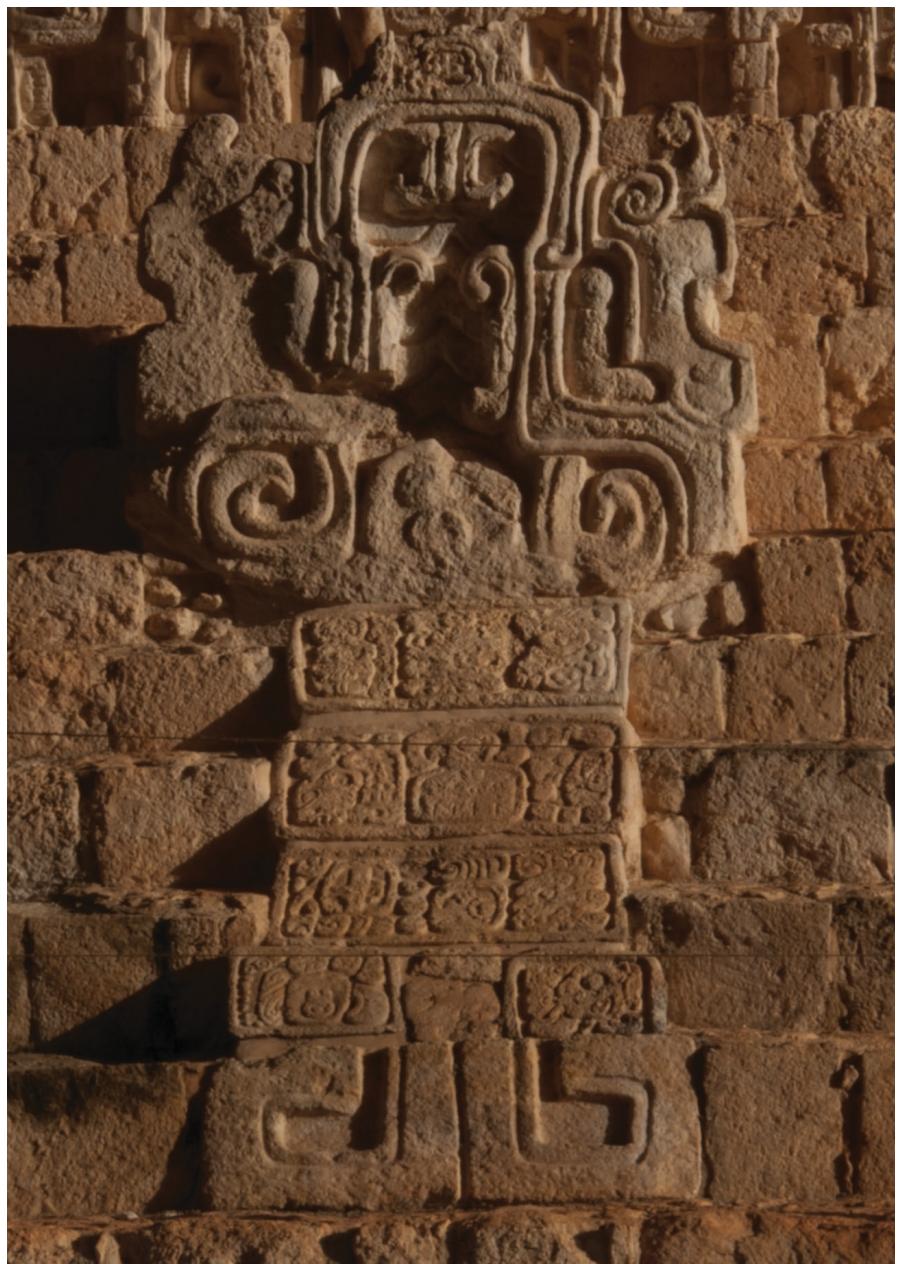
<sup>1</sup> INAH son las siglas del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

Ya desde la segunda temporada de trabajo (1996–1997) habíamos descubierto en la Estructura 8 del Juego de Pelota dos tapas de bóveda pintadas, con imágenes del dios *K'awiil* y acompañando estas figuras estaban los dos primeros textos glíficos que conocimos de Ek' Balam, pintados con hermosos trazos de color negro. Se habían restaurado dos estelas, en la Plaza Sur, y durante las excavaciones también se encontraron tres fragmentos de objetos con textos incompletos en un “basurero” arqueológico. Además, en la Acrópolis continuaban los trabajos iniciados en 1997 y ya se había recuperado la primera tapa de bóveda pintada de este edificio; estaba en proceso de liberación el primer tramo de la escalinata principal de la Acrópolis, donde aparecieron, *in situ*, dos monumentos de piedra que llamamos las Serpientes Jeroglíficas, con la inscripción más larga y completa hallada hasta entonces en Ek' Balam.

El entonces director del museo Palacio Cantón de Mérida, Arqlo. Agustín Peña Castillo, nos invitó un día a su oficina donde nos presentó al Dr. Lacadena, platicamos todos un rato sobre Ek' Balam y posteriormente el Dr. Lacadena procedió a “leer” algunas vasijas o fragmentos de ellas, que formaban parte del acervo del museo y que tienen inscripciones —entre ellas, la pieza que mejor recordamos es la llamada calabaza de Acanceh— y ante nuestro asombro, Alfonso Lacadena leyó los glifos con toda soltura, como si los textos estuvieran en español; debemos admitir, que sentimos cierta incredulidad y pensamos: ¿en verdad lo está leyendo? Es un muchacho muy joven ¿realmente puede hacer algo así?

Hasta ese entonces, nunca habíamos tenido contacto con otro epigrafista, por supuesto conocíamos por su nombre y trabajos a algunos estadounidenses, alemanes y por supuesto, rusos pero ¿un español? Aunque lo menos importante era su nacionalidad y posiblemente ya era conocido en su medio, nosotros nunca lo habíamos oído mencionar, sólo sabíamos que había llegado a Yucatán para trabajar en el Proyecto Oxkintok. ¿Podríamos confiar en él y dejar en sus manos el mayor tesoro obtenido hasta entonces en el peculiar sitio arqueológico bajo nuestro cargo?

Finalmente accedimos a mostrarle el material obtenido hasta entonces, aún con un poquito de inquietud e incertidumbre, pero tomamos la mejor decisión —sin saberlo entonces— y desde ese momento iniciamos junto con Alfonso Lacadena un largo y muy



**Figura 1.** Foto de la Serpiente Jeroglifica Oeste, donde se puede ver el Glifo Emblema, el primero de abajo a la izquierda (fotografía de Jesús López, Proyecto Ek' Balam, INAH).



**Figura 2.** *K'uhul Talol ajaw*, Rey sagrado de Talol (fotografía de Jesús López, Proyecto Ek' Balam, INAH).

resultados de la investigación sobre los textos glíficos de Ek' Balam, en el *VIII Encuentro de Investigadores del Área Maya*, en la Universidad Autónoma de Campeche, Campeche, México (Vargas et al. 1999).

Para ese entonces, el hallazgo más relevante era el del glifo emblema. A pesar de que los investigadores estadounidenses que trabajaron previamente en el sitio arqueológico ya habían reportado la presencia de un glifo emblema (Ringle y Bey 1996) no habían podido traducirlo debido a que se encontraba en una estela erosionada que impidió su lectura; en cambio, fuimos afortunados al encontrar las dos esculturas llamadas Serpientes Jeroglíficas, durante los trabajos de excavación del INAH en 1997, y de que el glifo estuviera claramente representado en ambas (Figuras 1 y 2).

El Dr. Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo se sentía con toda razón, sumamente feliz y orgulloso de haber sido quien tuvo el honor de leer por primera vez el glifo emblema, el símbolo de la existencia del reino de Talol y asociado a él, el nombre de uno de sus gobernantes, el fundador de la dinastía reinante en el Clásico Tardío, el más nombrado en los textos, un personaje fuera de lo común, que hizo de Talol un gran reino y se encargó de dejar su historia plasmada en bellísimos trazos pintados y labrados en la piedra, con la idea de perpetuar su legado y dar a conocer la extraordinaria historia de Ek' Balam.

Desde los primeros días de trabajo conjunto pudimos constatar los amplísimos conocimientos del Dr. Lacadena y celebramos el tenerlo como parte de nuestro equipo de investigación y haber confiado en

productivo camino de cooperación profesional y también una hermosa amistad.

Habiéndole confiado el material para nosotros tanpreciado, producto de varios años de labores, empezamos a trabajar conjuntamente, para darle a conocer lo que ya se sabía del sitio y del contexto arqueológico de los materiales que analizaría enseguida. En noviembre de ese mismo año, presentamos los primeros

él, prácticamente sin conocerlo. Las pocas dudas que pudiéramos haber tenido al principio, pronto fueron completamente despejadas por el Dr. David Stuart —quien es considerado el mejor epigrafista del mundo— pues nos dijo, en una visita a Ek' Balam, que Alfonso Lacadena era “uno de los mejores”; y siendo los mejores tan pocos, pudimos entonces sentirnos plenamente felices de haber coincidido con él y de que fuera él quien nos acompañara en la tarea de sacar a la luz las maravillas de Ek' Balam.

Ser uno de los mejores del mundo nunca le quitó la sencillez, generosidad y caballerosidad que tenía con todos: trabajadores de campo, alumnos, investigadores o grandes eminencias.

Tuvimos muchos años de duro trabajo conjunto, de constantes descubrimientos en las intensas excavaciones realizadas en Ek' Balam de 1996 a 2000 principalmente, de muchas alegrías y asombros, de tremenda ansiedad y expectación cada vez que encontrábamos nuevos textos y mientras esperábamos los comentarios de Alfonso y, por supuesto, de un enorme placer cuando finalmente él nos leía los datos y relatos de la vida de *Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'* principalmente, y también de otros gobernantes.

La emoción era indescriptible y se nos enchinaba la piel cuando lo escuchábamos directamente de él o cuando leíamos sus cartas con la traducción que había hecho, y esto ocurrió con cada uno de los muchos textos pintados y labrados que fueron dejados hasta en los últimos rincones del que fuera el palacio real de ese extraordinario gobernante. Al comentar los datos hallados, Alfonso transmitía su gran entusiasmo y compartíamos el placer de esos descubrimientos.

Podemos recordar como si hubiera sido ayer, su primera visita a Ek' Balam, cuando nos hizo reír mucho al verlo ir apresuradamente hacia la Acrópolis e inclinarse a besar el glifo emblema labrado en las Serpientes Jeroglíficas y luego, en cada visita besaba también las estelas, los murales y todos los materiales arqueológicos que le daban tanta felicidad. Estamos seguros de que así lo haría en cada sitio arqueológico donde trabajó, porque así era él, amaba mucho su trabajo y esa era su particular y simpática manera de demostrarlo.

Durante muchos años, afortunadamente pudimos contar con su presencia, tanto en Mérida, como en Valladolid (donde estaba nuestro campamento arqueológico) y por supuesto en Ek' Balam con bastante frecuencia, gracias a que estuvo impartiendo cursos en la



**Figura 3.** Vista lateral del mausoleo de Ukit Kan Le'k Tok', en el cuarto nivel de la Acrópolis de Ek' Balam (fotografía de Leticia Vargas, Proyecto Ek' Balam, INAH).

Facultad de Antropología de la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán y también contaba con una beca de FAMSI, lo que le permitió invertir mucho tiempo en el estudio de los textos de Ek' Balam y preparar el fabuloso trabajo publicado en 2003, precisamente en la página electrónica de FAMSI (Lacadena García-Gallo 2003).

Le encantaba estar en Ek' Balam, aunque sufriera por el terrible calor y los insectos (tenía principalmente aracnofobia) pero nada de eso lo disuadía de disfrutar del sitio, donde solíamos pasar horas contemplando la magnífica fachada del mausoleo, tratando de penetrar en cada recoveco y descubrir los secretos escondidos (Figura 3).

Y durante cada arduo día de trabajo, el pequeño descanso para la comida era uno de los mejores momentos para platicar de los avances y los sucesos diarios y para disfrutar de la comida; le encantaba el frijol colado, que saboreaba solo —como si fuera una sopa— antes de comer cualquier otra cosa, lo que nos parecía gracioso, pues en Yucatán se acostumbra comer el frijol acompañando la carne. Le gustaban muchas comidas, pero otro de sus grandes favoritos eran los huevos motuleños, y al restaurante que fuéramos, en Valladolid o en Mérida, tenía que probarlos y en cada carta mencionaba cómo

los añoraba y hacía planes para comerlos en su próxima visita. El pan francés hecho en horno de leña en una panadería de Valladolid le encantaba. Siempre recordaremos la vez que trajo de España —de contrabando— jamón serrano y queso manchego, en una caja envuelta como regalo para un bebé, y nos dijo que lo hizo así para que les diera pena a los aduaneros y no insistieran en abrirlo; nosotros comimos esas delicias con el francés, mientras que él prefirió comer el pan solo, para disfrutarlo más.

Muy pronto nos habíamos convertido en buenos amigos, y Alfonso, al igual que nosotros, se enamoró de Ek' Balam y ese mutuo amor nos haría más cercanos, aunque tuviéramos un océano entre nosotros. Por suerte nos tocó la era de *Internet* y cuando no podía estar personalmente con nosotros, mantuvimos largas conversaciones e intercambio de opiniones, “chateando” como si estuviéramos frente a frente; raudales de ideas, dibujos, fotos e información iban y venían en el correo electrónico.

Cuando podíamos coincidir, disfrutábamos y aprovechábamos días y noches de conversación en persona, de análisis de los diversos materiales culturales y de los textos que contenían, de la Acrópolis y en general de Ek' Balam, mientras “reconstruíamos” su historia y la de *Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'*, incluso imaginándonos el ceremonial del *ajaw* en sus apariciones públicas, describiéndolas, al igual que la vestimenta y adornos que llevaría, como niños inventando cuentos.

Con frecuencia solíamos conversar sobre uno de nuestros temas favoritos, acerca de nuestras respectivas maneras de hablar y del significado de algunos términos, que aunque son iguales en español, tienen significado tan diverso en México y en España, lo que nos hacía morirnos de risa. Nuestros años de trabajo fueron también de diversión, pues quien haya conocido a Alfonso sabe lo encantador, simpático, ocurrente y chistoso que era, y era imposible sentirse cansado o aburrido aun después de horas de trabajo.

Mientras más conocíamos a Alfonso Lacadena, más lo queríamos como persona, su simpatía y don de gentes lo hacía ser apreciado y elogiado donde quiera que fuera; fuimos grandes admiradores de su trabajo y sus hermosos dibujos, que hacía con gran facilidad (Figura 4). Tenía vastos conocimientos históricos, arqueológicos, filológicos, lingüísticos, epigráficos, era un verdadero erudito, sabía todo sobre la historia de España; dominaba muchas disciplinas y su entendimiento

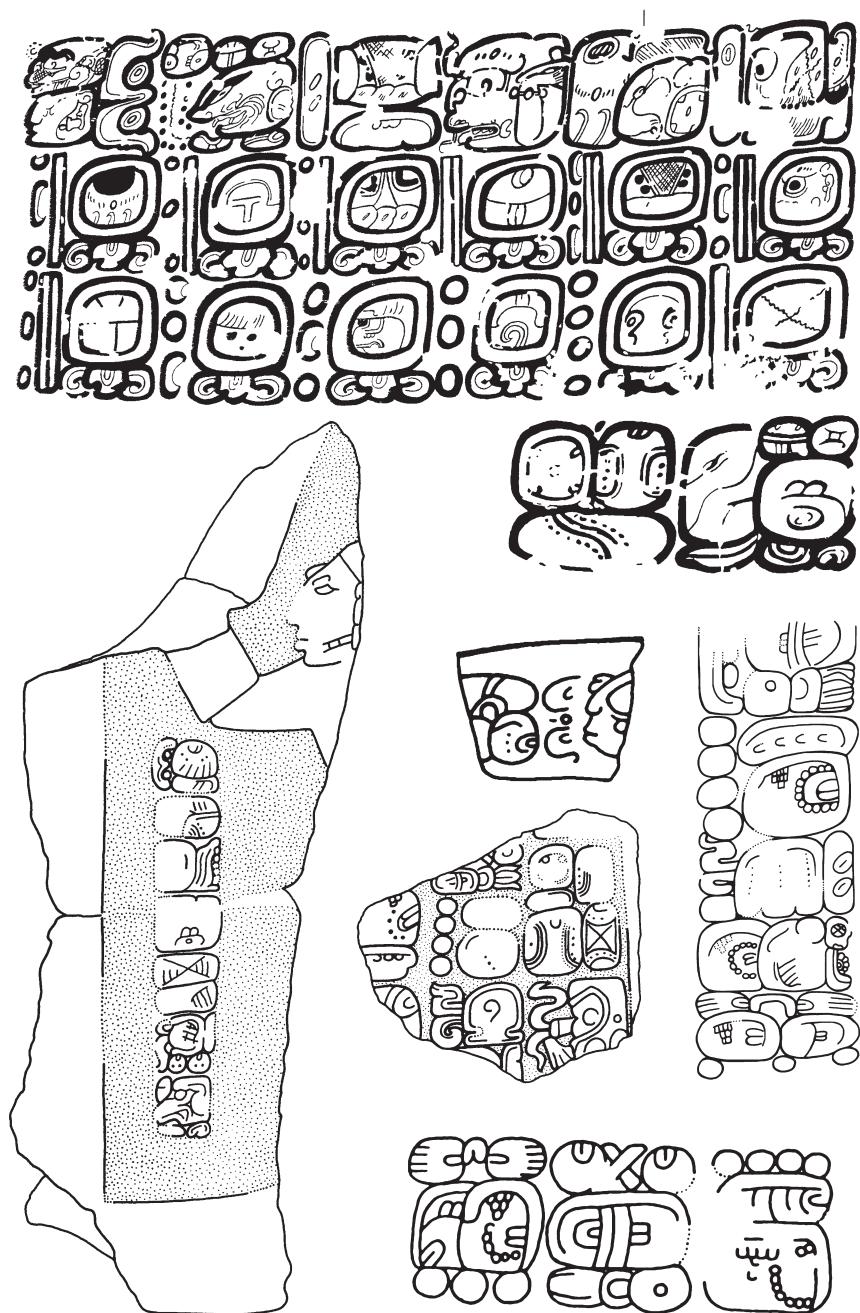


Figura 4. Una muestra de los dibujos realizados por Alfonso Lacadena de varios textos de Ek' Balam.

miento de la gramática, la sintaxis y la escritura mayas de distintas regiones, era impresionante. Además trabajó en el desciframiento de la escritura náhuatl, a la par de la maya; tenía una extraordinaria capacidad de deducción y comprensión.

Sus incontables alumnos en España y México saben que era un magnífico maestro, y nosotros, aunque brevemente, también pudimos gozar de su gran didáctica, cuando tomamos dos cursos de epigrafía, que él hacía ver como algo fácil de entender, siendo en realidad algo tan complejo.

En 2004 pudimos los tres compartir una gran felicidad cuando el Arqlgo. Castillo obtuvo su plaza en el Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia y Alfonso en la Universidad Complutense, casi al mismo tiempo, pues incluso las noticias se cruzaron en el correo electrónico. Ambas plazas fueron logros muy merecidos, conseguidos después de muchos años de trabajo, aunque él decía que *Ukit Kan Le'k* les trajo suerte. Si bien había podido trabajar incansablemente con becas, durante años, eso no se podría comparar con la seguridad que esta plaza le brindaba, a él y sobre todo a su familia, que era lo que más le importaba. Nos dijo que ya vería cómo dividirse para cumplir con sus obligaciones docentes, que también le encantaban, y continuar con sus investigaciones. Por supuesto que pudo cumplir con todo perfectamente.

Un viaje a España en 2005 debido a un congreso, nos permitió conocer a su hermosa y amada familia, a su esposa Laura y a los dos niños, quienes siempre fueron uno de sus temas favoritos de conversación, por lo que nosotros ya sentíamos conocerlos y los apreciábamos también. Esa noche los niños esperaban impacientes la llegada de “los mexicanos”; querían conocernos, ya que su papá siempre les platicaba de nosotros y de su trabajo en Ek' Balam, que para los niños era por supuesto la gran aventura. Una vez que llegamos a cenar y nos conocimos, pudieron irse tranquilos a dormir. Fue una ocasión muy especial que disfrutamos enormemente.

Por medio de Alfonso también pudimos conocer a otros investigadores (principalmente españoles) que ahora apreciamos mucho y consideramos nuestros amigos.

Al paso de los años, cada vez era más reconocido su trabajo y sus conocimientos y todo el tiempo era muy solicitado, todo el mundo quería que trabajara en su proyecto; sabíamos cómo tenía que divi-

dirse para cumplir con sus tareas en la universidad y poder hacer sus investigaciones epigráficas y lingüísticas, pero él tenía una especial predilección por Ek' Balam y sentía un enorme deseo e impaciencia porque pudiéramos seguir excavando, para que él pudiera seguir trabajando con sus materiales. Siempre se lamentaba junto con nosotros, de no poder continuar con la exploración de aproximadamente la mitad faltante de la Acrópolis, pensando en la enorme cantidad de información que ya teníamos de la primera parte y en lo mucho que aún permanece oculto bajo el escombro y la vegetación.

Cuando excavamos parcialmente la Plaza Este de la Acrópolis de Ek' Balam, hallamos un sillar labrado perteneciente a la escalinata del edificio norte, su diseño sólo estaba parcialmente conservado, pues había sido hecho con estuco; se puede ver claramente un jugador de pelota, pero la inscripción desafortunadamente está ilegible. Estaba muy entusiasmado, como nosotros, pero él decía que: “le olía a escala jeroglífica”. Desgraciadamente hasta la fecha no se ha continuado esa liberación por falta de recursos y nos hubiera encantado tener la oportunidad de disfrutar juntos de ese hallazgo.

Esa devoción hacia Ek' Balam que él y nosotros compartimos, nos llevó a sentir una satisfacción adicional después del hallazgo del entierro de *Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'* en el año 2000, regocijándonos de saber que nuestro bien amado *ajaw* descansaba en su magnífica tumba, donde fue inhumado con las ofrendas y los honores merecidos. Era divertido oír a Alfonso decir que estaba feliz de que hubiéramos encontrado al *ajaw* en esa tumba y en su magnífico mausoleo, pues “no hubiera podido superar encontrar a ese increíble monarca como cautivo en Cobá o en otro sitio”.

Parece mentira, pero llegamos a considerar a este gobernante, no sólo como un tema de estudio, sino como algo muy real y muy cercano, y comentábamos nuestra sorpresa por sentirnos así, aunque concluimos que quizá otros investigadores sientan lo mismo por los personajes y los sitios en los que han trabajado durante muchos años.

El profesionalismo y amplios conocimientos del Dr. Lacadena lo llevaron a realizar un extraordinario trabajo en todos los ámbitos que abarcó, pero en particular, pensamos que su trabajo sobre Ek' Balam lo hizo ser más reconocido y admirado, y eso nos hace muy felices. A nosotros, como estudiosos de Ek' Balam, nos ha ayudado a conocer e interpretar la etapa más importante de la historia del



**Figura 5.** Fotografía que muestra al Equipo Ek' Balam, quienes hemos trabajado juntos en el sitio durante muchos años. De izquierda a derecha, Víctor Castillo, Alejandra Alonso, Leticia Vargas y Alfonso Lacadena, Izamal, 2016.

reino de Talol y de algunos de sus gobernantes, y por ello, Alfonso Lacadena también ha pasado a formar parte de esa historia.

Su extraordinaria aportación con la investigación realizada en Ek' Balam incluye muchos nuevos descubrimientos y contribuciones para el entendimiento de algunos términos epigráficos y gramáticos no bien definidos anteriormente. A nosotros, como arqueólogos investigadores nos hizo comprender, en algunos casos o bien reafirmar, datos arqueológicos hallados, que aunados a los epigráficos permiten una mejor comprensión. Y las fechas que él pudo descifrar tan bien, son invaluables para el establecimiento de la secuencia constructiva del palacio real y de otros edificios, así como para la ubicación temporal del acontecer histórico y social de Ek' Balam. Su dedicación, tenacidad y perfeccionismo hicieron posible tener la información más exacta posible y, aun así, la seguía corrigiendo y afinando.

Hicimos tantos planes con Alfonso, dando por seguro que durante muchos años más seguiríamos trabajando juntos, que tendríamos nuevas temporadas de trabajo de campo, que recuperaríamos más textos y que él tendría el gusto de hacer las nuevas lecturas, hallando nuevos datos que permitirían entender algunos otros que aún permanecen un poco oscuros e inciertos. Planeamos muchas nuevas

aventuras de trabajo, muchos artículos en conjunto, pero nuestra meta principal era terminar ese gran libro que iniciamos hace años y que compendiará nuestro conocimientos sobre Ek' Balam y especialmente sobre su gran gobernante *Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'*. Sin embargo, la vida decidió algo diferente y Alfonso ya no estará con nosotros para hacerlo, pero su trabajo y su información estarán para siempre, así como él permanecerá en nuestros corazones (Figura 5).

La pérdida personal, para su familia y amigos es inmensa, pero también la investigación del mundo mesoamericano prehispánico pierde mucho, pues se ha quedado sin uno de sus más valiosos expertos. La ausencia del Dr. Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo ha dejado muchos proyectos truncados en Ek' Balam y otros sitios, pero aunque su lugar difícilmente podrá ser ocupado, su legado permanecerá siempre y la huella que imprimió, profesional y personalmente, será imborrable.

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# Breve narración del venturoso año en que un epigrafista se convirtió en arqueólogo<sup>1</sup>

PEPA IGLESIAS PONCE DE LEÓN  
Universidad Complutense de Madrid  
(pepaipdl@ucm.es)

**Resumen:** En las siguientes líneas se narra la experiencia profesional y personal de Alfonso Lacadena en el verano del año 2005, cuando llevó a cabo tareas de arqueólogo, además de epigrafista, en el sitio de Machaquila, en el marco del Atlas Arqueológico de Guatemala. La investigación arqueológica tuvo lugar en el conocido como Cuadrilobulado, un especial recinto situado en la Plaza A, el centro neurálgico de la ciudad, que había sido detectado ya iconográficamente en estelas y altares de Machaquila y otros yacimientos mayas clásicos.

**Abstract:** The following lines report on a professional and personal experience that Alfonso Lacadena had in the spring of 2005, when he conducted both archaeological and epigraphic work at Machaquila under the auspices of the Atlas Arqueológico de Guatemala. This research took place in a location known as the “Quatrefoil,” a special precinct found and the city core on Plaza A, which had already been detected iconographically on the stelae and altars of Machaquila and other Classic Maya sites.

Conocí a Alfonso como alumno hace más de 30 años, cuando ya tenía una idea clara de cuál era su mayor pasión, que no la única: la epigrafía maya, y de los pasos que tenía que dar para vivir con y para ella. Con el tiempo tuve ocasión de descubrir que en realidad para Alfonso casi todo lo que le rodeaba era apasionante (Figura 1), ya fueran entes animados o inanimados: familia, alumnos, amigos, colegas, conocidos, gentes por conocer y desconocidos, códices, estelas, altares, cerámicas, murales, cualquier cosa que tuviera algo escrito, cualquier cosa escrita, cualquier cosa por escribir... Así que hoy estaré perplejo, y al tiempo feliz, ante la riada de recuerdos y reconocimientos que se presentan en este volumen en homenaje a su vida personal y profesional.

Cuando apenas hacía cuatro meses de su ida le celebramos un Acto Académico en su universidad de referencia, la Complutense<sup>2</sup>. Y digo

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<sup>1</sup> Este escrito, en una versión más breve, fue presentado en el Acto Académico en Homenaje al Profesor Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, que tuvo lugar el 30 de mayo de 2018 en el Salón de Actos de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

<sup>2</sup> El video del Acto completo realizado por el Departamento de Estudios e Imagen Corporativa de la UCM puede verse en el siguiente enlace: <https://youtu.be/EeWt5hdmKRk>.



Figura 1. Alfonso con el arqueólogo Jorge Chocón en Machaquila, junio 2004.

celebramos porque ese era el objetivo que, a pesar de las circunstancias por las que se hacía, fuera un acto con un necesario trasfondo académico serio pero alegre al tiempo, como era Alfonso.

Así, algunos de los colegas de Departamento hablaron de las diferentes y múltiples facetas de Alfonso como docente, “administrador” e investigador en el campo de la epigrafía y la lingüística. Disfrutamos también con las entrañables intervenciones en video enviadas por antiguos alumnos desde México, por colegas y amigos componentes de los proyectos Ek Balam, Río Bec, Naachtun y del GERM (*Groupe d'enseignement et de recherche sur les Mayas et la Mésoamérique*) o de la sorprendente y reconfortante aportación de Juan Carlos Vita sobre los años que pasaron juntos en el Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.

Pero sin duda la incommensurable intervención del Profesor Emérito Juan Ramón Lacadena supuso un punto y aparte, proporcionándonos una visión de Alfonso al tiempo tan conmovedora, sólida y orgullosa como sólo un padre que pierde un hijo amado puede dar.

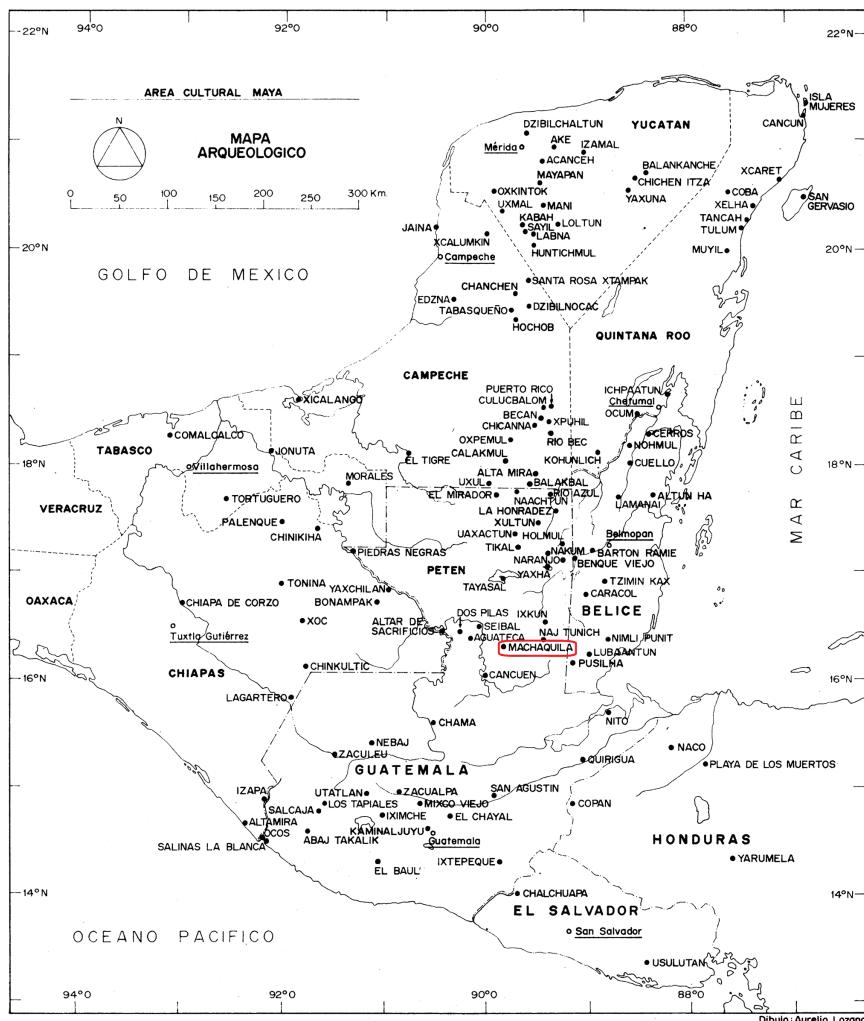


Figura 2. Localización de Machaquila en Petén, Guatemala.

## La temporada de campo 2005 en Machaquila, Guatemala

Ciertamente no tuve ninguna duda de que en el Acto Académico de lo que quería hablar era de Alfonso como investigador, pero de un momento que si bien fue, por llamarlo de alguna manera, coyuntural, resultó ser en todos los sentidos una experiencia tan peculiar como inolvidable: la temporada 2005 de Machaquila, donde Alfonso trabajó, no sólo como epigrafista, sino fundamentalmente como arqueólogo de campo ¡y cómo lo disfrutó!



a



b

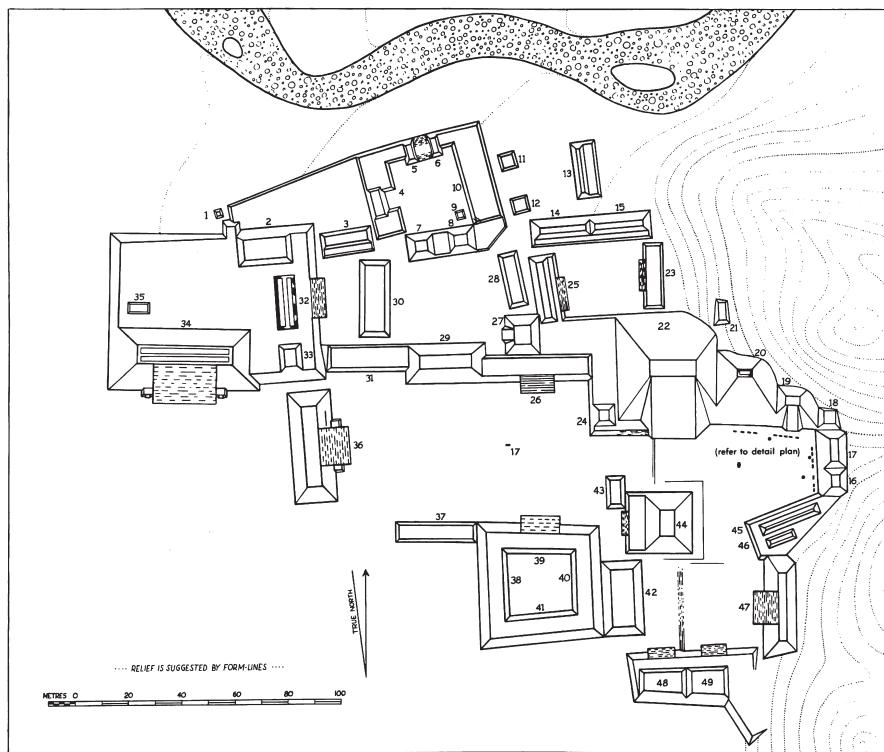
Figura 3. a) Alfonso con ternero en potrero camino al yacimiento. b) Plano general de Machaquila en el 2005 (dibujo de Jorge Chocón).



Figura 4. Alfonso y Andrés delante de la Estela 19, situada en la Plaza C, frente a la Estructura 36.

El sitio arqueológico de Machaquila se encuentra (Figura 2) en el Departamento de Petén, Guatemala. La ciudad —salvaguardada en gran medida por su vegetación selvática original como parque arqueológico y rodeada de potreros con multitud de vacas que Alfonso adoraba (Figura 3a)— es un yacimiento arqueológico de tamaño pequeño con una zona central (Figura 3b) con plazas rodeadas de templos y palacios, y otra —a una cierta distancia— de grupos de habitación.

La ciudad tuvo un recorrido histórico relativamente corto, pero muy interesante. A Alfonso le fascinaba Machaquila porque de allí se conocían numerosos monumentos tallados (Figura 4) (en principio 17 estelas, seis altares y tres piedras finamente talladas) desde que el británico Ian Graham visitó y trabajó el sitio en los años 60 (Graham 1963, 1967; Chocón y Laporte 2001). Él fue quien levantó el primer plano (Figura 5) que sería de gran utilidad para las investigaciones posteriores, incluida la nuestra. Después de su investigación de campo del año 1962 Machaquila sólo recibió algunas visitas even-



**Figura 5.** Plano del área central de Machaquila (Graham 1967: fig. 33; imagen cortesía de Middle American Research Institute de la Universidad de Tulane).

tuales que, a posteriori, permitieron controlar el estado de su acervo monumental (Grube 1989) para bien y para mal.

La idea de trabajar en Machaquila surgió del arqueólogo guatemalteco Juan Pedro Laporte, director del Atlas Arqueológico de Guatemala (Figura 6), ya que él y su equipo estaban muy preocupados por la destrucción ocasionada en parte por las ocupaciones campesinas que había habido en el sitio, donde llegaron a sembrar maíz en sus plazas principales, pero sobre todo por el creciente saqueo de materiales arqueológicos, epidémico en la zona, pero que en Machaquila se dio casi desde el momento en que se conoció la existencia de tantos monumentos tallados.

Así, en 2001 comenzó el proyecto Machaquila (Laporte 2001), en el que el Atlas Arqueológico de Guatemala realizó un nuevo levantamiento (que conservó el sector central previamente levantado por Graham) que abarcó un área más amplia incluyendo unidades



Figura 6. Alfonso con Juan Pedro Laporte en la excavación del Cuadrilobulado.



a



b

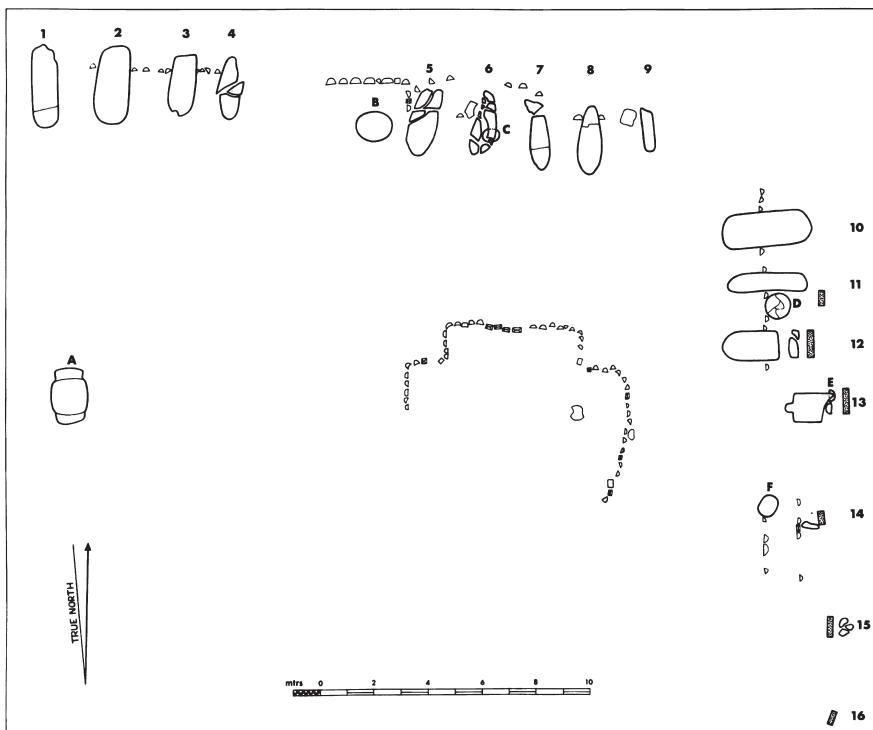
**Figura 7.** a) Equipo del Atlas Arqueológico de Guatemala preparando viaje. b) Alfonso y Andrés Ciudad camino del sitio en la Temporada 2004.



**Figura 8.** Mesa de trabajo de Alfonso en el Laboratorio de materiales del Atlas Arqueológico de Guatemala en Dolores, Petén, Temporada 2004.

residenciales antes no contempladas (Chocón y Laporte 2001: 7–11, Cuadro 1). Además se llevó a cabo un registro de los monumentos que quedaban en el sitio, mayoritariamente fragmentos de las estelas y altares que habían sido sacados —legal o ilegalmente— del sitio (Chocón y Laporte 2001: 13–23). Asimismo se realizaron 32 sondeos en plazas y patios residenciales (Chocón y Laporte 2001: 12, Cuadro 2). En los primeros tiempos se tardaba en llegar varias horas utilizando diferentes medios, desde barcas para salvar dos ríos a coches de doble tracción (Figura 7a) por duras carreteras de tierra, y naturalmente diarios trayectos a pie (Figura 7b). Pero merecía la pena.

En el año 2004 Alfonso se había incorporado ya como epigrafista al proyecto, que tenía su base en el petenero pueblo de Dolores, donde se encontraba el laboratorio de materiales. Ese verano del 2004 disfrutó trabajando sobre todo con las piedras talladas (Figura 8) que habían salido en la Plaza F (Iglesias y Lacadena 2005) y que enriquecían lo que se sabía de la antigua historia de Machaquila (Lacadena 2005; Lacadena e Iglesias 2005). Pero estando en el campo empezó a perpetrar algo que le rondaba en la cabeza desde el comienzo del proyecto: la excavación de un elemento cultural especial conocido



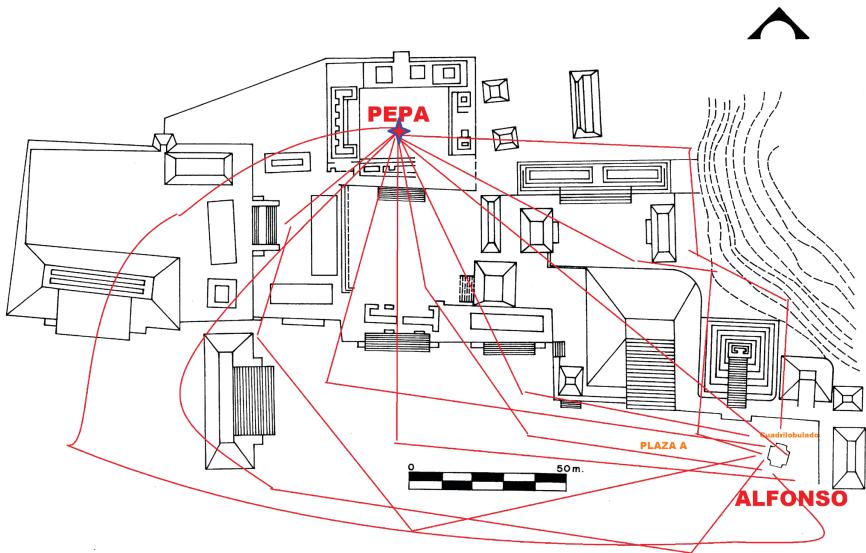
**Figura 9.** Cuadrilobulado de la Plaza A (Graham 1967: fig. 42; imagen cortesía de Middle American Research Institute de la Universidad de Tulane).

como Cuadrilobulado que Graham (Figura 9) había dibujado en su visita (1967: fig. 42) y que se situaba —rodeado de estelas y altares— nada menos que en el corazón del sitio, en su plaza central y ritual, donde estaban los mayores templos. Ya otros colegas (Stuart y Houston 1994: 33, figs. 37, 38) habían relacionado este componente con iconografía aparecida en monumentos, pero nunca se había dado la ocasión de tratar de constatar arqueológicamente la existencia de esos espacios de cuatro hojas, si bien posteriormente se tuvo constancia de al menos dos más: en La Blanca (Retalhuleu), posiblemente del Preclásico Medio (Love et al. 2006), y en Cancuen, fechado para finales del Clásico Tardío (Barrientos et al. 2006).

Así que se empeñó en la tarea de convencer primero a Andrés —con el que no hubo mayor problema ya que es un chico fácil, como lo era Alfonso— y después a Juan Pedro, que fue un hueso algo más difícil de roer y a quien a veces el entusiasmo de Alfonso le sobre-



a



b

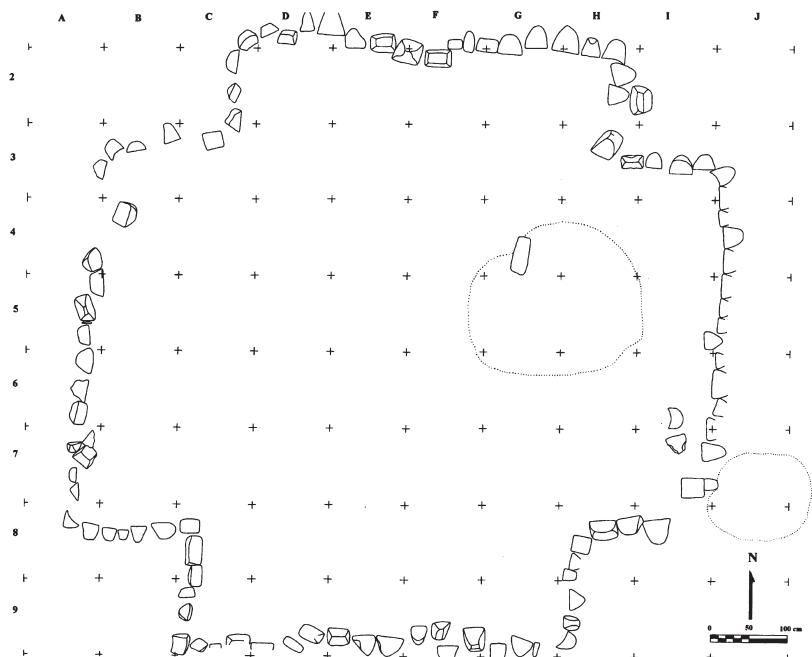
Figura 10. a) Equipo de trabajadores y arqueólogos de la Temporada 2004. b) Localización de los puntos de trabajo de Alfonso y Pepa en Machaquila (sobre planta de Machaquila 2005; dibujo de Jorge Chocón).



**Figura 11.** Trazando la cuadrícula para la excavación del Cuadrilobulado.



a



b

Figura 12. a) Dibujo de campo mostrando la cuadrícula planteada. b) Planta final del Cuadrilobulado (Lacadena 2006: fig. 11).



**Figura 13.** Alfonso en su codiciada silla plegable.

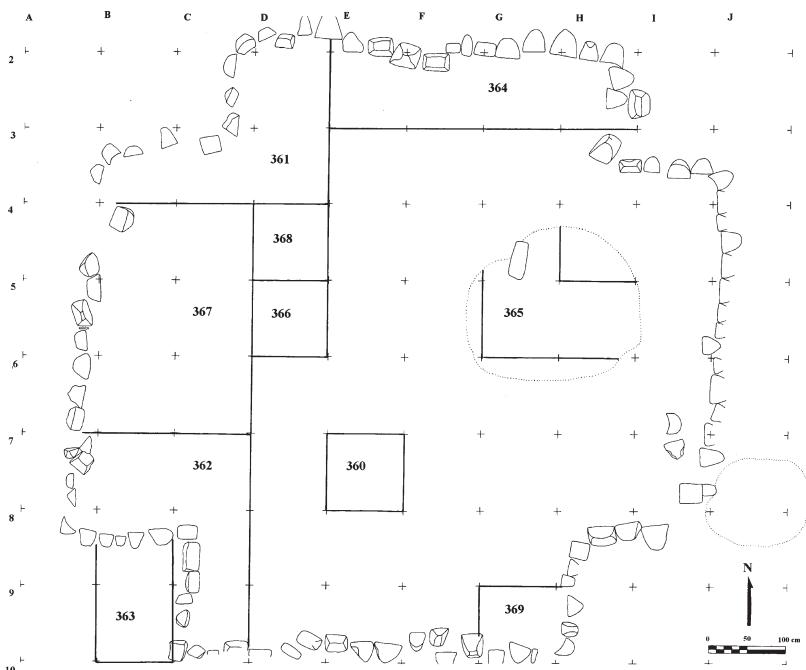
pasaba; pero al final también claudicó, siempre bajo la condición de que Alfonso mismo se encargaría de la excavación y de trabajar los materiales que salieran de ella, igual que hacíamos el resto de los arqueólogos. Alfonso estaba exultante aquel final de la Temporada 2004 (Figura 10a).



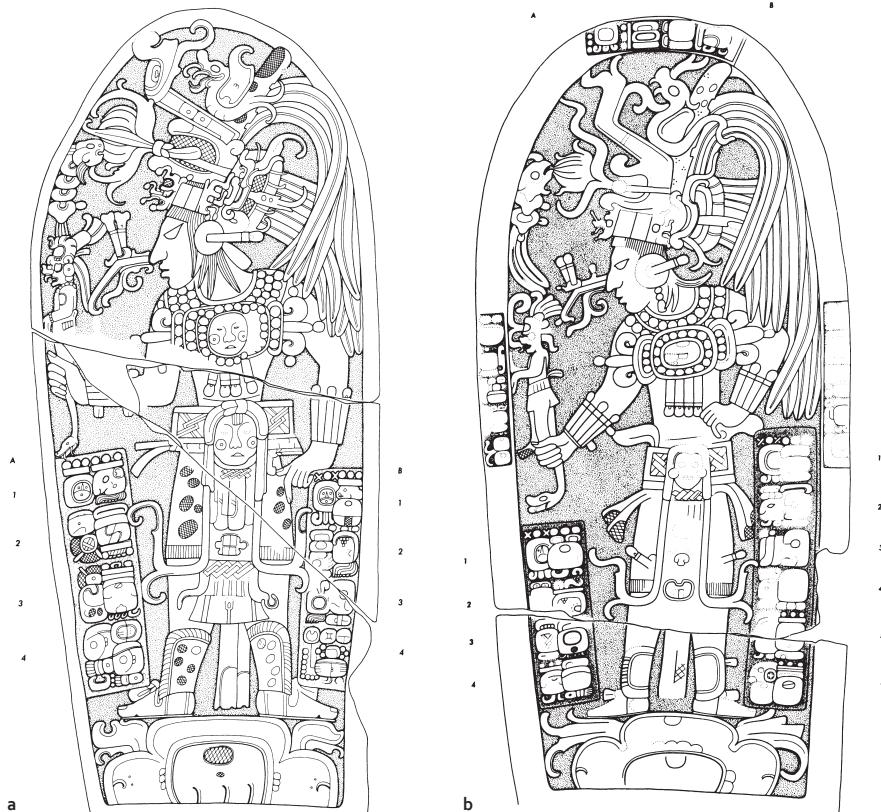
**Figura 14.** Laura Jack, esposa de Alfonso: *a)* en la celebración de sus 50 años, *b)* en la exposición "Lalibela. Cerca del cielo" de Cristina García Rodero, Madrid 2017.

La experiencia de Machaquila 2005 comenzó en el aeropuerto de La Aurora en la Ciudad de Guatemala donde llegamos Jesús, Alfonso y yo dispuestos a asumir una temporada de campo con estupendos colegas guatemaltecos como Jorge Chocón pero sin Andrés, que andaba por Perú con la Ruta Quetzal. Esperando las maletas tuvo lugar eso que aquí llamamos “la primera en la frente” al preguntar yo a Alfonso “¿Dónde llevas los talky-walkies para comunicarnos en la excavación?” Y ver aquella bien conocida cara mezcla de penita e ingenuidad diciendo ¿seguro que los tenía yo? En ese momento vi claramente lo que iba a suponer físicamente para mí el “tutorar” la excavación de Alfonso: pasar de la talla 42 a la 40 gracias a los no menos de 42 km (Figura 10b) de maratón que debí recorrerme al cabo de las semanas de trabajo de campo...

Ya el inicio de la excavación fue espectacular viendo hacer a los muchachos la limpieza de vegetación de la plaza, e inmediatamente

**a****b**

**Figura 15.** a) Ezequiel y Alfonso en el Cuadrilobulado, Temporada 2005. b) Planta del Cuadrilobulado mostrando las suboperaciones excavadas (Lacadena 2006: fig. 12).



**Figura 16.** a) Estela 4 y b) Estela 8 de Machaquila mostrando ambas en su parte inferior una forma cuadrilobulada (Graham 1967: figs. 51, 59; figuras cortesía de Middle American Research Institute de la Universidad de Tulane).

Alfonso se puso a trazar una hermosísima y muy europea cuadrícula (Figura 11) como forma de excavación más adecuada, ya que estaba ante un elemento arquitectónico tan peculiar como delicado, que apenas sobresalía unos cm del suelo de la plaza (Figura 12a). El resultado fue un cuadrado de 10 x 10 m de lado, orientado al norte, que incluía en su totalidad el cuadrilobulado (Figura 12b) y una pequeña zona alrededor, dividiéndose el cuadrado en 100 cuadrículas de 1 m<sup>2</sup>.

No menos espectacular fue el despliegue del “kit de supervivencia del arqueólogo maya” que Alfonso llevaba consigo y en el que destacaba una increíble silla plegable (Figura 13) con la que naturalmente todos los arqueólogos nos queríamos fotografiar... Y aquí tengo que hacer un breve inciso para dar las gracias a Laura que se la regaló junto a muchos más instrumentos del “kit de supervivencia”; Laura



a



b

Figura 17. a) Ofrenda de caja de cerámica. b) Alfonso en plena excavación del Cuadrilobulado.



**Figura 18.** En el Laboratorio de materiales del Atlas Arqueológico de Guatemala en Dolores clasificando la cerámica aparecida en el Cuadrilobulado.

(Figura 14) es la mujer de mayista más consentidora (en la acepción de bondadosa) que ha habido en la profesión, doy fe de que ninguna otra esposa (ni marido, en el caso de las arqueólogas) ha tenido tal cantidad de deferencias pensando en hacerle el trabajo de campo arqueológico y epigráfico más fácil al amor de su vida. Alfonso, siempre estuvimos de acuerdo en que esta chica vale un potosí...

Durante las siguientes semanas Alfonso y su excavador Ezequiel (Figura 15a) trabajaron con una enorme minuciosidad un total de



Figura 19. Equipo de arqueólogos del Proyecto Machaquila del Atlas Arqueológico de Guatemala en el Cuadrilobulado, Temporada 2005.

34 cuadrículas de 1 m<sup>2</sup>, tanto para delimitar claramente el cuadrilobulado (Figura 15b), como para profundizar hasta la cercana roca madre, o nivel geológico, y conocer los materiales que le proporcionarían información sobre la función de un elemento cultural que —en ese momento— era único en la zona; y lo suficientemente importante como para aparecer en estelas y altares (Lacadena 2006: 77–84) (Figura 16).

Este elemento cuadrilobulado resultó ser un contexto extremadamente rico en cuanto a restos materiales, especialmente cerámica, pero difícil para excavar ya que una gran parte se encontraba muy quemado sobre todo por el tipo de rituales que seguramente se llevaron a cabo en él, pero también por esas quemas previas a la siembra, que ya he mencionado, durante la ocupación campesina que había tenido lugar años antes. Ni las lluvias ni los mosquitos, a los que tradicionalmente se trata de contener quemando restos de termiteros abandonados, pudieron con el ánimo de Alfonso. Cada día salían del cuadrilobulado bolsas y más bolsas de 25 libras con fragmentos cerámicos producto de la excavación, pero también en ocasiones afloraban pequeñas ofrendas (Figura 17a) que parecían estar allí depositadas por los antiguos mayas como “regalo” al lite-



Figura 20. Casa de la aldea San Antonio, la población más cercana al sitio arqueológico.

ralmente titánico esfuerzo (Figura 17b) de un epigrafista transfigurado en arqueólogo.

Al finalizar la excavación nos trasladamos a Dolores para cumplir con la segunda parte del cometido: clasificar los restos materiales (cerámica, lítica, hueso) que habían aparecido en el campo, y Alfonso volvió a demostrar que no hay que decaer en el esfuerzo y la ilusión en ningún momento. Y así, se clasificó 9709 fragmentos de cerámica pertenecientes en un interesante porcentaje a los llamados incensarios (Figura 18) que suelen estar hechos en una cerámica muy tosca, y que —salvo excepciones— los calificamos (él también lo reconocía) como los más feos y peor conservados de todo Machaquila y parte del extranjero, pero para variar Alfonso le sacaba la gracia a todo... Junto a la cerámica aparecieron otros materiales, aunque en número mucho menor, como objetos líticos fragmentados ( $n=102$ : 26 de pedernal, 74 de obsidiana y dos de cuentas de piedra pulida) y algunos restos óseos humanos (fracciones de cráneo, huesos largos y dientes, quizás de un mismo individuo), hallados en la zona central saqueada. La presencia de varios objetos completos como cajitas de cerámica con tapadera, cuchillas de obsidiana enteras y un cuchillo y una punta de pedernal, colocados como ofrendas confirmaría la

intuida ritualidad del cuadrilobulado (Lacadena 2006: 90–94, 104–105, figs. 14–15, fotos 5–7).

Hasta Juan Pedro Laporte —generalmente parco en elogios— reconoció que la excavación del Cuadrilobulado fue muy satisfactoria (Figura 19) para el proyecto, y el informe que Alfonso presentó para el Atlas (Lacadena 2006; Laporte y Mejía 2006) y posteriormente para nuestro Ministerio de Educación fue absolutamente modélico tanto a nivel visual como académico, ya que además de describir técnicamente la excavación y sus hallazgos, realizó una serie de apasionadas interpretaciones relacionando el cuadrilobulado real que él había trabajado, con sus apariciones en la iconografía no sólo de Machaquila sino de otras ciudades mayas, así como unas interesantes inferencias acerca de su funcionalidad (Lacadena 2006: 107–115). Alfonso estuvo feliz de su incursión en la arqueología pura y dura.

### **Algo más que arqueología: San Antonio Machaca**

Pero la historia no se acaba aquí, porque aunque este escrito fue concebido en principio para un acto académico, incluso en un marco universitario formal, con Alfonso es inevitable aunar lo profesional y lo personal, porque Machaquila —en las temporadas 2004 y 2005— fue algo más que una ciudad prehispánica y una excavación arqueológica, fue también la vida diaria en San Antonio Machaca (Figura 20), una aldea dispersa cercana al río Machaquila típicamente petenera, compuesta en aquel momento por 14 familias y que además de las casas de dichas familias disponía de una escuela, un centro de salud, otra construcción que servía de iglesia y centro de reunión y... una tienda ¡con futbolín!

Y San Antonio forma parte imprescindible de esta breve historia, ya que en dos de las casas —literalmente incrustados en sus habitaciones (Figura 21a)— convivíamos lugareños, animales domésticos, arqueólogos y trabajadores, por lo que la relación con una buena parte de los habitantes de la aldea era enormemente cercana. Allí aprendimos que se podía vivir perfectamente sin electricidad (Figura 21b), ¿para qué si no están las velas y las linternas?; sin agua corriente (Figura 22a) ¿para qué están el río y las lluvias tropicales?; por supuesto sin teléfono y sin internet y “disfrutando” de unas rudimentarias letrinas implementadas un par de años antes por el



a



b

**Figura 21.** a) Interior de la casa de Don Tonilo y Doña Eva. b) Cocina de Doña Blanca, con dos de sus hijos, Sandy y Franklin.



a



b

**Figura 22.** a) Pila para lavar en la casa de Adán y Doña Blanca, junto a ella dos de sus hijos, Franklin y Sandy. b) Niños de la aldea San Antonio Machaquila.



Figura 23. El equipo de arqueólogos (Temporada 2004) preparado para el baño diario en el río Machaquila.

proyecto del Atlas Arqueológico. Incluso aprendimos el valor de la solidaridad cuando cada miércoles, hiciera buen tiempo o literalmente diluviera, caía por allí en una destortalada moto un médico cubano, Rodrigo, para pasar visita en el Centro de Salud a quien lo necesitara; el resto del tiempo nosotros funcionábamos como tales médicos porque para eso éramos “doctores”, si bien en Antropología Americana, pero eso en realidad no era importante.

Pero para Alfonso la mejor parte de esa cercanía con los lugarezos —dado que en España había dejado a Ignacio y Alejo aún muy pequeños— era la presencia de un montón de niños (Figura 22b) que estaban fascinados por tener allí a unos seres tan extraños y que hablaban de manera tan rara como los españoles, ya que nuestros muchachos eran todos peteneros, como ellos.

Todos los días a la vuelta de la excavación ya estaban allí todos los patojos esperando a que nos preparáramos para bajar al río a bañarnos (Figura 23) y disfrutar con ellos en el llamado “lanzamiento del patojo”, donde entre Jesús y Alfonso proyectaban por los aires en medio del río a esos maravillosos seres tan flaquillos y tan livianos que parecían volar. Mientras, los hombres se quitaban la tierra de la



**Figura 24.** Aspecto de la improvisada sala de cine en casa de Adán (Temporada 2004).

excavación y las mujeres lavaban grandes cubos de ropa. Sin duda era uno de los mejores momentos del día para él y para todos.

Excepcionalmente y cuando teníamos suficiente gasolina poníamos un viejo generador en marcha y había cine en el sala de estar de Adán (el dueño de una de las casas que “okupábamos”) que había estado en Estados Unidos y traído de allí una televisión, un video y un teclado de música para las celebraciones religiosas dominicales. El día que, cuando ya anochecido, resonaba el generador en medio de los ruidos típicos de la selva, los niños, y también los adultos, acudían a la casa como moscas a la miel (Figura 24). El primer año fue desolador para nosotros porque Adán sólo tenía horrorosas películas norteamericanas de acción en inglés y ¡con subtítulos en inglés! Pero con ellas los adultos y los niños —la mayoría de los cuales ni siquiera leían el castellano— se mataban de la risa, aunque ya las habían visto muchas más veces ¡tal era la necesidad de novedades en aquel rincón perdido de Petén! Pero todo mejoró cuando en la temporada 2005 (Figura 25), Alfonso llegó armado de películas de dibujos animados



**Figura 25.** Alfonso con los niños de la aldea viendo películas de dibujos animados (Temporada 2005).

de Ignacio y Alejo que los niños, literalmente embelesados, veían en castellano y en su ordenador, y Alfonso triunfó, vaya que si triunfó.

Estoy segura que 13 años después habrá en la aldea San Antonio, jóvenes y no tan jóvenes que recuerden con una gran sonrisa a los españoles que en esos años jugaban con ellos en el río y que les enseñaron sus primeras películas de dibujos animados... Hermosos recuerdos en los que Alfonso fue un protagonista de primera línea.

### **La realidad más cercana**

En los meses de marzo y abril de 2018 el equipo de investigación al cual Alfonso pertenece ha estado en la ciudad de Palenque excavando, y desde el primer momento sentimos su ausencia. Durante el año anterior (Figura 26) todo el equipo —no sé si él también— habíamos albergado la esperanza de que se hubiera incorporado al trabajo de campo aunque en plan tranquilo, pero a medida que pasaban los meses se nos hizo evidente que no iba a poder ser. Pero en realidad sí que ha estado allí, porque no ha habido día desde que



**Figura 26.** Equipo español del Proyecto Palenque preparando la temporada 2018 y tomando un cafecito el 18 de diciembre del 2017.

pisamos México en que Alfonso no haya estado presente, ya sea en el mismo Palenque recordando anécdotas suyas en torno a una cerveza después de terminar el trabajo de campo, o ya sea en la UNAM donde en cualquiera de los Institutos que hemos visitado (Estéticas, Históricas, Centro de Estudios Mayas, Antropológicas) se le recuerda con las mismas dosis de cariño que de respeto y admiración académica. Y es que para México sólo tenemos palabras de agradecimiento en nombre de Alfonso. El Homenaje (Figura 27) que le hicieron en el mes de octubre del año 2017 dedicándole el III Encuentro Internacional de Gramatología es difícilmente superable. Alfonso estaba orgulloso de este homenaje y no dudaba en dejar claro que “y que conste que lo habían organizado antes de que pensaran que me iba a morir”. Así era Alfonso cuando se refería a la posibilidad de una muerte cercana... Mi mayor agradecimiento a esa gran cantidad de entrañables amigos, y al tiempo colegas, de todo el mundo que tanto le han apoyado en la parte final de su camino.

## Epílogo

Visitando este mes de abril por enésima vez el Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia en la Ciudad de México que Alfonso tanto



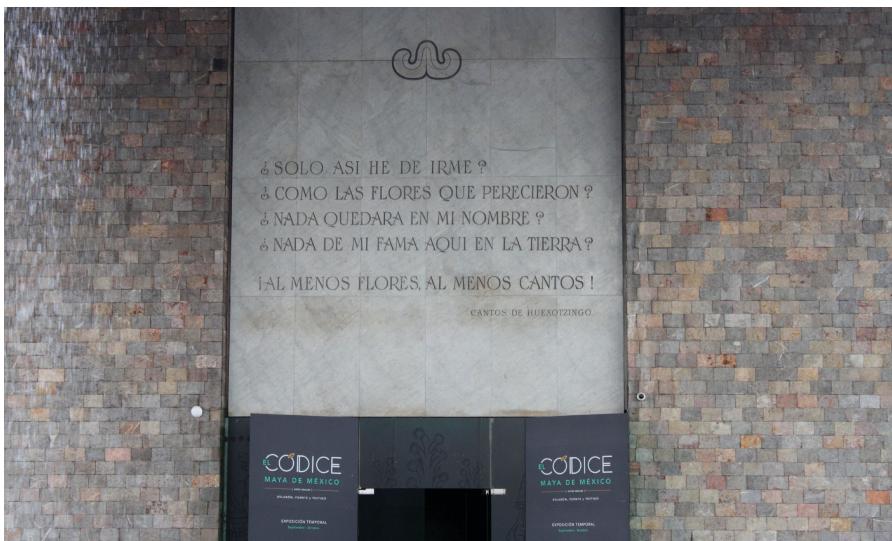
**Figura 27.** Alfonso con el Presídium del *III Encuentro Internacional de Gramatología, Homenaje a Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, octubre 2017 (fotografía de Eduardo Salvador Rodríguez).

amó, nos dimos de cara en un muro de su gran patio con algo en lo que hacía años no reparábamos, pero que sin duda nos estaba esperando, porque inmediatamente pensamos en las veces que Alfonso —tan aficionado a la poesía— lo habría recitado (Figura 28); nos parecía que ahora estos versos estaban allí sólo para él:

¿Sólo así he de irme?  
 ¿Cómo las flores que perecieron?  
 ¿Nada quedará de mi nombre?  
 ¿Nada de mi fama aquí en la tierra?  
 ¡Al menos flores, al menos cantos!

(Cantos de Tecayehuatzin de Huexotzinco)

Afortunadamente de Alfonso quedarán no sólo nombre, fama, flores y cantos sino su inmenso trabajo académico y el infinito cariño que familiares, alumnos, amigos y colegas de las dos partes del océano



**Figura 28.** Muro del patio central del Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia de la Ciudad de México con un fragmento de los *Cantos de Tecayehuatzin* de Huexotzinco.

le profesamos. Le doy las gracias a Alfonso por ser como era hasta el final y habernos regalado una última lección, nada más y nada menos, de cómo afrontar ese *och b'ih*, “entrar en el camino”.

Ojalá que quienes lean este volumen puedan conocer, comprender y querer esas facetas diferentes que componían la forma de ser, de vivir y de morir de Alfonso.

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# Breve recuerdo de diálogos efímeros

M. CHARLOTTE ARNAULD

CNRS, ArchAm

Université de Paris 1—Panthéon-Sorbonne

(marie-charlotte.arnauld@cnrs.fr)

*Para Ignacio y Alejo*

**S**omos arqueólogos, trabajamos entre los árboles en una selva donde no hay agua, sólo la que traemos para fabricar el mortero de cal usado en la consolidación de los edificios arruinados. A los pocos días de nuestra llegada, empiezan a cantar unos pájaros en la cercanía y pronto van cantando encima de nosotros. A donde vayamos en la selva a abrir nueva excavación, llega un pájaro y canta. Los trabajadores, al estar excavando, se pasan el día platicando en lengua maya, de vez en cuando se meten a imitar algún pájaro y se entabla un diálogo extraño.

Alfonso llegó un día de marzo 2003 a mi excavación. Estructura 6N2 del Grupo B de Río Bec, Campeche, México. En aquel tiempo, una pareja de pájaros oropéndolas (*Psarocolius montezuma*) se había instalado en el árbol alto frente al edificio más grande, 6N1, vecino del mío (Figura 1). La última vez que pude contar los nidos en aquel árbol, en 2009, había más de dos docenas. Los oropéndolas construyen nidos parecidos a largos calcetines que cuelgan en una rama para que el aire los vaya columpiando. A los bebés oropéndolas les gusta el movimiento. Los padres al cantar hacen un movimiento de péndula curioso. Cantan una especie de sonido acuático, glu glu largo y de varios tonos complicados, de los más lindos porque le dan a la selva la profundidad de un inmenso lago tranquilo. Cuando llegó Alfonso, a diario cantaba uno de los dos oropéndolas en la mañana y en la tarde.

La Estructura 6N2 que estábamos excavando es una vivienda importante de muros gruesos y recámaras pequeñas y grandes. Habíamos despejado tres banquetas —o camas— mamposteadas (Figura 2), parcialmente pintadas de vivos colores, con soportes esculpidos. Yo había confiado la limpieza del frente a un joven trabajador muy hábil



**Figura 1.** Nidos de oropéndolas, vistos desde el edificio 6N1 del Grupo B, Río Bec (2009; fotografía por M. Charlotte Arnauld).

con un pequeño instrumento de madera para despejar la cáscara blanca de caliza que escondía los motivos. Inmediatamente, hice una copia a calco, poniendo colores con mis lápices, con la esperanza de que quizás los motivos fueran glifos y esperaba a Alfonso para que nos dijera si en realidad lo eran.

De hecho, Alfonso me confirmó que habíamos limpiado tres verdaderas inscripciones glíficas pintadas en la parte frontal de las banquetas. Alfonso inició su trabajo redibujando durante dos días las tres inscripciones. A su lado, los trabajadores seguían despejando las recámaras, y un oropéndola cantaba cada mañana con la brisa fresca antes que aumentara el calor.

El tercer día Alfonso tenía los dibujos terminados y sólo faltaban algunos ajustes. Se pasó el día sentado frente a cada banqueta con sus dibujos en la mano, armando una traducción fonética, signo por signo. La banqueta de la recámara oeste, en posición central frente a la puerta de entrada de la residencia, había sido desarmada en el momento de su abandono por los años 900 o 1000 d. C., para no dejar la inscripción a la vista. Los glifos ya no eran descifrables, excepto



**Figura 2.** Estructura 6N<sub>2</sub> del Grupo B de Río Bec. Cuarto central en curso de excavación y cuarto norte con su banqueta excavada (vista hacia el norte; fotografía del Proyecto Río Bec).

por algunos fragmentos de un posible nombre de persona, *Kan B'ohb' Tok'*, y de *yotoot*, 'la casa de'.

Las dos banquetas de los cuartos sur y norte conservaban unos glifos parcialmente legibles, pintados algunos en tinta negra sobre fondo verde oscuro, otros en anaranjado sobre fondo azul (Figuras 3 y 4).

De repente en la tarde, Alfonso empezó a descifrar en voz alta unas palabras, fonema por fonema:

XV-[tu]-TUN-ni IX-[AJAW], 15 tuun 9 Ajaw<sup>1</sup>

**KAB'-WITZ**, *kab'witz*

Recuerdo muy bien que los trabajadores mayas, quienes ya sabían que las inscripciones representaban escritos mayas antiguos, pero no lo creían, dejaron de excavar para escuchar a Alfonso quien

<sup>1</sup> Fecha 9.18.15.0.0 en el sistema de Cuenta Larga, 805 d.C. en nuestro calendario.

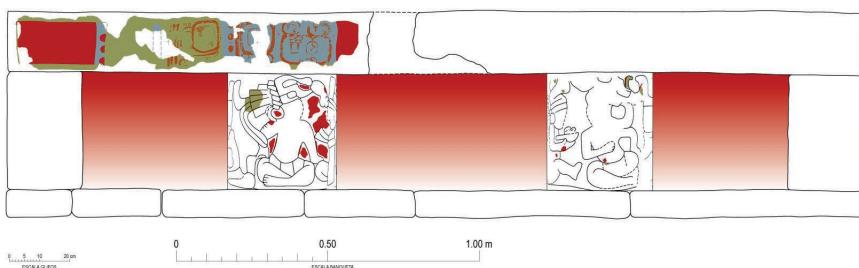


a



b

**Figura 3.** a) Recámara norte, banqueta norte, 6N2 y b) detalle (fotografías del Proyecto Río Bec).



**Figura 4.** Restitución por Alfonso Lacadena de la banqueta de la recámara norte, Edificio 6N<sub>2</sub>, Río Bec. Las dos banquetas norte y sur se encuentran ahora restauradas en uno de los museos de la ciudad de Campeche, México.

enunciaba claramente palabras que ellos reconocían como del maya yucateco. Lorenzo, hombre de conocimiento más experimentado entre ellos, repitió una de ellas, *kab'witz*.

Fue cuando todos se dieron cuenta que Alfonso estaba de verdad «leyendo» una inscripción en lengua maya. A todos nos tocó vivir juntos un minuto de gracia milagrosa, de las que hay pocas en la vida. A mí me había pasado varias veces vivir emociones fuertes con trabajadores, no sólo por hallazgos extraordinarios sino por compartir pequeños eventos de la vida selvática, a veces tan sólo una broma bien sentida de alguno de ellos. Pero nunca había conocido un minuto de tan alta intensidad, en la que ellos experimentaban de repente una realidad intelectual en una circunstancia cotidiana, de inmensa profundidad y consecuencias: la lectura, pero la lectura de otra escritura que la acostumbrada, más aún, la lectura de una escritura particular de ellos, los mayas. Alfonso y yo sentimos claramente la percepción que estallaba entre ellos en forma de alegría y carcajadas, como que se estaba abriendo algo, no supimos qué exactamente, pero creo que quizás el mundo cambió ligeramente su eje durante aquel minuto. Yo recuerdo que no comentamos nada en el momento mismo.

Entonces Alfonso entabló un diálogo de algunos minutos con Lorenzo. El campesino campechano, vecino de un pueblito ejidal, explicó al profesor español de Madrid el sentido exacto de la palabra maya *kab'witz*, usando la lengua castellana compartida. Lorenzo hablaba muy bien, en un modo calmado y sencillo, sin hacer alarde

de nada. Alfonso escuchaba y la concentración en las excavaciones de todos era total.

Pocos meses después Alfonso preparó el texto de la publicación de las banquetas, y de *kab'witz* en particular escribió lo siguiente:

Por su estructura, podría tratarse de una expresión toponímica. Sin embargo, el estado incompleto del texto —falta un bloque antes de la fecha y cuatro después de esta expresión— impide asegurar nada más. Sólo aventurar que podría tratarse de un topónimo que designe a la estructura 6N2, al Grupo B o, lo que sería ciertamente interesante, al propio Río Bec. El presunto topónimo estaría compuesto por *kab'* y *witz*, donde *kab'* es una raíz polisémica que significa ‘tierra’, ‘almagre, tierra roja’ o ‘bajo, abajo’ (Barrera 1980, p. 277) y *witz* significa ‘cerro’ (*ibid.*, p. 924). Un trabajador del proyecto, de habla yucateca, definió *kab'witz* como el espacio que queda entre las colinas o elevaciones de terreno, posiblemente tomando *kab'* en su acepción de ‘bajo’. Esta acepción está confirmada en las fuentes léxicas coloniales, donde se documenta *cul cab uitz* como ‘collado /colina/ de sierra’ (Alvarez 1980, p. 132), lo que sería quizás apropiado a la geografía del sitio, con numerosos bajos entre zonas elevadas (Arnauld y Lacadena 2004: 215).

Es así como Alfonso y los mayas vecinos al sitio arqueológico de Río Bec —en el ejido cercano que lleva por nombre una fecha en nuestra cuenta corta, 20 de Noviembre— juntaron sus conocimientos para redistribuir entre nuestras sociedades los méritos de dos sistemas de escritura con dos idiomas, y compartirlos platicando juntos durante un breve momento. Sin duda Alfonso había vivido lo mismo en sitios donde él iba trabajando cada año en Yucatán, por su sensibilidad y su atención natural a los mayas, a los trabajadores, a la gente en general, y a los pájaros, por igual.

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# **Alfonso Lacadena y el arte rupestre**

EMMA SÁNCHEZ MONTAÑÉS  
Universidad Complutense de Madrid  
(sitka@ghis.ucm.es)

**Resumen:** Esta es la breve historia de cómo alguien perteneciente a los estudios de la cultura maya se interesó, desde el ámbito de la docencia, en el arte indígena americano en general y en el arte rupestre en particular, hasta el punto de dedicar el último año de su vida a la investigación en profundidad de dicho arte.

**Abstract:** This is a brief introduction about how a scholar specialized in Maya history became interested in native American art and, specifically, in native American rock art, to the extreme of spending the last year of his life researching this art in detail.

Afirmar que el nombre de Alfonso Lacadena quedará para siempre en la historia de los estudios mayas es una obviedad. El lector no tiene más que dar un vistazo a los trabajos que se encuentran alojados en este mismo lugar. Pero lo que tal vez desconozcan casi todos es que, durante el último año de su vida, Alfonso se dedicó en cuerpo y alma, con todo el entusiasmo e interés que ponía en todos sus proyectos, a la investigación sobre el arte rupestre americano. Ese interés pensaba plasmarlo en un artículo, artículo que, siguiendo lo que era tradicional en Alfonso, fue engrosando de tal manera que casi se acabó convirtiendo en un libro, ahora inédito.

Este breve trabajo es la historia contemplada desde los ojos de quien fue su profesora y más tarde su compañera, de la gestación de ese interés y de su desarrollo, la micro historia de alguien curioso, fantástico, inteligente, maravilloso, de alguien que se entregaba en cuerpo y alma a todo aquello a lo que se dedicaba.

## **Los primeros años en el Departamento de Historia de América II**

Alfonso Lacadena entró en el entonces departamento de Historia de América II, Antropología de América, el 1 de diciembre de 2004 como investigador contratado doctor del Programa Ramón y Cajal. Se trata de un programa del Ministerio Español de Investigación, Ciencia y Tecnología, de cinco años de duración para la “contratación laboral de doctores en organismos de investigación a fin de favorecer la

carrera profesional de los investigadores y promover la captación o recuperación de investigadores españoles o extranjeros de cara a su estabilización en el sistema nacional de I+D+i; así como para la creación de puestos de trabajo de carácter permanente a ocupar por investigadores de trayectoria destacada a fin de contribuir a la renovación generacional de las plantillas de los organismos de investigación y promover las mejores prácticas de contratación estable<sup>1</sup>. Dicha situación laboral se mantuvo hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2009 y, desde el 1 de octubre de ese mismo año, se convirtió en profesor Contratado Doctor, situación laboral en la que se mantuvo hasta el final.

El programa Ramón y Cajal permitía y obligaba a su participación en las actividades docentes del departamento como profesor investigador lo que, con gran entusiasmo, realizó desde el primer momento. En esos años existían todavía los “restos” de la antigua licenciatura en Antropología de América que venía siendo desmontada paulatinamente junto con las demás especialidades de Historia. Sin ánimo de exhaustividad, Alfonso impartió, por ejemplo, la asignatura de *Etnología de México y América Central*, tanto como optativa en la licenciatura de Historia como para el Programa de Universidades Reunidas Norteamericanas; impartió también la asignatura obligatoria de Primer Ciclo de Historia de América *Culturas indígenas de América: modelos de análisis*; y un curso de *Arqueología de Mesoamérica*, dentro así mismo del primer ciclo de la Licenciatura de Historia y también dentro de un Máster de Arqueología.

### **La Historia de América Prehispánica**

Durante el curso 2010–11 se comenzaron a aplicar en la Facultad de Geografía e Historia los nuevos planes de estudio, los llamados Grados, estructurados en cuatro años y que ya echaban definitivamente por tierra las antiguas licenciaturas especializadas, concretamente la de Antropología de América. No es el momento de entrar en este desgraciado asunto.

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<sup>1</sup> He optado por transcribir literalmente la información de la correspondiente página web ya que el currículum y la trayectoria profesional de Alfonso se ajustaban perfectamente a lo solicitado. 24/06/18 10'57. sede.micinn.gob.es.

Por lo que nos ataña y especialmente a Alfonso, tenemos que mencionar una de las pocas materias supervivientes, la *Historia de América Prehispánica*. Dentro del Grado de Historia, dicha materia se concibe como obligatoria de primer curso, de duración cuatrimestral —como casi todas— la cual, y por el elevado número de alumnos, se divide en cuatro grupos, correspondiendo la docencia de dos de ellos al antiguo departamento de Historia de América II, Antropología de América.

Desde ese primer curso 2010–11, Alfonso se hizo cargo de uno de los grupos de *Historia de América Prehispánica*, actividad docente que mantuvo hasta el final. Era muy importante para el departamento tenerle en el primer año del Grado de Historia, ya que era fantástico para captar, para interesar a los alumnos en el ámbito de la americanística. Alfonso era un maestro nato; disfrutaba con el contacto directo con los alumnos, sabía despertar en ellos el mismo entusiasmo que él ponía en todo lo que abordaba, en una palabra, creaba “escuela”. Adoraba a los alumnos y los alumnos le adoraban.

El programa de Alfonso estructuraba la materia en varias Unidades: Introducción y fuentes, Paleoindio y Arcaico, Mesoamérica, Área andina, Culturas agrícolas de Norteamérica y área Intermedia, Caribe, Amazonas y Cono Sur. Cada una de dichas unidades se componía de una serie de temas; en el primer tema de la segunda unidad, dedicado al poblamiento de América y al Paleoindio, podemos leer los siguientes epígrafes: Teorías sobre el poblamiento de América. El origen asiático de los indígenas americanos. América a finales del Pleistoceno. La ocupación del continente: modelos de colonización. Tradiciones culturales y modos de vida de los cazaadores-recolectores del Paleoindio.

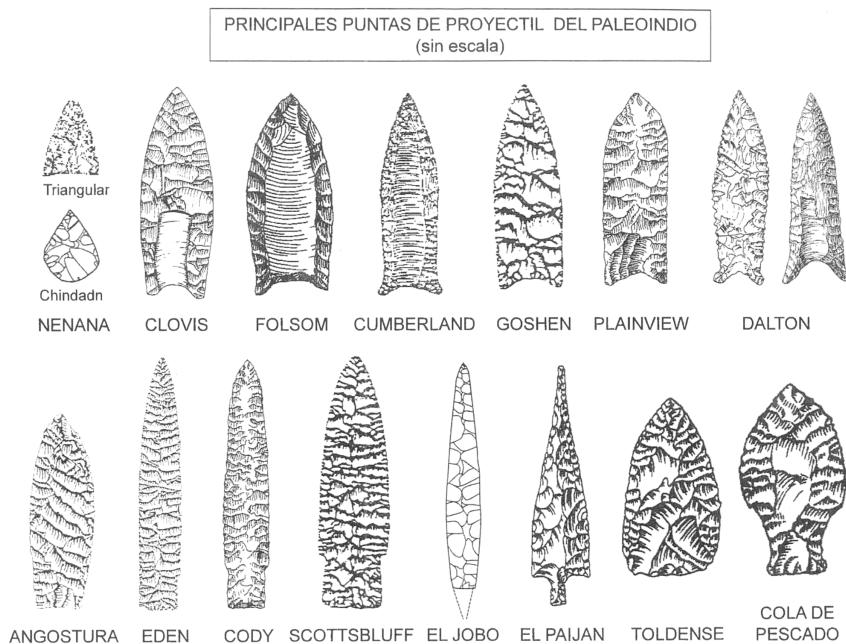
Una de sus alumnas destacadas, Zoraida Raimúndez Ares<sup>2</sup>, me confirma lo que todos sus colegas conocíamos. Alfonso se detenía pormenorizadamente en las primeras unidades durante casi un mes, de los tres y poco más que dura un cuatrimestre. Hablaba a los

<sup>2</sup> Agradezco a Zoraida Raimundez Ares, alumna de la segunda promoción del Grado de Historia, la información proporcionada sobre las clases de Historia de América Prehispánica de Alfonso así como sobre su seminario de lítica. Zoraida fue 2º premio Alberto Ruz Lhuillier otorgado en el marco del X Congreso Internacional de Mayistas en 2016. Actualmente reailiza el programa de Doctorado en Historia y Arqueología de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid y el Doctorado en Estudios Mesoamericanos por la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

alumnos de las diversas teorías sobre el poblamiento de América, desde las tradicionales, a las más recientes. Se explataba en las culturas del Paleoindio, especialmente en América del Norte, describiendo con detalle las diferentes industrias líticas, recreándose en los detalles y perfección de su técnica, proporcionando a los alumnos artículos al respecto. Parecía mostrar un especial interés por los antiguos pueblos cazadores recolectores, aunque luego se apresuraba para llegar a Mesoamérica y, obviamente, hablar de los mayas. Alfonso hubiera necesitado no un cuatrimestre de poco menos de 30 clases teóricas, sino los cuatro cursos completos del Grado para completar su programa.

Alfonso se interesaba por todo, era un investigador curioso, insaciable. Cuando abordaba un tema, en principio, con fines “simplemente” docentes, se zambullía en él hasta el fondo; era incapaz de conocer nada superficialmente y, por supuesto, de transmitirlo superficialmente. Podríamos pensar que tal vez por lo que acabo de mencionar y porque los temas del Paleoindio se encuentran al comienzo cronológica y estructuralmente de cualquier programa, se dedicase desde el primer momento a su conocimiento en profundidad, invirtiendo en ello una enorme cantidad de tiempo y también de recursos: Alfonso era un recopilador y comprador compulsivo del tema objeto de su interés en ese momento.

Pero al observar sus materiales docentes veo que, en los exámenes de *Historia de América Prehispánica*, se hizo “famoso” porque parte de los mismos lo constituía un “examen de mapas”. Efectivamente, entregaba a los alumnos tres mapas ciegos: un mapa político de América, un mapa de áreas culturales y otro de yacimientos del Paleoindio. En ellos los alumnos debían reconocer los diferentes países, las áreas y los nombres de los yacimientos señalados. Esta parte del examen se completaba con un cronograma general de Mesoamérica y el área andina en el que aparecían las fechas y los alumnos debían escribir los períodos cronológicos. Previamente los alumnos habían dispuesto de los mismos mapas y cuadro con sus correspondientes nombres “para practicar”. Según cuenta Zoraída, este ejercicio representaba un punto sobre la nota final y cada mapa significaba, por lo tanto, un 0.25. Continúa informando que, en el caso concreto del mapa de los yacimientos del Paleoindio, cada yaci-



**Figura 1.** Hoja de prácticas con las principales puntas de proyectil del Paleoindio. Tomada del archivo de materiales para el seminario de lítica del Departamento de Historia de América II.

miento no acertado descontaba decimales. Creo que es significativa esa importancia que dedicaba al período Paleoindio.

### El seminario de lítica

Los estudios de grado contemplaban y contemplan una serie de horas teóricas de cada materia y luego una serie de prácticas / seminarios, aunque estos últimos se han reducido en la actualidad. La duración de esas clases prácticas podía ser de tres o de seis horas y en el caso de nuestra materia se escogió, en el primer momento, el módulo de seis. También desde ese primer curso Alfonso se encargó activa y entusiásticamente de las prácticas que, al estar vinculadas a las clases teóricas de *Historia de América Prehispánica* que él mismo impartía, podía organizar y coordinar a la perfección.

Para la realización de los seminarios / prácticas, como él mismo recoge en su detallada programación, organizaba a los alumnos en equipos de trabajo de cuatro o cinco miembros que se encargarían



**Figura 2.** Práctica de materiales líticos, año 2012. Se pueden ver las excelentes réplicas en resina utilizadas. Las manos a la derecha son de Alfonso.

de realizar de forma conjunta las tareas encomendadas, provistos de los materiales de apoyo pertinentes que Alfonso proporcionaba previamente. Las sesiones de trabajo consistían en sus explicaciones teórico-prácticas sobre los temas señalados apoyadas en el análisis de casos y, posteriormente, en el trabajo personal de los alumnos.

Dentro de la “Primera Práctica”, dedicada a la arqueología, antropología física, estudios genéticos y zooarqueología, todos los alumnos realizaban las siguientes actividades: la interpretación de un yacimiento arqueológico prehispánico a partir de los patrones de distribución del registro material; la identificación del sexo y la edad en una colección de restos humanos arqueológicos americanos; y la identificación y clasificación de puntas de proyectil del periodo Paleoindio.

Nos interesa destacar en este momento el último bloque, para el que se entregaba a los alumnos una hoja de papel con reproducciones de las “principales puntas de proyectil del Paleoindio” (Figura 1). El pequeño grupo de alumnos que trabajaba en ese momento, lo hacía con una colección de reproducciones (Figura 2).



**Figura 3.** Alfonso en plena práctica de instrumentos líticos paleoindios. En la esquina izquierda de la fotografía puede observarse parte de un *atlalt* que él mismo había fabricado.

Previamente y a veces con la duración de una hora y sobre la base de sus clases teóricas, Alfonso proporcionaba a los alumnos información adicional sobre el tema. Se centraba en los valores estéticos de las puntas de proyectil y sus usos dentro de las sociedades cazadoras recolectoras. Hablaba de la importancia de los materiales con los que eran fabricadas y las técnicas de tallado empleadas por esas poblaciones. Durante la práctica, explicaba algunos aspectos relacionados con los elementos más distintivos de cada una de las piezas y cómo las diferentes formas facilitaban su acoplamiento a las partes de madera de las que originalmente constaban y los modos de atarlas.

Las actividades del seminario de lítica no se limitaron al Grado de Historia. Si dicho grado significó realmente la reducción de la mayor parte de las antiguas especialidades de la licenciatura de Historia, se implantaba, sin embargo, en el mismo curso 2010–11, un nuevo Grado, el de Arqueología. En él la asignatura de *Historia de América Prehispánica* se comenzó a impartir durante el curso 2012–13, ya que figuraba, y figura, en el plan de estudios como una materia obligatoria del tercer curso. La parte teórica de dicha materia fue impartida desde el primer momento y lo sigue siendo por el profesor Andrés Ciudad. Y muy pronto Alfonso participó en dicha materia con su

seminario de lítica, ya desde ese mismo curso 2012–13 y durante los siguientes cursos 2013–14 y 2014–15.

En el Grado de Arqueología<sup>3</sup>, el seminario de lítica se incluía dentro del bloque de una segunda práctica, junto con la de Antropología Física / Bioarqueología. Específicamente en el programa se explicita un “ejercicio práctico de identificación y clasificación de puntas de proyectil del Paleoindio” para lo que se entregarían a los alumnos “reproducciones de puntas de proyectil del Paleoindio (colección del Museo de Arqueología y Etnología de América, UCM)”. Los alumnos se organizaban también en grupos de 4 o 5. Al mostrar la colección de lítica, Alfonso ponía en relación dichos materiales con lo que se había visto en las clases teóricas del profesor Ciudad, buscando sobre todo que los alumnos internalizaran las bases imprescindibles para poder identificar los distintos tipos de puntas (Figura 3).

Para redondear ese interés mostrado por Alfonso por el ámbito paleoindio, se puede mencionar su dirección de un trabajo final de grado —TFG— sobre el tema “La Cultura Clovis de América del Norte: una visión general”, que realizó, durante el curso 2012–13.

Alfonso no pudo mantener esos seminarios de lítica hasta el final. A pesar del disgusto que le proporcionó, desde el 1 de noviembre de 2013, se convirtió en secretario académico del todavía departamento de Historia de América II, Antropología de América —cargo que mantuvo hasta el último momento—, con lo que tuvo que reducir su carga docente. Pero, a pesar de todo, se embarcó en otro proyecto docente, de nuevo ilusionante para él y a través del cual trataría de plasmar en un libro todos sus conocimientos sobre el arte rupestre paleoindio.

## **El Arte Indígena Americano**

Durante el curso 2013–14 se puso en funcionamiento la asignatura de *Arte Indígena Americano* que se encontraba y se encuentra encuadrada en el Grado de Arte, como materia optativa de cuarto curso. Su introducción se debió a una solicitud expresa de los profesores que habían confeccionado el Grado de Arte, retomándose la antigua

<sup>3</sup> Agradezco a Alonso de Rojas Pascual la información sobre el seminario de Alfonso en el Grado de Arqueología. Alonso de Rojas es Máster en Historia y Antropología de América por la Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

materia de Arte Prehispánico que, durante muchos años, se había impartido en la antigua licenciatura de Historia del Arte; con esa antigua denominación se nos había solicitado al entonces departamento de Historia de América II, Antropología de América, el que siempre se había encargado de dicha asignatura. Dado que por mi trayectoria docente e investigadora iba a ser quien impartiera dicha asignatura, solicité el cambio de denominación por el de *Arte Indígena Americano*, razonando de diferentes maneras dicho cambio que fue aceptado sin ningún inconveniente.

Como todas las materias de grado, la estructura de la asignatura se organizaba y se organiza a través de una serie de clases teóricas “magistrales”, de una hora y media de duración, y una serie de prácticas o actividades de seminario, aunque se ha ido modificando tanto el número de horas teóricas como el de prácticas. Durante ese curso 2013-14, y solamente durante ese curso, las clases teóricas fueron muy pocas, unas 20 y las actividades de seminario fueron muchas, siete, de tres horas de duración cada una. Dada la carga docente que yo arrastraba, con otra materia optativa del también nuevo Grado de Historia, más el obligado mantenimiento de otra asignatura del antiguo plan de licenciatura en extinción, se hacía evidente que no podría afrontar la total carga de créditos de la materia de Arte Indígena.

Afortunadamente Alfonso asumió todos los seminarios mientras yo me hacía cargo de las clases teóricas. Puedo afirmar que, a lo largo de una muy dilatada carrera docente que finaliza este curso, esa ha sido mi mejor experiencia, la más ilusionante y la más plena como profesora, y todo ello debido la estrecha colaboración con Alfonso. Creo que llegamos a formar un excelente equipo. Soy una buena divulgadora, capaz de resumir en unas pocas pinceladas generales lo esencial del contexto cultural y el arte de una serie de pueblos de la América Indígena, desde América del Norte —más adelante volveré sobre ese hecho particular— hasta América del Sur. Pero luego Alfonso podía entrar, brillantemente como solía y trabajando en estrecha relación con los alumnos, en aspectos concretos de algunas de esas artes, especialmente en temas de iconografía. Logramos también algo que luego no pudo repetirse jamás: los seminarios profundizaban en culturas de las que yo había podido proporcionar previamente a los alumnos algunas ideas de carácter general. Por

ejemplo, Alfonso hablaba de iconografía maya, del Templo Mayor de México, o de cerámica e iconografía moche, después de que los alumnos tuvieran ya unas ideas generales sobre la cultura y el arte maya, el arte azteca o el moche respectivamente. Nos encargamos además de un solo grupo de la materia, numéricamente ideal, en torno a 30, manejable y suficiente.

Por supuesto y, como era de esperar, al curso siguiente toda esa excelente programación se fue al traste. El número de alumnos aumentó considerablemente; tuvimos que encargarnos ya de dos grupos de la asignatura; el número de seminarios se redujo; otros profesores entraron a dar prácticas en la asignatura, y así hasta la actualidad. Al menos Alfonso pudo mantener un seminario, el de iconografía maya, hasta el final.

Pero en esta asignatura había un “pero” para Alfonso: en ella no había espacio para ningún seminario ni práctica sobre la cultura y el arte paleoindios, sobre todo porque yo no tocaba para nada ese tema en las clases teóricas, hecho que a Alfonso no le gustaba demasiado.

La base para la confección de los programas de la asignatura de arte era la “ficha” de la materia, de obligado cumplimiento, que se había renovado recientemente y en cuya remodelación él había participado activamente. En dicha ficha se fijaban, junto con una breve descripción de la materia, los resultados del aprendizaje, actividades docentes, sistemas de evaluación y una bibliografía básica, los contenidos temáticos de la asignatura. En ellos, y tras un primer apartado dedicado a los presupuestos teóricos de la Antropología del Arte y una brevíssima introducción a las áreas culturales americanas, aparece como segunda unidad temática “Las manifestaciones artísticas de pueblos cazadores-recolectores”.

Esa línea temática me ha permitido dedicarla a que los alumnos tuvieran algunas nociones del arte de los nativos de América del Norte. Durante muchos años había impartido la asignatura de Culturas Indígenas de América del Norte y desde hace muchos años mi campo de investigación es la Costa Norte pacífica americana, con un especial interés en su arte. Mis propósitos eran dobles: por un lado mostrar a alumnos españoles que el arte indígena no se limita al arte que existió en los actuales países hispanoamericanos, que es lo que suele encontrarse en cualquier manual al uso de “arte prehistórico”; por otro, abrirles los ojos ante otro tipo de manifestaciones

artísticas poco conocidas, como las esculturas de esteatita o los grabados inuit, o las tallas de madera del Pacífico norte, o el fantástico arte antiguo de las culturas mississippianas orientales. Y también las que no suelen ser consideradas como obras de arte en nuestro ámbito occidental, como la cestería de California o de la Gran Cuenca y que se encuentran actualmente dentro del mercado del arte. En la asignatura de “Arte Indígena”, por lo tanto, omitía el arte rupestre paleoindio. Cuando una materia de tan enorme magnitud no llega a las 30 clases teóricas, se hace necesario elegir; aunque Alfonso no compartía mi elección y me echaba en cara cariñosamente que les hablase a los alumnos de “cestos”<sup>4</sup>. El número de alumnos de la asignatura de “Arte Indígena” se incrementaba curso tras curso, lo que originó que la administración de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia planificara el desdoblamiento de la misma en el turno de mañana para el curso 2016–17. Y Alfonso se iba a encargar, con una enorme ilusión, de impartir la docencia teórica del nuevo grupo. A lo largo del curso 2015–2016 se preparó a conciencia la materia. Había llegado su momento, él sí que se dedicaría al arte rupestre y lo haría a fondo.

Comenzó el curso 2016–17; desde los comienzos del mismo Alfonso tenía ya preparada la asignatura de arte que se impartiría en el segundo cuatrimestre, a partir de febrero. Aprovechó esa preparación cuando fue invitado a impartir una conferencia en el ámbito del I Congreso Internacional de Arquitectura e Iconografía Precolombina, que se celebró en Valencia entre los días 16 y 18 de noviembre de 2016<sup>5</sup>. Alfonso pertenecía al comité científico del congreso, moderó una de las mesas y pronunció su conferencia sobre el tema *Artes y artistas en la América Indígena*. En el resumen de la misma podemos leer cómo describe su contenido:

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<sup>4</sup> Como ejemplo, mercantilista si se quiere, de la consideración de obras de arte de algunos ejemplos de la cestería de las áreas mencionadas encontramos, en varias páginas web, que sería prolífico enumerar, un cesto *washo* vendido en 2005 por 7050 dólares; otro cesto *washo* vendido en 2009 por 10 000 dólares, o un cesto autentificado por la cestera más famosa *washo*, Dat So La Lee, con un precio de salida de 175 000 dólares.

<sup>5</sup> Dicho Congreso estaba patrocinado por la Consellería de Educación, Investigación, Cultura y Deporte de la Generalitat Valenciana y organizado por la Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, bajo la dirección de Gaspar Muñoz Cosme y Cristina Vidal Lorenzo. Sus temas generales trataban sobre: pintura mural, espacio urbano y arquitectura, tecnologías constructivas, escultura integrada en la arquitectura, texto e imagen.

Desde el anonimato y la no especialización de los autores de los primeros ejemplos de representaciones plásticas de las bandas de cazadores-recolectores del Paleoindio en los límites del Pleistoceno a los puestos encumbrados de pintores y escultores cortesanos en la aristocrática sociedad maya del período Clásico Tardío que firmaban sus obras, desde las obras eternas realizadas en piedra o metal a las representaciones efímeras de los dibujos de arena navajos o los diseños de genipa sobre el cuerpo humano, la América Indígena presenta un rico elenco de casos y situaciones en el que la Historia del Arte y la Antropología dialogan en un fructífero intercambio mutuamente enriquecedor. En la ponencia se explorarán diversas situaciones de producción artística a lo largo de la historia milenaria de la América Indígena, reflexionando sobre la motivación y la funcionalidad de las representaciones plásticas y sus autores desde el punto de vista de la simbología y las creencias, la sociedad, el género y la política (Lacadena 2016: 14).

Sin embargo y según me informa Andrés Ciudad, como era usual en Alfonso, su conferencia se centró sobre todo en las manifestaciones artísticas y en los artistas cazadores recolectores del Paleoindio<sup>6</sup>, pero por lo menos y ya en el texto escrito, Alfonso pudo aprovechar, aunque fuera en una parte mínima, el gran trabajo de preparación que había realizado para la asignatura de arte.

Muy poco después la desgracia se cruzó en su camino y en la Navidad de 2016 la noticia de su enfermedad nos dejó a todos totalmente impactados. A pesar de todas sus ganas y su ilusión Alfonso no impartiría —al principio estábamos convencidos de que solamente durante ese curso— *Arte Indígena Americano*. A los alumnos no se les hablaría, por el momento, de arte rupestre.

Su sorprendente mejoría pocos meses después hizo que, a pesar de encontrarse de baja médica y con la ayuda de la profesora Ana García Barrios, Alfonso se empeñase y consiguiese dar a todos los alumnos de *Arte Indígena*, tres grupos del curso más numeroso que hemos tenido nunca, el seminario de Iconografía Maya que había venido impartiendo desde el principio, desde el curso 2013–14. Para él, el implicarse en ese seminario, volver a las aulas, establecer contacto con los alumnos, fue como una sesión de quimioterapia; hizo trabajar a los alumnos, los calificó, calificaciones que por razones obvias se utilizaron solamente para mejorar las notas finales de los alumnos, y le devolvió la ilusión de poder retomar la asignatura completa en el curso siguiente.

<sup>6</sup> No he tenido acceso al texto escrito de la conferencia que envió a los editores del congreso. Es de suponer que fuera un texto de carácter más general.

Pero ya no hubo para él más cursos, ya no habría más seminarios, ya no daría nunca la asignatura de *Arte Indígena*. Se nos fue el día 9 de febrero de 2018. Nos dejó, sin embargo, un importante testimonio final sobre el arte indígena americano, aunque curiosamente no tratase sobre arte maya.

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## **Parte 2**

# **AVANZANDO CAMINO EN LOS ESTUDIOS MESOAMERICANOS**



# New Research on the Aztec Script: A True Writing System

ALFONSO LACADENA GARCÍA-GALLO  
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

2011 Tatiana Proskouriakoff Award Lecture  
Harvard, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011

The decipherment of Aztec writing started one hundred and fifty years ago when by mid 19<sup>th</sup> century the French scholar Joseph Marius Alexis Aubin published his work about this writing system using his large private collection of Aztec manuscripts. In his work, Aubin provided the reading of more than one hundred signs, transcribed many glyphic expressions and identified scribal practices present in the writing system such as the rebus principle and phonetic complementation. Aubin spoke overtly about phoneticism in Aztec writing, labeling it as syllabic. After such a strong initial impetus the decipherment of Aztec writing should have been completed in the following decades making Aztec writing the first to be deciphered in Mesoamerica. Nevertheless, the fact is that his proposals soon dissolved in the bitter controversy that has raged since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This controversy has confronted Mesoamericanist scholars who polarize in two antagonistic extremes: those who defended the phonetic character of Mesoamerican writing systems considering them full writing systems, and those who argue that Mesoamerican scripts were not fully developed phonetic systems, but instead were systems that are basically pictographic or ideographic. The story is well-known: the defense of anti-phoneticism was led by imposing authorities such as Eduard Seler and Eric Thompson, who marked the research on Mesoamerican writing systems for almost a century, slowing the pace of decipherment considerably. The coup de grace took place when in the early sixties Ignace Gelb, in his influential book *A Study of Writing*, labeled Mesoamerican scripts as forerunners of writing. Seemingly, nobody realized at that time that Gelb was not providing an independent authorized judgment on the subject, but basing it

precisely on the firm opinion of both Seler and Thompson, creating a circular argument. In fact, the main argument expressed by Gelb was that if Mesoamerican writings were true or full writing systems they should have been already succumbed to decipherment.

A challenge to Gelb's words and a great surprise to Mesoamerican studies took place when Maya writing started to be deciphered by Russian Yuri Knorozov during the fifties. Thereafter the pace of decipherment increased steadily, although only slowly at first during the sixties and seventies, but more rapidly after Thompson's death, during the decades of the eighties and nineties. The decipherment of Maya writing revealed a fully developed writing system of the logo-syllabic type, perfectly comparable to other writing systems of the Old World. However, the continuous methodological achievements and results reached by Maya scholars focusing on Maya script did not influence the methods used by scholars in the decipherment of other Mesoamerican writing systems. Following the endemic subdivision that characterizes the separate fields of Mesoamerican studies, for other scholars the example of Maya writing could not be extrapolated, nor could its decipherment methodology be considered directly and validly applicable to the other pre-Columbian writing systems. Instead of asking why did Maya epigraphers succeeded or wondering about the methodology used by Mayanists in the decipherment, it was considered that research concerning itself with Maya writing was not necessarily applicable to other Mesoamerican writing systems.

The state of the art on Aztec writing in the last twenty years provides a certainly confusing picture, involving several competing approaches and schools. Although most of the scholars refer to the Aztec system as a writing, the fact is that there is no agreement about its exact nature, what kind of signs it involves, or how it works. The most extensive assumption, repeating the arguments of the old anti-phonetic thesis, is that Aztec writing is basically pictographic or ideographic, with scant or incipient phoneticism, a defective or immature writing closer to a proto-writing than to a fully developed system; others consider Aztec writing as a semasiographic system that records meaning but not language, a system adapted to a region and an epoch—Central Mexico in Late Postclassic—where different peoples with very different languages sharing the same territory

consciously developed a system of communication that was not tied to a specific language of the area. In the mind of most scholars, is the deeply rooted idea that Aztec writing was in an early stage of development, not comparable to other writing systems of the Old World or Maya writing, which in contrast were fully developed. This idea has been reinforced by the iconic or figurative design of Aztec signs, the extensive use of abbreviated spellings in the Aztec script, and the absence of long texts providing verbal information. All of these features have led to the idea that the writing is wholly restricted to the spelling of common and proper names, place names, and calendrical and arithmetic information, as if Central Mexican scribes would have been incapable of developing a complete system. Others still argue that there is scant evidence for Aztec writing before the European conquest, which raises the idea that this Mesoamerican script may have been stimulated by external interaction, in much the same way as Rongorongo or Sequoyah's Cherokee script.

The long controversy between phoneticism versus non-phoneticism and the many resultant interpretative proposals have distorted concepts such as "writing", "reading", "sign" or "phoneticism", in the various field of studies, with each scholar pushing for the meaning that accorded best to his or her particular point of view, without using the same parameters and theoretical framework.

In order to go ahead and resolve this highly charged and the confusing situation, one needs to turn back and re-state from the onset the precise meaning of the terms used and strive for an accurate method for our object of study. Precisely such an accurate method is provided by grammatology, or theory of writing, and it is within this solid framework where we must place ourselves. As I have said on other occasions, I am not suggesting a new methodology. On the contrary, I have regularly insisted that if we are to deal with writing systems we must use the methodology developed for the study of writing systems. As a precedent to the success in the application of this method to Mesoamerican scripts, there is the brilliant decipherment of Maya writing, which took place only when epigraphers were formed in grammatology and linguistics, and followed the method successfully put into practice with the decipherment of Old World writing systems.

So, the first question that we have to state clearly at the onset is what do we mean by and how are we to understand “writing”? In the book *The World’s Writing Systems* by Daniels and Bright, writing is defined as “a system of more or less permanent marks used to represent an utterance in such a way that it can be recovered more or less exactly without the intervention of the utterer”. As the authors highlight further, and this is crucial for us, “by this definition, writing is bound up with language; consequently, the widespread practice of recording by means of pictures (pictograms), or ideas that are not couched in a specific linguistic form is excluded” (Daniels 1996: 3). When Aztec writing is labeled as pictorial, pictographic, ideographic, or semasiographic writing, something falls short of the very definition of writing. Alternatively, the term “writing” is used in an incorrect way and described by the adjectives “pictorial”, “pictographic”, “ideographic”, and “semasiographic”. If recording language is not central to the system, we would deal with any other systems of communication, such as iconography, but not with writing. If Aztec writing is a true writing system, we must prove that it records utterances of a language, a specific language, and by means of graphic signs.

In other writing systems of the Old and New World that are not dubiously suspected as being defective or otherwise partial, such as Egyptian, Akkadian, Linear B, Hieroglyphic Luwian or Maya—or even in our own alphabetic systems—we find that the respective languages are recorded using certain shared sign categories, and writing resources. Let me briefly review which sign categories and resources these are, in order to subsequently check to what extent Aztec writing behaves as a true writing system.

## Classes of signs in writing systems

There are four categories of signs in writing systems: logograms, phonograms, semantic determinatives, and auxiliary signs.

Logograms are signs that correspond with words of the language (independent or morphemes) and carry meaning. In the Egyptian script, signs like PR ‘house, estate’, or NFR ‘good, beauty’ are logograms. The same is true in Persian cuneiform, where signs like BUMIŠ and BAGA are logograms, corresponding to the words ‘earth’

and ‘god’; or in Maya writing, the signs **OTOT** ‘house’ or **NAL** ‘maize’. Or in our own writing system, sing for **PLUS**, **MINUS**, **DEGREE**, or numbers are usually represented in many scripts by means of logograms. In all these cases, signs record words belonging to the respective languages and meaning is carried by the words themselves. Interestingly, there are not categories like pictograms or ideograms. Only logograms. Although it is also clear that several researchers label logograms with these other terms, but this seems to stem from a fundamental misunderstanding. We also see that in some scripts, signs are iconic or figurative, in which we can see a relationship between the particular design of the sign and the meaning of the word recorded. However, this is not always the case, and in other examples, there is no apparent relationship between design and meaning. In fact, design has little or nothing to do with the function performed by the sign in a writing system. The number of logograms present in different writing systems, varies greatly, ranging from a handful (or even none) to several hundreds. As a convention, logograms will be rendered throughout in capital letters.

The second category of signs are phonograms, also called phonetic signs. Phonograms are signs that record one or more phonemes of the language, but, unlike logograms, they do not in themselves carry any meaning. Phonograms in Egyptian script are, for example, the 1-consonant signs, like **m**, **n** or **r**; or in Persian cuneiform signs for **ka**, **di** or **mu**; or in Maya writing signs for **a**, **i**, **hu** or **ch'o**; or in our writing system, signs for **b**, **s**, or **t**. Phonograms are classified according to their structure. If they correspond to a single morpheme, we talk about alphabets, futharks, or abjads (depending on whether vowels are included); if they correspond to two or more phonemes, we talk about syllabic signs, which can be vowels (V), consonant plus vowel (CV), vowel plus consonant (VC), or consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC). Although phonograms may present varied structures, it is important to notice that in every writing system they constitute a structured system. There are writings with alphabetic signs, like Ugaritic or runic scripts; there are writings with syllabic signs that correspond to vowels and consonants plus vowels, like Linear B, hieroglyphic Luwian, Persian cuneiform, the Japanese Hiragana and Katakana scripts or, in Mesoamerica, Maya. Other writing systems, like Akkadian cuneiform, show phonograms of the type vowel (V),

consonant plus vowel (CV), vowel plus consonant (VC), and consonant plus vowel plus consonant (CVC). Concerning the design of phonetic signs, we can notice that these can also be iconic, depicting objects or beings, but again the degree of figurativeness does not relate to meaning. This is important because we can see that the design of the signs is unrelated to their function as logograms or phonograms. In other words, what identifies a logogram or a phonogram in a writing system is not their graphic design, nor their degree of iconicity but the function they perform in the system. There is no way to distinguish logograms and phonograms only by their appearance. In these examples drawn from hieroglyphic Luwian and Maya, all the signs are iconic, representing objects and beings. But the signs on the left are logograms and the signs on the right are syllabic phonograms. Again, it is not the design but the function that distinguishes logograms and phonograms. As a convention, phonograms are transliterated in lower-case.

Dislike logograms and phonograms, which have phonetic reading values, the last two categories of signs, semantic determinatives, and auxiliary signs, do not convey phonological information, nor do these correspond with phonemes of the language, performing other functions within the system altogether.

Semantic determinatives or semagrams are signs that are attached to words written by logograms or phonograms, giving information about their meaning. Egyptian and Chinese writing are paradigmatic examples, considering the ample use of semantic determinatives. In Egyptian, there are determinatives that indicate masculine or feminine, verbs of motion, or the presence of deity names. Semantic determinatives are useful for understanding the meaning of a word. However, not all the writing systems exhibit this category of signs, and in many cases semantic determinatives are wholly absent from writing systems.

The last category of signs is that of auxiliary signs. Like semantic determinatives, they do not in themselves have a reading value. Auxiliary signs help in the correct reading or pronunciation of a text. Auxiliary signs involve punctuation signs, diacritic marks, prosodic signs or word dividers.

There are no additional categories of signs than the four briefly introduced here. Of these four categories, only one cannot be

absent in a full and coherent writing system. There may be writings with few or even without logograms; there can be scripts without semantic determinatives or auxiliary signs. But there cannot be writing systems without a structured set of phonograms. This is crucial for our discussion about the nature of any Mesoamerican writing system and that of the Aztec in particular.

Writing systems that have logograms make use of two scribal resources: phonetic complementation and the rebus principle.

Rebus is the usage of a logogram for its phonetic reading value and not for its meaning. In Egyptian writing, for example, **PR** ‘house, estate’ can be used to write the verb *pr* ‘to go’, or be involved in the spelling of the word *prt* ‘winter’, without intending that the sequence /pr/ that provides meaning ‘house’ as carried by the logogram at face value. In Maya writing, the logogram **NAL** ‘maize’ is used to spell the locative suffix *-nal* ‘place of’, as in **K'IN-HA'-NAL** or the logogram **WINIK** ‘month’ is often used to spell the homonymic word *winik* ‘human, person’. It is important to highlight that the rebus use of logograms do not convert them into phonograms. Instead, rebus momentarily disassociates a given sign from the word that it usually conveys and exploits its phonetic qualities, at the detriment of the semantic information usually carried by the word. When we write informally in our system ‘room 4 rent’, the logogram **FOUR** is used not for its meaning ‘four’ but because of its reading value /four/ approximates the pronunciation of the preposition ‘for’. This usage, however, does not convert the logographic numeral **FOUR** into a phonetic sign that in turn should be added to the list of English phonograms.

The other scribal resource commonly used in writing systems that feature logograms is that of phonetic complementation. According to this resource, phonograms can be attached to a logogram to help its reading, with phonemes indicated to mark the initial or final phoneme of the logogram. Phonetic complementation can be initial, final, initial and final, or complete, if all the phonemes that compose the reading value of the logogram are spelled phonetically. In Egyptian writing, for example, phonogram **r** follows logograms **PR** ‘house’ or **NFR** ‘good’, showing that they both end in /r/; in hieroglyphic Luwian, a **sa** syllabic phonogram follows the logogram **TARHUNZAS**, the name of the storm god, indicating that the reading

of the logogram ends in /s/. Similarly, in Maya writing, the phonogram **ni** follows **TUN** ‘stone’ and **K’IN** ‘sun’, to indicate showing that they end in /n/. In our own system, phonograms used as phonetic complements help to read ordinal numbers, thus distinguishing them from cardinal numbers, such as for example, **ONE** from **FIRST**, or **TWO** from **SECOND**, adding **s** and **t** to the number **ONE**, 1<sup>st</sup>, and **n** and **d** to the number **TWO** indicating that the intended reading value is not /one/ and /two/ but /first/ and /second/. Phonetic complements are useful to show the intended reading of a logogram, especially when the sign is polyvalent, that is, when it has more than one reading value. That is the case of Maya sign for ‘month’, which correspond to two dialectal variants, **WINIK** and **WINAL**, being clarified by the phonetic complementation of **ki** and **la** phonograms.

According to the type of phonetic signs used, writing systems are classified in logo-phonetic scripts (if they use a significant number of logograms besides phonograms), and depending on the structure of the phonetic signs, they are subdivided in logo-alphabetic, like Egyptian, or logo-syllabic, like Sumerian, Akkadian, Hieroglyphic Luwian, Linear B or Maya; if the scripts do not have a significant number of logograms or they are absent they are simply classified according to the structure of their phonograms, thus being syllabic/abugida, or alphabetic/abjada. Notice that as such there are no pictographic, ideographic or even purely logographic scripts.

Considering this theoretical framework, let us see now how Aztec writing behaves, what the relationship is between signs and language, and what can be inferred about its nature, looking at the classes of signs it has and the scribal resources it exhibits.

## Classes of signs in Aztec writing

Traditionally several categories of signs have said to be recognized in Aztec writing, including pictograms, ideograms, logograms, phonetic signs, and determinatives. However, the fact is that the inventory of signs actually present in the system consists of only two categories: logograms and phonograms.

The traditional categories of pictograms and ideograms are formerly based in the presumed relationship that exists between the graphic referent and its meaning: if a sign means what the graphic

referent depicts in a direct way, it is considered a pictogram; if there is some kind of indirect cultural convention in the association of the graphic referent and its meaning, it is considered an ideogram. Thus, in this example, the signs that depict an armadillo and a hank of thread would be pictograms because they mean ‘armadillo’ and ‘thread’, while those that depict a scroll for ‘speaking’ and a blue background circle with horizontal or spiral lines inside for ‘water’ would be ideograms, because they are cultural conventions that ‘speaking’, an invisible act, could be represented as a figurative scroll, and ‘water’ could be blue (water being colorless). In both cases, according to the traditional definition, pictograms and ideograms are not signs believed to be read, but rather signs thought to be understood by anyone knowledgeable of the pictorial conventions of the system, independently of his or her language. Thus, pictograms and ideograms behave like icons and symbols of iconography, converging and blurring the boundaries of writing and image. Moreover, because of the linear evolutionary scheme that has pervaded studies of Aztec writing, intensified by Gelb’s work and his inclusion of Mesoamerican writing systems with the forerunners of writing, wherein pictograms and ideograms bear the label of being fossil signs that correspond to supposed archaic stages in the evolution of writing, where pictograms would be the most primitive stage and ideograms the one immediately after. This supposed preservation of primitivism in the script has influenced many scholars to consider the system as something imperfect, immature, and not fully developed.

Much attention has been paid in the past to classifying Aztec signs into these categories, as if the labels of pictogram or ideogram describe something essential and distinctive regarding their function in the system. But this is not the case. We have seen that pictograms and ideograms do not exist as categories of signs in writing systems. Pictograms and ideograms entered and became embedded in the discussion about Aztec writing a long time ago, becoming alleged facts by means of repetition, without any testing, and without being supported by any grammatical foundation. In fact, according to their postulated function in the system, the supposed pictograms and ideograms do not differ from each other. Both pictograms and ideograms correspond to precise phonological

renderings of words (independent or morphemes) of a language, carrying meaning: **AYOTOC** ‘armadillo’, **IKPA** ‘thread’, **TLATO** ‘speaking’ and **A<sub>1</sub>** ‘water’. The difference between pictograms and ideograms is only informative for what it tells us about the process by which certain signs were recruited into the signary; the two supposedly represent different levels of arbitrariness in the selection: with pictograms more direct and thus less arbitrary than ideograms. But we can even question whether pictograms and ideograms differ in this respect, because it is also an arbitrary convention to establish that the armadillo-sign reads **AYOTOC**, meaning ‘armadillo’, and that the thread-sign reads **IKPA**, meaning ‘thread’. They could have had any other reading and meaning.

As we see, the main feature that these signs share is that they correspond with phonological renderings of words, carrying meaning. That they correspond with precise phonological renderings of words is demonstrated by the phonetic complementation they take, giving clues about how they are read: **a-AYOTOC**, **IKPA-pa**, **tla-TLATO**, **a-A<sub>1</sub>**. If, as has been pointed out many times, these signs were thought to be simply understood and not to be read, they would not carry phonetic complements, otherwise, why would these be complemented? All these signs are actually *logograms*, signs that correspond to words of the language, and carry meaning in as much as the word itself conveys semantic information.

Aztec logograms are thought to be read, and thought to be read in Nawatl. When an Aztec scribe attaches the phonogram **te** to the logogram ‘flint’ to clarify that it reads **TEKPA** (*tekpa-tl*) ‘flint’, or to the logogram **TEPE** (*tepe-tl*) ‘mountain, hill’ in Nawatl, he does not do anything different from a Maya scribe who attaches the phonogram **to** to the logogram ‘flint’ or the phonogram **wi** to the logogram ‘mountain’ to clarify that they read **TOK** (*to'k'*) ‘flint’ and **WITZ** (*witz*), respectively, in Maya. Even numbers, whose graphic designs and arithmetic system are shared by several Mesoamerica cultures and which are usually mentioned as paradigmatic examples of signs that can be read in any Mesoamerican language (even in English and Spanish), and therefore not tied specifically to any of them, are in fact logograms in Mesoamerican scripts, as they are in the context of Aztec writing, having an intended reading value in Nawatl, and only in Nawatl. Phonetic complementation to numbers like **e-EI** ‘three’

(<ey>), **na-NAW** ‘four’ (<*nahui*>) or **ma-MAK<sup>W</sup>IL** ‘five’ (<*macuilli*>), or substitution of the logogram **SE** ‘one’ by the phonogram **se**, as in the calendrical name <*Cequahuitl*> ‘One-Eagle’, strongly suggest that Aztec scribes were writing these numbers to correspond to a reading value in Nawatl, and not using a supposed ideographic or semasiographic system intended to be understood by all without making recourse to any language.

Phonetic complementation to logograms appears in all the thematic fields covered by Aztec writing. A special context for which the usefulness of pictography/ideography or semasiography has been suggested is the economic one. A Mexica official would write a number in association with a pictogram depicting the requested tribute, and such a composition would be easily understood by any official speaking any of the other languages of the Empire. However, the available evidence show that phonetic complements are also attached to signs corresponding to tributary goods, so in this context also language is present. For example, in the *Matrícula de Tributos*, the scribe attached the phonogram **so** to the logogram of certain cloaks to clarify that they were **IKSO-so-TILMA**, *iksotilma[tl]* ‘yucca fiber cloaks’ (Berdan and Anawalt 1992: 76: Note 1); the scribe attached the phonogram **a** to the logogram **APOSINAL** to clarify that it was *aposonal[li]* ‘amber’; and phonogram **te<sub>1</sub>** was paired to the logogram **TEKOMA** to clarify that the requested vessels were *tekoma[tl]* ‘tecomates’. Clearly the scribe wrote these examples in Nawatl, without considering another writing system or another language besides the Aztec script and Nawatl language. If there were exact copies of the lists of tribute in the corresponding sections at the *cabeceras* of the tributary provinces, they needed readers knowledgeable about Aztec writing, who would know that the piercing-sign is the phonogram **so** and not the verb ‘to pierce’, that the water-sign is the phonogram **a** and not the word ‘water’, that the stone-sign is the phonogram **te** and not the concept ‘stone’, and that their function in the text was to help read the words *ikso[tl]*, *aposonal[li]* and *tekoma[tl]* in Nawatl (and not in any other language).

In fact, such a behavior is not different from other places in the world where there is a concentration of different languages, such as the Ancient Near East or Medieval Europe. And yet, in these cases, semasiographic systems were never developed. Instead of this, one

language with its corresponding writing, those of the highest political and cultural prestige, were imposed and used by all the other cultures of the area. In the Ancient Near East it was Akkadian cuneiform; in Medieval Europe it was Latin. In most of Late Postclassic Mesoamerica it was Nawatl.

The inventory, or signatory of logograms in Aztec writing is certainly large, with more than eight hundred signs. Adopting the useful convention followed by scholars in related fields, we will transliterate the reading value of logograms in capital letters, as a way to show their function in the system, leaving phonograms in lowercase letters.

Some Aztec logograms are polyvalent, having more than one reading, such as the chili-sign, with values of **CHIL** ‘chili’ and **KOKOK** ‘hot, spicy’, the earth-sign with values of **TLAL** ‘land’, **MIL** ‘cultivated field’ and **IXTLAWA** ‘field, plain’, or the grasping-hand-sign with values of **WA** and **YO**, both with the meaning of ‘possession’. This phenomenon—quite normal in many other scripts of the world—is actually not as frequent as has sometimes been suggested, and, of course, it does make the system an ambiguous one at times. In fact, most of the Aztec logograms correspond to a single word.

As in other writing systems that have this class of signs, Aztec scribes used logograms in rebus, that is, for their reading value and not for their meaning, a scribal practice identified a long time ago. Thus, **IKPA** ‘thread’ can be used for the sequence /ikpa/ of the suffix -*ikpak* ‘on top of’; **TZIN** ‘back, rump’, for the diminutive or reverential suffix -*tzin*; **PA(I)N** ‘go, run’, for the suffix -*pan* ‘on’; or **ATLA** ‘spear-thrower’ for the sequence /atla/ in the place name Atlacuihuayan, where <*atlacui*> means ‘to take water’. This resource was largely used by Aztec scribes, although its importance to the system as a whole has been greatly overemphasized.

The presence of rebuses is very interesting because it is another proof to add to phonetic complementation that Aztec logograms have reading values corresponding to a sequence of phonemes. Logically, if logograms did not have a specific reading value, a rebus would not be possible. Thus, all instances of rebus are inherently and inextricably tied to one specific language. This shows the contradiction of the traditional proposals concerning the existence of pictograms and ideograms that were supposedly independent of

language, but are, however, involved in this kind of process based not just on meaning, but on phonetic reading. This also reinforces the thesis that writing and language are inseparable and that only readers who know Aztec writing and the Nawatl language would be able to use this system, because they would be aware of the reading values of these signs in Nawatl and the sets of homonymy existing in the language.

Although rebus undoubtedly implies highlighting the phonetic part of the reading of logograms, thereby suppressing their meaning in this context, it is important to state again that the use of rebus by itself does not make writing phonetic, nor does it convert logograms used in rebus into phonetic signs. This has been one of the aspects that has caused much confusion in the discussion and is responsible for the general feeling that the phoneticism found in Aztec writing is meager and limited. However, to posit the presence of phoneticism in Aztec writing, it cannot be established on the basis of the rebus use of logograms.

The second main category of signs that are found in Aztec writing is that of phonetic signs or *phonograms*. As we have seen before, phonograms are signs that render one or more phonemes of the language, which lack meaning. The existence of this class of signs is crucial for the categorization of Aztec writing as a true, full writing system. This is so because of the four categories of signs that can be present in a writing system—remember: logograms, phonograms, semagrams (or semantic determinatives) and auxiliary signs—and phonograms is the only class that cannot be absent. As I said before, there can be writing systems without logograms, semagrams or auxiliary signs, or they can be few in number, but there is no writing system in the world without phonograms. The categorization of Aztec script as a writing system rests on the identification of this particular class of signs.

The identification of true phonograms has not been very successful in the past. This is brought about by the absence of an accurate method for their identification and the confusion surrounding the iconicity of Aztec signs, prompting certain scholars to view them as pictograms or even sometimes as iconography. I would like to insist on the point that the logograms used in rebus are not phonograms, and there are differences between logograms used in rebus and true

phonograms. Nicholson already noticed this subtle distinction when he pointed out the differences between how phoneticism was understood by scholars working with Highland Mexican writings and how it was understood by scholars working with Maya script:

Both Thompson (1959, 1962, 1963) and Kelley (1962a, 1962b), in recent discussions and exchanges concerning the degree of phoneticism in this system [Maya], seemingly employ the term ‘phonetic’ in a somewhat different sense than used in this paper. They (particularly Kelley—Thompson appears to vary somewhat more in this usage) seem more or less to agree that genuine phoneticism is achieved when a grapheme signifies a lesser sound unit than a morpheme, rather than emphasizing the employment of the grapheme to convey a phonetic message independent of the semantic connotation of what it represents. (Nicholson 1973: 36)

Now that the decipherment of Maya writing has largely taken place, we see that this strict way of understanding phoneticism by Mayanists was correct and that, as a precedent, it is possible to try to discover it in other Mesoamerican writing systems. If Aztec writing is a true writing system, we can expect to find this same class of phonetic signs in its sign inventory.

Like the phonograms of other scripts, Aztec phonograms can be identified by looking at their function in the system. The evidence that we can use for their identification is the following: 1) they correspond with phonemes in the language and do not carry meaning; 2) their reading value corresponds to phonemic units, and not to morphemic units; and 3) if the script has logograms, phonograms can act as phonetic complements to these logograms.

A sign correctly identified a long time ago as a phonogram is the water-sign, which, for identification purposes, I will label the long-water-sign. This sign figured as the first in Aubin’s list of Aztec signs. This sign is a phonogram because conforms to these requirements. First, it corresponds with phoneme /a/ without carrying meaning in examples like **ko-a**, *ko[w]a[tl]* ‘snake’, **a-MAXTLA**, *amaxtla[tl]* ‘loin-cloth’ or **a-mi** *amin ~ amin[i]* ‘hunter’. Second, even in the cases where morphological analysis suggests correspondences between the /a/ phoneme provided by the water-sign with the meaning *a-tl* ‘water’, as in **a-TEPE**, *Atepe[k]* (*a-tepe-k* ‘at the water hill’ ~ ‘water-hill-place’), such correspondence is a fortuitous one, because, in fact, there are two logograms with the value of A ‘water’ in the Aztec signary,

which I will call round-water-sign  $A_1$  and water-in-canal-sign  $A_2$ , this last one often used for the day *Atl* ‘Water’ in the calendar. That the round-water-sign and the water-in-canal-sign are logograms  $A_1$  y  $A_2$  is suggested by the fact that they always mean ‘water’ and that they are complemented phonetically by the phonogram long-water *a*, as in the interesting example from the *Matrícula of Tributos*, which we saw before, or in other cases the phonogram *a* is merged with the logograms  $A_1$  and  $A_2$  as a ligature. It is precisely this function as phonetic complement that definitively identifies the water-sign as the phonogram *a*, as can be seen in many other examples, like **a-AKOL**, **a-AMA**, **a-AYOTOC**, **a-AKAL**, **a-AKA**, **a-AYO** or **a-AYAW**.

Many other signs behave in this way. Amongst them, some are especially interesting, like the jar-sign *ko*, flag-sign *pa*, teeth-sign *tla*, mother-sign *na*, trap-sign *mo*, mouth-sign *te<sub>2</sub>*, sandal-sign *ka<sub>1</sub>*, or drum-sign *we<sub>1</sub>*, because the reading value that they have, /ko/, /pa/, /tla/, /na/, /mo/, /te/, /ka/ or /we/, corresponds to sequences of phonemes shorter than the roots of the words from which they derive through acrophony (*kom-itl*, *pan-tli*, *tlan-tli*, *nan-tli*, *mon-tli*, *ten-tli*, *kak-tli* and *wewe-tl*), as may be seen in these examples where they participate in phonetic sequences or act as phonetic complements: **ko-a**, **CHAL-ko**, **ko-KOKO**, **pa-PAPA**, **pa-PA(I)N**, **tla-TLAKO**, **K<sup>W</sup>ITLA-tla**, **ko-a-na**, **na-NAW**, **mo-IX**, **mo-MOTO**, **mi-MIL-te<sub>2</sub>**, **te<sub>2</sub>-TESKA**, **tla-TLAL-te-WA-ka<sub>1</sub>**, **AKA-ka<sub>1</sub>**, **tla-we<sub>1</sub>-EL**, **AWEWE-we<sub>1</sub>**.

We saw that phonograms in writings are typically put to use as phonetic complements, in writing systems that have logograms, helping to specify their reading, which is very useful in ambiguous cases involving polyvalent logograms (as in the group of signs based on footprints, where we find complementation such as **YA-a**, *ya ~ ya[w]* ‘go’, **ne-NEMI** *nemi* ‘walk’, **te-TEMO**, *temo* ‘descend’, **pa-PAIN**, *pain[a]* ‘go, run’). Phonetic complementation is also helpful in those cases where there might be some doubt concerning a logogram’s precise identification (as in some logograms naming animals, like **te-TEKOLO**, *tekolo[tl]* ‘owl’, **wa-WAK**, *wak[tli]* ‘falcon’, **ko-KOXKOX**, *koxkox* ‘pheasant’, **te-TECHIK**, *techik[tli]* ‘type of bird’, **te-TEK<sup>W</sup>SIL**, *tek<sup>W</sup>sil[tototl]* ‘type of bird’, **to-TOS**, *tos[tli]* ‘yellow parrot’, **wi-WILO**, *wilo[tl]* ‘dove’). Phonetic complementation was first identified as a resource used in the Aztec script at the very beginning of research in 19<sup>th</sup> century by Aubin, and, given the mechanics, is the most effec-

tive clue in identifying logograms (because they take complementation) and phonograms (because they provide complementation), establishing their reading value.

The use of phonetic complementation in Aztec writing is not as limited as has been traditionally thought. Even if we limit the examples to the *Codex Mendoza*, there are many more examples than the ones included traditionally in the discussion: water-sign **a** (**a**-AKAL, **a**-AKOL, **a**-AMA, **a**-APOSINAL, **a**-AWEXO, **a**-AWITZO, **a**-AYOTOCHE, **a**-AYO), road-sign **o** (YO-**o**, XOKO-**o**), flag-sign **pa** (**pa**-PAPA), piercing-sign **so** (IKSO-**so**), stone-sign **te<sub>1</sub>** (**te<sub>1</sub>**-TEKOMA, **te<sub>1</sub>**-TEKOSAW, **te<sub>1</sub>**-TEPE, **te<sub>1</sub>**-TEPOXAK, **te<sub>1</sub>**-TEWILO), teeth-sign **tlā** (very possibly **tlā**-TLANIS, may be also **tlā**-TLAPANI, OTLA-**tlā**), double-stroke-sign **wa<sub>1</sub>** (**SIWA-wa<sub>1</sub>**, **WA-wa<sub>1</sub>**), drum-sign **we<sub>1</sub>** (**AWEWE-we<sub>1</sub>**). Perhaps it may be difficult to evaluate objectively if these examples can be characterized as many or few. But, we can compare them with the frequency of usage of phonetic complementation in other writing systems, like the Maya, a script that no one longer doubts is phonetic. Doing so, we see that the eight Aztec phonograms (**a**, **o**, **pa**, **so**, **te<sub>1</sub>**, **tlā**, **wa<sub>1</sub>**, **we<sub>1</sub>**) involved at least in 21 different examples of phonetic complementation in the *Codex Mendoza* (which has about 700 glyptic compounds—excluding calendrical and numeral logograms), do not contrast significantly with the eleven Maya phonograms (**hi**, **ka**, **ki**, **la**, **ma**, **mu**, **na**, **ni**, **pi**, **ti**, **wa**) involved in 21 different examples of phonetic complementation in the text of the three panels of the Temple of Inscriptions of Palenque (which has 617 glyph blocks).

If we re-examine the reading values of the phonograms that have appeared throughout this presentation, we can see that, interestingly, they share a similar phonological structure. They represent vowels (V), like **a**, **e** or **o**, or a consonant plus a vowel (CV), like **ko**, **ma**, **mi**, **mo**, **na**, **ne**, **pa**, **se**, **so**, **te<sub>1</sub>**, **te<sub>2</sub>**, **tlā**, **wa<sub>1</sub>**, **we<sub>1</sub>** and **wi**. Other signs that also appear to be phonograms based on their behavior, such as **ka<sub>1</sub>**, **ka<sub>2</sub>**, **kʷa<sub>1</sub>**, **kʷa<sub>2</sub>**, **kʷe**, **me**, **to** and **wa<sub>2</sub>**, exhibit this same structure. Moreover, other signs that probably belong to this class, like **i**, **chi**, **ke**, **kʷi**, **pe**, **pi**, **po**, **sa**, **si**, **we<sub>2</sub>**, **xa**, and **xo**, also exhibit this V and CV structure.

Aztec phonograms do not have a random phonological structure but a fixed one. Aztec phonograms conform to an open syllable-

bary. This is perhaps the biggest surprise that arose during the research carried out over the last several years on Aztec writing. This coherent phonological structure of Aztec phonograms agrees with what is observed in other writing systems, where phonograms conform to structured systems, being alphabetic or syllabic: if alphabetic, showing consonantal signs, like Semitic alphabets, or consonantal and vocalic signs, like Greek, Etruscan and Roman alphabets; if syllabic, showing vowels and open consonant-plus-vowel syllabic signs, like Linear B, Hieroglyphic Luwian or Japanese Hiragana and Katakana, or showing instead closed vowel-consonant and consonant-vowel-consonant syllables, like Akkadian. In the New World, we find the same phenomenon, with the phonograms of Maya writing conforming to an open V and CV syllabary.

The discovery to date of these approximately forty phonograms and their disposition in an open syllabary contradicts the idea that phoneticism in Aztec writing was limited or incipient in its development. On the contrary, the existence of this formal syllabary, shared by all the scribal schools, strongly suggests that Aztec writing was a full writing system, mature and completely developed when the Spanish conquerors arrived. In fact, phonograms constitute the stable nucleus of Aztec writing. Whereas logograms presented more variation in their graphic designs according to their usage by the different Aztec scribal schools, and while without doubt, their number changed through time, phonograms, on the contrary, present a greater graphic stability and a more closed repertory of signs. In any of the Aztec scribal schools and at any time, the phonogram **a** is always the long-water-sign; the phonogram **ko** is always the jar-sign; the phonogram **pa** is always the flag-sign; the phonogram **ma** is always the hand-sign. In the Colonial Period, for example, new logograms were added to the signary to represent new words belonging to the new Spanish cultural universe, including ‘espadrille’, ‘shirt’, ‘chicken’, ‘wheat’, names of saints, and conquerors, but as far as I know not a single new phonogram was added to the syllabary, not even to represent new Spanish phonemes, and neither their syllabic structure nor their reading value was changed.

The Aztec writing system was used throughout the Nawatl-speaking Postclassic world, independently of political boundaries. The variation in the design of some signs, the preference for certain

variants, and the greater or lesser use of resources such as phonetic complementation, reflect and identify the particular idiosyncrasies of the different scribal schools centered in the *altepetl* that constituted the political landscape of central Mexico at that time, like Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, Tetzcoco, Huexotzinco, Cuauhtinchan or Tlaxcalla. But all of them share the same repertory of signs, their categorization as logograms or phonograms, their reading values and the orthographic rules for composition.

### On the nature of Aztec writing

We have seen that writing is defined as a system of communication that records language by means of graphic signs. We have seen how in Aztec writing graphic signs fulfill the function of recording a language, Nawatl, both at the level of word/morphemes by mean of logograms, and at the level of phonemes by means of phonograms. As in any other writing system of the world, Aztec phonograms share the same structure, conforming an open syllabary. Aztec writing is, then, a full writing system, comparable and on par to the other known writing systems of the world.

The existence of abbreviated spellings and the absence of long texts including verbal information do not degrade or diminish the nature of Aztec writing as a full writing system. Abbreviated spellings are a consequence of orthographic rules. Unlike Maya writing where CV syllables can stand in final position only for the consonant, as in **b'a-la-m(a)** for *b'ahlam* 'jaguar', or in contexts of phonetic complementation to logograms ending in consonants, as in the examples we saw before of **TUN-ni** and **K'IN-ni**, as a rule, Aztec phonograms provide always the complete CV value to the spelling. That is why Aztec glyphic spellings are so abbreviated. Common final endings in /tl/, -/k/, or -/n/ are not shown, nor are no final phonetic complementation to logograms ending in a consonant because Aztec scribes did not use tIV, kV or nV or any CV sign in general to represent the final consonant. That is why we have complete initial and final examples of phonetic complementation when logograms start and/or end in vowels, but only examples of initial complementation when they end in a consonant. Writing in Colonial times the Spanish name *Anton*, written **a-to**, is not an imperfection of the system. It is an

example of the rigid application of Aztec orthographic rules, which cannot use CV syllabograms for their consonantal value. Abbreviation is not a failure of the system, but is instead firmly rooted in tradition and scribal practices. The earlier writing from which the Aztec one stems, known as Epi-classic writing ultimately derived from Teotihuacan script, probably exhibited this same orthographic convention. The same origin and tradition also explain the absence of long texts including verbal information in Aztec writing. Again, Central Mexican Epi-classic scripts ultimately deriving from Teotihuacan exhibit this same specialization of writing in the spelling of common and proper names, place names, as well as calendrical and arithmetic information. Aztecs were extremely conservative in their use of writing, in much the same way as their cultural forebears in central Mexico.

Since writing systems are classified according to the kind of signs used for recording language, the existence of a large number of logograms as well as a structured repertory of syllabic phonetic signs classifies the Aztec script as a logo-syllabic writing system, wholly comparable to Sumerian, Akkadian, Linear B, Hieroglyphic Luwian, and Maya. The traditional assumption that Aztec writing plays an exceptional role in the History of Writing is therefore incorrect and unfounded. The decipherment of Maya writing in the past few decades, and the systematization and decipherment of Aztec writing, which is now underway, demonstrate that from a grammatical point of view there is no difference between Old and New World scripts, and therefore there is no justification for the way in which we study them. In fact, as also happened with Maya writing, it is only when the study of Mesoamerican writing systems is placed within the theoretical and methodological framework of grammatology that decipherment is possible.

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# **La escritura jeroglífica náhuatl en las copias del Lienzo de Tlaxcala**

MARGARITA COSSICH VIELMAN

Posgrado en Estudios Mesoamericanos

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

(cossichmargarita@yahoo.com)

**Resumen:** Uno de los documentos gráficos más importantes para estudiar la conquista de México y Centroamérica es el *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*. Aunque no se conoce el paradero del documento original se cuenta con tres copias del mismo. La primera realizada por Diego Muñoz Camargo en el siglo XVI, la segunda, por Juan Manuel Yllanes en el siglo XVIII y la tercera por Alfredo Chavero en el siglo XIX. Cada una de las copias presenta diferencias respecto a las otras lo cual hace importante su análisis en conjunto. Para este artículo me centraré en los signos escriturarios y las diferentes interpretaciones hechas por cada copista. Luego de analizar los jeroglíficos de estas tres copias propongo que el autor de la copia más temprana conocía el funcionamiento del sistema de escritura jeroglífico náhuatl y por esto decidió, en algunas ocasiones, hacerlo evidente mediante glosas. Por su parte, los otros dos copistas ya no conocían el repertorio de signos de dicha escritura confundiendo algunos signos escriturarios con imágenes.

**Abstract:** The *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* is one of the most relevant pictorial documents for the study of the Spanish conquest of Mexico and Central America. The current location of the original *Lienzo* is unknown, although there are three known copies of this document. The first of these copies was made by Diego Muñoz Camargo during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Juan Manuel Yllanes elaborated the second copy during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and, finally, the third copy was made by Alfredo Chavero in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Each of these copies present particularities which make their comprehensive analysis an important task. In this article, I focus on the scriptural signs and the interpretations developed by each of the three copyists. After the analysis of the hieroglyphs, I propose that the copyist who made the earliest copy of the *Lienzo* was well aware of how Nahuatl hieroglyphic writing worked; accordingly he decided to make a statement about his writing skills in some instances. The other two copyists, on the contrary, were not knowledgeable any more on the repertoire of signs of Nahuatl writing, which made them to incur in misidentifications of scriptural signs and images.

Desde 2012 se lleva a cabo el congreso internacional “La Gramatología y los sistemas de escritura mesoamericanos” en la Ciudad de México, organizado por Erik Velásquez. En 2017, este evento estuvo dedicado a Alfonso Lacadena y al aporte de sus investigaciones tanto en la escritura jeroglífica maya como en la náhuatl. Esta actividad nos dio la oportunidad, a muchos de los alumnos de Alfonso, de verlo, discutir, reír y abrazarlo por última vez. El trabajo que aquí presento fue expuesto dentro de este congreso y apro-

vecho para publicarlo en este volumen en homenaje a Alfonso, quien pasará a la historia como el sistematizador de la escritura jeroglífica náhuatl. En su artículo del *PARI Journal* (2008) sobre esta escritura, Alfonso exhortó a los investigadores a analizar todos los ejemplos de escritura jeroglífica náhuatl que existieran. Sirva este artículo como abono a esta investigación que comenzó Alfonso y como un homenaje a quien, al abrir una ventana en el estudio de la escritura jeroglífica náhuatl, mostró, sin saberlo, todo un abanico de nuevas oportunidades en mi vida.

## Introducción

En 1552, el virrey Luis de Velasco solicitó la elaboración del *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* para dar a conocer el trabajo realizado por la provincia de Tlaxcala en la Conquista con el objetivo de obtener mercedes, exenciones e indulgencias (Brito 2016: 55). El *Lienzo* fue elaborado a finales del siglo XVI por cuatro linajes tlaxcaltecas (provenientes de Ocotelulco, Tizatlán, Quiahuiztlán y Tepeticpac) que acompañaron a los españoles en la conquista de lo que hoy conocemos como México y Centroamérica.

Actualmente, se desconoce el paradero de la versión original, la cual fue vista por última vez en 1787 por Don Nicolás José Faustino Mazihatzin Calmecahua y Escobar (regidor y alcalde del Ayuntamiento de Tlaxcala y de origen tlaxcalteca), quien, a pesar de no saber náhuatl, realizó una interpretación que fue publicada por Antonio León y Gama (Brito 2016: 55–56).

Don Nicolás es quien reporta la existencia de tres copias. La primera se llevó a España por los mismos tlaxcaltecas, mientras que la segunda y la tercera se quedaron en la Ciudad de México y en el Ayuntamiento de Tlaxcala, respectivamente. En la actualidad se desconoce la ubicación de estas tres primeras copias. La última de éstas sirvió de base para realizar otra copia por Juan Manuel Yllanes del Huerto en 1773. De la copia de Yllanes se elaboraron otras tres: una fue enviada a París en 1889 y se desconoce su destino, otra fechada para 1933 se encuentra en la Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia y, la última (s. XIX), se localiza en la Universidad de Tulane. Otras copias parciales del documento se ubican en Austin y en San Francisco Ocotelulco (Brito 2016: 57).



**Figura 1.** Esquema del *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* realizado por Antonio Jaramillo Arango basado en la copia de Alfredo Chavero (1892).

En este trabajo me centraré en cuatro copias de tres siglos diferentes (XVI, XVIII y XIX), con el fin de dar una lectura gramatológica a los signos escriturarios del *Lienzo* que refieren topónimos y antropónimos y definir el repertorio de jeroglíficos que utilizaron los tlaxcaltecas en este documento, evidenciando el uso de logogramas y casi nulo uso de fonogramas. A través de este análisis quedará claro que el repertorio de signos es el mismo que aparece en otros documentos como el *Memorial de los Indios de Tepetlaoztoc*, la *Matrícula de Tributos* y otros (ver Lacadena 2008; Davletshin 2009; Cossich 2014), salvo en muy pocas excepciones.

### **El Lienzo de Tlaxcala**

La versión más popular del *Lienzo* es la de Alfredo Chavero (1892), que a pesar de haber sido publicada en formato de láminas dentro de un libro europeo se sabe que constituía un lienzo cuadriculado. El *Lienzo* se puede dividir en dos partes (Figura 1). La parte superior, configurada por un rectángulo donde se observa la organización política tlaxcalteca dividida en cuatro cabeceras del cabildo de Tlaxcala. Cada una de las cabeceras está representada por su líder que lleva frente a él la insignia que lo representa y detrás la respectiva edificación que era parte de su jurisdicción. Todos los líderes miran hacia el centro de la imagen donde se encuentra un cerro, una virgen, una cruz y varios dirigentes españoles (ver Navarrete Linares 2007; Martínez Baracs 2016: 80; Brito 2016: 97).

La parte inferior se encuentra debajo del rectángulo y se conforma por una serie de 87 cuadros que constituyen los relatos del pacto establecido entre tlaxcaltecas y españoles y la historia de la conquista. En esta segunda parte se relatan, una a una, las conquistas realizadas por esta dupla y todas las imágenes repiten la misma escena: los españoles en caballos junto a indígenas tlaxcaltecas del lado izquierdo, venciendo a los indígenas conquistados ubicados a su derecha. En la parte superior derecha aparece el topónimo del lugar conquistado con jeroglíficos acompañados de glosas en caracteres alfabéticos.

En el esquema de Chavero todas las imágenes están coloridas menos las siete últimas que solo presentan los cuadros delineados sin imágenes en su interior.

## Copias del Lienzo de Tlaxcala

Como he mencionado antes, para este estudio analicé la escritura jeroglífica de cuatro copias del *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*: 1) la copia que se encuentra en Glasgow, Escocia, realizada en el s. XVI por Muñoz Camargo (2000[1585]), 2) la copia de Yllanes (s. XVIII) que se ubica en la Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia (Alemán Ramírez 2016) y 3) la publicada por Chavero en el s. XIX (Chavero 1892). Existe una copia del *Lienzo* que no presenta las mismas imágenes de los otros tres ejemplares. Estos corresponden a dos fragmentos originales localizados en la Colección Lee Benson de la Universidad de Austin en Texas, y son los únicos ejemplares que presentan jeroglíficos para antropónimos.

### El Lienzo de Tlaxcala de Diego Muñoz Camargo

Según René Acuña (2000), este lienzo fue manufacturado en el siglo XVI y es una copia que se encuentra dentro de la obra de Diego Muñoz Camargo *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de la Nueva España e Indias del Mar Océano, para el buen gobierno y ennoblecimiento dellas*. Este documento presenta 156 escenas y fue realizado por tres amanuenses. Se sabe que corresponde al original de las *Relaciones Geográficas* enviadas a Felipe II entre 1583 y 1585. El original se encuentra en Glasgow, Escocia, por lo que se le conoce como el *Manuscrito de Glasgow*. Esta versión se elaboró con tinta negra, sin el uso de colores.

### El Lienzo de Tlaxcala de Juan Manuel Yllanes del Huerto

Esta copia, que se encuentra en la Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, fue realizada por Yllanes en 1773 y consta de cuatro lienzos. Dentro de estos se cuentan 87 láminas y presenta delineado negro con colores (Brito 2016).

### El Lienzo de Tlaxcala de Alfredo Chavero

Esta copia fue publicada en 1892, presenta numeración en la parte superior derecha, que va del 1 al 80, más la página principal. Esta versión fue elaborada con distintos colores (Chavero 1892).

## **El Lienzo de Tlaxcala de la Colección Nettie Lee Benson**

Se localiza en la Universidad de Texas en Austin. Únicamente se encuentran dos hojas de papel de maguey donde se relata la llegada de Hernán Cortés a Tlaxcala. Las imágenes fueron reproducidas por el padre Mariano Cuevas en su obra *Historia de la Iglesia en México* (Brito 2016: 57) y no presenta similitud con ninguna de las otras tres copias. Esta versión incluye la representación de escenas diferentes y se realizó en delineado de tinta negra y colores (ver Biblioteca Digital Mexicana [s.f.])

### **Comentarios sobre las copias**

La copia de la Universidad de Austin únicamente presenta dos páginas con nueve onomásticos. De estos nueve casos, ocho corresponden a los nombres de los cuatro gobernantes de Tlaxcala que se repiten dos veces cada uno y un topónimo.

Sobre las otras tres copias analizadas se puede decir que solamente los nombres indígenas tienen jeroglíficos asociados y junto a estos se encuentran glosas alfabéticas, a diferencia del *Códice de Tlatelolco* donde los nombres de españoles también están escritos con jeroglíficos. Curiosamente, solo los personajes masculinos presentan sus nombres jeroglíficos, nunca las mujeres. La única mujer que presenta glosa alfabética, no jeroglífico, es Marina.

Ninguna de las tres copias del *Lienzo* presenta escritura jeroglífica en las primeras páginas. Estas páginas refieren la conversión de los indígenas al catolicismo y la presentación de la organización política de los tlaxcaltecas, representando a sus gobernantes, sus insignias y sus casas. De las tres copias, la de Yllanes y la de Chavero son muy similares en esta primera parte, mientras que la de Muñoz Camargo presenta más detallado el momento de la transformación al catolicismo a través del bautizo y el cambio en las vestiduras. Además, se observa lo que quemaron los sacerdotes en las hogueras: imágenes, ropa y personas; así como los ahorcamientos por la reincidencia de los idolatras (Figura 2). En esta copia se retratan a Felipe II, Carlos V y Francisco Pizarro, y se incluye la imagen de Cortés y la mención a Cristóbal Colón.

Entre las copias de Yllanes y Chavero existe más similitud, mientras que la de Muñoz Camargo parece ser diferente. La ventaja de



Figura 2. Quema de signos de idolatría (Acuña 1981: Cuadro 13).

tener tres versiones de un mismo documento es que al comparar las versiones se esclarecen dudas que pueden surgir sobre la escritura jeroglífica y las imágenes. Por ejemplo, en el cuadro 36 de la versión de Muñoz Camargo no se encuentra el topónimo, mientras que en la lámina 9 de las otras dos copias sí aparece.

La copia de Muñoz Camargo presenta muchas más láminas que las otras dos copias. Esta obra se puede dividir en dos secciones: la primera trata sobre la evangelización y la segunda detalla las conquistas realizadas. La segunda parte tiene total correspondencia

con las copias de Yllanes y Chavero. Las copias de Yllanes y Chavero llegan hasta la parte de Guatemala, mientras que la de Muñoz Camargo representa las conquistas en El Salvador y Nicaragua.

Sobre la primera parte de la copia de Muñoz Camargo es importante decir que ésta consta de 27 escenas que no se encuentran en las otras dos copias, e incluyen representaciones que van desde la quema de imágenes religiosas indígenas hasta la presentación de Pizarro y Cortés como conquistadores.

De la primera parte de la copia de Muñoz Camargo llama la atención una de las representaciones de Francisco Pizarro (Figura 3) que es la única imagen (cuadro 22) donde aparece de espaldas un personaje y su caballo. Esta manera de representar a los personajes no es típica de los documentos prehispánicos. Más bien, esta representación recuerda al *Códice Azcatitlán* donde algunas imágenes están en perspectiva y presenta a los personajes de espalda.

La copia de Yllanes y la de Chavero no presentan escritura jeroglífica en la página principal. La escritura jeroglífica comienza ante la necesidad de nombrar los topónimos de los lugares conquistados, esto es a partir de la lámina 3. Las láminas 1 y 2, que corresponden a Tlaxcala y Oliyocan, aunque refieren a topónimos no presentan escritura jeroglífica. En todos los ejemplos que presentan el topónimo escrito en jeroglíficos éste siempre se ubica en la esquina superior derecha de la imagen.

### **Muñoz Camargo y su versión**

Para terminar con la descripción de los detalles de las copias creo necesario hacer hincapié en tres escenas de la copia de Muñoz Camargo que me hacen pensar que el autor estaba tratando de ocultar la escritura jeroglífica entre las imágenes.

El primer ejemplo se encuentra en los cuadros 20 y 23 donde en la insignia que lleva a cuestas Marina, glosada una vez como <la nueva España> y la otra como <mexico>, se observa una edificación y sobre ella un nopal que representa el logograma NOCH de Tenochtitlán (Figura 4).

En el Cuadro 30 se encuentra el segundo ejemplo, el topónimo está colocado en la esquina inferior derecha del encuadre, como si



Figura 3. Francisco Pizarro (Acuña 1981: Cuadro 22).

fuer parte de la imagen, pero en realidad representa el topónimo Tecocoaczinco, escrito como *te-KOA* (Figura 5).

El tercer ejemplo se encuentra en el Cuadro 19, en éste se observa una fila de nueve gobernantes cargando sus respectivas insignias. Xicotencatl lidera esta alineación y lo reconocemos por su *matlatl* con nudos. La glosa que acompaña esta imagen dice (Figura 6):



Figura 4. Logograma NOCH para nombrar Tenochtitlán (Acuña 1981: Cuadro 20).

Guatemala, Chiapa, Coixco, Mechoacan, Xalisco, Culhuacan, Totonacapa, Tlaxcala, Panco, Guaxaca.

Éstas son las provincias y rei[n]os que conquistó Her[nan]do Cortés. Marqués del Valle, y otras muchas que no se escriben.



Figura 5. Tecozzingo escrito como **te<sub>2</sub>-KOA** (Acuña 1981: Cuadro 30).

Entre esta glosa y la lista de gobernantes se encuentra una banda con textos jeroglíficos que incluyen los topónimos de cada uno de los diez lugares. **K<sup>W</sup>AW<sub>1</sub>, a, KOA, MICH, XAL-ix, KOL, PAN, TONAL, TLAXKAL**. Dentro de este listado hay un jeroglífico que se encuentra mal ubicado y que posiblemente represente a **WAX**. A pesar de que son diez topónimos solo se encuentran las figuras de nueve personajes.



Figura 6. Gobernantes con topónimos en escritura jeroglífica náhuatl (Acuña 1981: Cuadro 19).

### Análisis de la escritura jeroglífica

Para analizar la escritura realicé una lectura de todos los topónimos y antropónimos de las tres copias y los dos fragmentos. De los 290 onomásticos reportados, los antropónimos fueron escritos solamente en nueve ocasiones y ocho provienen de las páginas que se encuentran en Austin. En la mayoría de los casos, el topónimo está escrito con un solo logograma ( $n=165$ ). Luego se encuentra la composición de logograma con silabograma ( $n=38$ ), seguida por la composición de dos logogramas ( $n=23$ ), solo silabogramas ( $n=15$ ), la



Figura 7. Coatlan escrito como ko-KOA (Acuña 1981: Cuadro 150).

composición de dos silabogramas ( $n=4$ ) y, por último, los topónimos que no pude leer ( $n=19$ ). El repertorio de jeroglíficos de estos escribas está compuesto por 79 logogramas y 8 silabogramas. No hay ningún nombre que tenga en su composición más de dos logogramas. Los únicos silabogramas reportados son **a**, **ix**, **ko**, **mi**, **pa**, **pi**, **po**, **te<sub>2</sub>**. En las 6 veces que aparece el silabograma **te**, se utilizó la variante de piedra y no de labios (Tabla 1).

Solamente una vez se observa complementación fonética (Figura 7) y se encuentra en la copia de Muñoz Camargo en el Cuadro 150, donde se representa el topónimo Coatlan y está escrito como **ko-KOA**.

	Muñoz Camargo	Yllanes	Chavero	Austin	Total
<b>a</b>	20	4	6	3	33
<b>ix</b>	3	1	0	0	4
<b>ko</b>	2	1	1	0	4
<b>mi</b>	1	0	0	0	1
<b>pa</b>	2	1	0	0	3
<b>pi</b>	1	1	1	0	3
<b>po</b>	2	0	1	0	3
<b>te<sub>2</sub></b>	5	0	1	0	6
<b>Total</b>	36	8	10	3	57

Tabla 1. Silabogramas utilizados.

Algo interesante de destacar es que, dependiendo de la copia, se pueden hacer diferentes lecturas. La lámina 80 tiene la glosa Ytzcuintepec. El diseño en la versión de Chavero es un perro con manchas negras. En la versión de Yllanes el perro no aparece, mientras que en la de Muñoz Camargo el canino no presenta manchas. Esta confusión surge porque existen dos palabras en náhuatl que comparten la raíz chichi: *chichitli* ‘mancha’ (Molina 2008[1571]: 20) y *chichi* ‘perro’ (Molina 2008[1571]: 19v) y éste podría ser un ejemplo de escritura doble pero en este caso la glosa nos ayuda a leer el logograma como **ITZK<sup>W</sup>IN** de *itzkwintli* ‘perro’ (Molina 2008[1571]: 95).

La Lámina 26, en la copia de Chavero parece decir **TEMALAKA-AKA**, pero en la copia de Yllanes es **TEMALAKA** y en lugar de tener las cañas tiene **NOCH**, esto porque seguramente Yllanes no comprendió el logograma de ‘caña’ y lo confundió con la representación del ‘nopal’.

En la Lámina 27 y el Cuadro 54 tenemos ejemplos de malas interpretaciones de los copistas (Figura 8). Esta imagen representa la llegada a Xaltelolco (Tlatelolco) y el encuentro con Citlalpopocatzin, ambos onomásticos están representados con escritura jeroglífica en las tres copias. En la copia de Yllanes no aparece la arena de **XAL**, el copista la interpretó como grama, lo cual hace que su lectura se pierda; además el autor no colocó el jeroglífico antropónimo de Citlalpopocatzin, mientras que la copia de Chavero presenta **XAL** de *xalli* ‘arena’ (Molina 2008[1571]: 13), **SITLA** de *sitlalli* ‘estrella’ (Molina 2008[1571]: 61) y, además, el silabograma **po** de *poktli* ‘hacer humo’ (Molina 2008[1571]: 72v). En la copia de Chavero, la insignia que



Figura 8. Xaltelolco, XAL y Citlalpopocatzin SITLA-po (Acuña 1981: Cuadro 54).

cargan los indígenas en el lado derecho de la imagen está mal interpretada como un rostro de perfil con grecas en la parte superior. Por su parte, en la copia de Muñoz Camargo aparece XAL, SITLA y, posiblemente, po. Como vemos en otros ejemplos, este copista interpretó la insignia como el cuerpo de un ave desplumada colgada.

El último ejemplo que mostraré proviene del Cuadro 66 o Lámina 39, donde se glosa el nombre del lugar Itzucan pero no queda claro si



Figura 9. Itzucan, ITZ (Acuña 1981: Cuadro 66).

en las copias de Yllanes y Chavero es el logograma ITZ o es una “raya” en la imagen. Esta duda se resuelve al revisar la versión de Muñoz Camargo quien coloca el logograma ITZ al centro de la imagen y lo glosa con caracteres latinos en castellano como <navaja> (Figura 9). Este ejemplo nos demuestra que Muñoz Camargo sabía que esto era un signo de escritura y que la imagen se podía confundir fácilmente



Figura 10. Albert Davletshin, Alfonso Lacadena y la autora, octubre 2017 (fotografía de Alejandra Martínez de Velasco).

y por eso lo glosó, es el único ejemplo que tenemos de glosa en el centro de la escena.

Cuando inicié el análisis creí que las lecturas iban a ser muy diferentes dependiendo del copista. Sin embargo, este no fue el caso y los copistas se mantuvieron en las generalidades de la representación de la escritura jeroglífica, ya fuera entendiéndola o no.

## Discusión

Como se pudo observar, esta comparación entre los ejemplares permite entender que el repertorio de signos usados en el *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* corresponde al mismo que fue utilizado por la escuela de escribas de Tenochtitlán y por la de Texcoco propuestas por Lacadena (2008). Esta comparación entre los repertorios escriturarios enfatiza la necesidad de realizar análisis completos de todos los documentos disponibles, tal como lo convocara Alfonso Lacadena.

A pesar de que las tres copias son muy parecidas y representan en su mayoría los mismos signos, la copia de Muñoz Camargo es dife-

rente y presenta datos que no tienen las otras dos copias. Muñoz Camargo conocía el sistema de escritura jeroglífica náhuatl y por esto le dio un lugar privilegiado a los signos de escritura. Sin lugar a dudas, en algunas ocasiones el autor no estaba seguro del valor de lectura de algunos signos pero aun así decidió evidenciar el sistema.

Siguiendo el llamado de Alfonso a trabajar todos los documentos disponibles con escritura jeroglífica, próximamente publicaré un estudio del *Lienzo de Quauhquechollan* desde una perspectiva gramatológica, en donde resalto la importancia de las contribuciones de Alfonso Lacadena y Albert Davletshin sobre el tema (Figura 10).

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# **The Epi-Olmec Text on a Teotihuacan-Style Mask with Special Reference to Ritual Practices Referred to in Epi-Olmec Hieroglyphic Texts**

JOHN JUSTESON  
University at Albany, SUNY  
(justeson@gmail.com)

TERENCE KAUFMAN  
University of Pittsburgh  
(kaanbahlam@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** This paper presents an analysis and reading of the second-longest epi-Olmec text that is currently known to scholarship—a text of 104 signs inscribed on the inside of a stone mask in Teotihuacan style. It explains and illustrates the chronological, grammatical, lexical, and semantic features that constrain the analysis of this and other epi-Olmec texts. Comparison with other epi-Olmec texts makes it possible to recognize recurrent features and sequences of epi-Olmec rituals, and differences between rituals involving auto-sacrifice and those involving the sacrifice of another human being.

**Resumen:** En este estudio se presenta el análisis y la lectura de un texto epiolmeca escrito en la superficie interior de una máscara de piedra en el estilo de Teotihuacán. Con 104 signos, este texto es el segundo más largo de todos los textos epiolmecas conocidos. El estudio explica e ilustra los rasgos cronológicos, gramáticos, léxicos, y semánticos que rigen el análisis de este texto y de otros textos epiolmecas. La comparación con otros textos epiolmecas facilita el reconocimiento de rasgos recurrentes de los rituales epiolmecas y su secuencia cronológica, así como las diferencias entre rituales que involucran el auto-sacrificio, por un lado, y el sacrificio de otro ser humano, por el otro.

We got to know Alfonso Lacadena in the late 1990s, while attending the Maya Meetings at the University of Texas. Alfonso epitomized what being a scholar should be, personally and professionally: an engaged academic, exploring alternatives openly and honestly, following paths of research wherever they led. He was generously willing to share his insights, eager to know what others' insights were, and straightforward—not aggressive or hostile—when he disagreed with them.

He was knowledgeable about script and iconography in various subregions of Mesoamerica, and made important contributions to the interpretation of Epigraphic Mayan texts, and circum-conquest Nawa texts.

Alfonso was an early explorer of the grammatical structures of words attested in Mayan hieroglyphic texts, beginning with his recognition of antipassive constructions, and was one of few to make really significant contributions concerning the evolution of Mayan hieroglyphic writing.

Most importantly, Alfonso raised people up. He encouraged and assisted the professionalization of younger colleagues, students and strangers alike. He used his talents and accomplishments to assist established professionals and aspiring colleagues alike. In our case, he was almost entirely responsible for providing Epigraphic Mayan cognates for entries in the first edition of our Preliminary Mayan Etymological Dictionary (Kaufman with Justeson 2003).

We miss the fruitful conversations we had with him, the care and insight he brought to the understanding of ancient Mayan languages and their textual expression, and the person he was. We dedicate this study to his memory.

This article applies our previous work on the decipherment of epi-Olmec writing to the analysis, reading, and interpretation of a text that had been unknown to scholarship when that work was carried out, and is the second longest epi-Olmec text now known. No revisions in our earlier readings of any syllabogram proves to be required, but the set of interpretable syllabograms and logograms has been increased by the new data. It addresses recurring facets of the structure and content of epi-Olmec hieroglyphic texts, and the cultural practices they record or reflect. It focuses on the event structure of epi-Olmec rituals as they come to light in the longest epi-Olmec texts, supplemented by data from shorter texts and from iconographic representations of elements of epi-Olmec rituals.

This article has two main parts: Part I presents our reading of this text, and exploits it to advance the decipherment of the epi-Olmec writing system. As in our previous work, doing this hinges on establishing its conformity with the grammatical structure and vocabulary of reconstructed proto-Sokean and/or preproto-Sokean (for which see especially Kaufman and Justeson 2004a and Wichmann 1995).<sup>1</sup> Working out the grammatical structure of the text depends

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<sup>1</sup> Mije-Sokean is a family of languages with a common ancestor, called “proto-Mije-Sokean” (pMS). Proto-Mijean (pMi) is the last common ancestor of the Mijean languages, and pro-

crucially upon the pattern of use of syllabograms whose pronunciation corresponds to high-frequency obligatory inflectional affixes and on the most productive derivational affixes that have *CV* (=consonant-vowel) or *CVC* pronunciations. Working out the meaning of the text depends on the constraints provided by correlating reconstructed Sokean vocabulary with the text's patterning of previously read signs, syllabic and logographic, and on clues to meaning and to sentence structure that are provided by calendrical statements; not only do patterns of dates provide information on meaning, but in epi-Olmec texts they are almost always followed by a sentence and so constrain the grammatical analysis.

Part II exploits this text to focus on those features that are most important for characterizing epi-Olmec ritual patterns. It is notable that, in spite of its connection to Teotihuacan and possibly to Teotihuacan ritual practices, the ritual acts mentioned in the text, and their sequence, are consistent with those attested in the La Mojarra and Tuxtla Statuette texts. Part II identifies the ritual acts mentioned in these three texts, the regularities in the cultural contexts of different kinds of ritual events, in the sequencing of individual ritual acts within them, and the overall scheduling of these events in terms of a specifically epi-Olmec calendrical cycle.

## The epi-Olmec cultural context

Archaeologists working in the Olmec area have recognized four broad temporal phases of the Olmec cultural tradition.

The structural and stylistic design features diagnostic of “Classical” Olmec artifacts first appear in the Early Preclassic, Lowe’s (1989) “Initial Olmec” period. In this era, material manifestations of higher-level community organization and controlling elites are recognized in and around San Lorenzo in the south, Tres Zapotes to

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to-Sokean (pSo) is the last common ancestor of the Sokean languages. Proto-Sokean had two descendants: proto-Soke (pSoke), the ancestor of the Chiapas Soke languages and of the Oaxaca Soke languages; and proto-Gulf Sokean, the ancestor of Soteapan Gulf Sokean and of Texistepc and Ayapa Gulf Sokean. The epi-Olmec texts were written in Sokean. The earliest are clearly preproto-Sokean: they are in the Sokean branch, but retain archaisms—proto-Mije-Sokean characteristics that were lost by the proto-Sokean stage. No preproto-Sokean archaisms have been recognized in the latest epi-Olmec texts, from the Classic period—including the mask text and the inscriptions of Cerro de las Mesas. Neither do we recognize clear innovations; but since the latest dated Classic text is 568 years after the earliest, some of the vocabulary and grammar must be different.

the north-west, and La Venta to the north-east. The Olmec colossal heads, quintessential markers of this period of the tradition, date to this era and are associated with just these three sites, but major Olmec centers are also found elsewhere in the region.

Olmec material culture continues at these sites in the Middle Preclassic (c. 900–600 BCE), Lowe's "Intermediate Olmec" period, and spreads to the Chiapas highlands with a center at Chiapa de Corzo in the Chiapas highlands. Recognizably Olmec material culture traditions continued into what Lowe (1989) labels the "Terminal Olmec" phase (c. 600–300 BCE) at La Venta, Chiapa de Corzo, and Tres Zapotes.

These traditions continue, in altered form, at Tres Zapotes and neighboring communities in the north-west and at Chiapa de Corzo in the south, in Lowe's "epi-Olmec" period (c. 300–1 BCE). Both of these sites, and their environs, have been subject to detailed and long-term archaeological investigation, Tres Zapotes by Christopher Pool and colleagues and Chiapa de Corzo by the New World Archaeological Foundation.

Lowe (1989: 61–65) summarizes the beginnings of the epi-Olmec cultural tradition, when "the traditional markers of Olmec culture come to an end", around 300 BCE. In the easternmost part of the Olmec northern Isthmian plain, including the site of La Venta, Terminal Olmec ceramic assemblages were replaced and monuments were "typologically very distinct" (Lowe 1989: 61, 63) from Olmec norms; Olmec culture is thought to have been replaced there. At San Lorenzo, and at that site alone, ceramic assemblages continue Olmec patterns in the Remplás complex (Coe 1970: 30–31; 1981: 134; Lowe 1989: 63), but with no new architecture, sculpture, or other traces of high-level political/administrative activity. Rust (2008: 91) reports local centers, after a hiatus, between 300 BCE and 250 CE in the vicinity of La Venta. Von Nagy (personal communication, 2018) tells us that there is too little data to form a clear picture of the settlement hierarchy in the Isthmus generally, because of insufficient archaeological investigation.

Administrative centers showing continuity in ceramic assemblages and stylistic features persisted in the "highlands" of the Chiapas Depression, including Chiapa de Corzo, and in the Papaloapan Basin. For the Papaloapan region, Coe made its relationship to the Olmec tradition explicit: he characterized the Tuxtla Statuette as "a

small jade figure in epi-Olmec style” (Coe 1962: 94), and Tres Zapotes Stela C, “with an epi-Olmec mask” (Coe 1965: 696), as works of art “in a style which is derivative from Olmec, but not in the true canon” (Coe 1962: 92). These two objects bear the first known examples of the epi-Olmec writing system.

Chiapa de Corzo and the Papaloapan Basin, though separated by 200 miles, had been in contact in Terminal Olmec times, and remained in contact in the epi-Olmec era. A notable exemplification comes from the extraordinary Tomb 7 of Chiapa de Corzo Mound 1, dating to 100 BCE (Clark 2017: 271 and personal communication, 2018). The figure buried in this tomb was surrounded by 35 ceramic vessels, “all apparently imported from other regions of Mesoamerica” (Lowe and Agrinier 1960: 47–50)—from Oaxaca (3), El Salvador (5), Guatemala (12), and from Veracruz (6 surely, 6 probably, 3 possibly). Lowe and Mason (1965: 215) indicate that the Veracruz origin of three of these vessels, from “the Los Tuxtlas region”, is confirmed by paste analysis.

In the epi-Olmec period, no directionality can be determined, but several diagnostically epi-Olmec features of elite culture were shared by Chiapa de Corzo and the area from Tres Zapotes to the Laguna de Alvarado in the Terminal Preclassic era:

1. the epi-Olmec script, which appears on at least eight objects from the Papaloapan Basin—Tres Zapotes Stela C, the Tuxtla Statuette, the La Mojarra stela, the Alvarado stela, and at least four monuments from Cerro de las Mesas—and otherwise only at Chiapa de Corzo, on a potsherd and likely also on a wall panel (not one example is known from the Isthmus);<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> With no epi-Olmec text known to come from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, the use of the term “Isthmian” for this script, championed by Houston and Coe, is an oxymoron. The ten epi-Olmec texts with known provenience were found in archaeological zones outside the Isthmus; the other (two) known epi-Olmec texts, in private collections, are of unknown provenience. Neither has any other trace of the epi-Olmec cultural tradition yet been found in the Isthmus—neither diagnostic archaeological assemblages nor even one epi-Olmec object. Justeson (1986: 447), in a frankly careless revision of Lowe’s “Greater Isthmian tradition” term, made the error of introducing the term “Isthmian” for the epi-Olmec script on a presumption that it would have had a continuous distribution, thus from two southern attestations at epi-Olmec Chiapa de Corzo to the more numerous northern examples at epi-Olmec Cerro de las Mesas.

Houston and Coe (2003: n1) embrace the factually inaccurate term “Isthmian” and, quoting us out of context, claim that we use the term epi-Olmec (a) because of our be-

2. epi-Olmec design elements, that appear on the carved human femurs from Chiapa de Corzo (Agrinier 1960) and at Tres Zapotes, La Mojarra and El Mesón (e.g., Justeson and Kaufman 2008: 175–176);
3. long-count chronology, on the Chiapa de Corzo wall panel (a.k.a. “Stela” 2) and on Tres Zapotes Stela C, the Tuxtla Statuette, the La Mojarra stela, and Cerro de las Mesas Stela 5, 6, and 8;
4. dates recorded in a distinctively epi-Olmec calendrical cycle, discussed below, which occur on the Chiapa de Corzo wall panel, the La Mojarra stela, and three monuments from Cerro de las Mesas.

## Epi-Olmec calendrics and chronology

It has long been known that epi-Olmec and Mayan long count dates have the same calibration to the divinatory calendar (cf. Morley’s comments quoted by Holmes 1907: 698; Morley 1915: 196; Proskouriakoff 1950: 186; Coe 1957: 606–607). Table 1 presents the epi-Olmec

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lieving that “the archaeological cultures of the area descended from that of the Olmecs”, and—clearly falsely—(b) that we believe this “because” (their word) “the script itself may descend from an Olmec hieroglyphic system” (suppressing the remainder of the sentence in which we say that there is no evidence for this possibility). They further claim, on no evidence whatsoever, that we “appear to favor ‘epi-Olmec’ because it buttresses a separate argument, made by Campbell and Kaufman (1976), that the Olmecs spoke Mixe-Zoquean languages” (Houston and Coe 2003: n1).

In fact, we adopted “epi-Olmec” to refer to the script because that was the standard term being used at the time by archaeologists working in the region, notably in the then-recent landmark synthesis by Gareth Lowe (1989). Houston and Coe’s claims are the more misleading because the term was not introduced by us but by Coe himself, in the early 1960s (see discussion in text, above). Coe’s term was adopted and repeatedly used by specialists on the region. The first to do so seems to have been his mentor, Gordon Willey, who used it repeatedly from shortly after Coe introduced it (e.g., Willey 1969), and applied it specifically to the La Mojarra stela (Willey 1990) before our own joint work on epi-Olmec writing began. It was generally adopted by the leading archaeologists investigating the epi-Olmec cultural tradition (e.g., his student Barbara Stark), and in particular, it is the term used by Lowe in his (1989) state-of-the-art synthesis on the heartland Olmec cultural tradition, and earlier publications (e.g., Lowe 1981: 242). We, and most others working on the script after George Stuart distributed his drawing of La Mojarra Stela 1, adopted it from this literature, as a purely descriptive identifier—apart from incorporating the fact that the tradition, as Coe stated, is derivative from but not identical to Olmec. It is Houston and Coe who are revisionist here—of Coe’s own contributions and thinking, and judging from their framing of the matter in personal attacks, as a matter of academic politics rather than substantive issues.

epi-Olmec monument	long count	divinatory calendar date		date in 365-day year	
		epi-Olmec	Mayan	epi-Olmec	Mayan
Chiapa de Corzo	wall panel	7.16.3.2.13	6 Reed (XIII)	6 XIII	16 VI
Tres Zapotes	Stela C	7.16.6.16.18	6 ??	6 XVIII	? II
La Mojarra	stela	8.5.3.3.5	13 Snake (V)	13 V	3 ?
La Mojarra	stela	8.5.16.9.7	5 Deer (VII)	5 VII	15 (snake) I
"Tuxtla"	statuette	8.6.2.4.17	8 ??	8 XVII	0 XIV
Cerro d.l. Mesas	Stela 6	9.1.12.14.10	1 Dog (X)	1 X	3 XIX
Cerro d.l. Mesas	Stela 5	9.4.14.1.4	7 ??	7 IV	12 VIII
Cerro d.l. Mesas	Stela 8	9.4.18.16.8	9 ??	9 VIII	11 IV

**Table 1.** Epi-Olmec long count dates, showing that epi-Olmec divinatory calendar dates agree with Mayan for each long count date.

dates expressed in long count notation whose divinatory calendar dates are wholly or partially known. For each one, the trecena numeral is the same as if the long count were Mayan, and when the form of the epi-Olmec day sign agrees with those of early Mayan and other Mesoamerican traditions, that sign agrees with the Mayan day name for the same final digit of the long count date.

Both epi-Olmec and Mayan long counts have as a component of a “long count introducing glyph” a set of signs or sign groups that epigraphers refer to as the month’s “patron”. The patron on Tres Zapotes Stela C, the depiction of a jaguar’s head (Figure 1), appears as the patron of the first month in Mayan, and of that month only; but a Mayan long count date 7.16.6.16.18 would correspond to the second month (cf. Stirling 1939: 213; 1940: 4).<sup>3</sup>

James Fox (personal communication to Justeson, 1988; cited by Justeson and Kaufman 1996[1992]: 22–23) pointed out that the same patron appears on (Mayan) Altar 12 at Takalik Abaj, for the first month, and that it is preceded by a patron including the form of a coiled being (presumably a snake) and followed, with one patron intervening, by a clear “Zip monster” that is the patron of the third Mayan month; see Figure 2. Fox had thereby shown that, in the Mayan texts at Takalik Abaj, a coiled being is a patron from the end of the preceding year. At La Mojarra, a coiled snake is the form of the

<sup>3</sup> Coe (1976: 113) incorrectly stated that the depicted month patron of the long count introducing glyph is that of the second Mayan month; in fact, the form of the Tres Zapotes glyph has nothing in common with the attested Mayan patron glyphs for the second month, none of which actually depicts a jaguar or jaguar’s head. In contrast, every Classic period example of the patron of the first month depicts the head of a jaguar; the head of the Takalik Abaj patron agrees with these forms.



**Figure 1.** The jaguar-head patron sign for the initial series introducing glyph on Tres Zapotes Stela C (photographs, under different lighting to bring out different details, by Jorge Pérez de Lara, with Justeson's assistance; used by permission).

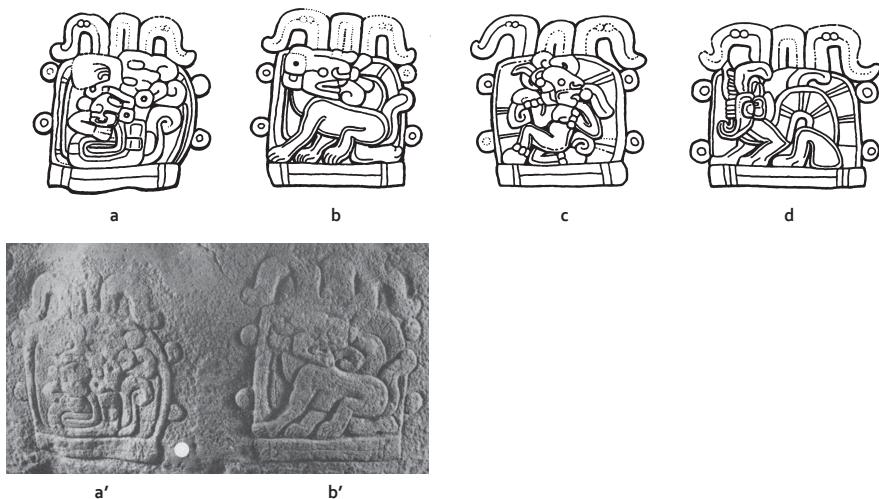
patron of the second long count date, 8.5.16.9.7, which would fall on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month in Mayan—again, the epi-Olmec long count falls a month earlier in the 365-day year than it does in Mayan.

Because this long count date is recorded as falling on day 15 of the epi-Olmec month, this month cannot be the 5-day period at the end of the year. The other La Mojarra long count date, 8.5.3.3.5, falls on day 3 of what would be the 17<sup>th</sup> Mayan month, and this date falls 57 days earlier in the 365 day year; this requires that the 5-day period falls either immediately before the epi-Olmec coiled-snake month corresponding to Cumku, or 20 days earlier.

In principle, then, a long count could lead to the same day in real time for epi-Olmecs and Mayans (if their divinatory calendar dates also fell on the same day in real time), or epi-Olmec long counts could fall 20 or 40 days before the Mayan (if their calendar year dates fell on the same day). The latter turns out to be the case. The La Mojarra text opens with the following statement:

A sun-eating moon was happening.

As a piercer, earlier, (the) bludgeon star [Venus] had shone;  
it was a late daytime one.



**Figure 2.** Sequential month patrons from Takalik Abaj Altar 12. Patrons are for a) Cumku, the 18<sup>th</sup> month, b) Pop, the first month, c) Uo, the second month, and d) Zip, the third month (drawing by James Porter; used by permission of John Graham and his Abaj Takalik Project). Photographs a') and b') correspond to drawings a) and b) (Graham et al. 1978: pl. 12).

The elements of this translation are secured as follows:

*The solar eclipse:* The text opens with two signs, one overlaid upon the other. The one underneath is the syllabogram **pa**, which spells the incomplete aspect suffix on verbs in a main clause—so, the verb indicates that ‘it was VERBing’; the subject follows the verb in this expression, which is typical in the La Mojarra text for non-agentive intransitive verbs.

The next sign closely resembles the Mayan logogram that functions as both the word for ‘moon’ and the numeral ‘20’ (although the Mayan words for these meanings differ); in the only surviving Mije-Sokean indigenous calendar, the word ‘moon’ is the name for the 20-day subdivisions (“months”) of the 365-day year. The sign we (and others) treat here as ‘moon’ also appears toward the end of the La Mojarra text, where it functions numerically in spelling the number ‘23’. Specifically, it occurs in a statement that ‘the 23<sup>rd</sup> jaguar got taken’ (‘23<sup>rd</sup>’, not ‘23’, because postposed numerals in Mije-Sokean are ordinals). This numerical value is verified by the otherwise coincidental fact this is the third of three successive recorded dates that mention jaguars, and these three dates span 23 days—one day for each jaguar.

The presence of the moon sign in expressing an event that takes place on the date of a solar eclipse that was visible at La Mojarra (and throughout the northern epi-Olmec region) calls for an explanation of the sign for ‘moon’ that relates to the occurrence of this eclipse. These two signs are preceded by a sign consisting of an animal head with an open mouth and bared teeth; the associated epi-Olmec long count date is that of a solar eclipse that was visible throughout the Papaloapan region. A widespread Mesoamerican expression for an eclipse, as a record of an event of that day, involves the sun or moon being eaten; we take this animal head with bared teeth to refer to eating, and inasmuch as it was the sun that was getting eaten, we assign the reading ‘sun’ to the remaining sign, yielding ‘sun-eating moon’ or ‘sun-eater moon’. Various Mesoamerican traditions indicate that during eclipses, the sun and moon are fighting or that one is being killed by the other. In this case, it is a sun-eater moon, the moon being the agent of a solar eclipse.

The whole sentence thus far is understandable as ‘a/the sun-eating moon was VERBing’, as a reference to a solar eclipse that took place on the recorded long count date. For the verb, we suggest pSo \**tuk* ‘to happen’, both because it fits the rest of the statement semantically, and because the form of the sign, which appears to depict a blade with a handle, could be motivated by the homophonous descendant of pMS \**tuk* ‘to cut, to harvest’.

*Venus:* STAR was generally accepted as a sign corresponding to the Mayan STAR glyph based on its form, as originally suggested by David Kelley; we entertained but did not adopt this visual correspondence until we found that the two events referring to it were separated by 9×584 days—nine canonical 584-day Venus cycles.

A single sign, which we read as *ma* based on its use in spelling the period of a day (pSo \**jama*), precedes the twice-used sign sequence corresponding to “Venus”. This sign also appears twice in contexts where it must spell a whole word near the end of the narrative of events of a single day (MOJ Q3–8 and U9–14), the same event having been mentioned among the first events mentioned for that day (MOJ O\*30–33 and T31–36); the pSokean word \**ma* means ‘earlier’, which agrees with these narrative patterns, and the sign begins the sequence spelling the word ‘star’ (pSo \**matza7*), consistent

with usage as a phonetic complement spelling the beginning of the pronunciation of that word.

Words for Venus in Mesoamerica consist of the word for ‘star’ plus a modifier; in Mije-Sokean, modifiers precede the nouns they modify. We therefore take the final sign as part of the spelling for the word ‘star’, and therefore as a phonetic complement to the STAR logogram. This could be pronounced either as *tza7* or *tza* but not as *7V*, since *7* (and the other “weak” consonants *h*, *w*, and *y*) is only spelled phonetically when it occurs before a vowel, unless, perhaps, the script includes *CV7* syllabograms.

The sign pair that precedes the STAR logogram we take to spell such a modifier. We hazard ‘bludgeon’ for this modifier in the La Mojarra text based on the form of the first two signs of the repeating spelling of this word: the first sign depicts a fleshless lower jawbone (pMS \**pak* ‘bone’, also \**pak* ‘to strike (something or someone]’), and the other sign we take on other grounds to spell the syllable *ku*, which would spell the instrumental suffix *.kuy7* since *h*, *7*, *w*, and *y* are spelled phonetically only before vowels.

The sign we designate as PIERCE iconically resembles the Mayan logogram for this concept—a pointed shaft passing through an empty field in the epi-Olmec case, and through a phonetic complement **lu** (for *jul* ‘to pierce [through]’) in the Mayan case. (PSo \**wu7tz* has the meaning ‘to pierce through’, and contrasts with verbs meaning ‘to pierce [into]’.) The Mayan uses of this sign occur in the Venus pages of the Dresden Codex where five distinct Venus gods are said to pierce specified victims; Venus is also referred to as a “piercer” in colonial Nahua sources. The La Mojarra text provides a third instance of this characterization. Note that we have entertained sign comparisons with Mayan only when something in the immediate context supports the interpretation (Justeson and Kaufman 1993: 1709)—which is the case of this example. Because no verb suffixes are spelled out, under our characterization of epi-Olmec spelling conventions this logogram would have to represent a noun derived from the verb, thus *wu7tz.t* ‘piercer’ or *wu7tz.i* ‘something pierced’.

The word *tza7yji* ‘late in the daytime’ is spelled with a previously unidentified sign, followed by the sign for the syllable *ji* that was identified from patterns of verb morphology, in which it spells the marker *-ji* of completive aspect on dependent verbs. Only three

reconstructed two-syllable words end in *ji*, or in *ji* plus *7, h, w*, or *y*; ‘late in the day’ is relevant to descriptions of Venus, and agrees with the timing of the visibility of Venus on this date.

Using a Goodman-family correlation (specifically Goodman’s 584 285 variant, favored by Lounsbury and Schele; cf. Martin and Skidmore 2012), the La Mojarra long count in Mayan would correspond to 22 May 143 CE. Twenty days earlier, on 2 May 143 CE, a solar eclipse was observable at dawn at La Mojarra and throughout the northern epi-Olmec region; on the previous afternoon (the text says “earlier”), Venus was indeed visible in the afternoon, and within a day of its greatest distance from the sun (its maximum elongation) as evening star. Visible solar eclipses are so rare at any location that coincidence is not a credible possibility: it must be the days of the calendar year that were synchronous in epi-Olmec and Mayan, while the divinatory calendar and long count dates fall 20 days earlier in epi-Olmec than in Mayan, and the correlation constant for epi-Olmec long counts must be 584 265.<sup>4</sup>

### **The epi-Olmec circumnodal Venus cycle<sup>5</sup>**

Of the seven other long count dates known from epi-Olmec texts, three fall near the same point in both the eclipse cycle and the Venus cycle—within  $\pm 8.4$  days (out of 173.30906) of the same point in the internodal cycle, which is a span within which total lunar eclipses occur, and within  $\pm 12.5$  days (out of 583.92166) of the same average position in the Venus cycle (empirically, centered on maximum elongation of the evening star). These spans amount to 4.27% and 9.70% of their respective cycles. This many repetitions near the same point in both cycles is statistically significant; had the “near” points spanned a full quarter of each cycle, the probability that as many as three out of seven dates would fall within the same quarter

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<sup>4</sup> An integer correlation coefficient in principle yields a real-time date corresponding to 6 am on a Julian calendar date—roughly at dawn. In principle, the (unknown) time of day on which the long count date changes should be part of the determination of a correlation constant. However, this is irrelevant in the present case. At La Mojarra, the solar eclipse of May 2, 143 CE began at 6:23 am, with the sun just 5.8° above the eastern horizon, and was at its maximum obscuration locally (55.58%) at 7:20 am, with the sun at 19.2° above the horizon (data from Espenak and Meeus 2007).

<sup>5</sup> The discussion is based on Justeson (2007).

of each cycle would be less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of 1%.<sup>6</sup> This shows that epi-Olmec inscriptions preferentially record long count dates near dates when an eclipse might be expected near the maximum elongation of Venus as evening star. The system of dates with these properties we therefore refer to as a “circumnodal Venus cycle” (CNVC). Notably, the scheduling of significant ceremonies recorded and illustrated on monuments relates closely to the actual dates of the corresponding astronomical phenomena.

Of the four remaining dates, two occur at close to the same distance from CNVC dates. The second La Mojarrá long count date and the date on Cerro de las Mesas Stela 6 occur within +0.862 days of the same point in the Venus cycle and within +0.526 days of the same point in the eclipse cycle. Had the “near” points spanned a quarter of each cycle, the probability that two out of these four dates would fall within the same quarter of each cycle would be less than 2.06%.<sup>7</sup>

The Venus cycle and the internodal cycle commensurate after 65 Venus cycles (37 954.9079 days) and 291 eclipse cycles (37 954.6841 days), accumulating a long-term divergence of 5 hours and 22 minutes in 103 years and 11 months.

When the long count dates are adjusted by subtracting multiples of 65 Venus cycles, their relative placement in a 65-Venus year cycle can be determined. The results are as follows:

MES 5	=	0 (or 65)	Venus cycles
MES 5 to MES 8	≈	3	Venus cycles
MES 5 to MES 6	≈	11	(-65) Venus cycles
MES 5 to MOJ (1 <sup>st</sup> )	≈	19	(-4×65) Venus cycles
MES 5 to MOJ (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	≈	27	(-4×65) Venus cycles
MES 5 to CHP 2	≈	38	(-6×65) Venus cycles

A station at  $n$  Venus cycles has almost the same deviation from an internodal cycle as a station at  $65-n$  average Venus cycles (aver-

<sup>6</sup> We increase the “near” range substantially from the attested range because restricting to precisely the attested range would introduce a bias into the computation. The variation from the mean would have amounted to more than 37% of the cycle length for the degree of clustering to fail a test of significance at the .05 level.

<sup>7</sup> The range of variation from the mean would have amounted to nearly 32% of the cycle length for this degree of clustering to fail a test of significance at the .05 level.

internodal cycles	<b>10</b>	27	37	54	64
length in days	1733.1	4679.3	6412.4	9358.7	11091.8
internodal intervals	<b>10</b>	17	10	17	10
Venus cycles	<b>3</b>	8	<b>11</b>	16	<b>19</b>
length in days	1751.8	4671.4	6423.1	9342.7	11094.5
Venus intervals	<b>3</b>	5	<b>3</b>	5	<b>3</b>
internodal cycles	91	101	118	128	155
length in days	15771.1	17504.2	20450.5	22183.6	26862.9
internodal intervals	<b>27</b>	10	17	<b>10</b>	27
Venus cycles	<b>27</b>	30	35	<b>38</b>	46
length in days	15765.9	17517.6	20437.3	22189.0	26860.4
Venus intervals	<b>8</b>	3	5	<b>3</b>	8
internodal cycles	165	<b>182</b>	192	209	219
length in days	28596.0	31542.2	33275.3	36221.6	37954.7
internodal intervals	10	<b>17</b>	10	<b>17</b>	10
Venus cycles	49	<b>54</b>	57	62	<b>65 / 0</b>
length in days	28612.2	31531.8	33283.5	36203.1	37954.9
Venus intervals	3	5	3	5	<b>3</b>

**Table 2.** Model for CNVC stations fitted to the pattern of attested examples. (a) Data in heavy outlines, with white background, are based on long count dates from epi-Olmec monuments; their average Venus and internodal intervals are in larger type. (b) Stations at one of these intervals *before* the 65<sup>th</sup> Venus cycle—at complementary positions in the table—have a white background, and their average Venus and internodal intervals are in larger type. (c) Stations whose average Venus and internodal intervals are closer than any of those in (a) have grey backgrounds and smaller type.

aging within  $\frac{1}{4}$  day). If the CNVC is based, as it appears, on a close commensuration of the two cycles, then these “complement” intervals should also reach CNVC stations; and, indeed, both 27 and 35 (=65–27) Venus cycles are among the attested CNVC stations. We must, therefore, entertain stations around 46, 54, and 62 Venus cycles (=65–19, 65–11, and 65–3) as being potentially equally viable CNVC stations as those that are attested.

The fact that stations 27 and 35, having equal discrepancies between their Venus and internodal correlates, are both attested stations, suggests that dates at *smaller* average distances than other attested stations should also be candidates for CNVC stations. The maximum average deviation of the Venus and internodal cycles among the above CNVC stations is close to 3 average Venus cycles

(1751.7650 days) and 10 internodal cycles (1733.0906 days), for a minimum discrepancy of 9.337 days (this is the distance between the long count dates of MES 5 and MES 8). Smaller average distances are found at 8, 16, and 30 Venus cycles (3.986, 7.971, and 6.717 days, respectively), and so from their complements at 35, 49, and 57 Venus cycles.

The resulting model for the placement of CNVC stations consists of 15 stations in any span of 65 Venus cycles; see Table 2. After 65 Venus cycles, the same sequence of stations repeats, but with discrepancies increasing by 0.22 days; it takes five passes through the 65-Venus-year cycle before a full day of discrepancy accumulates.

The CNVC can be seen as a functional counterpart among epi-Olmecs of Lowland Mayan katun-endings and hotun-endings, as the long-term historical cycle in terms of which civically or politically important actions were scheduled, and were recorded and depicted on Mayan monuments.

The La Mojarra text registers sets of events on several other dates that were indicated by specifying the days, months, and years elapsed between successive recorded events, and not by a long count date. One such event takes place on or near a CNVC station, 8 Venus years after the first, but most are not. One of them is the date of a long set of ritual activities that were scheduled, not at a station in the CNVC cycle, but on the ninth canonical Venus anniversary of the first Venus event: it occurs exactly  $9 \times 584$  days after the first Venus event, where 584 days is the length of a canonical Venus cycle, and the association of this anniversary with Venus is also made clear because the narrative of the events of the day close with another statement that Venus was shining. So, while the CNVC cycle seems to have been tied to a correlation between the astronomical cycles of Venus and eclipses, the CNVC base dates were also the bases from which canonical Venus intervals were counted to schedule ritual activities. Both the CNVC cycle and canonical Venus anniversaries of its base play a key role in the scheduling of events recorded in the epi-Olmec text on the Teotihuacan-style mask.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For other purposes, daykeepers may sometimes have focused on eclipse recurrences rather than Venus anniversaries. The time count of 13 years and two days from the solar eclipse with which the inscription opens leads to or near another CNVC base on 8.5.16.3.7 (25 February, 156 ce). A partial (65% magnitude) lunar eclipse was visible at La Mojarra starting before midnight on the night of February 23 and lasting into February 24.

The second station linked to the CNVC occurs about 132 days later in the Venus cycle on the second La Mojarra long count and about 134 days later on that of Cerro de las Mesas Stela 6. (These two dates happen to be separated by three grand cycles, of  $2 \times 37\,954 + 37\,955$  days.) This second type of station also appears in the mask's text.

### **Linguistic constraints in epi-Olmec decipherment: Exemplification of structural constraints in our previous decipherment work**

To provide a background on the kinds of inferences we draw from the structure of the mask text, we illustrate the role of Mije-Sokean phonology, morphology and vocabulary in our decipherment work on then-known epi-Olmec texts in the 1990s. Particularly in a long text like those of the La Mojarra stela or the epi-Olmec mask, we will often find a great deal of context filled in around a particular sign or sign group; the more constrained the context, the more straightforwardly and securely it can be interpreted.

Calibrating sign patterns to grammatical constraints led near the beginning of our work to the determination of the pronunciations of the signs for the syllables *wt*, *7i*, *pa*, and *ko*.

First, every proto-Sokean and proto-Mije-Sokean verb ended in a marker of aspect (completive vs. incomplete) or, more rarely, mood (optative or imperative). The choice among aspect markers depends on whether the verb is in an independent (main) clause or in a dependent (subordinate) clause.

In a narrative text, the independent completive aspect marker, pMS, pSo \**wt*, should be by far the most common. In addition, \**+wt7* was a clitic word ('relativizer') postposed to noun phrases; because the weak consonants *7*, *j*, *w*, and *y* were only spelled before vowels in epi-Olmec, a sign for the syllable *wt* should be by far the most common word-ending sign in a narrative text. Furthermore, the sound sequence *wt* was quite rare otherwise. The single most frequent sign in the La Mojarra text was recognized by presumably all who studied it as occurring overwhelmingly in word-final position; so identifying the sign for *wt* was straightforward.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Before undertaking the decipherment on a full scale with Justeson, Kaufman in 1987 commented to Nick Hopkins and Kathryn Josserand: "If this text is in a Mije-Sokean language, this sign spells the syllable *wt*".

	completives	incompletives
intransitive independent		
trans. indep.		
dependent		

optatives

Figure 3. Epi-Olmec verb morphology, showing its agreement with the structures and categories of Mije-Sokean verbs (figure by Justin Lowry after Justeson and Kaufman 1996[1992]: fig. 4).

Similarly, pMS and pSo \*7i+ is by far the most common word-initial grammatical morpheme in narrative texts: it is the agreement marker for third person (singular and plural) subjects of all transitive verbs, and of intransitive verbs in dependent clauses; and it begins

all noun phrases that have third-person possessors. These contexts of the phoneme sequence *7i* account for the overwhelming majority of its occurrences. Two of its other grammatical contexts are pMS and pSo \**7in+*, the second person (singular and plural) agreement marker, that occurs in the same contexts as \**7i+*, and the optative suffix (\**7in* ~ \**7i*). Identifying the sign for the syllable *7i*, which is by far the most frequent clearly word-initial sign, was therefore also straightforward.

An effect of knowing some 40 word ends and 30 or so beginnings allowed us to identify grammatical alternations between spellings of -*wi* and *7i+* and the less common word-ending and word-beginning grammatical morphemes, respectively. In particular, this led to the identification of the signs for the syllables *na* and *pa*.

The sign **na** occurs several times, word-initially, for *na+* ‘I/my’ and exclusive ‘we/us’) — and the shift from *7i+* to *na+* in the La Mojarra narrative provided a new constraint, allowing us to identify verbs of speaking in the narrative text of the La Mojarra stela. The sign **pa**, which typically occurs word-finally, proved useful in helping to establish David Kelley’s proposal for identifying an iconic element of the script with ‘sky’, pMS, pSo \**tzap*, as this sign is followed in one instance by **pa**, consistent with its use as a phonetic complement.

Verbs in subordinate clauses begin with a subject marker. Five verbs started this way, that were not followed by -*pa* or -*wi* (see Figure 3), which allowed us to recognize the dependent completive marker *-ji*.

Figure 3 displays these results, showing the interlocking of these categories of verb morphology for the data from the La Mojarra text as we knew it in 1994. The tight structural conformity to Mije-Sokean grammatical structures cannot arise by coincidence.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> After demonstrating the detailed correspondence of epi-Olmec sign patterns with Mije-Sokean verb and noun morphology, we investigated the basic patterns of Lowland Mayan, Wastekan, and Sapotekan morphology and were unable to calibrate the textual patterns of sign use to the morphology of these groups. Here we address the most obvious discrepancies that arise for a Mayan interpretation. Mayan and Mije-Sokean both use the same morphemes to agree with the subjects of transitive verbs and the possessors of nouns. However, unlike what we find in Mije-Sokean, Mayan transitive and intransitive verbs mark aspect differently. The spellings of frequently preposed grammatical morphemes that we have identified in epi-Olmec texts would have to correspond to these markers. However, the most frequent sign in these texts, which must spell a common grammatical suffix, (a)

## Other lexical and word-structure constraints

The pronunciation of the sign for *ki* was identified initially from its use in spelling a sentence *jama pa..* ‘the shapeshifter is *pa..*’ on the Tuxtla Statuette: Chiapas Soke data shows that a special class of shape-shifting shamans (ChSo *jama*) is known as a *paki7 jama*, *paki7* meaning ‘powerful’; the statuette depicts a person dressed as some kind of bird, which is a feature of the depiction of shape-shifters in other Mesoamerican traditions. This reading is verified by its productivity in several other contexts, as in the reading of a transitive verb *7i+ kip-wt* ‘they fought them’ whose subject and object are both marked with animate plural markers *+ta7m*; in other passages it serves as a phonetic complement to a logogram for the verb *wik* ‘to sprinkle’.

The logogram for BLOOD is identifiable as a noun for a liquid that can also characterize the manner in which an action takes place. It is a noun because it can be possessed while not being regularly followed by a sign for an aspect suffix (though sometimes it is followed by the sign **wt** which spells the relativizer *+wt7*). It refers to a liquid because it is the subject of an intransitive verb *naks* meaning ‘it flows/passes by’, and of a mediopassive verb ‘it gets sprinkled’; only a liquid is consistent with both. It is incorporated as a prefix to an intransitive verb *tut7p-ji* meaning ‘when it set (down)’, where it cannot be an incorporated object and so expresses manner; *nut7pin* ‘blood’ gets used this way in Mije-Sokean languages, while this is rare, if it occurs at all, with nouns for other liquids.

The boy-king in the La Mojarra text is quoted as saying *na+ nut7pin ko.wik-pa* ‘my blood is (or was) getting sprinkled on behalf of others’; later, the text says *7i+ ko.wik-pa* ‘he (the king) sprinkles it on behalf of others’.

Another sign represents the syllable *yaj* or the word *yaj* ‘to finish (use up) something’. The reading of this sign was unavoidable

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occurs frequently at the end of a word that begins with an ergative or possessive marker, and (b) occurs most frequently at the end of a word that does not. In Greater Lowland Mayan languages, such a pattern eventually came to characterize the difference between incompletive verbs with a suffix of shape *-V:l*, which were possessed gerunds reinterpreted as predictions (e.g., ‘my swimming’ became used for ‘I am/was swimming’), and unpossessed nouns. However, this pattern does not begin to show up in Mayan hieroglyphic texts until well into the Late Classic period, about 500 years later than the La Mojarra inscription. This is inconsistent with a Mayan pattern, Lowland or otherwise.

based on its appearance in spelling a verb *tun*-VERB-*yaj-jay7-wt* ‘we-and-you VERBed (him/them) for him/them’, referring to an event that took place on the day of the ruler’s brother-in-law was defeated, after the ruler sprinkled his own blood. The constraints are as follows.

The syllabogram **ja** appears immediately before the word-final completive suffix **wt** in this word; it cannot spell morpheme-final *j*, because *j* (like other “weak” consonants) is only spelled before vowels. It cannot spell the end of a verb root, because all Mije-Sokean verb roots end in a consonant. Therefore, it must spell a non-final verb suffix that contains the sequence *ja*, and the only such suffix is *-jay7*, which makes a verb agree with an indirect object (instead of a direct object, if present) and makes it inflect as a transitive verb if it was otherwise intransitive. This forces us to read the beginning of this word as the ergative agreement marker *tun*- ‘we (excl.)’ (= I/we and you, not them), because a verb with *-jay7* requires an ergative agreement marker and all the other ergative markers have known, distinct spellings (**7i**, **na**, and **7ixni**). The only inflectional suffix that can occur before *-jay7* are agreement markers for plural subjects or objects (direct or indirect), using the same morphemes as plural markers on noun phrases. The plural marker on animate (human) nouns and the agreement marker for first or second person subjects or objects is *+ta7m*; this is twice spelled **ta-ma** near the beginning of the text. The plural marker for nonhuman nouns and the agreement marker for third person subjects and objects in every Mije-Sokean language is whatever morpheme is the root of the verb ‘to be finished (used up)’ in that language; that the spelling in the verb *tun*-VERB-*yaj-jay7-wt* contrasts with **ta-ma** makes it likely that this is not *+ta7m*, and this is indicated independently by the fact that the noun phrase *7i+ si7i* ‘their butts/buttocks’ is followed by this same sign, which requires the nonanimate plural marker. The form of this word varies from language to language, but other evidence confirms that the widespread form *yaj* is its form in epi-Olmec.

In the last column of the La Mojarrá text, the sign for *yaj* appears immediately after the sign **wt** in the verb *tun*-VERB-*yaj7-wt* (a second instance of the verb just discussed, but without the optional agreement marker for third person subject or object). In this context, then, it is word-initial, and so cannot spell either a noun or a verb

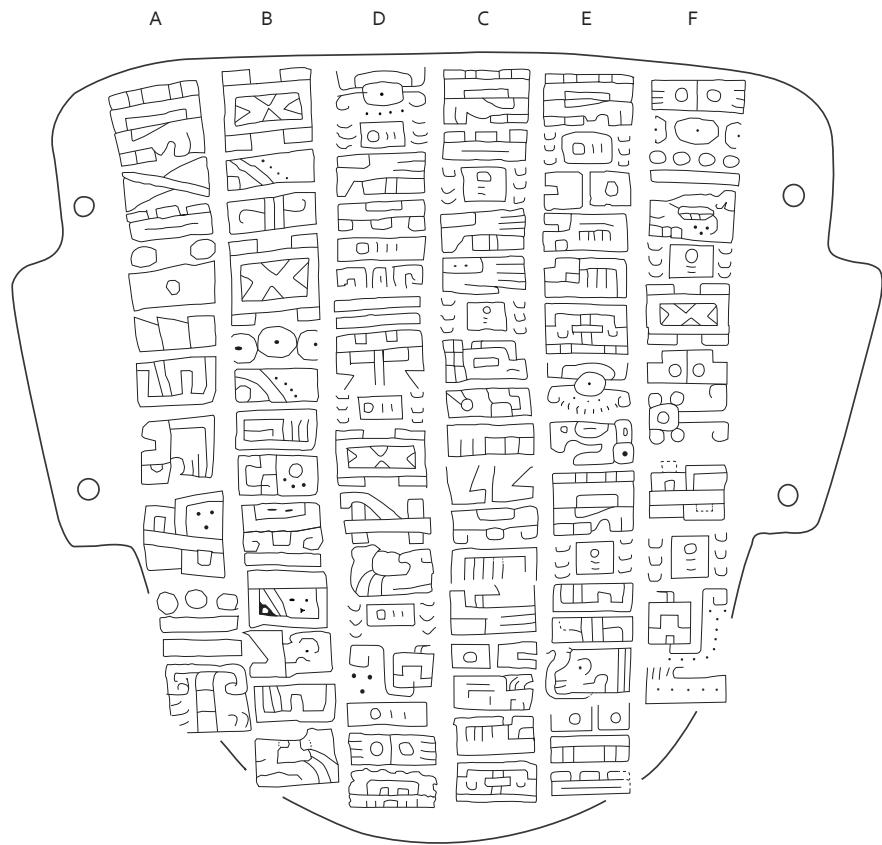
suffix; it must have the other function of the *yaj* morpheme, as a verb root, and must be followed by an obligatory aspect or mood suffix. It is indeed followed by one, the not very frequent optative suffix *-7i* (also attested on the Tuxtla Statuette); this sign sequence **yaj-7i** spells the verb *yaj-7i* ‘it should get used.up/finished’. After the next sign, to which we return momentarily, is the verb *7i+ ko.wik-pa*, with which this discussion began.

We therefore have a sequence of three statements: ‘we-and-you VERBed (him/them) for him/them; ?? should be used up; he sprinkles it elsewhere/for others’. In terms of topic continuity, the unknown sign most likely refers to what gets sprinkled; since the previous instance of the sprinkling verb has the ruler saying that ‘my blood gets sprinkled elsewhere/for others’, it seems likely that what is sprinkled is blood. This statement in turn immediately follows the statement that the captive brother-in-law was “VERBed” for the ruler. We infer that this blood was gotten from the ruler’s captured brother-in-law. While we do not know what word is referred to by the unknown sign, its most likely pragmatic reference we take to be the captive’s blood, taken for an offering. Note that the captive, or some captive, was kept alive at least for 13 days after the battle to serve as a source for the blood that was used up.

## Epi-Olmec text genres

Two genres of epi-Olmec text are known. The La Mojarra stela text is a historical narrative; a series of political and military events provide the overall framework for the reported action. The complete or nearly complete epi-Olmec texts on portable objects—the Tuxtla Statuette, the O’Boyle “mask,” and the Teotihuacan-style mask—are fundamentally ritual texts; it is the ritual acts themselves that provide the overall framework for the action. Even the La Mojarra text, however, is mostly devoted to recounting a series of rituals that took place, presumably connected in specific culturally understood ways with the historical events that frame its narrative.

The detailed narrative account on the La Mojarra stela (157 CE) is our single richest source. The Tuxtla Statuette text (162 CE) is quite different, laying out a process of engagement between a god and a person designed to culminate in spirit transformation. Comparative study of epi-Olmec rituals is made possible by our reading of the



**Figure 4.** The epi-Olmec text on the back of a Teotihuacan style mask (original drawing by Peter Mathews, 2004), adjusted on points of detail by Justeson and Kaufman, in consultation with Justin Lowry (vector graphics and final drawing by Lowry; see also Macri 2016).

Early Classic text on a Teotihuacan-style stone mask (Justeson and Kaufman 2004a, 2012); this text focuses entirely on a set of three related and perhaps repeated rituals, whose characteristics overlap with those of other epi-Olmec texts. Together these three texts provide enough data to begin studying the epigraphic evidence for epi-Olmec ritual practices.

### Part I: A Teotihuacan-Style Mask Bearing an epi-Olmec Text

The text on the Teotihuacan-style mask (Figure 4) is currently the second-longest in the epi-Olmec corpus—104 signs long by our count, 20 signs longer than the Tuxtla Statuette. At Teotihuacan,

masks of this sort date to the Early to Middle Classic period; this, then, is the longest epi-Olmec text known from the Classic period. All other currently known Classic epi-Olmec texts are from Cerro de las Mesas, all of them short stela texts, and most of them are badly worn (see Justeson and Kaufman 2008 for discussion).

## Origin and access

A looted object in a private collection, the place of origin of this mask is either unknown to scholars or has not been made public by any who do know it. Many such masks, of course, have been found at Teotihuacan, but several have also been found in Veracruz—and the inscribing of a Teotihuacan-style mask with an epi-Olmec inscription is a reflection of a relationship between Early Classic period epi-Olmecs and Central Mexicans that has long been documented at Cerro de las Mesas (Drucker 1943: 58, 82–86; Miller 1991; Taube 2000; Justeson and Kaufman 2008).<sup>11</sup>

This relationship is also registered in the Basin of Mexico. The “Chapultepec Stone” is iconographically a virtual copy of Stela 5 of Cerro de las Mesas (Figure 5). In his discussion of Stela 5, Stirling (1943: 35) states that the provenience of the Chapultepec Stone is unknown, but also (p. 3) that “it is supposed to have come not from the hill of Chapultepec in the Federal District, but from the village of Chapultepec [about 45 km east and] south of Mexico City”, and 14 km

<sup>11</sup> So far as we can tell, the first published statements that the inscriptions of Cerro de las Mesas were in the epi-Olmec script appear in our publications (Justeson and Kaufman 1993: 1703; 1996[1992]:13; 1997: 207). Kaufman and Justeson (2001: 2; 2004: table 44.1) noted that diagnostically epi-Olmec signs are found on Stela 6 and Stela 8 of that site. However, while not specifically noted in previous publications focusing on this writing system (e.g., Ayala 1983; Méluzin 1995), this must have been widely suspected or supposed, if only on culture-historical grounds, and the evidence for this was likely observed by others. Miller (1991: 35) specifically suggested that “The system of writing and counting was probably continuous from Late Olmec through Early Classic times.” Earlier yet, John Graham in 1970 grouped the Cerro de las Mesas texts with the Tuxtla Statuette in his UC Berkeley seminar on non-Mayan writing systems of Mesoamerica, in which Justeson as a participant focused on this group. More generally, an Olmec heritage in the sculptural tradition was pointed to by Coe (1962: 118–119), who stated that “A number of stelae encountered there [...] show features recalling both the Olmec and Izapan styles. [...] The Olmec were-jaguar appears in mask-like headdresses [...] Other sculptures include a monstrous figure of a duck-billed human closely resembling the Tuxtla Statuette, which itself was found not far from Cerro de las Mesas.” Similarly, Willey (1991: 199) considered the art of Cerro de las Mesas—“sometimes described as ‘Olmecoid’ or ‘epi-Olmec’”—as having a regionally distinctive style “with ‘Olmec residues’”.



**Figure 5.** Cerro de las Mesas Stela 5 and the Chapultepec Stone: *a*) Stela 5, Cerro de las Mesas, *b*) the Chapultepec Stone, *c*) the raised panel on the Chapultepec Stone.

south-west of Toluca.<sup>12</sup> Both also have a raised panel at the left, which the figure faces, and the inscriptions on these panels differ markedly. At Cerro de las Mesas, Stela 5, Stela 6, and Stela 8 have similar scenes with their single figure facing leftward toward a raised glyph panel (on Stela 8, two adjacent glyph panels). The text on Stela 5's glyph panel is badly effaced, but in 1997 Justeson recovered a complete long count date by using raking light at night; in retrospect, it is also visible in Medellín Zenil's (1971: plate 25) photographic documentation of the holdings of Xalapa's Museo de Antropología. The text on Stela 5 was no doubt a complete epi-Olmec hieroglyphic text, as on the glyph panels of Stela 6 and of the badly effaced Stela 8; and a sign is visible at A2 that seems likely to be the same as the verb logogram at A5 on Stela 6. The Chapultepec Stone, in contrast, does not bear an epi-Olmec text. Rather, it bears a sequence of glyph-like images in Teotihuacan style, imaginably either a Teotihuacano hieroglyphic

<sup>12</sup> Justeson and Kaufman (2008: n. 11) incorrectly fill in “[San Miguel]”, the district of Mexico City bordering Chapultepec park.

text or perhaps a form of iconography adapted to an epi-Olmec display format. Stela 5 dates to 528 CE (9.4.14.1.4); this must approximate the date of the Chapultepec Stone. Monuments that occur in copies that correspond so closely are rare, but a parallel Mayan case is provided by Aguanteaca Stela 2 and Dos Pilas Stela 16, with similar iconography, and the same series of dated events, phrased very similarly, up to the part of the Dos Pilas text that has been lost.

Daneels (2004) identified and analyzed sixteen Teotihuacan-style masks that have been recovered archaeologically in Veracruz, and discussed this corpus in terms of the masks' materials, dimensions, design features, and (where known) archaeological associations. Matthew Robb (personal communication, 2012), who has studied both the Teotihuacan and Veracruz corpora in detail, considers it to agree stylistically with Teotihuacan-style masks found in Veracruz more than with those found at Teotihuacan.<sup>13</sup>

Houston and Coe do not report its dimensions, but judging from Houston's schematic drawing (Houston and Coe 2003: fig. 1),<sup>14</sup> it is about 17.3 cm wide and 18.9 cm high. Inasmuch as the back of the mask was carved out to fit a human face, these dimensions are close to those of the only such mask found archaeologically in Veracruz whose back was also carved out to fit a human face, at 17.5x20.0 cm (Daneels 2004: 406). We do not have data on these dimensions for masks from Teotihuacan, but we suppose that the dimensions of those designed to fit a human face would be similar. Two other Teotihuacan-style masks found in Veracruz have similar dimensions (one from Cueva Huayateno at 17.7x17.2 cm, and one of unknown provenance at 20.2x18.4 cm).

<sup>13</sup> The discovery of a Teotihuacan-style mask near Arroyo Pesquero might suggest continuing or renewed elite-level activity there, but Daneels (2004: 407, 410) argues that this object was likely deposited in the Late Classic.

Houston and Coe (2003: 156) argue that the mask under analysis is likely from Veracruz on the grounds that, unlike most such masks from Teotihuacan, the back is not flat but rather is thinned out to fit onto a human face. However, Daneels (2004: fig. 12) reports that most of the nineteen Teotihuacan-style masks from Veracruz also have flat backs and, while several were slightly curved, only one (that recovered from Arroyo Pesquero) was carved out to fit a human face.

<sup>14</sup> The profile and face views of the published drawing, by Houston, are not consistent with one another. The distance from the top to the bottom is larger in the profile view. Aligning the two drawings with the perforations at the lower left "ear", the point of chin is aligned but the eyes, the nose, the upper lips, the upper edges of the "ear" flanges and the top of the forehead are all higher in the profile view than in the side view.



a

b

**Figure 6.** Stela 15 of Cerro de las Mesas, recording the dates 1 Dog (the third of the five “nameless” days ending the year) and 4 Reed (the name of the new year) (photographs by Herbert J. Spinden, courtesy of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University).

To our knowledge, no such masks have been found in or around Chiapa de Corzo, so if it is from epi-Olmec country it is more likely from in or near the Papaloapan Basin. It could relate to Cerro de las Mesas specifically—the only Classic period site known to have epi-Olmec texts—and otherwise most likely to Teotihuacan. Epigraphically, we have argued (Justeson and Kaufman 2008: 183–184) that Cerro de las Mesas Stela 15 (Figure 6), whose iconography seems purely Teotihuacanoid (cf. Stirling 1943: 44; Miller 1991: 31; Taube 2000: 44), is a new-year monument for the epi-Olmec year 4 Reed, a day name recorded on Stela 15; year-ending activities seem to have been performed 3 days earlier, on the day 1 Dog on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the five “nameless” days ending the year, which is recorded both on Stela 6 and Stela 15; on Stela 15, the two occur in sequence—1 Dog (day 363 of the old year) followed by 4 Reed (day 1 of the new year).

To anticipate some aspects of our conclusions: Whatever its source, the text on this mask seems to be purely epi-Olmec: it was written in the epi-Olmec language, thematically parallels the content of other epi-Olmec texts, is structured chronologically in terms of a distinctively epi-Olmec astronomical cycle, and agrees with the texts on the La Mojarra stela and the Tuxtla Statuette in attesting consistencies in the conduct of similar types of rituals, and systematic differences in the conduct of different types of rituals.

The existence of this mask and its text became widely known in the summer of 2002, having been reported by Houston to several European colleagues. We learned of it in August of that year, and in the same month we received a copy of David Joralemon's preliminary drawing of it.<sup>15</sup> As of this writing, full coverage photographs of the text are still not publicly available and we have had no access to any such resources that may exist. However, in fall 2003, upon our inviting Joralemon and Michael Coe to take half of our time at the Dumbarton Oaks conference on Classic Veracruz to present a discussion of this text, Coe provided us with three of his own high-resolution photographs of parts of it; these photographs were subsequently posted online.

Coe's photographs show that the published drawing (Houston and Coe 2003: fig. 2) is inaccurate in several respects, but few of these errors affect our analysis. Our Figure 4 provides a different perspective on the text (see also Macri 2016). Because of the curvature of the surface on which the glyphs are inscribed, and because Joralemon's and Houston's drawings reflect an angle of view of the object as a whole, their drawings distort the forms of the individual signs in the text as they would have been seen by a reader scanning through them sign by sign; there are also errors in the published drawings on details of some signs.

<sup>15</sup> In August of 2002, we received a copy of Joralemon's preliminary drawing from George Stuart, whose practice was to distribute drawings and photographs of primary data to active researchers. We immediately contacted Joralemon asking to examine the text or photographs of it; we were told that decisions on who would have access would be resolved on October 1, and that we should contact him then. As of that date we were denied access to it; at that time, we discontinued our work with the text pending its public release. We advised Stuart that parties unknown to us were limiting access to it, and that we were suspending work on its analysis until such time as it was made publicly available, when we would acknowledge his having provided us access to the text; Stuart approved this course of action.

To provide a more accurate representation of the individual signs, we asked Peter Mathews to redraw the text for us, with each sign at approximately the orientation it would have for a reader; the overall presentation in Figure 4 is due to Mathews. The final version is largely due to Justin Lowry, who created a vector representation from Mathews' drawing, after which he touched up details of every sign based on Coe's photographs, in consultation with us. The drawing published here is based on Coe's photographs for all features that are clearly discernable in them, but relies on Joralemon's and Houston's drawings for other details.

We also correct Houston and Coe's labelling of columns C and D to conform to standard Mesoamericanist practice: labels attached to columns that are read in reverse order standardly reflect the order of reading, not their left-to-right sequence.

## Overall text structure

The inscription consists of six columns of glyphs. Initially, the text can be broken down into three discrete text segments, each consisting of an adjacent pair of columns.

The faces of signs depicting humans and animals, and the fronts of each recognized epi-Olmec sign, are at the left in columns A-B and E-F, which the La Mojarra text shows is the orientation of epi-Olmec signs read left to right (cf. Macri and L. Stark 1991: 26–27). In columns C-D these features are at the right, which is the orientation of epi-Olmec signs read right to left. The reversed order of columns C and D is confirmed by the fact that a sign sequence at E3-E7 is repeated, sign for sign, starting in C14-C17 and ending at D1. This position on the reading order within each pair of columns is obvious and uncontroversial; Houston and Coe (2003: 157–158), and Joralemon before them, reached the same conclusions, citing the same evidence.<sup>16</sup>

While the reading order within the second of these three segments is reversed, it can be shown that the pairs of columns are themselves to be read in left-to-right order: columns A-B, then columns C-D,

<sup>16</sup> Note, however, that one sign, unique to this text, has opposite orientations at B3 and E12, even though both of these columns otherwise have the standard orientation of columns that are read from left to right. Several examples of this sort of error on reversal of orientation are noted by Macri and L. Stark (1991: 26–27).

then columns E-F. This is the only straightforward order of reading, and it would take compelling evidence to adopt any other.<sup>17</sup>

The default reading order in epi-Olmec texts is from left to right, with signs facing leftward, as in Mayan and Sapoteko writing. The text on the front of the La Mojarra stela is the only known epi-Olmec text besides that on the mask on which some text segments have different orientations than others. There, columns A-L, on the left side of the stela face, appear above the carved figure and are oriented rightward like the figure itself; the same correlation is found in the texts of Monte Alban (Kaufman and Justeson 1993–2015), and a similar correlation is typical of Egyptian texts (see especially Fischer 1977). The glyphs in columns M to U, on the right of the stela's face, show the standard/default leftward orientation. The overall visual effect is that the figure and text on the left of the stela face toward

<sup>17</sup> Houston and Coe (2003: 158) speculate as follows about the order of reading on the mask:

“Our hunch is that the text began, much like the La Mojarra text, in the middle, so that E1 may have been the first glyph in the text. We do not pretend to understand the content of the inscription, but it is noteworthy that this first cluster has what appears to be a ‘9’ (F3), the next cluster (Columns D and C) a ‘10’ (C7), and the final cluster (Columns B and A) a ‘13’ (A10). This sequence may be telling us something about the order of paired columns.”

First, there are three text segments, of two columns each; if the text literally began “in the middle”, it is the segment consisting of columns C and D that would be read first, not the segment beginning with column E. What they effectively argue for, based on a supposed pattern of increasing numerals, is that the three segments are read from rightmost to leftmost.

In principle, this “hunch” was not worth reporting. With only three numerals at issue,  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the arrangements—9, 10, 13 and 13, 10, 9—would show a consistently increasing or decreasing order, so such an order consistency would not be evidence of anything. Furthermore, they fail to mention the numeral 5 at B10, although they include it in their own transcription of the text. With this numeral included in their list, the sequence would be 9, 10, 13, 5 in the reading order they suggest, or 13, 5, 10, 9 in its actual reading order. With four numerals to place, and either order of reading available, there are 24 possible sequences and 20 of them have at most one out of order.

The stated basis for this speculation is astonishing coming from scholars with experience in Mesoamerican epigraphy: they do not mention—and given their argument about increasing order, they do not seem to recognize—that every one of these numerals is part of a day name. The numeral 10 at D7 (Houston and Coe’s mislabelled “C7”) appears immediately before what is unmistakably the sign for the day House in the form it has on the monuments of Xochicalco (e.g., as year names on Stela 2 and Stela 3); the numeral 10 is therefore a trecena numeral, part of the name of one of 260 days in the divinatory calendar. The only way that this numeral would necessarily be part of an increasing sequence of three would be if all of the days being named were from a single trecena—in this case, 9 Wind (inconsistent with the animal head represented at F4), 10 House, and 13 Death. Houston and Coe do not address this issue.

The other two numerals that Houston and Coe point to are also followed by signs identifiable with epi-Olmec day signs.

the text on the right, and the text on the right faces toward the text and figure on the left. The two text segments show the standard left-to-right reading order: that is, the text segment formed by columns A to L is read before the text segment of columns M to U. Accordingly, the expected reading order of the three 2-column text segments on the mask is in pairs of columns from left to right.

Our analysis of the chronology supports this reading order. The sequence of four dates in the mask text, when the text segments are read in the straightforward sequence, proceed forward through ritually significant dates in three successive Venus years within a specifically epi-Olmeccal calendrical or astronomical cycle, the circum-nodal Venus cycle (discussed in the introduction).

The order of the second (CD) and third (EF) segments is especially obvious. The day 10 House at D7–8 falls  $64+260n$  days (where  $n$  is some non-negative integer) before 9 Deer<sup>18</sup> at F3–4—which, given the evidence for a Venus chronology in the monuments at Chiapa de Corzo, La Mojarra, and Cerro de las Mesas, we take to be specifically one canonical Venus cycle of 584 ( $=64+2\times260$ ) days. This canonical interval is found recurrently in the Dresden and Borgia group Venus tables; in the latter, its explicit representation is via an interval of 64 days. This interval requires that columns C–D are read before columns E–F.

The discussion of the CNVC cycle above notes that Venus anniversaries are counted using a fixed 584-day canonical cycle from the base dates of the CNVC. The format of the mask's text suggests that the base date would be in the first segment, 584 days earlier than 10 House—hence on 11 Storm. The day name 11 Storm is not recorded, but 5 Sun<sup>19</sup> is recorded at B10–11 (as transcribed but not understood

<sup>18</sup> The basic features of the sign at F4 following the numeral 9 at F3 is an animal head identifiable with the day Deer based on its protruding tongue, found in examples from Highland Mexican codices and in the day name Deer on the La Mojarra Stela; and the sign after numeral 13 at A11 compare with those of the sign for the day Flint on Tres Zapotes Stela C (cf. Justeson and Kaufman 2008: fig. 6) more closely than either does with any other Mesoamerican day sign.

<sup>19</sup> The numeral 5 at B10—not mentioned in Houston and Coe's argument though appearing in their transliteration, and which is inconsistent with their argument for reading order—is followed by the sign that we are forced to read as a logogram for the word *saw* 'sun' in the solar eclipse statement of the La Mojarra stela (see note 3). Words with this meaning name the 16<sup>th</sup> day, or are part of it, in Metztitlan Nawa, in Matlatzinca, and in Otomi—all in the Basin of Mexico (Kaufman 1988–2017: 64–66). Gulf Coast Nawa forms of this day name,

by Houston and Coe). A day name ‘sun’, or including the word for ‘sun’, is found in the Basin of Mexico, in the conservative Metztitlan Nawa day name list, as well as in Matlatzinca and Otomi. It is also found in the Gulf Coast Nawa day names *tunal* and *tunal-li* that appear in Lakantun Ch’olti7 personal names (Justeson 2018). The date 5 Sun falls 137 days after 11 Storm, consistent with the second station known from other epi-Olmec texts. Its presence accords with the inference that 11 Storm was a CNVC base date.

The calendrics of the mask text therefore provide direct chronological evidence for the obvious reading order of the text—suggesting (a) that columns A–B pertain to a Venus year beginning on 11 Storm, (b) that columns C–D pertain to the next Venus year, beginning 584 days later, and (c) that columns E–F pertain to the Venus year after that, beginning another 584 days later. The fact that each of the three pairs of columns deals with events within each of three successive Venus cycles raises the possibility that the text concerns a complete CNVC cycle, one that was three Venus years long; this is the complete length of 53% ( $\frac{8}{15}$ ) of CNVC cycles.

In the process of reading the text, after finishing columns A and B a reader must skip over column D to reach column C, change to a leftward direction of reading from the top of column C through the bottom of column D, and then once again skip over column D to reach column E. Thereby, the reader actively engages each pair of columns, A–B, C–D, and E–F, as separate subparts of the overall text. That each pair of columns constitutes a discrete textual unit is also supported by the fact that all three begin with the same fused sign pair, also noted by Joralemon and by Houston and Coe. We will see that each pair of columns contributes, as a distinct component, to the structure of the text as a whole. The way that they do so also progresses through each cycle: initially, focusing on preparations, and thereafter shifting the focus onto sacrificial events.

The evidence that the segments of this text are timed calendrically, in terms of the Venus cycle, raises the testable possibility that

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both as *tunal* and *tunal-li*, were adopted in Ch’olti7 in personal names (Justeson 2018). The pre-Columbian adoption of Nawa days names in personal names was clearly of pre-Columbian origin in Yokot’an, given the earliness of their; and in both Ch’olti7 and Yokot’an, all Nawa day names whose Gulf Coast Nawa pronunciation differs from that in Nawa of central Mexico appear in their Gulf Coast Nawa form: these are *kuwa* (‘snake’) for day 5, *selu(-t)* (‘jaguar’) for day 14, *tunal(-li)* (‘day’) for day 16, and *xuchi(-t)* (‘flower’) for day 20.

the unrecorded date 11 Storm was the base of a CNVC. This we can confirm.

Archaeologically, masks of this style are known to have been produced in the Tlamilolpa and Xolalpan phases at Teotihuacan (c. 200–600 ce); George Cowgill (personal communication, 2004) suggests that they may have been produced as late as the Metepec phase (600–650). To avoid being overly restrictive, we explore possible chronological placements in the broader range from 1 ce to 800 ce.

1. The four known CNVC base dates are all within 10 days of a total eclipse, lunar or solar, or of an annular solar eclipse (which would fall in the same range of divinatory calendar dates as total solar eclipses). This is an effect of their falling very near a node, which in turn is part of the commensuration of eclipses with the divinatory calendar (for a detailed exposition of the relevant properties, see Justeson 2017). It is not the case that all of these eclipses were visible locally; the CNVC pattern relates to eclipse-timing commensuration, not observation.
2. Each of these four bases falls within 12 days of the maximum elongation of Venus.
3. For the two dates at the second CNVC station, about 134 days after the base, the actual base is unknown, but in both cases the date of a total eclipse and that of maximum elongation of Venus are close enough that the base could fall within the same range as for the established bases.

We address the date(s) on which the mask might have functioned with broader limits than the 200–650 ce range: results reported here are for 11 Storm dates in the epi-Olmec calendar between 1 and 800 ce within 9 days of a total eclipse and within 12 days of maximum elongation of Venus as evening star.

Table 3 displays seven 11 Storm dates between 290 and 602 ce whose CNVC cycle lasts exactly three Venus cycles and that are within or close to specified limits of a total eclipse and of the maximum elongation of Venus as evening star. One, in the year 511, falls 11 rather than 10 days from the nearest total eclipse; the rest all fall within 5 days. All are within 7 days of the maximum elongation of Venus as evening star. Three pairs of these dates, each pair enclosed in a single

cycle length	Venus cycle #	11 Storm	Julian date	maximum elong.	total eclipse date & type
3VY	46	8 12 12 6 19	290 May 24	290 May 29 2am	sol 290 May 25 6:18pm
3VY	54	8 13 5 6 29	303 Mar 17	303 Mar 14 6pm	lun 303 Mar 19 5:46pm
3VY	46	8 17 17 14 19	394 Apr 28	394 Apr 28 11am	lun 394 May 2 12:58am
3VY	54	8 18 10 14 19	407 Feb 19	407 Feb 12 1am	ann 407 Feb 23 8:11pm
3VY	46	9 3 3 4 19	498 Apr 2	498 Mar 28 11pm	ann 498 Apr 7 12:56pm
3VY	54	9 3 16 4 19	511 Jan 24	511 Jan 12 5am	sol 511 Jan 15 10:00am
3VY	46	9 8 8 12 19	602 Mar 2	602 Feb 26 8am	sol 602 Feb 27 2:35pm
5VY	30	9 12 8 2 19	680 Jun 23	680 Jun 26 9pm	lun 680 Jun 17 5:37pm
5VY	30	9 17 13 10 19	784 May 28	784 May 26 9pm	sol 784 May 23 3:59pm
8VY	38	9 2 10 4 19	485 Jun 9	485 Jun 12 11am	sol 485 May 29 1:35pm
8VY	38	9 7 15 12 19	589 May 14	589 May 12 3pm	lun 589 May 5 8:27pm

**Table 3.** 11 Storm dates between 1 and 800 CE, that are close to maximum elongation of Venus as evening star and to a total eclipse station. Cycle length refers to the number of Venus years from the candidate CNVC base to the next CNVC base.

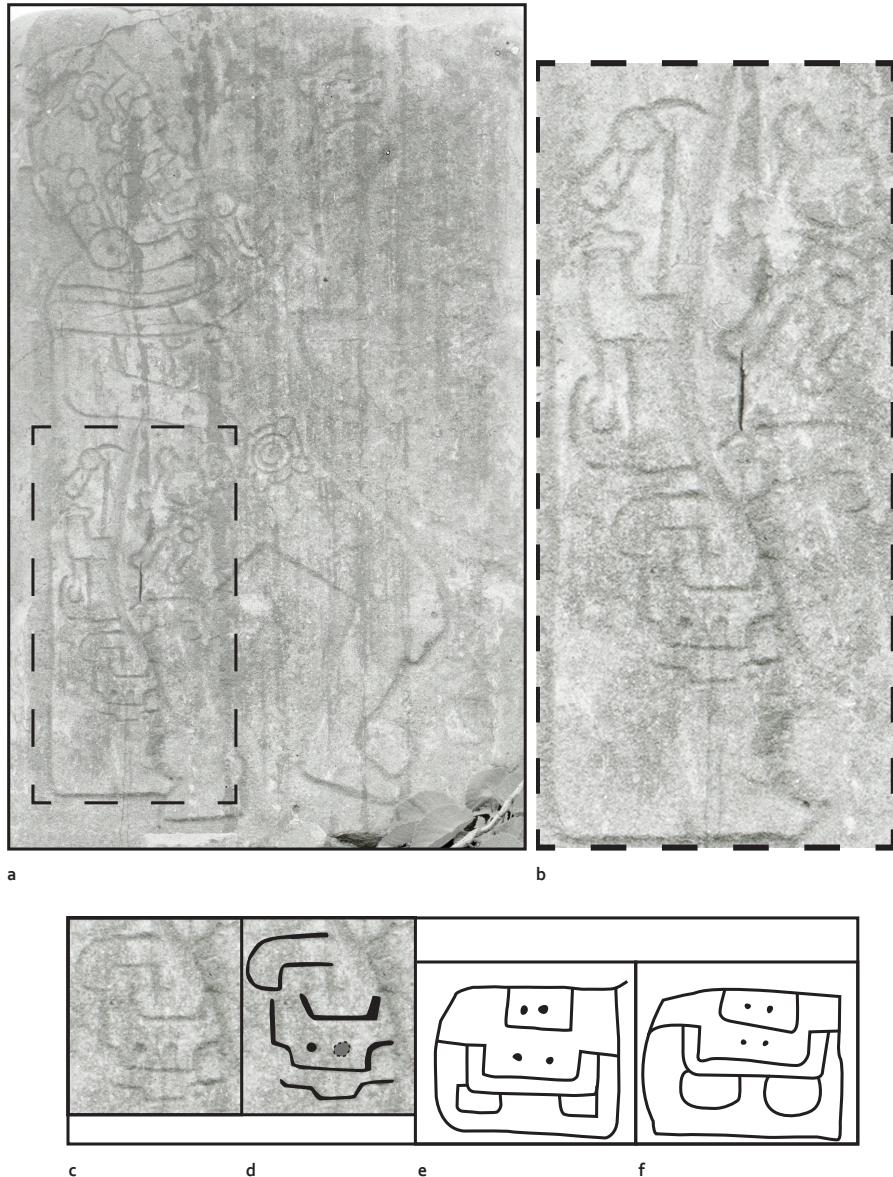
box in the chart, are separated by  $13 \times 360$  days, so that they fall on the same day of the divinatory calendar ( $13 \times 360 = 18 \times 260$ ) and 8 days past the same day in the canonical Venus cycle ( $13 \times 360 = 8 \times 584 + 8$ ). It is imaginable that the text was intended to be applicable for more than one of these dates.

Two other dates, bases of CNVC cycles lasting five Venus years, fall within the attested limits from a total eclipse and from the maximum elongation of Venus as evening star. Both are outside the 200–650 CE range. We do not dismiss the 680 CE date as impossible in principle, but the 784 CE candidate does seem implausibly late.

The last two candidates are bases of a CNVC cycle that would last for 8 Venus years. The earlier of the two falls within the range of the three secure epi-Olmec long count dates at Cerro de las Mesas, and the last is only 56 years later than that of Stela 8. Both fall within the attested limits from a total eclipse and from maximum elongation of the evening star.

A few other candidates could be entertained if the calibration to the internodal cycle were loosened to admit dates further from eclipse dates; they would be near eclipses that were not total or annular.

Finally, it is noteworthy that two of the eleven known epi-Olmec texts have segments that are read right to left. While exceedingly



**Figure 7.** Monte Alban Mound J Tablet 41 (J-41): *a*) Tablet J-41, *b*) detail of inside of cloak, showing the hill icon with vegetal sprouts, and glyph underneath, *c*) the hieroglyph below the hill sign, on the figure's cape, *d*) details drawn in, *e*) the logogram (APPEAR) at R2 on the La Mojarral stela, *f*) the same logogram at O12 on the stela (photograph by Herbert J. Spinden, courtesy of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology; drawing by Justin Lowry).

rare in Mayan, this is a common minority pattern in Sapoteko hieroglyphic texts, especially in the Preclassic period; in particular when adjacent to (above, or immediately to the right of) figures that are facing rightward; and in multi-column Sapoteko texts, it is typical that other columns have the default left-facing orientation. This practice may have diffused between the two groups. We know at least that the Sapoteko composers of some Monte Alban texts were familiar with epi-Olmec writing around 100 CE. Bernal (1968: 220, 1969: 163) noted Olmec-style facial features and ornamentation on many of Mound J's "conquest tablets", referring particularly to the inverted heads below the HILL logograms. On the cloak of a figure on Mound J's Tablet 41, what is inscribed below the hill glyph instead of an inverted face is an epi-Olmec logogram (see Figure 7).

Other facets of contact between epi-Olmecs and Oaxaca are documented by 100 BCE, when vessels from Oaxaca are found in the epi-Olmec tomb 7 at Chiapa de Corzo (Lowe and Agrinier 1960: 49) dating to 100 BCE (Clark 2017: 271; personal communication, 2018).

## Methods used to analyze the text

Before this text became known in 2002, based on the then-known epi-Olmec texts, we had published readings for 38 of the signs that occur in it (Kaufman and Justeson 2001), amounting to 70% of its signs in terms of text frequency. Using the known values for these signs, a knowledge of epi-Olmec grammar (Kaufman and Justeson 2004a), and a knowledge of Sokean vocabulary,<sup>20</sup> it is possible to

<sup>20</sup> Our chief source for Sokean vocabulary are the lexical databases created by linguists working on the Project for the Documentation of the Languages of Mesoamerica, which we initiated in 1993 in order to document lexically all the languages of the Mije-Sokean family, both because they are seriously endangered and because an expansion in the lexical and grammatical resources on this language was our primary means of advancing decipherment work on the epi-Olmec script (cf. Justeson and Kaufman 1993: 1710). The documentation work of this project, which expanded from its initial coverage to include other Mesoamerican language families, was completed in 2010; dictionaries of four Sokean languages (colonial Tecpatán Chiapas Soke [Zavala in press], Ayapanec Gulf Sokean [Soslak in press], Santa María Chimalapa Soke [Kaufman in press a], and San Miguel Chimalapa Soke [Kaufman in press b]) have been in production since 2014, and we are now in the process of bringing out dictionaries and grammatical sketches of the other Mije-Sokean languages whose documentation we conducted or supervised. Around 1990, Søren Wichmann provided us with a pre-publication version of his compilation of Mije-Sokean cognate sets (later appearing in Wichmann 1995) which was a significant aid to our research into the mid 1990s.

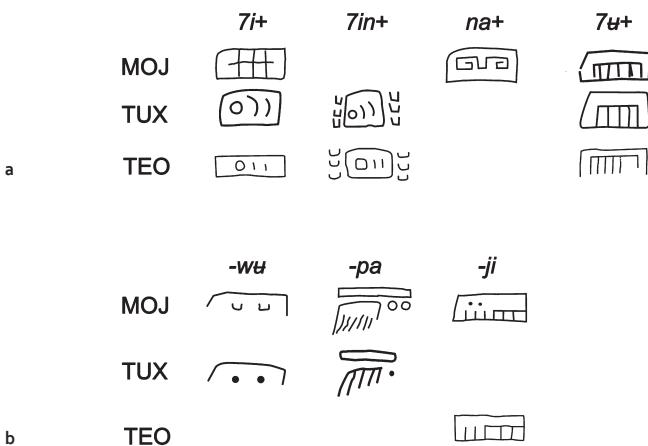
parse the mask text and to understand much of its content. All of our earlier readings prove consistent with their new contexts in the mask text; for some, the new contexts strongly support their previously proposed readings.

The nineteen signs for which we did not previously have readings are known only from this text. Eighteen of these signs are adjacent to a sign of known value, and thirteen are both immediately preceded and immediately followed by a sign of known value. The constraints thereby provided by the known signs enable us to establish a series of results.

Our inference methods, as in our previous work, are as follows:

1. Sokean languages have rich morphology, which will be reflected in obvious ways in almost any text with more than one or two sentences. We identify grammatical constraints that the known signs provide for a reading of the text, by locating known spellings for grammatically-required morphemes. For verbs, this means identifying spellings for proclitic pronominal agreement markers—that is, words preposed to the verb word that indicate the grammatical person of subjects and objects (see Figure 8a). (“Proclitic” in Mije-Sokean means that these elements are themselves separate words, not “prefixes”, and that they attach to the verb word after accent rules have been applied to it.) There are two categories of person markers on verbs: “ergative”, which agree in person with the subjects of all verbs in subordinate clauses, and of transitive verbs in main clauses; and “absolutive”, which agree in person with the subjects of intransitive verbs in main clauses and with the objects of transitive verbs regardless of clause type. The required grammatical suffixes on verbs mark aspect and mood, and are deployed depending upon whether the verb is in an independent (or “main”) or in a dependent (or “subordinate”) clause (Figure 8b). On nouns, the ergative proclitics serve as possessive markers, and the absolutives as subjects of predicate nouns or adjectives (like “I am your father” and “Life is short”).

The fact that every verb obligatorily ends in a marker of aspect or mood, while nouns (and noun phrases) and predicate



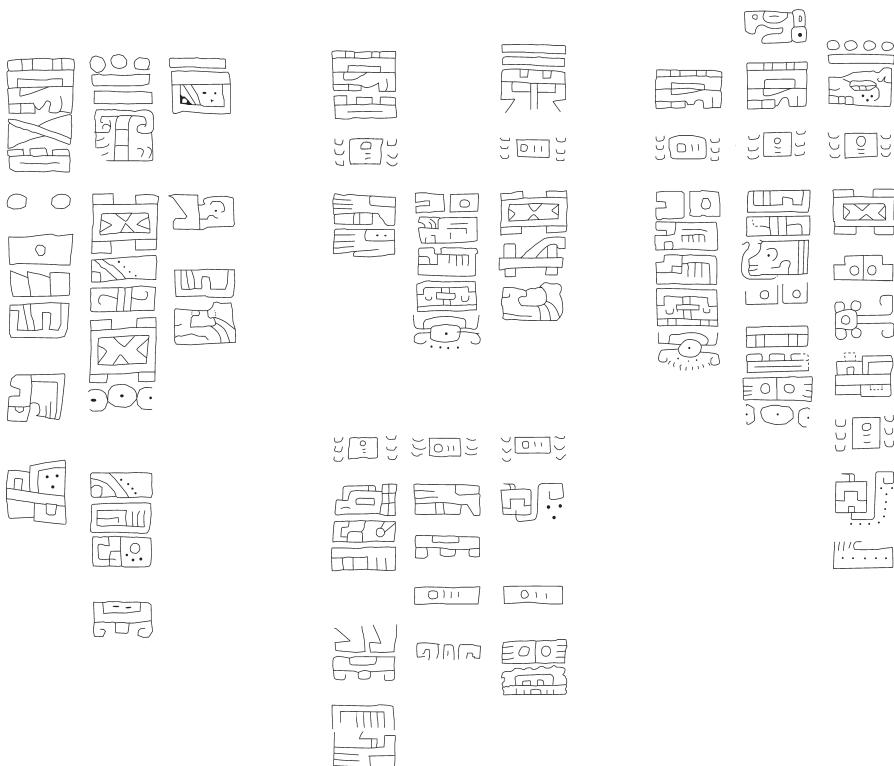
**Figure 8.** Signs and sign groups useful for grammatical analysis. The pictured signs spell epi-Olmec syllables whose occurrence typically corresponds to inflectional morphemes of obligatory categories. Note that each sign spells a syllable, not a morpheme; almost all are attested, though less often, in phonetic spellings of other parts of some epi-Olmec words. For example, the sign for *na* occurs in spelling the beginning of the word *nas-wθ* ‘(it/they) passed’ on the La Mojarra stela. *a)* Spellings for syllables instantiating ergative proclitics { $\text{7i}+$ } ‘3<sup>rd</sup> person’; { $\text{7in}+$ } ‘2<sup>nd</sup> person’ [spelled  $\text{7ixni}$ ]; { $\text{na}+$ } ‘1<sup>st</sup> person exclusive’; and absolute proclitic { $\text{7u}+$ } ‘1<sup>st</sup> person exclusive’. *b)* Spellings for syllables instantiating aspect suffixes: { $-\text{w}\theta$ } ‘independent incomplete’; { $-\text{pa}$ } independent incomplete; { $-\text{ji}$ } dependent complete.

adjectives need not have any suffix, helps us to distinguish the grammatical class of epi-Olmec words.

For more detail, see the general discussion of our linguistic framework for analysis above.

2. Dates and other adverbial terms (which are mostly temporal locators) occur at the beginning of the sentences in which they occur in epi-Olmec and in Mije-Sokean languages. We therefore use day names and logograms that represent adverbs to identify (some) sentence boundaries.
3. When (a) the end of the pronunciation of one sign is inconsistent with the beginning of the pronunciation of the next, given epi-Olmec spelling conventions, and (b) one of these signs is a logogram, this allows us to place a morpheme (grammatical) boundary between them.

Figure 9 presents the results of applying these constraints to breaking down the mask text; the 104 signs of the text are separated into 63 individual morphemes or multi-morphemic



**Figure 9.** Preliminary identification of morpheme boundaries in the mask text, prior to syntactic analysis or the reading of new signs, arranged to display grammatical and lexical parallels across text segments. Note that, on the mask, the orientation of signs in the middle segment was reversed (except for the sign  $7i_2$ ); we have “re-reversed” them to enhance comparability across segments.

sequences. Such extensive analytic breakdown of the text is promising for analysis.

4. We apply all these results to identifying vocabulary. Using grammatical constraints, we identify word and phrase boundaries. The ergative/possessive markers, for example, show us where eleven words on the mask begin. These results also help us to identify parts of speech: it is usually possible to determine whether a word is a transitive verb, an intransitive verb, a possessed noun, or a non-verb (a noun, an adjective, or an adverbial); for nouns marked as plural, we can know whether that noun is grammatically “animate” (human or divine), since the former are marked by the postposed clitic (= “enclitic”)

+ta7m and the latter by +yaj. When a phonetic sign is part of the spelling of a word, we look for reconstructible Sokean words that meet all these constraints—grammatical, phonological, and semantic.

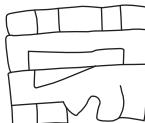
These phonetic and grammatical constraints allow us to determine probable or unavoidable values for about half of the newly encountered signs; for the rest, viable readings can be proposed but not established. Examples of the some of the issues are given following a transcription of the text into the epi-Olmec language, and a rough and tentative translation of it.

## Reading and translation

We write epi-Olmec and other Mije-Sokean words in a practical, Spanish-based orthography. Most letters and digraphs have their usual Spanish pronunciations, but *j* is pronounced like English *h*, *7* represents a glottal stop, and *tz* represents a sibilant affricate [ç], which sounds like *ts*. The letter *u*, or “barred *u*”, represents a high, central-to-back unrounded vowel; it sounds like the *u* of *put* and *bush*, as pronounced by some Southerners and Westerners in the US, and like the *u* in *just now*. In representing the grammatical structure of words, = joins the members of a compound, - joins inflectional affixes to stems, . (a dot) joins derivational affixes to stems, and + joins clitics to words (clitics are words that do not carry an accent). Accent falls on the next to last syllable of a word, not counting clitics.

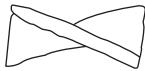
Our text transliterations below present the results of our analysis; full transliterations, including sign values, analysis of word structures, and both literal and free translations, are provided in the appendix. The following codes are used to label grammatical morphemes in our analysis of the mask text:

AN	active nominalization	1E	first person ergative
PN	passive nominalization	2E	second person ergative
NSTR	instrument nominalization	3E	third person ergative
NTP	antipassive voice	1A	first person absolute
II	independent incompletive status	2A	second person absolute
IC	independent completive status	3A	third person absolute

**SEGMENT 1**

A1a

MIDDLE

A1b "INVERTED JAWBONE":  
a place or type of place

A2

"TWIST": ?TWIST/WI7T  
(maybe ?FLAY/TZIK)

OR

TINY/NAM



A3

"BAG": SKIN<sub>2</sub>/NAKA<sub>2</sub>,  
OR NIGHT/TZU7**A1-A3:**

T	MIDDLE/KUK	"PLACE"	?TWIST/WI7T	SKIN <sub>2</sub> /NAKA <sub>2</sub>
---	------------	---------	-------------	--------------------------------------

R	kuk	??	?wi7t.i	nak
---	-----	----	---------	-----

G	middle	"place"	twist-PN	skin
---	--------	---------	----------	------

LT	middle	"place"	twisted	skin
----	--------	---------	---------	------

**OR**

T	MIDDLE/KUK	"PLACE"	?FLAY/TZIK	SKIN <sub>2</sub> /NAKA <sub>2</sub>
---	------------	---------	------------	--------------------------------------

R	kuk	??	?tzik.i	nak
---	-----	----	---------	-----

G	middle	"place"	flay-PN	skin
---	--------	---------	---------	------

LT	middle	"place"	flayed	skin
----	--------	---------	--------	------

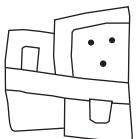
**OR****A1-A3:**

T	MIDDLE/KUK	"PLACE"	TINY/NAM-NIGHT/TZU7
---	------------	---------	---------------------

R	kuk	??	nam=tzu7
---	-----	----	----------

G	middle	"place"	little-night
---	--------	---------	--------------

LT	middle	"place"	before dawn
----	--------	---------	-------------

	A4	TWO/WUS=TUK
	A5	BLOOD/NU7PIN
	A6	"TANG": SOAK/SO7M OR so or ka
	A7	ma
	A8	7aw
	A9	DO/TZUK

**A4-A9**

T	TWO	BLOOD-SOAK-ma	7aw-DO
R	wus=tuk	n <u>u</u> 7pin=so7m.a7	0-7aw=tz <u>k</u> .i
G	two	blood-soak-AN	3A-before-make-PN
LT	two	blood-soak-er-s	they-are-prepared-in-advance

**OR****A4-A9**

T	TWO	BLOOD-ka-ma	7aw-DO
R	wus=tuk	n <u>u</u> 7pin=kam	0-7aw=tz <u>k</u> .i
G	two	blood-hard	3A-before-make-PN
LT	two	blood-hard-things	they-are-prepared-in-advance

kuk 7it.i7, wi7t.i/tzik.i naka, wus=tuk nu7pin=so7m.a7 7aw=tzk.i.

FT In the middle of the place, twisted (or flayed) skin and two blood-soakers have been prepared in advance.

**OR**kuk 7it.i7, nam=tzu7, wus=tuk nu7pin=so7m.a7 7aw=tzk.i.

FT In the middle of the place, before dawn, two blood-soakers have been prepared in advance.

	A10 THIRTEEN/ MAK-KO-TUKU		B4 puk
	A11 FLINT/ ?JUKUTU TZA7		B5 w <u>u</u> <sub>3</sub>
	B1 puk		B6 ku
	B2 ku		B7 "RECTANGLE": COTTON/TZOJA7 or tzo
	B3 pa <sub>3</sub>		B8 ja
			B9a tu
			B9b CLOTH/TUKU7

**A10-B9:**

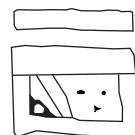
T	THIRTEEN		DAYNAME—"FLINT"
R	mak ko	tuk <u>u</u>	?jukut <u>u</u> ?tza7
G	ten plus	three	?fire ?stone
LT	thirteen		?fint

T	<b>puk-ku-pa</b> <sub>3</sub>
R	0-puk(=kuw7)-pa
G	3A-take(-dye)-II
LT	it-gets-taken(-and-dyed)

T <i>OR</i>	<b>puk-wu</b> <sub>3</sub>	ku	COTTON-ja	tu CLOTH
T	<b>puk-wu</b> <sub>3</sub>	ku	tzo-ja	tu CLOTH
R	puk +wu7	ku7	tzoja7	tuku7
G	fur +REL	hand	cotton	cloth
LT	furry	forepaw	cotton	cloth/garment

FT On 13 "Flint", (a) furry forepaw(s) and a cotton cloth/garment (will) get taken (and dyed).

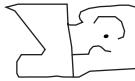
*note:* A word for 'flint' is likely the original name for this day, but we have no data on what its Sokean name was; 'flint' is *jukutu tza7* (lit., "fire stone").



B10 FIVE/MOS



B11 SUN/SUW



B12a "BOOT": ?RULER/7AW=KI7M&gt;7OY.E7

B12b "FACE"; ?PERSONAGE



B13 ma



B14 CAPTIVE/MATZ.(E)

**B10-B14:**

T FIVE SUN

R mos suw

G five sun

LT 5 Sun

T ?RULER "FACE" <sub>2</sub> ma-CAPTIVE/MATZ.E

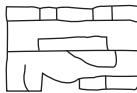
R ?7aw=ki7m&gt;7oy.e7 ?win 0-matz.e

G before=go.up&gt;NTP-AN personage 3A-seize.PN

LT ruler personage he-is-captive

FT On 5 Sun a ?"rulerly" ?personage is/will.be a captive.

*note:* "Rulerly" is a shorthand way to refer to some specific social status, presumably a relatively high one.

**SEGMENT 2**

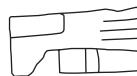
- C1a MIDDLE/KUK  
C1b “INVERTED.JAWBONE”:  
a place or type of place



- C2 “BAG”: SKIN<sub>2</sub>/NAKA<sub>2</sub>  
OR NIGHT/TZU7



- C3a 7i<sub>2</sub>  
C3b ni<sub>2</sub>



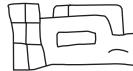
- C4 ne



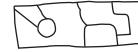
- C5 “INVERTED.HAND”:  
?COVER/NEK7



- C6a 7i<sub>2</sub>  
C6b ni<sub>2</sub>



- C7 ki



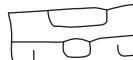
- C8 RECTANGLE2:  
?SHINE<sub>2</sub>/KIJ<sub>2</sub>



- C9 ji



- C10 “2.BOOTs”:  
?RULER/  
7AW=KI7M>7OY.E7



- C11a tu  
C11b CLOTH/  
TUKU7

**C1-C5:**

T MIDDLE/KUK	“PLACE”	SKIN <sub>2</sub> /NAKA <sub>2</sub>	7i <sub>2</sub> -ni <sub>2</sub> -ne-?COVER
R kuk	??	naka	0-7in+?nek7.a7
G middle	“place”	skin	3A-2E-?protective.cover-AN
LT middle	of the “place”	skin	(it-is-)your-?protective.covering <b>OR</b>

T MIDDLE/KUK	“PLACE”	NIGHT/TZU7	7i <sub>2</sub> -ni <sub>2</sub> -ne-?COVER/NEK7
R kuk	??	tzu7	(0-)7in+?nek7.a7
G middle	“place”	night	(3A-)2E-?protective.cover-AN
LT middle	of the “place”	night	(it-is-)your-?protective.covering

**C6-11:**

T	7i <sub>2</sub> -ni <sub>2</sub> -ki-?SHINE <sub>2</sub> -ji
R	7in+?kij.i
G	2E-?shine-PN
LT	your-?shining-thing

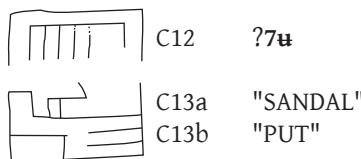
T	?RULER	tu-CLOTH
R	(0-)7aw=ki7m>7oy.e7	tuku7
G	(3A-)before-go.up-NTP-AN	cloth
LT	(it-is-)"rulerly"	cloth/garment

**C1-C11:**

FT In the middle of the place a skin is your ?protective covering;  
your shining thing is a “rulerly” garment.

**OR**

In the middle of the place, at night, your shining “rulerly” garment  
is your ?protective covering.



C12-13:

T      **7u**-“SANDAL”×“PUT”R      0-7uy=STOW.E

G      3A-bend=put.away-PA

LT      it-is-stowed-bent

FT      It (your shining rulerly protective garment)  
has been partially folded/bent and stowed.

	C14	TITLEx: a type of headgear		D2a	<b>7i<sub>2</sub></b>
	C15	NEW/JOME7		D2b	<b>ni<sub>2</sub></b>
	C16	?SPEAR THROWER/ ?TUP.KUY7		D3	<b>ne</b>
	C17	?EFFIGY/ ?MUTZ.I7		D4a	<b>tu</b>
				D4b	CLOTH/TUKU7
	D1	<b>ya<sub>2</sub></b>		D5	<b>7i<sub>2</sub></b>
				D6	<b>7o</b>

**C14-D6:**

T	TITLEx	NEW	?SPEAR THROWER	?EFFIGY	<b>ya<sub>2</sub></b>
R	??	0-jome7	?tup.kuy7	?mutz.i7	+yaj
G	(kind of headgear)	3A-new	shoot-NSTR	play-AN-INANPL	
LT	(kind of headgear)	it-is-new	spearthrower	effigies/models	

T	<b>7i<sub>2</sub>-ni<sub>2</sub>-ne-tu-CLOTH</b>	<b>7i<sub>2</sub>-7o</b>
R	7in+new=tuku7	7i+7o
G	2E-ridge-cloth	3E-maguey
LT	your ridged cloth	its-maguey

FT      The (headgear.types) are new ?spearthrower.effigies/  
spearthrowers.and.??s and your ridged cloth(ing)'s maguey

*note:* The word ‘ridged’ here refers to lines of material standing higher than the background, like appliqué or embroidery on the surface of a textile, or raised stitching joining pieces of fabric together at their edges. For the “cloth’s maguey”, see “Iconographic confirmation of features of the readings”.

	D7	TEN/MAK		D12	CAPTIVE/MATZ.(E)
	D8	HOUSE/TUK		D13a	7i <sub>2</sub>
	D9a	7i <sub>2</sub>		D13b	ni <sub>2</sub>
	D9b	ni <sub>2</sub>		D14	BLOOD.STASH/ ?NU7PIN=KOT.E
	D10	puk		D15	7i <sub>2</sub>
	D11	"FRAMEWORK": RACK/TZE7S		D16	ko
				D17	FILL/KOM OR PAINT/KOY

**D7-11:**

T	TEN	?HOUSE	7i <sub>2</sub> ×ni <sub>2</sub> -puk	?RACK	CAPTIVE
R	mak	?tuk	7in+puk.i	0-tze7s	matz.e
G	ten	?house	2E-take-PN	3A-rack	seize-PN
LT	ten	?house	your-taken-one	he-is-rack	captive

*note:* A word for ‘house’ is the name for this day in the Basin of Mexico, but we have no data on what its Sokean name was; ‘house’ is tuk.

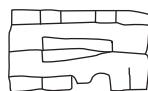
**D12-17:**

T	7i <sub>2</sub> -ni <sub>2</sub> -BLOOD.STASH	7i <sub>2</sub> -ko-FILL	OR	7i <sub>2</sub> -ko-PAINT
R	0-7in+n <u>7</u> pin=kot.e	7i+kom.a7		7i+koy.a7
G	3A-2E-blood.stash-PN	3E-fill-AN		3E-paint-AN
LT	he-is-your-blood.stash	its-fill-er		its-paint-er

**D7-17:**

FT On 10 House your taken one is a scaffold captive;  
he is your blood collection’s filler (or painter/stainer)

*note:* Proto-Mije-Sokean \*kom means ‘to fill with a liquid’ (and ‘to be filled with a liquid’); its nominalization kom.a7 ‘filler’ refers to the source of a liquid that is used to fill something; in this case the captive is the source of a collection of blood for a sacrificial offering.

**SEGMENT 3**E1a  
E1bMIDDLE/KUK  
“INVERTED JAWBONE”:  
specifies some some locationE2a  
E2b7i<sub>2</sub>  
ni<sub>2</sub>

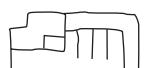
E3

TITLEx: a type of headgear



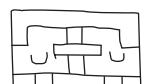
E4

NEW/JOME7



E5

?SPEAR THROWER/?TUP.KUY7



E6

??EFFIGY/?MUTZ.I7



E7

ya<sub>2</sub>**E1-E7:**

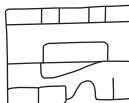
T	MIDDLE	“PLACE”	7i <sub>2</sub> × ni <sub>2</sub> + TITLEx
R	kuk	??	7in+??
G	middle	“place”	2E-(kind of headgear)
LT	middle of the	“place”	your (kind of headgear)

T	NEW	?SPEAR THROWER	??EFFIGY	ya <sub>2</sub>
R	o-jome7	?tup.kuy7	?mutz.i7	+yaj
G	3A-new	shoot-NSTR	play-AN-INANPL	
LT	it-is-new	spearthrower	effigies/models	

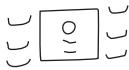
FT In the middle of “place”, your (headgear.types) are new  
spearthrower.models/spearthrowers.and.??s

E8 LONGLIP2.MONTH/  
JI7TZ.I7

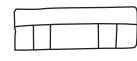
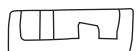
E13 TITLEy

E9a MIDDLE/KUK  
E9b "INVERTED.JAWBONE":

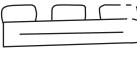
E14 LORD/KO.YUMI



E10a

E10b 7i<sub>2</sub>  
ni<sub>2</sub>E15 DRUM/KOW.A  
or YEAR/7AME7

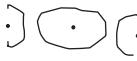
E11 ma

E16 "BAG": SKIN<sub>2</sub>/  
NAKA<sub>2</sub>

E12 pa



F1 ko

F2 wu<sub>3</sub>**E8-E12:**

T	LONGLIP <sub>2</sub>	MIDDLE	"PLACE"	7i <sub>2</sub> -ni <sub>2</sub> -ma-pa
R	ji7tz.i7	kuk	??	0-7in+may-pa
G	wrinkle-PN	middle	"place"	3A-2E-count-II
LT	Longlip.month	middle	"place"	you-count-them

**OR**

T	LONGLIP <sub>2</sub>	MIDDLE	"PLACE"	7i <sub>2</sub> -ni <sub>2</sub> -ma-pa
R	ji7tz.i7	kuk	??	0-7in+may-pa
G	wrinkle-PN	middle	"place"	3A-2E-tell-II
LT	Longlip.month	middle	"place"	you-tell-it

FT In Longlip month, in the middle of "place", you (will) count them;  
**OR** In Longlip month, in the middle of "place", you (will) tell it;

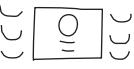
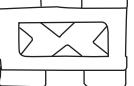
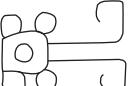
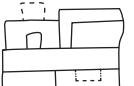
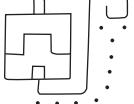
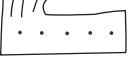
**E13-F2:**

T	TITLEy	LORD	DRUM-SKIN <sub>2</sub> -ko-w <u>u</u> <sub>3</sub>
R	??	ko.yumi	0-kow.a=naka=kow-w <u>u</u>
G	??	ELSE-noble	3A-play.AN-skin-play-IC
LT	"titular"	lord	he-play-ed-drum-skin

**OR**

T	TITLEy	LORD	DRUM	NIGHT-ko- w <u>u</u> <sub>3</sub>
R	??	ko.yumi	0-kow.a	(0-)tzu7-kow-w <u>u</u>
G	??	ELSE-noble	play-AN	3A-night-play-IC
LT	"titular"	-lordly	-drum	it-night-played

FT the titular lord will have played (a) drum-skin(s).  
**OR** the titular lordly drum will have been played at night.

	F3	NINE/ <b>MAKTAS=TUJTU</b>
	F4	DEER/ <b>MU7A</b>
	F5a	<b>7i<sub>2</sub></b>
	F5b	<b>ni<sub>2</sub></b>
	F6	<b>puk</b>
	F7	<b>kak</b>
	F8	LOINCLOTH/ <b>NI7.JUP.7</b>
	F9	DO/ <b>TZUK</b>
	F10a	<b>7i<sub>2</sub></b>
	F10b	<b>ni<sub>2</sub></b>
	F11	BLOOD.STASH/ <b>?NU7PIN=KOT.E</b>
	F12	OFFERING/ <b>TZI7&gt;7OY.KUY7</b>

**F3-F9:**

T	NINE	DEER		
R	maktas=tujtu	mu7a		
G	four-plus.five	deer		
LT	nine	deer		
T	<b>7i<sub>2</sub>-ni<sub>2</sub>-puk</b>	<b>kak</b>	LOINCLOTH	DO
R	7in+pu-k.u7	kak.e	0-ni7.jup.7	tzuk.i
G	2E-take-AN	replace-PN	3A-body-wrap-NSTR	do-PN
LT	your-tak-er	replace-ment	it-is-body-wrapp-er	device

**F10-F12:**

T	<b>7i<sub>2</sub>-ni<sub>2</sub></b>	BLOOD.STASH	OFFERING
R	7in+nu7pin=kot.e	0-tzi7>7oy.kuy7	
G	2E-blood-stash-PN	3A-give-NTP-NSTR	
LT	your-blood-stash	it-is-offering	

**F3-F12:**

FT On 9 Deer, your launcher/receiver is a succession body-wrapping device; your blood collection is an/the offering.

## Exemplification of analyses

Once we have identified several words in a row, there is usually only a limited number of ways that they can be related that are not ungrammatical. Among these—because texts are coherent and structured—typically there are some with obvious and close semantic relationships. In all cases we work first on contexts with the best and most restrictive clues.

If we can get at most words and sequences in this way, the text as a whole gets put together into a meaningful story. If the model for the grammar, vocabulary, or writing system is fundamentally incorrect, then this should not prove possible with a text of any substantial length. For the mask, however, we do recover a meaningful and in fact highly structured text from the application of these procedures.

Without delving into particulars of the process of working out our readings of every new sign for which we have proposals—which would require monographic treatment—the remainder of this section addresses various kinds of issues that arise in interpreting the newly encountered signs in this text. These signs and their interpretations are provided in Figure 10.

### Signs for the syllable **wu**

In an independent (main) clause, a Sokean verb must take one of four suffixes: the completive suffix -**wu**; the incomplete suffix -**pa**; the optative suffix -**i(n)**; or an imperative suffix -**at7 ~ -a7**. All but the imperative are attested in other epi-Olmec texts, and both the completive and incomplete suffixes occur frequently; however, the known signs for the syllables **wu** and **pa** do not occur in the mask text (with the possible exception of what we treat as a numeral 2 at A4, which could in principle be an instance of the syllabogram **wu<sub>2</sub>**).

In the five other legible epi-Olmec texts, the syllabogram **wu** is so frequent that it amounts to about one out of every 12 non-calendrical signs. According to our analysis, it is used almost exclusively for two purposes: to spell the completive aspect marker on independent verbs (those in main clauses), and otherwise to spell a relativizer ('which is/was a ...') (typically marking a noun or adjective as modifying a following noun phrase). Based on their frequencies in other epi-Olmec texts, we would expect about 6 instances of verb

	A1b "INVERTED.JAWBONE": C1b a place or type of place E1b E9b		B14 CAPTIVE/MATZ(.E) D12
	A2 "TWIST": TWIST/WI <sub>7</sub> T (maybe FLAY/TZIK) or TINY/NAM		C5 "INVERTED.HAND": COVER/NE <sub>7</sub> K
	B3 "BAG": SKIN <sub>2</sub> /NAKA <sub>2</sub> C2 E15		C13a "SANDAL" C13b "PUT"
	A6 "SAWTOOTH": SOAK/SO <sub>7</sub> M <i>OR so</i> <i>OR ka</i>		C14 TITLE <sub>x</sub> : E3 a type of headgear
	A11 FLINT/ ?JUKUTU-TZA <sub>7</sub>		C16 ?SPEAR THROWER/ ?TUP.KUY <sub>7</sub>
	B3 pa <sub>3</sub> E12		C17 ?EFFIGY/?MUTZ.I <sub>7</sub> E6
	B5 we <sub>3</sub> F2		D8 HOUSE/TU-K
	B7 "RECTANGLE": COTTON/TZOJA <sub>7</sub> or tzo		D11 "FRAMEWORK": ?RACK/TZE <sub>7</sub> S
			D17 FILL/KOM <i>OR</i> PAINT/KOY
			E13 TITLE <sub>y</sub>

Figure 10. Epi-Olmec signs currently known only from the mask text.

suffixes *-w<sub>H</sub>* or *-pa* in the mask's text. In our analysis, we recognize half this number. Whatever one's analysis, these statistics indicate that some other sign must be used in the mask's text as the equivalent of what we read as *w<sub>H</sub>* and/or *pa*.<sup>21</sup> In our analysis, this text deals

<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting that there is a predictable grammatical difference between narrative texts and (as we take the mask text to be) ritual texts, with inflected verbs playing a larger role in narratives. Comparing the narrative text on the La Mojarra stela and the ritual text on the Tuxtla Statuette—the only texts comparable in length to that on the mask—the narrative text proceeds more via verbal rather than equational clauses: in the La Mojarra text, 40 out of 61 sentences (~ 66%) have inflected verbs, with completive statements outnumbering incompletives; in the Tuxtla Statuette text, equational clauses are relatively more common, occurring in 6 of 12 sentences (= 50%). The mask text has an even lower rate of verbal predictions: we analyze it as containing fifteen sentences of which only three have inflected verbs.

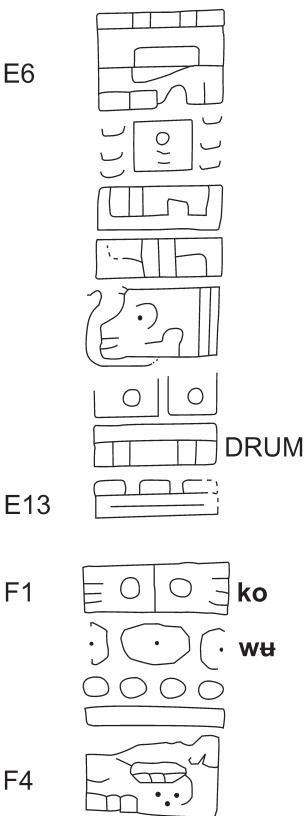


Figure 11. A verb referring to drum playing.

texts always constitute or are part of a sentence-initial adverbial construction, we can conclude that what precedes this day name ends the clause in which it occurs. Clause-final position is standard for the verb in epi-Olmec, and was at least the favored position in early Mije-Sokean languages generally. The sign at F2 is therefore (almost?) certain to spell the aspect suffix on a verb; and the verb must be in an independent clause, since dependent clauses precede independent clauses in epi-Olmec. Signs for the syllable *7i* and a sign pair for the syllable *7in* are found in the text, and imperatives are the least likely to appear, so the only plausible readings for the sign at F2 are *wt* or *pa*.

The sign spelling this verb suffix is immediately preceded by the sign **ko**. No prefinal verb suffix is consistent with this shape, so this

substantially with situations, and otherwise with ritual acts rather than political events.

In an epi-Olmec text of 96 non-calendrical signs, we should expect about five instances of signs spelling *wt* and/or *pa* in grammatical functions. A sign for either syllable should usually be the final sign in the written word, and is likely to occur multiple times. Among signs found only in the mask text, none occurs more than twice and only four occur twice each; two emerge as viable candidates for spelling these syllables. An example illustrates our inference procedures (see Figure 11).

One sign we entertained as spelling an independent verb suffix comes just before a day name, and so ends the passage it is part of. It is certainly word-final, and since day names in epi-Olmec

sign must spell all or part of a verb stem. A verb stem can only be spelled in this way, according to epi-Olmec spelling rules and Sokean verb shape constraints, if it is a verb root shaped *ko7*, *koj*, *ko7j*, *kow*, *ko7w*, *koy*, or *ko7y*. Only two of these syllables are the shapes of reconstructible verbs: pMS \**kow* ‘to play (a drum)’ and pMi \**koy* ‘to stain it’. Strikingly, this candidate for spelling a verb is preceded, with one sign intervening, by the sign we read as a logogram for ‘drum’ at MOJ:O\*29 (elsewhere, ‘year’). Given its semantic specificity, the only reasonable conclusion is that we have here a spelling of a verb whose root is *kow* ‘to play (a drum)’; and, given that spellings for the syllables *ji*, *7i*, and *7in* occur in the text, the only grammatically viable readings for the sign after **ko** are *wt* or *pa*.

The evidence above supports a conclusion that the sign immediately before the date 9 Deer spells either suffixed *-wt* or *-pa*, but it does not establish which. This we resolve by the context of its first occurrence, in column B. At B5, this sign immediately follows the second instance in the column of a sign for the syllable *puk*. In the La Mojarra text, the syllabogram **puk**<sup>22</sup> spells a verb root meaning ‘to take/acquire/achieve something; to get taken/acquired/achieved’ (Kaufman and Justeson 2004a: 1102). We also suggested that it could spell a noun root *puk* meaning ‘(animal’s) hair, fur; feather’ (Macri and L. Stark 1993: 5). On the mask we read the first of these as the verb in its mediopassive reading, ‘it got taken’, and the second as the noun. This pairing may be seen as an instance of verbal art.

The reading as a noun yields a long noun phrase that is topically coherent. The passage must end by the time a new clause begins with the date 5 Sun. This date is immediately preceded by the textually frequent sign sequence (**tu**) $\times$ **TUKU7** for the word *tuku7* ‘cloth, clothing’; special cloth is discussed in both of the lengthy epi-Olmec

<sup>22</sup> Houston and Coe incorrectly transliterate this using capital letters, treating it as a logogram; we explicitly identify it (Kaufman and Justeson 2001: 6) as a syllabogram. CVC syllabograms occur in many logosyllabic writing systems; Houston and Coe’s error may be due to the fact that many Mayanist epigraphers have failed to recognize the existence of a class of CVC syllabograms in Mayan writing. However, there are several clear cases in which a sign represents a CVC phonological sequence that spells all or part of different morphemes or morpheme sequences. A few examples from Classic period inscriptions are **7ak**’ in spellings of the root *7ahk’ut* ‘dance’ and the transitive verb root *7ak*’ ‘to give, to put’, **nah** for *naah* ‘house’ and *nah* ‘first’, and **nal** for a suffix sequence *-n-al* as in *y-ich-n-al* and for a place name suffix seemingly derived from \**naah-a(:)l*. As in other writing systems (for example, Sumerian), CVC syllabograms can take phonetic complements, as they do both in Mayan and epi-Olmec writing.

ritual texts, and in parts of the La Mojarra text that recount ritual acts. Grammatically, this word must be the head noun of its phrase, possibly the entire noun phrase, and, as a complete word it must be preceded by the end of another word. Furthermore, in each of the three segments of the text, the date (in the first segment, the last date) is followed by a statement about a ritual, and the material preceding it discusses the preparations for rituals. The reference to types of clothing, including all three references to *tuku7*, occur in the sections on preparations.

The other two references to cloth or clothing in the mask text are preceded by appropriate modifiers, pSo \*new ‘ridge(d)’ and *yumi* or *ko.yumi* for ‘lord(ly), noble’ (*new tuku7*, spelled **ne (tu)×TUKU7**, which is also mentioned on the Tuxtla Statuette, would refer to cloth or clothing having material standing out from the background; such features can be seen (for example) in the higher relief on Cerro de las Mesas Stela 5 and the Chapultepec Stone (see Figure 5).<sup>23</sup>

In the third case, ending the preparations before the events of 5 Sun, the sign immediately preceding **(tu)×TUKU7** is **ja**; this sign cannot spell word-final *j*, since *j* is one of the “weak” consonants, along with 7, *w*, and *y*, that are only spelled before vowels in the epi-Olmec writing system. So, the word it spells must end in *ja*, or in *ja* plus one or two of the weak consonants. This is not a viable spelling of all or part of a word-final verb suffix, except in the unlikely possibility that it were an imperative in *-a7* of a verb ending in *j* whose

<sup>23</sup> Barbara Stark, along with her collaborators in the archaeology of the lower Papaloapan Basin, has devoted considerable attention to the artifactual and archaeobotanical evidence for the development of a major cotton industry in the region, finding that it probably existed at a very low level toward the end of the Late Preclassic and became a major part of the local economy and ecosystem during the Early Classic. Stark et al. (1998: 19–20) note a correlated increase in the depiction in figural ceramics of elaborate clothing types, including “textilelike garments”, details of which Stark discusses in several publications. Her decades of excavation in the region show that stylistic groups of figurines and textile types identified by McBride (1971) were well-established in the Early Classic period (Stark 1977: 92–94 and 2001: 208–210), including most types assigned by McBride to the Late Classic, and (Stark 1977: 92–94) that the Nopiloa tradition described by McBride extended to the coast of the lower Papaloapan Basin.

Stark et al. (1998) cite examples of textile types in this tradition from complete examples, some from Medellín Zenil’s excavations and others from exhibitions of Veracruz ceramic sculptures in private collections. Many ceramic figures from these sources show the kinds of ridged features that the term *new tuku7* would apply to, among them, minimally, Medellín Zenil (1987: Figures 31, 40, 42, 56, 59–61, 69, 73), characterized by Medellín Zenil (1987) as “relieves”, and Hammer (1971, entries #59, 60, 62, 69–73, and 99).

root vowel is /e/, /a/, or /o/; in all likelihood, **ja** ends the spelling of a non-verb. One and only one candidate makes sense in terms of a discussion of special cloth for a ritual: proto-Soke \**tzoja7* ‘cotton’. Cotton was the clothing of the nobility in pre-Columbian times, so it is an especially appropriate sort of clothing to be prepared for an elite ritual. The Mixtequila, the epi-Olmec region whose center was at Cerro de las Mesas, became an important cotton producer during the Early Classic period there (300–600 CE), the industry likely beginning toward the end of the Terminal Preclassic (Stark et al. 1998: 9ff). The sign at B7 could be a logogram for *tzoja7* ‘cotton’ or a syllabogram for the syllable *tzo* (see also note 23).

The three preceding signs are interpretable as a part of the description of this ritual costume, if we interpret the sign after that for *puk* as spelling the syllable *wt* rather than *pa*. Besides the completive aspect marker *-wt*, the other common application of syllabograms for this syllable is to spell the relativizing enclitic *+wt7*. Applied to a noun (or noun phrase), it attributes the property designated by the noun to the referent of another noun phrase; for example, on the Tuxtla Statuette, this enclitic is attached to *tuki* ‘turtle’ to indicate that a hand-span measuring device was made of turtleshell. Here, the sequence we would read as *puk +wt7* would indicate that what follows is hairy/furry or feathered. A single sign, the syllabogram **ku**, appears between the spellings for *puk +wt7* and *tzoja7 tuku7*. In this context, *puk +wt7* could only serve as a modifier of the word spelled by **ku**, the only viable candidate for which is proto-Mije-Sokean \**kut7* ‘hand; paw’. This entire stretch would then refer to a cotton garment decked out with one or more ‘hairy hands/furry paws’.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> This passage, subjected to grammatical analysis in the light of basic facts about Mije-Sokean grammar, turns out to yield a complete reading of a complex sentence with culturally surprising content that may relate to the iconography of a roughly contemporaneous monument from the one epi-Olmec site with a clear and deep cultural relationship to Teotihuacan. It is important in the decipherment of the epi-Olmec script in that it resolves the reading of two previously unknown signs, which was made possible by the known grammatical structure of Sokean languages and the previously established grammatical structure of the epi-Olmec language (for which see Kaufman and Justeson 2004a).

It is an irony that Houston and Coe (2003) introduced to the public this mask, and this passage in particular, in their effort to discredit our decipherment of epi-Olmec writing. They begin by stating that they have no knowledge of Mije-Sokean grammar, which they therefore do not address—in spite of the fact that the grammatical structure of Mije-Sokean languages is a foundation of the decipherment, and in particular for the phonetic reading of its signs. And in spite of this admission, they have no hesitation presenting their own

Cerro de las Mesas Monument 15 (see Figure 6) is one of numerous monuments at this epi-Olmec site that show the site's serious level of engagement with Teotihuacan (Miller 1991: *passim*; Taube 2000: 44). Its text shows that it is a new year monument (Justeson and Kaufman 2008: 184), evidently commemorating ceremonies performed on 1 Dog as the 363<sup>rd</sup> day of the outgoing year and 4 Reed as the first day of the incoming year in 468 CE; our assignment of 1 Dog to the five-day year-ending period and of 4 Reed to the first day of the year is secured by the long count on Stela 6, also for the day 1 Dog.

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misanalysis of a three-sign sequence in this very passage as a smoking gun that shows that applying the results of our published work to a new text yields nonsense—because it is ungrammatical!

How do they arrive at this specious analysis? The answer involves mistake after mistake, in two overall steps: misidentifying our readings of the signs, and attempting a grammatical interpretation of the results.

They misidentify two of the three signs in the four-sign sequence that they discuss. (1) Concerning the sign that we had published as a phonetic sign for the syllable *puk* (Kaufman and Justeson 2001: 6; see also Macri and Stark 1993: 5), they claim on the contrary that we read it as a logogram for the verb 'to take', and they apply *their* interpretation to both instances in column B; this is in fact our interpretation for the application of the sign at B1, but not for its application at B3 for a homophonous morpheme 'hair, fur, feathers'. (2) They manage to correctly read the sign at B2 as the syllabogram for *kut*, and, without argumentation, treat it as a phonetic complement; this happens to be a possible interpretation in this passage, grammatically and semantically, but another feasible interpretation is that it spells a second transitive verb root *ku7w* 'to dye' (see our detailed text analysis below). (3) The next sign, not previously attested in the epi-Olmec script, they treat without comment as if it were a sign we read for the syllable *7i*—presumably based on a vague resemblance to the sign of that reading in the text on the La Mojarra stela. The sign we actually read as *7i* on the La Mojarra Stela does not occur on the Statuette, nor on the mask. In fact, the mask text has eleven instances of the Statuette's sign that we do actually read as *7i* (nine of them are combined with a diacritic in the sequence we read as *7i<sub>2</sub>×ni<sub>2</sub>*, spelling the 2<sup>nd</sup> person ergative marker 'you; your'). There are two signs that we read as *7i*: one on the stela (33 times), and one on the Tuxtla Statuette (4 times); the statistically significant ( $p < 0.002\%$ ) fact that these signs do not co-occur in these two texts indicates that some feature of these texts, such as material, or genre, or the social group of the writer, affects the choice between them. The fact that the mask text frequently uses the Statuette's sign and never that of the La Mojarra stela supports the general view that the choice between the two is fixed in each text. (4) They read the second instance of the *puk* syllabogram as a logogram for the verb *puk* 'to take'.

Overall, Houston and Coe get our reading for two out of four signs right. Next, they move on to an interpretation of the sequence as "take he take". Ignorant though they claim to be of Mije-Sokean grammar, they assume this to be obviously ungrammatical. The best one can say of this exercise is that they are able to recognize nonsense in the nonsense they themselves have created. What we have shown is that if one uses the actual grammatical constraints of the language, correctly identifies the signs, and uses our actual interpretations of those signs, the text yields perfectly grammatical sentences in a Sokean language and culturally significant information about epi-Olmec ritual practices.

This monument depicts a figure wearing Tlaloc-style goggles; the garment the figure wears *may* be depicted as being garment covered with human hands—right hands on the figure’s right, left hands on the left. This is suggested by what appears to be an extended index figure on these potential hands, pointing upward and toward the center of the monument. This would be a striking confirmation of our previously-established readings, and would secure the reading of the sign at issue with the syllable *wt* rather than *pa*.

Nonetheless, it is not clear from the photos that we have access to that these elements do indeed depict hands; details are frankly not well preserved. They can even be seen as human faces in profile. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of this monument are seemingly unknown (Barbara Stark, personal communication in the 1990s), so this issue cannot be resolved at present.

The noun phrase in question is preceded by three signs, which themselves follow a divinatory calendar date that begins this part of the text. The first two have known readings: the sign for the syllable *puk* followed by the sign for the syllable *kt*. We have previously treated the sign **kt** as a phonetic complement to the syllabogram **puk** on the La Mojarra Stela, and we so interpret it in this case (see note 19). Read in this way, the word *puk* seems unlikely to be the noun ‘body hair, fur’, as this would yield an equational clause to the relatively uninformative effect that a hairy thing is a cotton garment with hairy hands. If it is a verb, however, the sign at B3 must spell the obligatory aspect marker that ends the verb *puk* ‘to take’, and in this case its only plausible reading is as the syllable *pa*.

This sign for *pa* happens to be the other sign not attested in other legible epi-Olmec texts that occurs twice in the text on the mask. In its other context, it occurs in the sign sequence **7i<sub>2</sub>×ni-ma-pa<sub>3</sub>**, a straightforward spelling of a transitive verb in the incompletive aspect. Two other monuments record a verb whose root is spelled identically, also at stations of the CNVC: *may-wt* ‘it was told/ counted’ on the La Mojarra stela, in connection with the sacrifice of a prisoner on occasion of a speaker’s inauguration, and either *may-wt* or *7anh=may-wt* ‘he instructed them/him/her’ on Cerro de las Mesas Stela 6, which records only this one event and whose accompanying image indicates that the ruler is speaking (Stirling 1943: 35; Justeson and Kaufman 2008: 173).

Recognizing these two signs as having the readings *w̄w* and *pa* yields 4 instances of these signs—somewhat but not substantially lower than the frequencies of signs for these syllables in other epi-Olmec texts.

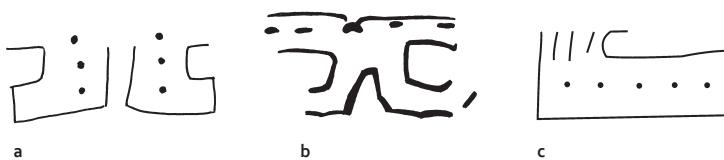
### **Previously unattested signs for day names**

The previously unattested sign at D8 raises no interpretive difficulties, because it occurs in a ritual calendar date. Given that it occurs immediately after a numeral between 1 and 13, and that its form is essentially equivalent to those of signs for the day House as the frontal view of a building with a stairway at Xochicalco, there can be no doubt on the interpretation of this sign as spelling the name of the third day of the ritual calendar. The example on the mask is, to our knowledge, the earliest attestation of this day sign in any tradition; but we do not know whether the sign was introduced into epi-Olmec writing under Teotihuacan's influence or into the Basin of Mexico under epi-Olmec influence.

The section “Overall text structure” discusses the use of the epi-Olmec logogram **SUW/SUN** for the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the divinatory calendar, and its basis in day name vocabulary rooted in the Basin of Mexico and otherwise diffused from there. Along with the day name (or sign) ‘house’, the appearance of this day name is another reflection of the central Mexican association of the mask’s epi-Olmec text. Again, we do not know in which direction the innovated use of a word for ‘sun’ as the name of this day diffused.

### **New insights about previous readings**

At some points, the new data contribute to a rethinking of previously analyzed material. One example concerns the logogram for ‘offering’ (i.e., ‘offered thing’; Figure 12). The meaning of this sign was recognized and interpreted from its context on the La Mojarra text (Kaufman and Justeson 2001: 42). The sign is symmetrical around the vertical axis, with two elements jutting out below and separated at the central axis. On the O’Boyle “mask”, at OBM:D1, what we now recognize as the same sign was rendered in effect as a fuller form; it too is symmetrical along the vertical axis, but with four projecting elements; the two below are strongly separated at the bottom, while



**Figure 12.** Variant forms of a logogram for 'to offer': a) MOJ:N12, b) OBM:D1, c) TEO:F12.

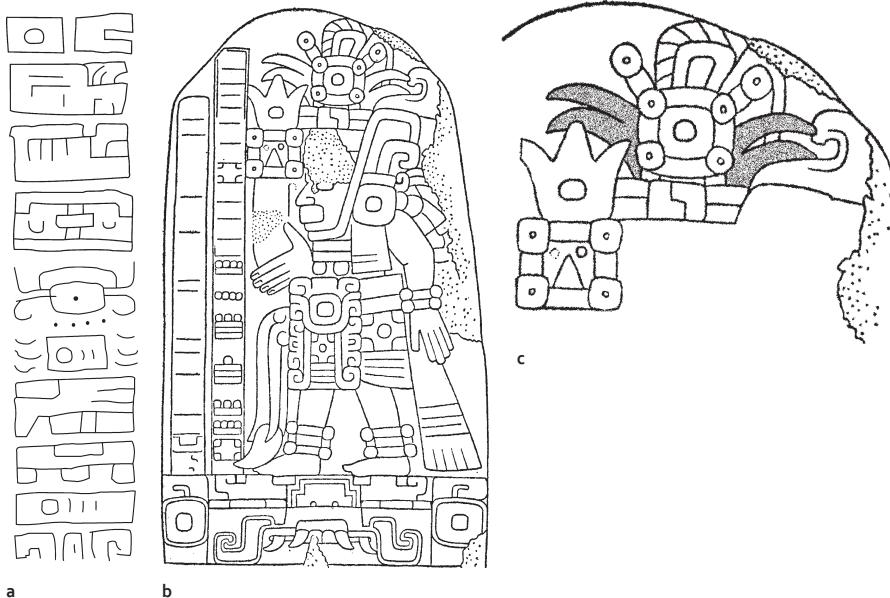
the two above join very near the top. Both signs are decorated with dots on the left and right sides—on the upper projecting elements on the O'Boyle mask, and on the only projecting elements (which are descending) at La Mojarra. In effect, the O'Boyle mask example is something like the prototype on which the La Mojarra example would have been based, except that the projecting elements on the O'Boyle mask are proportionally longer. The sign at TEO:F12 is similar to the lower righthand quarter of both the MOJ:N12 and OBM:D1 signs, agreeing with OBM:D1 in that this element is elongated horizontally, and this single projecting element is decorated with dots.

All three contexts are consistent with the meaning 'offering' that is indicated by the context at MOJ:N12. Grammatically, any Mije-Sokean word for an offering is almost sure to be a nominalization of a verb stem meaning 'to offer'; in its context at OBM:D1 the sign spells the stem of a dependent completive verb, 'when I/we(excl.) offered it/them'.<sup>25</sup>

### Iconographic confirmation of features of the readings

As is to be expected in representations of lost ritual practices, some of the overt statements in the text are obscure. One such statement is "The headgear (insignia) are Xs; they are your ridged clothing's maguey." These are unlikely to refer to maguey spines—which might have been used for bloodletting—since *7apit* 'thorn' rather than *7o* 'maguey' should be the head noun in such a reference. Initially, this statement was as surprising as it was unambiguous. However, its

<sup>25</sup> In its context on the O'Boyle mask, we interpreted this sign as a logogram for a verb referring to a ritual act. We had suggested a provisional interpretation of OBM:D1 as proto-Sokean \**sij*, reconstructible in the meaning 'to cast lots' (Kaufman and Justeson 2001: 2.84), based on transcribing the sign as ?CAST.LOTS to mark our uncertainty.



**Figure 13.** Maguey in headgear: a) textual statement on the mask text, ‘the “headgear insignia” are new ?? ??s and your ridged clothing’s maguey, b) Cerro de las Mesas Stela 8, showing maguey in headgear, c) detail of maguey in headgear (after Justeson and Kaufman 2008: fig. 13).

relevance is confirmed by the imagery on Cerro de las Mesas Stela 8 (Justeson and Kaufman 2008: 175): the headdress of the figure on this epi-Olmec monument includes a plant that Peter Mathews and we independently identified as a maguey (Figure 13). While the reference remains puzzling, Stela 8 makes it clear that maguey was indeed at times, in some way, considered a feature of headgear in epi-Olmec ritual practice; the statement in the mask text and the depiction on Stela 8 presumably refer to the same kinds of costume features.

Similarly, the raised elements of clothing worn by the figures on relief sculpture verify the wearing of “ridged” (*new*) cloth/clothing described in texts of the mask and of the Tuxtla Statuette; they are reflected in the Classic period monuments at Cerro de las Mesas and in ceramic sculptures from the general Mixtequilla area (Stark et al. 1998: 18–20).

## Uncertainties and unresolved issues

For some logograms, our prior understanding of a sign's meanings or readings is not advanced enough for us to be entirely explicit in our interpretations, and we can provide only approximate semantic glosses for the relevant sections of texts; this is the case, for example, of logograms for titles.

(1) One curiosity is that we have been able to narrow the reading of one of the otherwise unattested signs in this text to one of two possibilities, which are neither phonetically nor semantically comparable. The tightest grammatical and semantic constraints come from its appearance between the sign for 'drum' and a verb for drum-playing. The sign that we have read above as *naka*, meaning 'skin, hide, leather' could instead be read as *tzu7*, meaning 'night'. We see no plausible alternatives to these two readings. We must read the sign at A2 as a modifier of one of these words. If the word is to be read *tzu7*, the Sokean languages provide us only three lexically supported modifiers, two of which are ruled out because they happen to be spelled by other signs in this very text. The remaining possible modifier is *nam*, meaning 'tiny' or 'new', with \**nam=tzu7*, a reconstructible proto-Soke word, referring to the last few hours before dawn.<sup>26</sup> The following differences emerge.

The first passage would become:

A1-9:           kuk ??, nam=tzu7, wus=tuk nu7pin=so7m.a7 7aw=tzuk.i.

In the middle "place," before dawn,

two blood-soakers have been prepared in advance.

During this part of the Venus cycle, Venus would have been visible in the pre-dawn sky.

The beginning of column C would read:

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<sup>26</sup> Evidence for proto-Soke \**nam=tzu7* is the following:

MAR	(7anh=)nam=tzu7	'(muy) de mañana, de madrugada'
MIG	7anh=nam=tzu7	'temprano en la mañana'
TEC	nam=tzu7	'madrugada, mañana'
COP	nam=tzu7	'madrugada, temprano'

C1-11:      kuk ?? tzu7 7in+nek7.a7 7in+kij.i ?? tuku7

In the middle “place,” at night,  
your shining “rulerly” garment is your protective covering.

Venus would be visible in the early evening on this date.

The ritual in column E-F would read:

E13-F2:      ?? ko.yumi kow.a tzu7=kow-wu.

the “noble” lordly drum will have been played at night.

This too was a date on which Venus would be visible at night.

One appealing feature of the ‘night’ reading is that the timing of each ritual is during Venus’s visibility—pre-dawn on 13 Flint, and in the evening on 10 House and 9 Deer. This agrees with our only evidence on this issue. The La Mojarra auto-sacrifice rituals, timed in terms of the cycle of Venus, were performed when the planet was visible: the sequence of actions on the Venus anniversary in that text begin when the constellation Scorpius appears (with Venus in its head), and the narrative of these actions ends with statements that Scorpius and Venus (still) shone.

An advantage of the ‘skin’ reading is that the construction involved in the verb for playing a drum is certainly grammatical. It is not known whether the construction required by the ‘night’ reading—a non-active reading of an underlyingly transitive verb *kow* without any mediopassivizing suffix—would be grammatical in epi-Olmec. Currently the verb \**kow* ‘to play an instrument’ survives only in Mijean, though the derived noun \**kow.a* ‘musical instrument’ survives in both Mijean and Sokean. In fact, in Oluteko and Totontepet Mije, both Mijean languages, *kow* has both transitive and antipassive uses, but not mediopassive ones. Strategically it might be unwise to urge a mediopassive reading here.

There are also other possibilities for interpretation at various points. For example, although we prefer the reading *so7m.a7* ‘soak-er’ at A6-7, another possibility involving a reading of the sign at A6 as a syllabogram **ka** or as a logogram **KAM** also makes sense:

A1-9: *kuk ??, ?? naka, wus=tuk nu7pin=kam 7aw=tzuk.i.*

In the middle “place,”  
??flayed skin and two blood-hard things have been prepared in advance.

This would refer to an object that has had blood dry on it through repeated use, something feasible in the context of blood offerings. One appealing feature of this interpretation is that noun-adjective compounds like “blood-hard” are a regular construction in Mije-Sokean languages.

## **Part II: The structure of rituals in epi-Olmec texts**

As our reading of the text on the mask exemplifies, epi-Olmec texts provide considerable information about epi-Olmec ritual practices, laying out both preparations for them and the progression of events within them.

### **Ritual structure in the text on the Teotihuacan-style mask**

This section describes the progression of ritual action in the longest Classic-period epi-Olmec text; the next two sections compare this with information on the sequences of ritual action gleaned from the La Mojarra and Tuxtla Statuette texts.

Our analysis of the mask text shows it to be a ritual text of highly formulaic structure, defined in terms of a set of dates and activities of parallel types (Table 4). Each of the three segments has the same basic structure, though the details of their execution differ.

The mask text cannot be a narrative, because it contains few inflected verbs—just three, by our analysis. Mije-Sokean narratives are always carried along by verbs. In this respect, this text differs not only from the historical narrative of La Mojarra but also from the ritual narrative of the Tuxtla Statuette; its rate of occurrence of inflected main verbs is only 20%, compared to 50% on the Statuette. Nonetheless, the types of ritual acts on this text are similar to those on the other two texts, and the progression of ritual actions it specifies agree with the fuller data on the progression of ritual action that is laid out on La Mojarra Stela 1.

### PARALLEL STRUCTURES IN THE EPI-OLMEC TEXT ON A TEOTIHUACAN-STYLE MASK

SEGMENT 1: VENUS YEAR 1 (beginning: 11 "Storm")	SEGMENT 2: VENUS YEAR 2 beginning: 10 "House"	SEGMENT 3: VENUS YEAR 3 beginning: 9 Deer
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#### PREPARATION PHASE:

in the middle of (place),      in the middle of (place),      in the middle of (place),  
 things are "prepared in advance"  
 for use in ritual:  
 blood soakers (for stauching blood)  
 bloody Xs

#### RITUAL GARMENTS PREPARED:

on day 120 of CNVC		
<b>clothing</b> is taken and dyed for use in ritual	<b>clothing</b> (and other things) are on hand for use in ritual: garment has been partially folded and put away	<b>clothing</b> (and other things) are on hand for use in ritual
	<b>headgear</b> : X's are new Y's and are your ridged outfit's maguey	<b>headgear</b> : X's are new Y's in the middle of (place), in month Ji7tzi7, you will count them (or: tell it) the noble lord will have played drum(skin)s

#### SACRIFICE-RELATED PERSONS AND EVENTS:

on day 138 (standard Venus station)	on day 1 (anniversary of Venus base)	on day 1 (anniversary of Venus base)
rulerly person is a captive	your captive is the source of your blood collection	stauncher is a succession outfit your blood collection is an offering

**Table 4.** Parallels in the time progression of sacrificial rituals in the mask text in successive Venus cycles within the circumnodal Venus cycle.

Chronology provides one formulaic dimension of the text. The events of the full text occur over three successive Venus years (i.e., calendrical cycles of 584 days), one Venus year per text segment. Each segment is anchored chronologically in one of the two CNVC stations known to have been salient for epi-Olmecs in scheduling public rituals (see "Overall text structure"), the base of the cycle and a date about 134 days after that base.

Another recurring feature of the ritual sequences is that each segment begins with preparations for the ritual—certain things are prepared in advance of the focal ritual acts. In all three Venus years, some of the things prepared in advance were particular, specified types of clothing and/or accoutrements such as royal headgear. In the first part of the first segment, the text explicitly states (A1-A9) that particular named things “have been prepared in advance”, for an unstated but presumably known purpose, perhaps implicit in the second and third segments. These preparations are described before the CNVC-related date (which, in segment 1, is the second of two dates).

Each segment ends by referring to some kind of ritual action or situation that involves a captive and/or a sacrificial offering of blood; the references to these actions follow the CNVC-related date in each section. In segment 1 and segment 2, the ritual involves a captive, and in segment 2 some of his (or another captive’s) blood is collected for an offering. In segment 3, we do not know if anyone was sacrificed—bloodletting could be involved instead—but blood is collected from someone for an offering. Each of these events is mentioned after the date (in segment 1, after the later date, which falls at a station in the CNVC).

According to this presentation of the formulaic structure of the text, there are two main variations in the content and chronology of its three segments, variations that reflect a shift in emphasis from detailing the preparations for sacrificial or offertory rituals to detailing the progress of the rituals themselves.

1. Two different ritual acts are referred to in the third Venus year, while only one is mentioned in each of the first two segments. The first of these acts in segment 3 was the beating of a drum. We believe that this was part of the preparation for the second ritual, involving an offering of blood. There are two reasons for this: (a) the reference to this ritual precedes the only date in this section of the text; and (b) on the La Mojarra stela text, the beating of drums was one of the first actions performed in preparation for an upcoming ritual of blood sacrifice.
2. The other difference is the chronology of text segment 1. In this first Venus year, the preparations are broken into two sets of

activities, 18 days apart. In the second and third Venus year, all the activities seem to pertain to a single date. In addition, the main ritual action in the first Venus year takes place on day 138 of the CNVC; in the La Mojarra text, the corresponding date (roughly, the 134<sup>th</sup> day) in the CNVC is that of the sacrifice/killing of a prisoner taken in battle 13 years earlier; it is also seemingly the date of accession of the youth—born after the date of that battle—who carried out the sacrifice in the course of acceding as ruler. In the second and third Venus years on the mask, the main and more elaborately described ritual actions occur on a Venus anniversary of the day 11 Storm; 11 Storm was the beginning of the Venus year of segment 1, and the last prior base of the CNVC. On the La Mojarra stela, the text also opens with a major event at a CNVC base. What is arguably the peak event of the narrative, to which more space was devoted and more detail elaborated than for any other date, occurs on the ninth Venus anniversary of the CNVC base event. This peak event was a ritual involving a series of bloodlettings by the ruler and his supporters, and actions in preparation for them.

In general terms, the structure of this text is broadly comparable to that of ritual almanacs like those of the Dresden Codex. It runs through sections that subdivide a single ritual cycle—in the Dresden Codex, usually through fifths or quarters of a ritual calendar cycle, on the mask text through each of the Venus years of a CNVC. There are constants in the overall structure of what is recorded in association with different stations on different dates, and also variation in the content. In the codices, however, the formulaic almanac passages are short, usually tightly parallel to one another syntactically, and highly repetitive lexically. Typically, some features—a verb and/or a subject and/or an object and/or a location—recur in each of the parallel statements, while another feature or two varies. In the mask text, in contrast, the passages are often fairly long and are syntactically diverse. Locations recur and types of (CNVC-related) dates progress, but there is no direct substitution of noun phrases or verbs from one segment to the next in the same syntactic frame. What is formulaic is the thematic and chronological structure of the text (these parallels are laid out in Table 4).

There may be a further dimension of the formulaic character of the mask's ritual text, beyond the parallelism of its content and general format. Given its calendrical structure, the ritual cycle of this text could have been performed several times during the Classic period—whenever 11 Storm fell close enough to a base of the CNVC (see Table 3). This might be especially true of the three pairs of viable CNVC base dates in Table 3 that are separated by thirteen 360-day years; imaginably, formal recurrences at this interval, but that do not fit the astronomical patterns as closely, might have been entertained as well. In this connection, note that this  $13 \times 360$ -day interval is recorded in the opening passages of the La Mojarra text, and separates the taking of a captive from maybe a presentation of him; 6 months later, that captive was sacrificed (see next section for details).

Textually, it is consistent to suppose that the mask was intended for use in just such recurring performances: all of the events on the text can be read as being customary; since these customary events are provided with dates in the ritual calendar, the event types described in the text could, in principle, recur on those dates.

On the other hand, it is not required to interpret the text in this way. The text might pertain to a set of rituals performed over just one historical sequence of three Venus cycles.

It may also be the case that mask text represents a single, longer-term sacrificial ritual—that the generally parallel representations of ritual situations and actions in each Venus year refer to different sequential phases of a ritual process that develops over the course of just one set of three successive Venus years. For example: During the first Venus year of the 11 Storm CNVC, a captive may have been presented publicly; in the second, he may have been bound to a rack and kept alive while having his blood drawn for offerings; and in the third the sacrificial events may (but may not) have gone further, to the point of his being finally dispatched.

### Ritual sequences in the La Mojarra text

The long historical narrative of the Late Preclassic stela of La Mojarra provides our most elaborate data on distinct types of rituals and their progression. The last 70% of the text is devoted to the events of just three days. On average, 120 signs are devoted to the nar-

tive of each of these days' activities, which are mostly ritual events. The result is that we get a fair amount of detail about the progression of ritual activities, mostly focusing on the sacrifice of blood, that took place on those dates. (For a full translation of the text see Kaufman and Justeson 2001: 34–74 and Justeson and Kaufman 1997; cf. Kaufman and Justeson 2004a for more detailed grammatical analysis of many passages).

This section summarizes the most elaborate epi-Olmec data on the progression of ritual action, that for the last three days whose events are described on the La Mojarra stela—on 8.5.17.14.0, 8.5.17.14.9, and 8.5.17.15.2, a span of 23 days altogether. The background to these events concerns the rise of a new ruler to power. The narrative begins with a battle over royal succession. It took place on a base of the CNVC in the late afternoon or evening of May 1, 143 CE (8.5.3.3.4), or shortly thereafter. On 8.5.16.3.7— $8 \times 584 + 11$  days later, and at or within days of the next base of the CNVC cycle—a prisoner is mentioned who was sacrificed 120 days later as part of the inauguration rites of a 12-year old boy who acceded to rulership.

The remainder of the text deals mostly with rituals that the boy-king performed during the first Venus cycle of his reign, and with another battle; afterward, the king's brother-in-law—we suppose a would-be usurper—was sacrificed. There is a set of bloodletting rites on 8.5.17.14.0; a battle, and sacrifice of blood from a battle captive, on 8.5.17.14.9; and a further sacrifice of his blood on 8.5.17.15.2, that may have involved killing him.<sup>27</sup>

8.5.17.14.0: 20 September 157 CE. The peak event of the narrative was the ruler's auto-sacrifice by bloodletting from his penis. The account of the events of this night details a sequence of actions leading up to this act of bloodletting, and then the wrap-up of the ritual. All of the action occurred during the few hours that Venus was visible in the head of Scorpius. The action was scheduled relative to the Venus cycle: it took place on the ninth Venus anniversary of the battle over succession that opens the text (more precisely, exactly 9

<sup>27</sup> Some ritual activities in the La Mojarra text are alluded to without being explicitly described. The three dates discussed above are the first day, the tenth day, and the last day of a 23-day period in which a jaguar was “taken” each day. The activities surrounding the taking of these jaguars are not described, so it is not clear how jaguar taking relates to the other actions, but on the tenth and the 23<sup>rd</sup> day they appear to have predated and to have provided part of the context for the other activities described for those days.

canonical Venus years— $9 \times 584$  days—after the recorded Venus event that was associated with the solar eclipse and the battle with which the text opens). It also fell roughly one Venus year after the allusion to the holding of a prisoner from that battle during the next CNVC base (the text does not indicate the specific date of that base).

In the late afternoon or evening, the ruler appeared while Scorpius was visible, with Venus shining in the head of the scorpion. A ritual space was measured out (by multiple participants, and by hand-spans, so likely in a relatively small and maybe private space), presumably for the performance of the upcoming rituals. After a drum was played, the ruler's clothing was dealt with in a standardized way (we hazard 'to fold up' as the meaning of the verb, but only based on the form of the sign), either 'at first' or 'in front'. The most straightforward interpretation, given the statements that follow, is that the loincloth was removed and set aside, in preparation for bloodletting, and for the later use of the loincloth to staunch the flow of blood from the ruler's penis. After his clothing was set aside, the ruler drew blood from his buttocks, which was collected and poured out as a sacrificial offering, an offering proclaimed by the king himself. Then, under the auspices of a Venus god named Ten Sky, a group of supporters drew blood from their buttocks, after which the ruler drew blood from his penis. At this point, a macaw-headband was supposed to be taken. Not long thereafter, the ruler sang a song about a shape-shifter, and then his loincloth and royal "head-wrap" (perhaps the kind of head-band or bandanna covering the scalp worn by Mayan lords) were used to staunch the flow of blood from his penis. At the end of this sequence of events, Venus and Scorpius were still visible.

8.5.17.14.9: 29 September 157 ce. The narrative picks up nine days later. The background statements about this occasion are that a jaguar was to be taken —evidently the 10<sup>th</sup> in a series of 23 that were taken over a period of 23 days—and an item of headgear was on hand for the ruler, linked to his having held a specified status for more than a year. A battle takes place with the would-be usurpers, who are described as overturners of inscribed stones. Afterward, the king announces that his own blood is being offered. The ruler's supporters by now have one of the would-be usurpers at their disposal (presumably, a captive in their custody), who was evidently

dressed as some kind of bird, and they “deal with” (possibly ‘spear’) this person. Someone, we suspect the king, but possibly the enemy, is dressed as a macaw to impersonate a shape-shifter or his animal guise. As the bloody enemy quivers, the macaw-person declares, “I am the sun,” which we take to be an allusion to a myth similar to that about the macaw personage Wuquub’ Kaqi7x (Seven Macaw) in the *Poopol Wuuj*. Finally, the bloody enemy “sets down” (epi-Olmec *tu7p* ‘to set like the sun, to land like a bird, to fall to the ground’), his bloody wing or shoulder quivering.

8.5.17.15.2: 11 October 157 CE. On this twenty-third day in the sequence, after a twenty-third jaguar was taken, various objects (perhaps the overturned inscribed stones) are replaced upright. Then the ruler’s supporters again “deal with” the captive, who is the ruler’s brother-in-law (perhaps more likely his sister’s husband than his wife’s brother, inasmuch as the ruler was now only thirteen years old). Now a blood offering, presumably from the captive brother-in-law, is supposed to be used up, and his blood is sprinkled “on behalf of others”, i.e., of the community.

To present parallels with the Teotihuacan-style mask text, we compare each of the three ritual segments of the text on the mask to the ritual sequences from the La Mojarra text.

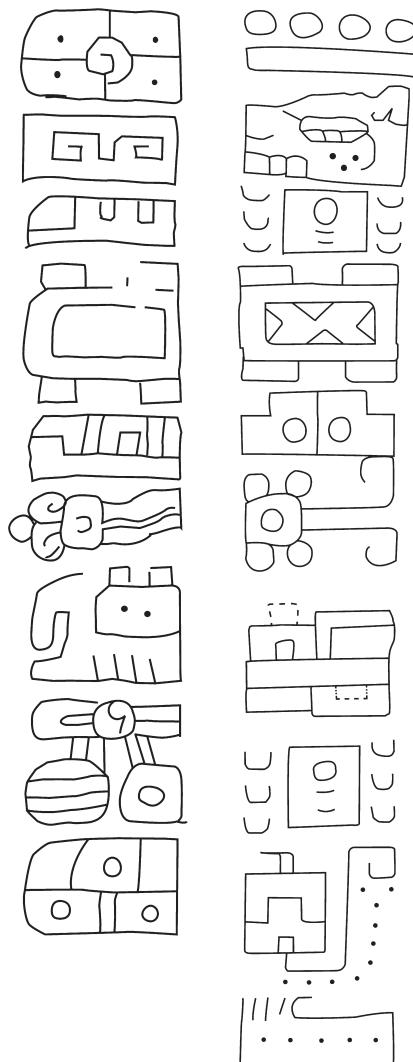
In segment 1, the mask text simply indicates that at the second CNVC station there is/was a captive (*matz.e*) of a specified status, without referring to any actions performed on that date; blood sacrifice is mentioned explicitly in segment 2. Similarly, in the La Mojarra text, the first mention of a prisoner (*pit.i*) at or near the base of a CNVC, states that there is one who has been a prisoner for 13 years—an 8-Venus-year span of one complete CNVC—and on the next recorded occasion, at the second station of the CNVC, he is sacrificed.

A blood sacrifice reference is overtly mentioned in the second section of the mask text. The sacrifice occurred, or would occur, on 10 House, the first Venus anniversary of the 11 Storm base of the CNVC. On this occasion, the blood of a prisoner (perhaps but not necessarily the same one as on 5 Sun) was used as a sacrificial offering that has specific parallels to the last one mentioned on the La Mojarra text, at MOJ:U1-3: it was referred to using the same term for the collection of blood that was to be offered (MOJ:U3, TEO:12), and

the ritual described on the stela occurred twenty-two days after a Venus anniversary, and thirteen days after a battle where a captive was taken. In a more general way the sacrifice at TEO:D7-17 parallels the ruler's auto-sacrifice on the La Mojarra Venus anniversary date, which is more explicit about the preparatory work.

As in the La Mojarra text, our analysis of the mask text shows that blood sacrifices were enacted on Venus anniversaries of the CNVC base, and, in the first Venus year, that a prisoner or prisoners were dealt with about 134 (here, 137) days after such a base. However, because the events of that day in the case of La Mojarra are not discussed in as elaborate detail as other ritual activities, below we instead present for our parallel the treatment of a second war captive in the La Mojarra text, taken a Venus cycle later (on 8.5.17.14.9, or 29 September 157 CE).

The third section of the mask text refers to the use of the loin-cloth not only to staunch the flow of blood from auto-sacrifice, but also to thereby collect enough for a sacrificial offering—a blood offering referred to in the same terms as the one that had been gathered from the prisoner one Venus year earlier (Figure 14). The statement about this use of the loin-cloth parallels the statement on the La Mojarra stela about the



**Figure 14.** Semantically parallel statements about the use of royal outfit elements to absorb blood from acts of bloodletting: *a*) 'now, my penis receiver (=stauncher) had earlier been a body wrap (loincloth) and a royal head wrap', *b*) 'on 9 Deer, your (penis) receiver (=stauncher) is a succession body wrapping device (loincloth)'.

ruler staunching the flow of blood from his penis with a royal loin-cloth (Figure 14a). Calendrically, this offering was made in the first year of a CNVC on the La Mojarra stela but in the third on the text of the mask.

In the La Mojarra text, the Venus anniversary events began sometime after Scorpius was visible. Venus was in Scorpius on this date; they were high in the sky at sunset, and Venus would have been visible before any of the stars of Scorpius. The narrative of the events of that day ends with Scorpius and Venus both still shining; all of the narrated events associated with the Venus anniversary took place during the time that Venus was visible in the night sky. We therefore take it as likely that the events of 10 House and 9 Deer also took place at night, or in the late afternoon, during the period of visibility of Venus.

The third segment of the mask text, dealing with the second anniversary of the 11 Storm base of the CNVC, explicitly addresses the lord's involvement in the sacrificial rites, and so provides comparisons to the La Mojarra narrative that are not present in the first two segments of the mask's text. In both ritual sequences, the playing of a drum precedes the bloodletting rites.

Two segments of the La Mojarra text offer details about processes of capture and sacrifice that unfold over time; they compare with the sacrifice portions of each of the mask's segments.

1. The 'prisoner' (*pit.i*) taken in battle near the beginning of the La Mojarra story (probably on 8.5.3.3.7) was held for a full CNVC cycle of thirteen 360-day years (8 Venus years)]. The first event recorded for the next CNVC was the sacrifice of that prisoner by a new king on the date of his inauguration; this was done on or near day 135 of the first Venus year of that CNVC. Similarly, on the mask, the main ritual action in the first Venus year of the CNVC textually, a presentation of a high ranking 'captive' (*matz.e*), takes place on day 138 of the first Venus year of a CNVC. The La Mojarra CNVC was one that lasted 3 Venus cycles; the mask presents the first three Venus cycles of its CNVC, but we do not yet know whether this was the full length of that cycle.
2. On the La Mojarra stela, the peak ritual event of the narrative—to which more space was devoted and more detail elaborated

than for events of any other date—occurs on the ninth calendrical Venus anniversary of the base of the CNVC with which the text begins. This ritual involved a series of bloodlettings by the ruler and his supporters, and actions in preparation for them. (We take these rituals to be preparatory for the battle that took place 9 days later). In the second and third Venus years on the mask, the main and more elaborately described ritual actions, culminating in sacrificial offerings, occur on a Venus anniversary of the base of the CNVC with which the text opens.

3. The brother-in-law taken in battle near the end of the narrative was held not for 13 years, like the prisoner discussed at the opening of the text, but for 13 days. During that time, he was a source of blood collected for offerings, and, terminologically, the description of his final sacrificial offering closely parallels the final description on the Teotihuacan-style mask; see Figure 14.

### Ritual sequencing in the Tuxtla Statuette

The text on the Tuxtla Statuette focuses on the preparations for a ritual, followed by the main ritual action. Here, the sequence agrees with that of the La Mojarra text, with bloodletting preceding shape-shifting, but the focus is on an act of shape-shifting rather than a bloodletting. The Statuette's text clarifies one detail from the mask text.

The sequence on the Statuette begins by identifying the status of the person performing the ritual, followed by an addressing of the god under whose auspices it is performed. A tool (made of turtle shell) for measuring by hand-spans, having presumably been used to measure out a ritual space (as explicitly stated at MOJ:027), is stained. It, or something not mentioned, is hallowed by being sprinkled eight times with blood, which was presumably drawn in an act of auto-sacrificial bloodletting; the offering of blood by means of blood-stained objects was carried out, at least in this instance, by its burial. The god will then provide “ridged” clothing and royal headbands; the headbands may be the staunchers or the collectors of blood for offerings. The final ritual act is for the person performing

the ritual to pass out and shape-shift into a powerful animal spirit counterpart (*nup jama*).

On the Tuxtla Statuette, a god distributes ridged clothing and headbands of high rank or office to probably a group of people a while after at least one of them performs his bloodletting. In the Teotihuacan-style mask, too, the ridged clothing belongs to a high-ranking participant in the ritual, possibly the only participant other than the god being addressed and the captives from whom blood was taken. It was made ready or available during the preparation for drawing an offering of blood from a captive, and would presumably have been worn by the lord during some phase of that ritual. In both cases, the ridged clothing is made available before the act of bloodletting; how and when it was used is not made explicit, so the nature of its relevance must depend on cultural knowledge assumed by the writer and readers.

### **Summary of correspondences**

There are several points of contact among the epi-Olmec texts in their references to rituals and ritual paraphernalia.

Like katun- and year-endings among Lowland Mayans, among epi-Olmecs the CNVC was a broadly applied framework for the timing of publicly-celebrated activities: for varied types of blood-sacrifice rituals discussed in Part II, other ritual types depicted at Cerro de las Mesas (Justeson and Kaufman 2008), and events such as battles over political succession with a substantially non-ritual focus (Kaufman and Justeson 2001). The chronology of the mask appears to be framed almost entirely in its terms. Nonetheless, some rituals were timed in other ways; for example, that of the Tuxtla Statuette took place on the 260<sup>th</sup> day of the 365-day year.

Ritual cloths or outfits were prepared in advance of rituals (MOJ, TUX, TEO; probably also on the Chiapa de Corzo sherd), and set aside for later use. A particular type of outfit, the *new tuku7* (“ridged clothing”), has been identified (TUX, TEO); it seems to be associated with people in control of the ritual, not with sacrificial victims. Complex headgear assemblies are mentioned (TEO, MES).

Two contrasting types of blood sacrifice are documented: auto-sacrifice and offerings of blood drawn from others.

We have records of two rituals involving auto-sacrifice (MOJ, TUX; in MOJ, a group of people performed auto-sacrifice from their buttocks, after which the ruler drew blood from his penis). In both cases, spaces were measured out beforehand by handspans. This suggests that these rituals were conducted in a smallish space—perhaps privately, perhaps publicly on a raised platform. In both cases, shapeshifting occurs or is otherwise engaged with textually (on MOJ, in connection with the ruler). Both involve persons of high rank and both took place when Venus was an evening star; in one case (MOJ), the auto-sacrifice is known to have been enacted at night.

The blood of prisoners (MOJ: *pit.i*) and captives (TEO: *matz.e*) is not known to have been drawn in acts of auto-sacrifice; rather, their blood was collected for later use (MOJ, TEO; what we gloss as a ‘blood stash’ or ‘blood collection’), which is not documented for cases of auto-sacrifice. It is not clear whether blood collecting is always done when it is others’ blood that is sacrificed, nor is it clear that persons whose blood is collected were always or even ever killed as sacrificial offerings. We have one documented instance of an execution (MOJ), which seems to be part of the accession of a ruler to office. The ruler’s brother-in-law was plausibly executed as well, 13 days after the battle in which he was taken, but the text does not say so.

Drums were beaten in connection with rituals involving persons not having their blood drawn by others (MOJ, TEO); when auto-sacrifice is mentioned (MOJ), the beating of drums precedes these acts.

In rituals described in three texts (MOJ, TEO, MES 6), the main protagonist performs an action referred to either by the same verb (*may* ‘to tell; to count’) or two related verbs of speaking (*may* and *7anh.may* ‘to instruct’). We do not know what was said in these cases. Ritual speech is also reflected textually by the use of 1<sup>st</sup>- and/or 2<sup>nd</sup>-person statements in three texts (MOJ, TEO, TUX); a god is involved or addressed in all three. It is reflected iconographically on MES 6 by a tiny speech scroll (Stirling 1943: 35; Justeson and Kaufman 2008: 173), and perhaps on MOJ by the element floating before the ruler’s face (labelled by a glyph referring to the item in the ruler’s outstretched hand).

We have detected no differences between rituals described in epi-Olmec texts of the Terminal Preclassic period (MOJ, TUX, CHP) and those from the Early Classic (TEO, MES).

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# Saltillo: Not Just a Town in Northern Mexico

NICHOLAS A. HOPKINS  
Jaguar Tours, Tallahassee, Florida  
(nickhopkins@live.com)

**Abstract:** This paper reviews the treatment of the glottal stop (Spanish *saltillo*) in selected works of Alfonso Lacadena and in Mayan studies in general. Alfonso's work is exemplary, although I take exception to some of his conclusions. To account for widespread misunderstandings of the glottal stop in Mayan epigraphy, the history of its treatment from Colonial to modern sources is reviewed. An appeal is made for the proper recognition of this common Mayan consonant, with the goal of producing more elegant analyses of the Classic Maya writing system.

**Resumen:** En este ensayo se examina el tratamiento del saltillo (cierre glotal) en una selección de obras de Alfonso Lacadena y en los estudios mayas en general. El trabajo de Alfonso es ejemplar, aunque no estoy de acuerdo con todas sus conclusiones. Para arrojar luz sobre los amplios malentendidos sobre el saltillo en el campo de la epigrafía maya, se presenta un resumen de su tratamiento en las fuentes coloniales y modernas. Se hace una llamada para el merecido reconocimiento de esta común consonante maya, con el fin de producir análisis más elegantes de la escritura maya clásica.

There are many paradoxes in the field of Mayan hieroglyphics. Chief among them is the fact that while epigraphers may disagree strongly—even vehemently—over the fine details of how to read or interpret a word or a phrase, there is almost universal agreement on the historical content of the inscriptions. Interpreters of inscriptions may have a low opinion of how a colleague reaches his or her conclusions but nevertheless have no reason to doubt the results. The opposite is also true, and this paradox relates to the present paper. I liked Alfonso Lacadena as a person and admired his thoughtful and thorough scholarship as a colleague, but I did not always agree with his conclusions. This is possible in a field like epigraphy, where standards of proof are not rigorous and arguments by authority often take precedence over rational discourse. This is not the case in a field such as mathematics, where units and operations are precisely defined and a proof is a proof, despite anyone's opinion. Mayan epigraphy is less a mature science and more of an art, where opinion holds sway.

The case in point is the treatment of the glottal stop (the *saltillo*) in Mayan epigraphy, an issue about which Alfonso wrote extensively.

His compilation of the relevant data is admirable, and his consideration of possible interpretations of the data is to be applauded, but I found his conclusions unconvincing. This in no way detracted from my respect for him and his research. Only because he had presented such a transparent case, with the presentation of the data set, was it possible to propose an alternative. In that disorderly tree that represents the march of science, characterized by many branches that lead nowhere, every twig contributes to the whole, and a well-laid argument that leads to a dead end is as valuable as one that leads to further growth. We not only need to know the truths, we need to see the un-truths as well. In the sad case of the saltillo, I respectfully disagree with Alfonso's conclusions, but that disagreement does not diminish my respect for his seminal work.

In a recent review of the status of the linguistics of Maya writing, Alfonso Lacadena and Søren Wichmann (2004) examine the relationship between simple and complex syllable nuclei as reconstructed or attested, on the one hand, and synharmonic and disharmonic final glyptic signs on the other. The goal is to test the hypothesis that Maya writing clearly marks some words as having long, glottalized, or fricativized vowels (in CVVC, CV'C, and CVhC forms). Their conclusion is that except for the latter, it does, but the proposed "rules" that predict the former shapes are complicated and not seemingly based on natural vowel sets. Rule 2, for writing CVVC words, requires CV(C)-Ci disharmony if the root vowel is not *i*, and CV(C)-Ca disharmony if the root vowel is *i*. Rule 3, for writing CV'(V) C words, calls for CV(C)-Cu disharmony if the root vowel is either *i* or *a*, and CV(C)-Ca disharmony otherwise. No consistent rule could be designed for CVhC forms. These rules may achieve what has been called "structural adequacy", having predictive value, but fail to reach the level of "psychological adequacy", not only predicting accurately but making some kind of sense.

There is an old adage in scientific thought that if your premises lead you step by inexorable step to an absurd conclusion, then what is wrong is found in your premises. That is, if the only rules you can derive to explain why words are written a certain way are absurd, then there may not be any such rules, and the initial hypothesis fails.

The conclusion that Lacadena and Wichmann seem to draw is that however awkward the rules, the Maya were recording some but not

all of the complex syllable nuclei. From the same data, I would draw a different conclusion: that they were not systematically registering complex syllable nuclei at all, if in fact such existed universally. Classic Maya hieroglyphic writing was abnormally homogeneous across a wide area where many different varieties of Cholan must have been spoken by the general populations if not the literate elite. Some of this diversity does show up in inscriptions, as Lacadena and Wichmann themselves have noted (Lacadena and Wichmann 2002). But if the writing system was as uniform as it appears to be across the landscape, many local dialects must have been suppressed in favor of a standardized norm. Complex syllable nuclei could very well have been such a feature.

In the 2004 chapter mentioned above, entitled “On the representation of the glottal stop in Maya writing”, Lacadena and Wichmann (2004) discuss representations of one of the complex vowel nuclei, the one with the word-internal glottal stop. Like many authors, they do not recognize the glottal stop as a real consonant; consequently, they misinterpret its representations and take ’V signs (glottal stop-vowel signs) as “vowel signs” that write V alone. Thus they argue that internal glottal stops are written by “vowel doubling”; thus, *che'en* is written **che-e-na**, where the middle sign represents only a vowel. But if the sign is really a normal CV sign, 'e, with initial glottal stop, then it is no surprise that **che'-e-na** writes *che'en*. To their credit, they admit this as a possibility, although it is “not completely clear” (2004: 112).

For all the above, I remain unconvinced by the proposals of Lacadena and Wichmann. However, I have considerable respect for the systematic way they go about formulating their arguments and the extensive and unbiased assembly of data they present to support them. Their work stands in sharp contrast to the all too frequent arguments by authority involving careful selection of only favorable data. We learn nothing by cooking the books.

As far as the glottal stop is concerned, misunderstandings of this common Mayan consonant have a long history in Maya epigraphy, one that is worthy of a review. We can best correct the misunderstandings of the past if we are aware of them.

## The Glottal Stop

The glottal stop is, as its name implies, an occlusive consonant produced by closing the glottis to impede the passage of air (and then releasing the impounded air). It was recognized as a consonant in the world's earliest writing systems. For example, it was the Hebrew consonant *'aleph*, “the 1<sup>st</sup> letter of the Hebrew alphabet, representing the glottal stop” (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* 1979: 16), from “Hebrew *'alep*, from *'elep* ox, from Canaanite *'alp*” (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* 1992: 43). Foreshadowing its later misunderstanding in Maya studies, when this letter passed from Middle Eastern writing to Greek, which lacked the glottal stop phoneme, it was taken to transcribe a vowel rather than a consonant, and became Greek *alpha*, representing the vowel *a*. Thus, A (an inverted ox head) begins the alphabet in Western writing.

## Mayan Phonologies

Without exception, the phonological inventories of Mayan languages include the glottal stop as a consonant, and this consonant occurs in all structural positions: initial, medial, and final. Aside from its occurrence as a consonant phoneme in its own right, the glottal closure also figures in the articulation of a series of consonants known as “glottalized consonants” that parallel the set of non-glottalized stops and affricates: *p'*, *t'*, *tz'*, *ch'*, and *k'*, for instance, paralleling the set of “plain” stops and affricates *p*, *t*, *tz*, *ch*, and *k*. In general, the glottal closure precedes the articulation of the oral stop or affricate and is held until the latter is released, causing a resonance between the glottis and the oral articulation; the glottis then releases in turn. As a consonant, the glottal stop has the normal distribution patterns, occurring initially, medially and finally in native words (Hopkins 1964, 1967; Koob Schick 1979).

## Colonial Orthographies

In the best of Colonial orthographies, adapting European letters to represent Mayan sounds, the glottalized consonants were distinctively marked to distinguish them from the plain ones, although the practice was not perfect. The mechanisms for marking the glot-

talized consonants varied greatly. In writing Maya of Yucatán, for example, the letter <h> was used as a diacritic to mark some glottalized consonants: <ph> for *p'*, <th> for *t'*. A special character, an inverted or backwards “c”, represented *tz'* (with the transition to printed works, it was replaced by <dz>); a <ch> with a line through the <h> marked *ch'* (and was later replaced by <chch> or <chh>), and the otherwise rare letter <k> was used to transcribe *k'*. The glottal stop (Spanish *saltillo*, “little jump”) did not fare as well, receiving no regular transcription and generally ignored:

Los antiguos autores olvidaron señalar, por un lado, la duración y por otro el saltillo en las vocales de una manera regular. La duración la representaron duplicando el signo, pero de la misma manera significaron la clausura glotal que seguía a la vocal, las pocas veces que aparece indicada en los escritos. (Barrera Vásquez 1946: 209)

## Modern Orthographies

In the early modern period, the glottal stop became recognized as a consonant and was more consistently written, now as an apostrophe. Perhaps because it was ignored by the Colonial sources he surveyed, Alfred Tozzer (1921) missed the consonant entirely, but the leading Maya scholar of his day got it right: “Cuéntase entre las consonantes mayas el ‘saltillo’ u oclusiva glotal, ‘golpe glotal’, o ‘glottal stop’ representada en este trabajo con el apóstrofo” (Barrera Vásquez 1946: 208).

However, establishing a tradition that would confuse scholars into the next century, Barrera Vásquez did not transcribe word-initial glottal stops, writing 'ik 'pepper' as <ik>, 'ok 'foot' as <ok>, etc. This is a reasonable orthographic convention; the initial glottal stop is not prominent acoustically, although its presence can be demonstrated in the abrupt beginning of “vowel-initial” words analyzed with sound spectrography. Words in Mayan languages that are glottal stop-initial take distinct sets of prefixed subject and possessive pronouns, making it convenient to mark them as different from (other) consonant-initial words, and writing them as if they were vowel-initial achieves this goal.

If one and only one initial consonant (the glottal stop) is not written, there is no resulting confusion between words; a word written with an initial vowel can be assumed to have an initial glottal

stop. Regardless of the legitimacy of the convention, it is useful to remember that the glottal stop is actually there, it is just not being written. It is worth noting that if there were no initial glottal stops, the glottal stop would be the one and only Maya consonant not to appear in that structural position. Furthermore, the actual presence of the initial glottal stop in underlying forms shows up in word composition and inflexion where the glottal stop is no longer in initial position.

However, the orthographic convention left the impression that the glottal stop did not occur at the beginning of words. This impression is now firmly established. It is a rare dictionary that writes initial glottal stops, and a rare grammar that does not refer to “vowel-initial” words (for exceptions, see Hopkins and Josserand 2011; Hopkins 2012). Following this convention, Terry Kaufman, who distinguishes between the marking of glottal stops and glottalized consonants by writing the latter with the traditional apostrophes (<p’, t’, ch’>, etc.) and the former with the number seven <7>, does not write initial glottal stops in his landmark compilation of comparative Mayan data (Kaufman 2003).

## Epigraphic Transcriptions

Word-initial glottal stops having been expunged from written sources in Mayan languages, it is no surprise that epigraphers deciphering Maya hieroglyphic writing would also ignore them—or more likely, simply be unaware of their presence. Thus, as the inventory of deciphered signs proliferated and scholars began to publish charts of syllable signs (mostly combinations of consonant and vowel, CV), signs which in fact represent CV syllables composed of glottal stop plus vowel were taken to be “vowel signs,” representing V alone. This misunderstanding has created significant confusion in the epigraphic literature.

The first epigraphic workshop for Mayan language speakers themselves took place in 1987 in Antigua, Guatemala, under the sponsorship of the Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín (PLFM), a program started in the 1970s by Kaufman and others to train native speakers in linguistics.<sup>1</sup> The major presenter was Linda Schele, with

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<sup>1</sup> See [discovermam.org](http://discovermam.org) for a discussion of this workshop.

the assistance of two epigrapher-linguists, Kathryn Josserand and Nick Hopkins. The notebook for the workshop was translated to Spanish from Schele's earlier Texas Meetings workbooks by Nora England, a linguist attached to PLFM. In this context, it is notable that the syllable chart on inserted pages (Schele 1987: 7b–7d) included a column headed by the glottal stop and listing signs deciphered as the syllables 'a, 'e, 'i, 'o, and 'u.

However, the same year, David Stuart published his influential *Ten Phonetic Syllables*, and his syllabic-sign chart presented the same signs as representing "vowels" (Stuart 1987: 47). Schele's Notebooks retained the glottal stop column as late as 1990 (Schele 1990: 5b), but by 1993 had adopted the vowel-initial reading (Schele and Mathews 1993: 16). This unfortunate decision immediately muddied the waters of phonetic readings. Schele and Mathews noted that Stuart (1987) had proposed that final vowels had been written by adding to the previous CV sign a presumably unread syllable sign ya or yi. That is, to write a CVCV word, "three signs had to be used to create CV-CV-V with the most frequently used [final] signs being the CV glyphs using the semi-vowel y" (Schele and Mathews 1993: 15). They then added:

A comparable context was discovered long ago in the spelling of words ending in glottal stops. The Maya could elect to ignore the final stop, but when they did wish to register its presence, the [sic] reduplicated the vowel in the main root. For example, *te'* ("tree") was spelled *te-e*; *mo'* ("macaw") was spelled *mo-o*, and *le'* ("noose") was spelled *le-e*. (Schele and Mathews 1993: 16)

The leading epigraphers having drunk the Kool-Aid, glottal stop-initial syllable signs disappeared from syllable charts from then on (e.g., Montgomery 2002: 132, Stuart 2006: 27).<sup>2</sup>

Somehow nobody thought to suggest that perhaps the way the Maya were writing final glottal stops was the way they wrote all other final consonants, by using a CV syllable sign with the final consonant (the glottal stop) and a vowel of the same quality as the preceding one, a vowel to be ignored according to accepted spelling rules. In other words, **te-e** writes *te'* because it is really **te-'e**, **mo-o** writes *mo'* because it is really **mo-'o**, **le-e** writes *le'* because it is really **le-'e**, and so on.

<sup>2</sup> For a notable exception see Kettunen and Helmke 2005: 49.

This misunderstanding persists in the literature. Alfonso Lacadena and Søren Wichmann (2004) drafted an entire chapter “On the Representation of the Glottal Stop in Maya Writing” that is mainly concerned with how word-internal glottal stops were represented, in opposition to spelling rules proposed by Houston et al. (2004) in the same volume edited by Wichmann (2004); see the review in Hopkins (2006). Leaving aside the Lacadena/Wichmann argument and their complicated spelling rules (addressed above), their “Data” section includes such spellings as **a-pa-a-la**, *A[ʃ]-Pa'äl* “he of Pa'äl”, **che-e-na**, *che'en* “it is said”, **k'u-u-lu**, *k'u'ul* “holy”, **mo-o-la**, *mo'ol* [part of an expression], and **wo-o-ja**, *wo'oj* “glyph(s)”. In all these examples it appears that reading the “vowel” glyph as CV (glottal stop-vowel) would lead to a fairly straight-forward reading without introducing complicated new rules. Incidentally, and somewhat surprising—perhaps a typographical error—one of their entries is **nu-'u-na**, *nu'un* [part of a name], suggesting that they did contemplate glottal stop-initial syllable signs.

## Conclusions

From all the above, it seems apparent that the so-called vowel signs of the Maya syllabary should once again be treated as CV syllables beginning with glottal stops, like the other syllable signs. The current aberrant status of the glottal stop is a result of misunderstandings, not the characteristics of Mayan languages or Maya writing. The evidence suggests that the Maya were unaware of any special quality of the glottal stop and treated it like all the other consonants. It is a long-standing principle of scientific endeavors that good theories cannot be satisfactorily built on bad foundations. Where mistakes of the past have led us deeper into the brambles rather than into open clearings, we need to retrace our steps and begin again. As the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Thomas Hobbes put it:

By this it appears how necessary it is for any man that aspires to true knowledge, to examine the definitions of former authors, and either to correct them, where they are negligently set down, or to make them himself. For the errors of definitions multiply as the reckoning proceeds, and lead men into absurdities, which at last they see, but cannot avoid without reckoning anew from the beginning. (Hobbes 1909[1651]: 28)

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# On the Graphic and Lexical Origins of Maya Syllabograms

HARRI KETTUNEN  
University of Helsinki  
([harri.kettunen@helsinki.fi](mailto:harri.kettunen@helsinki.fi))

**Abstract:** This article analyzes the graphic and lexical origins of Maya syllabograms by exploring the potential pictorial and linguistic stimuli behind the signs. While the graphic motivation of many syllabograms in the Maya script is relatively well known, their lexical motivation is much more obscure. The reasons behind this can be numerous. Typically, as in other parts of the world, the origins of the sign inventory are shrouded in the mists of time. Consequently, the lack of the oldest signs impedes our understanding of the early evolution of the scripts. However, with the help of available linguistic data and comparative methods, we can try to fill in the gaps.

**Resumen:** Este artículo analiza los orígenes gráficos y léxicos de los silabogramas mayas a través del estudio de los potenciales estímulos pictóricos y lingüísticos que determinaron la forma de los signos. Si bien las motivaciones gráficas de muchos de los silabogramas en la escritura maya son comparablemente bien conocidas, sus motivaciones léxicas son menos claras. Las razones de esto pueden ser muchas. Tal como sucede en otras partes del mundo, los orígenes del inventario de signos se esconden en las sombras de los tiempos. En consecuencia, la falta de evidencia de los signos más antiguos nos impide entender el desarrollo temprano de los sistemas de escritura. No obstante, podemos intentar llenar las lagunas apoyándonos en los datos lingüísticos disponibles.

Alfonso Lacadena's (1995) seminal work on the graphic evolution of Maya hieroglyphs set standards for methodological analyses of the formal evolution of signs in the Maya script. In this short treatise, I honor Alfonso's exceptional career, incomparable generosity, and affectionate friendship. I will be touching some of the issues that Alfonso was working on: grammatology, the etymologies of words, and the origins and evolution of signs. The subject matter of this article has previously been a central topic of various workshops tutored by the author, in cooperation with several colleagues: "Graphic Origins of Maya Signs" at the Cracow Maya Conference in 2013 (Harri Kettunen, Guido Krempel, and Sebastián Matteo), at the UCL Maya Hieroglyphics Workshop, London 2013 (Harri Kettunen), and at the Maya at the Playa Conference in 2013 (Harri Kettunen and Marc Zender); "Paleographic and Lexical Origins of Maya Signs" at the University of Bologna in 2014 (Harri Kettunen and Christophe

Helmke); “Los métodos de la epigrafía maya: un taller sobre los orígenes gráficos y léxicos de los signos mayas” at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in 2014 (Harri Kettunen); “Methods in Maya Hieroglyphic Studies” at the 19<sup>th</sup> European Maya Conference in Bratislava, 2014 (Harri Kettunen and Alfonso Lacadena); and “Origins and Development of the Classic Maya Syllabary” at the Maya Meetings in Austin, 2015 (Marc Zender, David Stuart, and Harri Kettunen). I would like to thank all my colleagues and students for their insights and feedback, and especially Alfonso for openly sharing his ideas with everyone.

The graphic motivation of Maya syllabograms is relatively well known. Maya hieroglyphs are highly pictorial, as are other Meso-American scripts, and this allows us to inspect the formal representation of the signs. However, although in many cases we can identify the graphic origins of signs, their lexical motivation is much less known. The reasons behind this can be numerous. Typically, as in other parts of the world, the origins of the sign inventory are shrouded in the mists of time and the lack of the earliest signs in any given writing tradition impedes our understanding of the early evolution of the scripts.

The strategies to explore the possible origins of the signs are various. The main challenge is the very origins of the script. When we know the origins, as is the case of Japanese writing system (modified from Chinese) or the various alphabets, abjads, and abugidas across Europe, the Middle East, northern Africa, and South Asia, we can, in many cases, study the evolution of the signs all the way back to the very early examples. However, in the case of Mesoamerican writing systems, the earliest writing is not known, which leads us to speculate about its formal characteristics as well as its linguistic affiliation. Alfonso Lacadena (2007, 2012, 2013, n.d.; Lacadena et al. 2010; and personal communication) has pointed out that based on parallels from other writing systems, it seems that later writing systems in Mesoamerica, including the Maya script, modified the early script to suit the phonology of Mayan languages. According to Lacadena (2012) this is especially noticeable with the Maya syllabograms **ba** (T501) vs. **ma** (T502) and **bu** (T21) vs. **mu** (T19) (see Figures 51 and 5m) where the first sign of each pair appears to be created using the

second one as a model, much the same way as Å and Å are derived from A, Ø from O, and Ł form L in our script. According to Lacadena, this points out to the fact that the earliest writing in Mesoamerica was based on a language that had /m/ but no /b/ in the phonological inventory. Observing other features in the scripts, Lacadena also pointed out that the language of the early writing did not have /ch/, /l/, or /x/, no glottal consonants, and only one back spirant. The only language family in Mesoamerica with these features is Mije-Sokean, which led Lacadena to propose that this language family must have been behind the earliest script. Other scholars, including David Stuart (personal communication, 2016) have challenged this view and have proposed alternate scenarios where the Mije-Sokean origin model is disputed in the light of lack of evidence of the earliest script altogether.

My position regarding this matter is to keep avenues open for several interpretations, including (1) the theoretical earliest script and its potential linguistic affiliation, (2) native Maya origins, as well as (3) the combination of the two. Based on comparative studies on the evolution of writing systems in the world, it is likely that writing as a concept was only invented once in Mesoamerica, whereas the subsequent scripts in the area either modified an existing script or (re)invented a new writing system based on the *idea* of writing. The extent to which the later scripts applied or modified an existing writing system, is poorly known.

Comparisons between the so-called Isthmian<sup>1</sup> and Maya scripts have been carried out by a number of scholars, including Alfonso Lacadena, and some signs clearly have a common origin. Some of these, such as the epi-Olmec signs #050, #068, #072, #124, and #149 (see Kaufman and Justeson 2001) appear “upside down” in the Maya script (T535, T506 [’OHL], T548 [HAB], T528 [TUN/ku], and T126 [CH’AM/K’AM], respectively). Whether one influenced the other or whether both originate from a common source, is unknown. Interestingly, however, we have similar patterns in the writing traditions of other parts of the world, including the proto- and early (Sumerian) cuneiform signs that were rotated 90 degrees counterclockwise in the later Akkadian script (see, e.g., Gnanadesikan 2009: 17).

<sup>1</sup> Concerning the inexactitude of the term ‘Isthmian,’ see Justeson and Kaufman in this volume.

## Comparative studies

Comparative studies of writing systems allow us to look at the Maya and Mesoamerican scripts from the perspective of other traditions in the world. Although the processes are different in each area, some patterns in the evolution of scripts are surprisingly similar. What interests us here is not so much the evolution of scripts in general but, rather, the processes of forming new sign categories from existing signs, such as the phonographic signs from logograms in the eastern Mediterranean and eastern Asian scripts. The principle of acrophonic reduction was at play in the evolution of scripts in the eastern Mediterranean area in a similar manner as in Mesoamerica. Furthermore, although the Mesoamerican writing systems cannot be easily demonstrated to originate from a common source (instead of sprouting from the *idea of writing*), the history of writing systems in Mesopotamia and Mesoamerica are parallel in many respects. From the core area of cuneiform writing in Mesopotamia, the tradition spread to linguistically unrelated areas, being used, all in all, in five different language families or language isolates: Sumerian, Elamite, Akkadian, Hurrian, and Urartian (Gnanadesikan 2009: 26). How writing developed and spread in Mesoamerica is much more opaque, and requires, consequently, more studies in the future.

## Notes on the history of studies of writing systems

One of the most influential studies of writing systems in the European thought until very recently was Ignace Gelb's *A Study of Writing*<sup>2</sup> (first published in 1952) where he suggested a tripartite typology of scripts from *word-syllabic* via *syllabic* to *alphabetic*. The problem of Gelb's study is that it is (along with some earlier and later classifications) evolutionary, Euro-centric, teleological, and oversystematized (see Daniels 1996: 7; Joyce and Borgwaldt 2011; Kettunen in press). The evolutionary idea, or Gelb's "principle of unidirectional development" is inherently problematic as it proposes that writing systems follow a certain path from logographic to alphabetic systems. A prime contrary example is the Chinese writing system

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<sup>2</sup> Gelb is also the person behind the term 'grammatology' that has been applied to the study of writing systems in certain traditions including, relatively recently, the study of Meso-American writing systems.

that has not transformed from logographic to a syllabic or alphabetic system during its 3000-year history.

Gelb's study was not without antecedents: the first comprehensive study of writing systems from a scientific perspective is Isaac Taylor's *The Alphabet: An Account of the Origin and Development of Letters* (1883a, b), where he divides the history of writing into five different classes by evolutionary progression: pictures, pictorial symbols, verbal signs, syllabic signs, and alphabetic signs. The first two are labeled as 'ideograms' and the next three as 'phonograms'. According to Taylor (1883a: 5–6) “[t]he development of alphabetic writing proceeds regularly through these five successive stages.” A similar classification was later popularized by Ignace Gelb (1952).

Interestingly, Taylor (1883a: 23–25) also discusses the Aztec and Maya writing, believing that Aztec phonographic writing is, at least partially, a result of European contact. Furthermore, he seemed to be fascinated with the phonetic Maya writing that he regarded “superior in simplicity and convenience” to the Chinese or Assyrian scripts:

[...] the Aztecs, at the time of the Spanish conquest, had taken the first step on the road to the invention of a system of phonographic writing. [...] Under the tuition of Spanish missionaries the Mexican ideograms were subsequently developed so as to be capable of expressing the sounds of a foreign idiom [...] But without such foreign assistance another nation of Central America had advanced still further on the path which leads to Alphabetic writing. At Palenqué [sic], the ruined capital of the Mayas of Yucatan, several inscriptions have been found written with phonetic signs, which are believed to have been derived from the Mexican Hieroglyphics [...] The high state of civilization attained by this people is thus attested, not only by the ruins of their magnificent buildings, but by the invention of a system of writing actually superior in simplicity and convenience to that employed at the present day by the Chinese, or even by the great Assyrian nation at the epoch of its greatest power and glory. The systems of picture writing, which were invented and developed by the tribes of Central America, are however so obscure, and so little is really known about their history, that they must be regarded rather as literary curiosities [...]. (Taylor 1883a: 23–25)

Other scholars throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century followed the path laid out by Taylor and Gelb. David Diringer's “Writing” (1962) presents a similar alphabets-centric classification as those of Taylor and Gelb, this time using pictographic, ideographic, analytic transitional, phonetic, and alphabetic as the classificatory terms. However, in

the 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century we see a less evolutionist and more detailed analysis of writing systems, especially by Peter Daniels (1996, 2001), who proposed to divide writing systems into six classes without forced evolutionary stages. These are: (1) logosyllabary / morphosyllabary; (2) syllabary; (3) abjad (Semitic-type script); (4) alphabet (Greek-type script); abugida (Sanskrit-type script); and featural (Korean or “phonotypic” shorthand). Daniels (2001: 68) also notes that “once abugidas are distinguished from syllabaries, a different historical sequence can be identified, which no longer privileges the alphabet teleologically”.

## Methods

Looking at the inventory of syllabograms in the Maya script, we can identify the graphic motivation of c. 28% of the signs, whereas the understanding of the lexical origins of signs drops down to c. 12% (Kettunen 2014, 2017, 2019).<sup>3</sup> As an example, we know that the graphic motivation for T741v as /ʔe/ is based on a head of an animal but we cannot securely identify the lexical source for that sound. Compared to other writing systems in the world, acrophonic reduction and synecdoche (or *pars pro toto* principle) are often at play when forming sounds from (the sounds of) entire words. Other possibilities include sound symbolic or onomatopoeic origins of the signs, where the abovementioned /ʔe/ could originate from the sound that, e.g., specific toads or frogs make. This same method can be applied to other syllabograms, such as the T743 parrot head /ʔa/ that in all probability originates in the call of the parrot, rather than a name for a parrot starting with the sound /ʔa/ (although the latter cannot be ruled out). Furthermore, we should keep in mind that some of the sound values of the syllabograms might not even be originally native to Mayan languages, as suggested by Alfonso Lacadena (see above), paralleling the processes in other parts of the world (compare, e.g., to Sumerian syllabic values used in Akkadian cuneiform).

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<sup>3</sup> This is very low compared to other writing systems: e.g., we know the graphic (and in most cases the lexical) motivation of practically every single Egyptian unic consonantal sign or Aztec (Nahuatl) syllabogram.

What is important when looking at the origins of Maya syllabograms, is to examine the formal history of the signs. The graphic origins of the signs cannot be exposed by looking at the late examples of the signs, in case they are notably different from the earlier ones, but by understanding their early versions. Furthermore, although the dictionary searches expose potential lexical sources for the syllabograms, we need to be careful not to assume that what is a *possible* source would also be a *likely* or *definite* source. Examples such as **ch'o** from *ch'o'* 'rat, mouse' or **ka** from *kay* 'fish' are rather secure sources but many others are not. It is tempting to propose lexical origins for syllabograms merely by visual inspection of the signs, without further scrutiny of the formal history of these signs. Likewise, even if the graphic and lexical motivations appear to match, the origins of a given sign may be outside the linguistic area of Epigraphic Mayan. Signs may have received original sound values from an earlier Mesoamerican script, which were then assigned with new values—or reinterpreted by the subsequent cultures and/or linguistic areas.

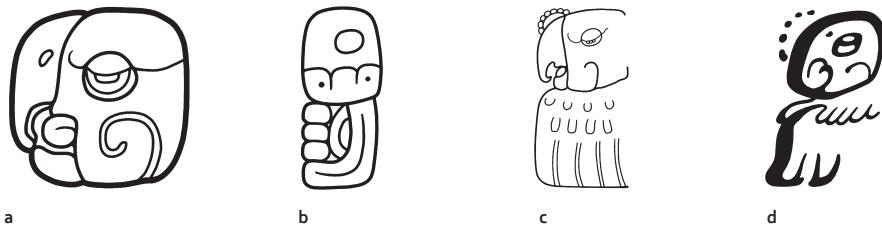
## Analysis

The following is an analysis of a selection of syllabograms and their potential graphic and lexical origins. Signs will be discussed within general thematic groups, based on their graphic appearance.

It has been thought desirable, for the advancement of the study of Maya hieroglyphs, that the interpretation of the conventionalized animal figures, which so frequently occur in the Maya codices, should be undertaken. (F. W. Putnam, Harvard University, August, 1909, cited in Tozzer and Allen 1910: 275)

Two very common signs in the corpus of Maya hieroglyphic writing are T743 and T228/229 (Figures 1a and 1b, respectively) with the phonetic value <sup>?</sup>**a**, representing the head and beak/bill (or frontal part of the head) of a parrot, respectively. The former has sometimes been confused with the head of a turtle (with a consequent ostensible lexical origin being proto-Ch'olan *'ahk* [Kaufman and Norman 1984: 115]), but winged examples of the sign (as in Machaquila Structure 4, Stone F [Figure 1c; Justeson 1975],<sup>4</sup> Seibal Stela 7

<sup>4</sup> See Krempel (Machaquila Structure 4, Type II fragments) in this volume.



**Figure 1.** The syllabogram **?a**: a) T743, b) T228/229, c) Tnn ?a (Machaquila Structure 4, Stone F), d) Tnn ?a (K7786) (drawings by Harri Kettunen, except for drawing c by Guido Krempel).

[Stuart 1985: 2], and K7786<sup>5</sup> [Figure 1d]) clearly point toward a parrot as the graphic motivation.<sup>6</sup> Of interest here is also the polyvalent sign T238 for **?a** and **MO?**, used as a syllabogram **?a**, for example, on K6059 (Kerr 1997).

Nonetheless, various earlier and later proposals<sup>7</sup> have associated the sign with turtles, and it is not impossible (although rather unlikely) that the confusion between parrot and turtle heads derives from the mis- or reinterpretation by Maya scribes themselves—especially considering the lengthy history of literary traditions in the area. Both signs appear also in the “Landa alphabet” (Figure 2), corresponding to the grapheme <a> in the Latin alphabet.

<sup>5</sup> I would like to thank Marc Zender for pointing out this example to me.

<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, Tozzer and Allen (1910: 323) echo what previous scholars had suggested (see below), but at the same time associate T743 infixated with a **K'AN** cross (as in the month name *Kayab*) with parrots: “A number of glyphs representing the turtle are found throughout the codices [...]. They are all characterized by the heavy beak. It may be noted that these glyphs are virtually the same as the sign for the first *a* in Landa's alphabet. As the turtle is called *?ak* or *?aak* in Maya, the reason is clear for the selection of this sign for an *a* sound. [...] The head shown in PI. 14, fig. 10, has quite a different eye [= **K'AN** sign] though otherwise similar. Its resemblance to the glyph on PI. 25, fig. 9, is marked and suggests the parrot.”

<sup>7</sup> E.g., Brinton (1895: 126): “There is no doubt but that the turtle's head and not that of the parrot is intended, though some have thought otherwise” and Thompson (1950: 116): “Fürstermann [sic], Seler, Gordon, and Tozzer and Allen [see the footnote above for contrary interpretation] recognize the *Kayab* glyph as the head of a turtle; Spinden sees in this hieroglyph the head of the blue macaw. It must be admitted that both parties can cite much evidence in their favor. I think the decision should go to Seler because of a feature which has hitherto been disregarded. That is the prominent kan cross in the creature's eye. The kan cross has two values: it is a symbol of water [...] and also the sign for yellow. Whichever value it has in this case, it agrees better with the identification as the turtle, for that is an aquatic animal and has a brilliantly yellow under side. The blue macaw, on the other hand, has nothing to do with water, and has little yellow plumage.”



Figure 2. The “Landa Alphabet” (image courtesy Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid).

Philipp Johann Joseph Valentini elucidates the process of the motivation and origins of the sign as follows:

Let us fancy our learned Bishop Landa sitting in the refectory of his convent in Mérida. A group of barefooted Indians stand waiting at the door and their elected speaker is beckoned by Landa to approach the table. In response to his question what object he would think of and draw when hearing the sound of a, the man with somewhat doubtful hand begins to trace upon the sheet of paper laid before him, this little picture which you notice standing first in the three rows of the alphabetic table. (Valentini 1880)

Valentini goes on to explain that although it looks like a bird head, the artistic characteristics are closer to those of turtles, and concludes that “[i]f we now ask for the Maya word for tortoise we shall find it eminently suited to the purposes of our demonstration. It is ac. It gives the assonance of the a, the first alphabetic letter. It is promising discovery” (Valentini 1880). Interestingly, at the same time as Valentini argues that the “Landa alphabet” is merely a Spanish fabrication, he describes the principles of acrophonic reduction—a process that the phonetic Maya signs had undergone at an early stage in the history of (Maya and Mesoamerican) writing systems, leading to the sounds (phonograms/syllabograms) echoing the names of the Spanish letters presented in the “Landa alphabet”. Valentini continues explaining what he calls “the genesis of the Landa alphabet”, speculating what the motivation of the signs could

have been. However, his analyses are mostly far-fetched and, in most cases, fail to identify the graphic and lexical origins of any of the signs. Examples, such as **'e** based on “three little heaps of black color, such as the painter placed upon a kind of palette for use in coloring and drawing”, based on the (then logical) assumption that the script recorded the Yukatek language and that “[b]lack in Maya is called *eek* or simply *ek*.“

Another example is Landa’s **<ca>** that Valentini explains by stating that “[t]he symbol he selected for this sound was undoubtedly a comb, because the Maya word *caa* means to pull a man’s hair out.” However, Valentini also rightly points out the graphic and lexical origins of Landa’s letter **<n>** by rationalizing the following: “Imagine the body of a genuine Central American monkey affixed to this volute and you will come to the conclusion that the painter wished to express by it the monkey’s tail. As the symbol is to represent the letter *n*, which in Spanish sounds as if spelled *enne*, and as further the Maya word for tail is *ne*, it becomes quite evident why the symbol was accepted.” Finally, Valentini examines the last sign in the “Landa alphabet” that still eludes identification, with the following remarks: “In the picture standing for the letter *z* I cannot help recognizing a copy of the Central American metlatl or grinding stone, the forms of which are quite familiar to every Mexicologist. You may also distinguish the roller, the shadow below very likely representing *la masa de maíz*, the dough under treatment, and the *masa molida*, the mass still to be ground lying as the women of those countries place it, in the middle of the stone. The Spanish sound for the alphabetic *z* is *tzeta*, and *tzee* is to mash Indian corn!” (Valentini 1880).

Regarding Valentini’s analysis of Landa’s **<z>**, it should be noted that bird’s eye depictions of signs in Maya writing are rare (Landa’s first **<b>**, i.e., Classic Mayan **bi** is one example) so, at least statistically, the chances that the sign represents something else than a metate are high. Interestingly, that very position on the list of syllabograms is, thus far, empty, i.e., no good candidates for a **tze** syllabogram have been found in the corpus. One reason for this is the rarity of the very sound *tze* in the reconstructed Classic Mayan language. Likewise, it is noteworthy that out of the 714 proto-Ch’olan lexemes in the work of Terrence Kaufman and William Norman (1984), only two words



**Figure 3.** The syllabogram <sup>7</sup>o: a) Tnn “O-Bird”, b) T99/T279 (drawings by Harri Kettunen).

incorporate the sound sequence (syllable) *tze*, namely \**tze*’ ‘laughter’ and \**tzel* ‘coxcomb, lizard’s comb’. Although there surely were terms that incorporated this sound in the Classic Mayan language, especially in derived forms, the syllable is, regardless, an uncommon one—even in Greater Tzeltalan languages in general. Consequently, we might have to consider other possibilities to decrypt the identity of Landa’s <z>. However, considering the linguistic environment where the “Landa alphabet” was created, Yukatekan forms should be taken into account. Consequently, Valentini’s “metate” (16<sup>th</sup>-century Yukatek *tzee* ‘moler de la primera vuelta o de la primera vez el maíz, para tortillas’ [Ciudad Real 1577a]), was not an unfounded speculation.

Yet another question is that if we know exactly how the name of the letter <z> was pronounced in Spanish during the 16<sup>th</sup> century? In Old Spanish (10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries) <z> represented phonologically a voiced alveolar affricate /dz/ that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was first devoiced (/ts/) and then went through a deaffrication process, merging with /s/ in the southern dialects and in the Americas (Lapesa 1981: 205–206, 371–377). Consequently, in modern Spanish, the name of the letter is pronounced as /seta/ or /θeta/. If the name of the letter was pronounced /tseta/ (or /tseda/) by Landa and his contemporaries, we should look for words starting with the sound /tse/, but if it was pronounced /seta/ we should explore other possibilities.

Valentini’s “findings”, discussed above, were by no means solitary examples in the history of research on Maya and Mesoamerican writing systems. Fanciful theories and explanations of the nature of the script were presented regularly (and, to some extent, still are), and in many cases, scholars agreed on certain speculative assump-

tions regarding the nature of the script without questioning the premises. In retrospect, many of these theories seem absurd but, obviously, one has to consider the times, the available data, group-think (Whyte 1952; Janis 1971, 1972) and the nature of scientific revolutions (Kuhn 1962) before making judgments. Likewise, I hope that this brief treatise will generate further discussion and debate—even if we sometimes venture into the unknown and might have “fanciful” ideas ourselves.

Going back to the analysis, another avian figure that has caused speculation is the Tnn “O-Bird” and T99/T279 ’o (Figures 3a and 3b, respectively), the former being the head and the latter a feather of a bird. The identification of the bird is challenging. It has some of the characteristics of various owl species in the Maya area (Kettunen 2016). However, none of the known species start with the sound /’o/, unless we are, again, dealing with sound symbolism. On the other hand, the Ritual of the Bacabs (Arzápalo Marín 1987: Text III, Folio 17, lines 30–31) mentions an avian creature by the name of O’ (transcribed as <oo>):

<i>Oo bacan u ch'ich'il,</i> <i>ix chac Oo bacan.</i>	<i>El pájaro Oo es su ave,</i> <i>es decir, el Oo rojo.</i>
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Whatever the relation to the Classic Maya counterpart is, it is possible that this is the lexical motivation for the sign. Another suggestion (Macri and Looper 2003: 95) is that the lexical source is the Yukatek ’òop ‘parrot’. However, the featural characteristics of the bird do not correspond to any known parrot species in the Maya area. Moreover, what is interesting is that the sign appears later (first appearance in 9.11.15.0.0 according to Nikolai Grube [1990: 117])<sup>8</sup> in Maya writing than the “o-feather” (T75/T99/T279/T280/T345: 9.0.0.0.0 until the “Landa alphabet”), operating akin to *totum pro parte* principle. These

<sup>8</sup> The bird is very elusive even regarding the T(hompson)-numbering: Grube (1990: 117) refers to it as T746, John Montgomery (2002: 191) as T1034v?, and Martha Macri and Matthew Looper (2003: 95) as T1066 but I do not think the sign is in Thompson’s (1962) catalog at all. Although the sign has characteristics of T746, the examples in Thompson (1962: 329) do not correspond to the sign in question. T1034 “Tun” and T1033 “Baktun”, on the other hand, share the feathers with the “O-Bird” but are otherwise distinct signs.

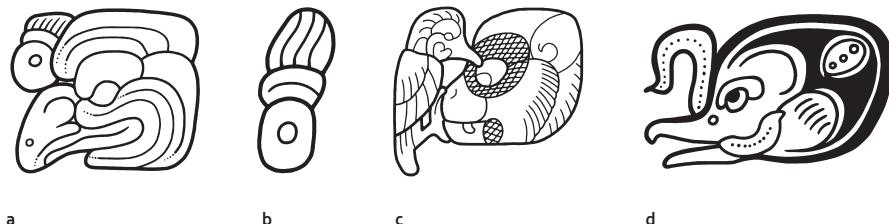


Figure 4. The syllabogram *ti*: a) T747, b) T59. c) Tnn ?i?, d) Tnn li (drawings by Harri Kettunen).

*tota pro partibus* examples are not restricted to this example, as we will see later.

Yet another avian creature is the sign T747 **ti** (Figure 4a) that represents a bird head, quite possibly the King Vulture (*Sarcoramphus papa*) (Tozzer and Allen 1910: 329, Pl. 17–19; Thompson 1950: 58, 163, 187) while T59 **ti** (Figure 4b), by *pars pro toto* principle, most likely represents a caruncle attached to the cere of the King Vulture. However, no apparent corresponding bird starting with the sound *ti-* has been recorded so far in the ornithological literature in the Maya area. Alfred Tozzer and Glover Allen note the following of the King Vulture:

Numerous figures of vultures appear in the codices and elsewhere. [...] Two species only seem to occur in the writings, the king vulture and the black vulture. The former is a large black and white bird with the head and the upper part of the neck unfeathered, except for numerous short, almost bristle-like plumules. These naked portions are often colored red and there is a large more or less squarish fleshy knob at the base of the upper ramus of the beak. This conspicuous protuberance has been seized upon as a characteristic in the conventionalized figures, and serves to identify the king from the black vulture. In addition, a series of concentric circles about the eye seems to be a rather constant mark of the king vulture, though they are also sometimes found in connection with figures which, from the absence of the rostral knob, must represent black vultures [...]. (Tozzer and Allen 1910: 329)

Furthermore, worth noting is that Tzeltal has *ti'* ‘to eat flesh’ (Berlin 1968: 211), which is a tempting association to the vulture’s behavior or feasting on dead (or even wounded) animals (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001: 316). Another bird feeding on vertebrates is the T237:765v ?i? ‘hawk’ (Figure 4c), undoubtedly representing the call of the bird. Although absent in most Mayan languages, Chontal has ?i? (Pérez González 1998: 45) and *aj'i? ~ a'i?* (Keller and Luciano 1997:

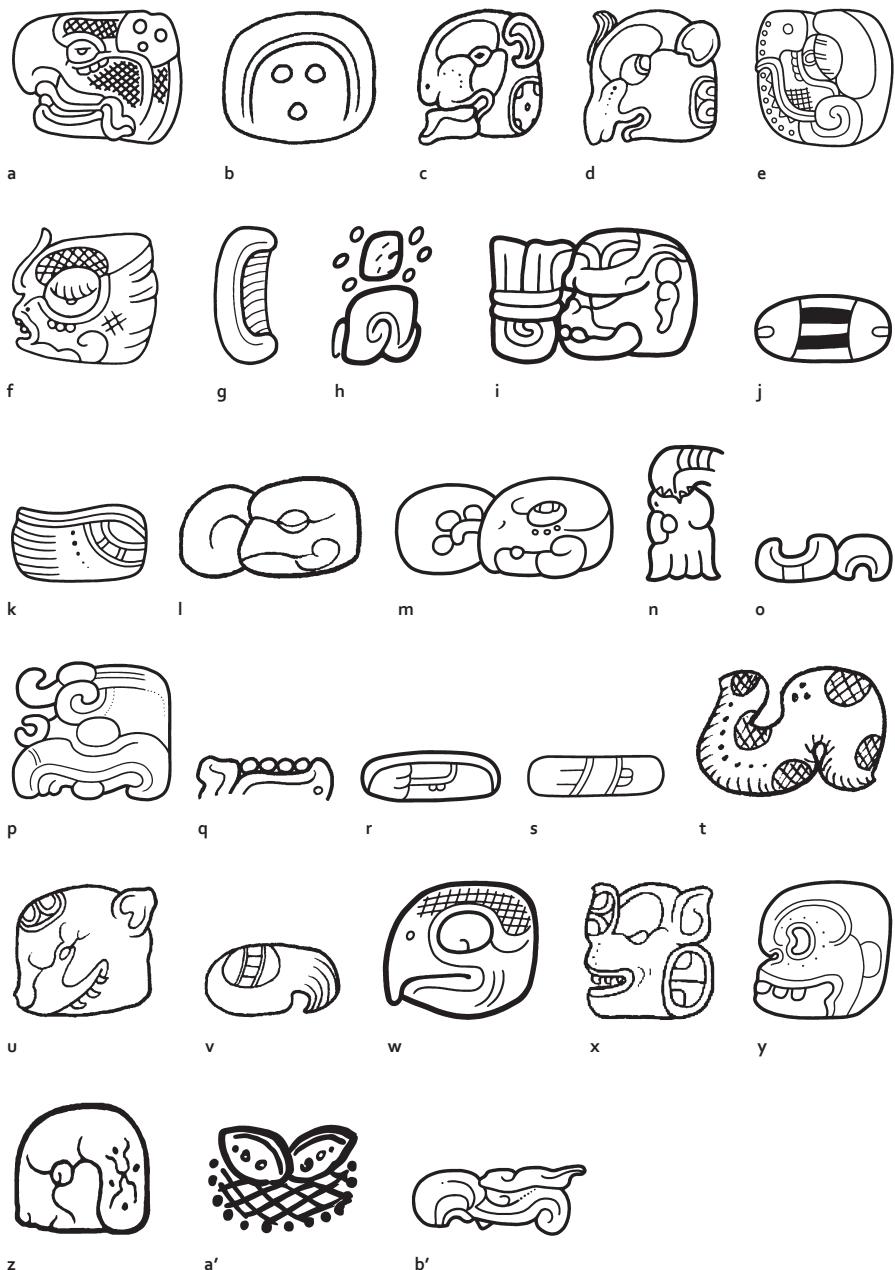
31, 34) and Yukatek *?i?* and *ah ?i?* (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 261) for ‘hawk’ (Spanish ‘gavilán’).<sup>9</sup> According to Hull and Fergus (n.d.:23), “‘i’ [and] a’i’ [are] [l]ikely generic term[s] for light and dark hawks (*Accipitridae* family). Known in Spanish as *gavilán*. There are two kinds, one yellow and one black. Hunters do not like them because they cry out when hunters are coming to warn the animals, allowing them to escape. They announce good weather, i.e., ‘la seca,’ meaning no rain.” In addition to the above, another bird, the snake-eating Tnn **li** (Figure 4d), may derive from a name of a hawk called *liklik* (Hopkins et al. 2011: 129), as proposed by Kerry Hull (personal communication, 2019).<sup>10</sup> According to Hull, *liklik* is Bat Falcon (*Falco rufigularis*) with the Q’eqchi’ and Mopan of Belize, and it eats snakes.

Moving to other animal species, the abovementioned **?e** sign (T741v and T542, Figures 5a and 5b, respectively) shows a stylized head of an amphibian or a reptile creature (possibly a toad) with characteristic three dots on the back of the head of the creature. This symbol also functions as a *pars pro toto* for the whole head. As explained above, although T741v as **?e** is probably based on a head of an amphibian creature, we cannot securely identify the lexical source for it, unless it is sound symbolic. As for identifying toad or frog species in Maya writing and art, Tozzer and Allen (1910: 309) observe that “[...] it is quite impossible to refer them definitely to any of the numerous species occurring in Central America, if, indeed, the artists had any one species in mind.” By and large, the same seems to go with many other species of animals in Maya and Mesoamerican art and writing.

Other relatively secure identifications of lexical origins include T757 **ba** (Figure 5c), T758 **ch’o** (Figure 5d), T740 **hu** (Figure 5e), and T738 and T25 **ka** (Figures 5f and 5g, respectively). T757 as **ba** stems from a often pan-Mayan term for ‘gopher’ (*baah* in Classic Mayan) by way of acrophonic reduction. The head of the gopher displays a k’an cross and a foliated leaf or a tongue coming out of the mouth. Originally, the sign represented the logogram **BAH** but by the late

<sup>9</sup> The latter appears as <ahij> (*?ah ?i?*) ‘especie de gavilanes’ in Ciudad Real (1577a: 19v).

<sup>10</sup> According to Kerry Hull (personal communication, 2019), “[w]hen informants imitate the call of the liklik, which is ‘lik lik’, they do say it with the ‘k’, but any voiceless stop at the end of a segment is always an ideal place for partial pronunciation or deletion, so it is possible that ‘li’ could come from the call.



**Figure 5.** a) T741v 'e', b) T542 'e', c) T757 ba, d) T758 ch'o, e) T740 hu, f) T738 ka, g) T25 ka, h) Tnn t'o, i) T60.1042 ha, j) T110 ko, k) T76/77 ki', l) T19 mu, m) T21 bu, n) T203v/T608 tz'u, o) T130 wa, p) T131 wa, q) T117 wi, r) T100v ki, s) T102 ki, t) Tnn ne, u) T758v ji, v) T88 ji, w) Tnn be, x) T756v xu, y) T736 xi, z) T759 pe, a') T604 k'u, b') T204 ?u (drawings by Harri Kettunen, except for drawing h by Christophe Helmke).

Late Classic the sign was used for the phonemic value /ba/ as well. T758 **ch’o**, on the other hand, derives from a common term for ‘rat, mouse’ in Mayan languages: proto-Ch’olan \*ch’ohok (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 119), ultimately from proto-Mayan \*ch’o<sup>7</sup>h (Kaufman 2003: 587), while T740 **hu**, which represents an iguana (possibly Black Iguana, *Ctenosaura similis*), stems from proto-Ch’olan \*huj (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 120). The syllabogram **ka** represents a fish (T203), a head of a fish (T738v), or an abstract form of a fish fin (T25). Interestingly, the Ch’olan form of the word for ‘fish’ is *chay* while both the Yukatekan and Eastern Mayan languages have /k/ in the term (*kay* in Yukatekan and *kar* in most Eastern Mayan languages), all ultimately from proto-Mayan \*kar (Kaufman 2003: 648).

Other animal-based syllabograms include Tnn **t’o** (Figure 5h) from proto-Ch’olan \*t’ot ‘snail’ (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 133), T60.1042 **ha** (Figure 5i) from proto-Ch’olan \*hah ‘fly’ (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 120), ultimately from proto-Mayan \*ha<sup>7</sup>h ‘green fly’, ‘fly grub’ (Kaufman 2017: 82), and probably also T110 **ko** (Figure 5j) from *kok* or *kohk*, a reference possibly to *Staurotypus triporcatus* or a Mexican musk turtle (a.k.a. narrow-bridged musk turtle). Ch’ol has *kok* for ‘small turtle’ (Aulie and Aulie 1978: 28: <ajcoc> ‘tortuga chica’), while modern Yukatek (Barrera Vásquez 1980) has *kok* for ‘tortuga terrestre’ and *Itza’* (Hofling and Tesucún 1997: 107, 356) *ajjolon-kok* for ‘tortuga guao, tortuga wawo, tortuga tresfilos / ajjolonkok turtle, *Staurotypus triporcatus*; freshwater turtle’ and *kok* for ‘stingy’. Interestingly, Wisdom (1950: 707) has *choch* in Ch’orti’ for ‘an edible marine animal (? turtle)’ although the same term in Hull (2016: 103) is ‘jute’ or freshwater snail. Of interest is also the **ko-ko** spelling above a turtle figure on Madrid Codex page 88c.

Yet another animal-related syllabogram is the T76/77 **k’i** (Figure 5k) bird wing (possibly also for **ch’i** in certain contexts). The lexical motivation for the sign is not known. Mayan dictionaries do not have good candidates for the lexical origins but some other linguistic sources, including Brent Berlin’s (1968) *Tzeltal Numeral Classifiers: A Study in Ethnographic Semantics*, have entries that might be productive. As David Stuart (2002) and Marc Zender (personal communication, 2013) have pointed out, Tzeltal and Tzotzil may have a productive lexical source for the sign. Tzeltal has a numeral classifier -*k’iy* ‘objects completely spread out to dry, as beans, coffee beans’ and

-*k’iy* ‘to spread out to dry’ (Berlin 1968: 202). Furthermore, Tzotzil (Laughlin 1977: 134; Stuart 2002: 2) has a corresponding verb, referring to the spreading of butterfly wings. These sources are interesting, especially taking into consideration the double (opened?) wings of some Early Classic (e.g., K1285 and K8042) and Late Classic (e.g., K6436) examples. However, although tempting, this remains a speculative lexical source for the sign.

Another animal-based sign is the T19 **mu** and the graphically similar T21 **bu** (Figures 5l and 5m, respectively [see the discussion on modified signs above]). The signs have amphibian characteristics, although the variability of the signs make the identification of the species impossible. One tempting source, however, is the proto-Ch’olan \**b’u(h)b’* for ‘tadpole’ (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 117).<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, the Early Classic versions do not always distinguish between the **mu** and **bu** signs (see, e.g., Structure XX-sub bench, West Group, Calakmul, with an **u-te-bu**, instead of the expected **u-te-mu**, spelling). And yet another animal figure is the T203v/T608 **tz’u** (Figure 5n) that represents most likely a nibbling fish. The lexical origin of the sign is quite possibly the verb ‘to suck,’ as in proto-Ch’olan \**tz’ub*’ (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 134).

The graphic origins of the signs are not always self-evident. The frequent T130/T131 **wa** syllabogram (Figure 5o) is a good example. Only by inspecting the early and full forms of the sign (as in Yaxchilan Lintel 47: D8 [Figure 5p]) we can identify the zoological origins of the sign, representing a stylized centipede rostrum. The lexical origin of the sign is even more challenging if the sign has been produced by acrophonic reduction, as there are no good candidates available in the linguistic sources. Furthermore, what is interesting about the sign is that it appears as part of the **WI'** logogram, which made Alfonso Lacadena wonder (personal communication, 2014) why the Maya did not use the **wi** syllabogram under the **WI'** sign but, instead, a **wa** sign, and to speculate that the proto-Sokean term for ‘root,’ \**watzi* (see Wichmann 1995: 503) might have something to do with the origins of the sign. Interestingly, the syllabogram T117 **wi** (Figure 5q) itself, speculated to derive from proto-Ch’olan \**wi*’

<sup>11</sup> Kaufman (2003: 630) notes that there are multiple reconstructions for the Greater Tzeltalan term for ‘tadpole’ but all starting with /*b’u*/’. The term is preserved in Ch’orti’ as *b’ub’*’ (Hull 2016: 77).

(Kaufman and Norman 1984: 136), shows serrated elements (as in the teeth of various creatures in Maya imagery and writing) as part of the sign in some of the Early Classic versions,<sup>12</sup> in place of the characteristic round elements of the Late Classic versions—adding to the complexity of the origins of the sign.

Other enigmatic signs include the T100v and T102 as **ki** (Figures 5r and 5s, respectively). The former is similar to some of the eyes of supernatural beings in Maya art, while the latter (also later in evolution [see Grube 1990: 91]) might be a variant of the former, although the latter could also have been invented (or reinterpreted) independently. The lexical motivation of the signs is still rather elusive. More straightforward syllabograms include the tail sign **ne** (T120v, T856v, and Tnn “jaguar tail” [Figure 5t]), evidently deriving from the proto-Ch’olan \*neh (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 127). However, at the same time we have a myriad of signs whose graphic origin is relatively well known, while the lexical motivation is not. These include the nocturnal creature T758v and T88 **ji** (Figures 5u and 5v), avian Tnn **be** (Figure 5w), bat-like (or wasp?<sup>13</sup>) T756v **xu** (Figure 5x), death-head (insect?)<sup>14</sup> T736 **xi** (Figure 5y), and the rabbit T759 **pe** (Figure 5z). The latter has a rather restricted distribution and is outwardly similar to logograms **CHIT** and **T’UL ~ T’UHL**, both with restricted distributions as well. Other possibly animal-related syllabograms include the T604 **k’u** (Figure 5a’), that may represent a bird nest, from proto-Ch’olan \*k’u? ‘nest’ (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 124), although other possibilities cannot be ruled out.

Besides these, the various **?u** signs in the Maya script are a source of much debate, discussion, and confusion. The inventory of **?u** signs in the script is immense and it almost seems that every scribe or workshop (or at least every generation of scribes) came up with a new sign to represent a sign for the sound /?u/. Certainly, this is due to the fact that most Maya texts were written in third person singular, with the ergative pronominal prefix **?u-** being the most common lexical item in the epigraphic inventory of the Classic Maya. According to Erik Boot,

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., the Early Classic Río Azul cacao pot (c. AD 450–500) (Stuart 1988). However, at Early Classic Tikal and El Peru the sign shows the more typical round elements.

<sup>13</sup> Note proto-Ch’olan \*xux for ‘wasp’ (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 137).

<sup>14</sup> Note, e.g., proto-Ch’olan \*xinich for ‘ant’ (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 136).

[f]or the value '**u**' the largest amount of different signs is employed, and numbers can go as high as 45+. However, most forms are derived from a small group of 5 or 6 basic signs for '**u**', mostly derived through the acrophonic principle (e.g., 'UT "eye, face," 'UH "moon," 'UH "jewel," HUJ? "Xok-head") as well as onomatopoetically derived signs (e.g., "huuu" or howling sound to explain the howler monkey head, the howling dog head, as well as Landa's second '**u**'). (Boot 2009: 180, n. 257)

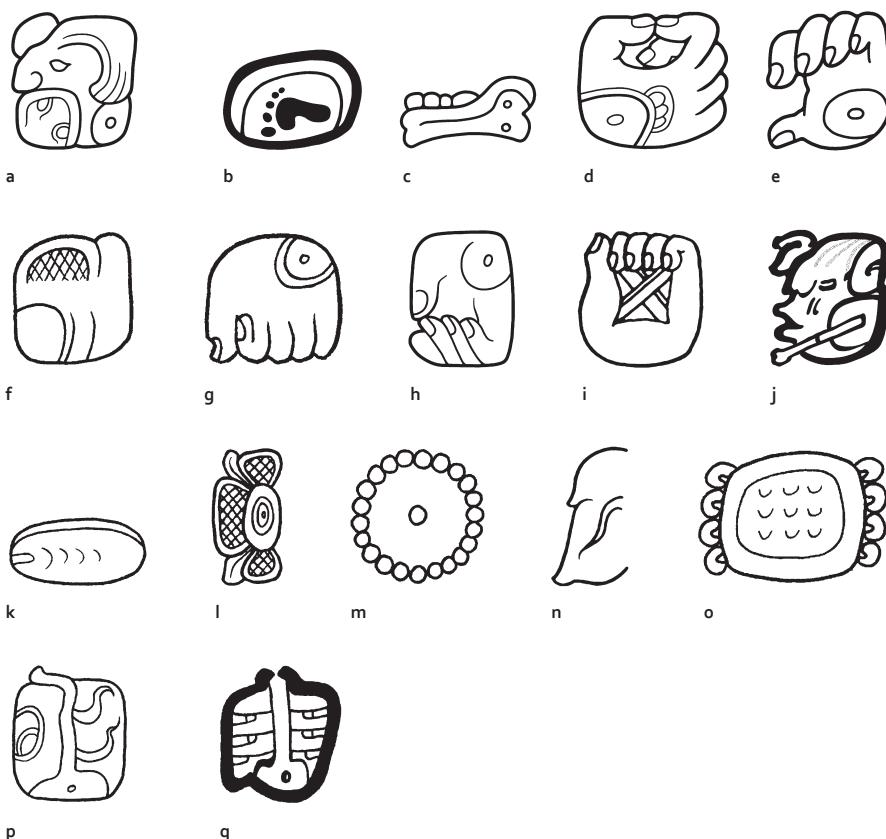
One of these signs, T204<sup>15</sup> (Figure 5b'), is an imaginative representation of a head of a predatory fish (with or without the lower jaw). However, the exact identification of the species or the lexical motivation of the sign is not known. Tozzer and Allen point out that

[f]igures of fish (Maya *kai*) occur commonly in the Maya codices in various connections as well as in the stone carvings, but none of these seems certainly identifiable. Among the representations, however, there are clearly several species. One [...] has a single dorsal fin, powerful teeth, and a generally ferocious aspect and may represent some large predacious variety, perhaps a tunny. The distinct operculum in most of the figures would preclude their representing a shark. (Tozzer and Allen 1910: 307)

Moving away from the animal to the human world, Maya syllabograms exhibit a selection of human body parts, especially hand signs. Tnn **sa** (Figure 6a) represents a human profile head with the sign **KAB ~ CHAB** in its mouth. While proto-Ch'olan has \*chab' for 'honey' (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 117), from proto-Mayan \*kaab' (Kaufman 2003: 676), this does not explain why the sound value of the sign is /sa/.<sup>16</sup> Prospective lexical sources ought to convey the idea of sweetness. One candidate for the sound value is the proto-Ch'olan \*sa? (Kaufman and Norman 1984:130) for 'corn dough', 'corn drink', and 'corn gruel' ('atole'). However, this does not explain the connection between honey/sweetness and corn dough or corn-based drinks. A more fitting candidate (see Helmke 2013: 7) is the Ch'olti' <çä> (*sa?*) 'sweet / dulce' (Morán 1695: 105, 111), along with

<sup>15</sup> See also T738v.

<sup>16</sup> Ch'olti' (Moran 1695) and Ch'ol (Hopkins et al. 2011: 30) have 'sugar', and 'sweet' or 'candy' for *chab*. Although these are colonial or modern meanings for the term, it is worth considering the possibility that the pre-Contact terms had also a broader meaning 'sweet'. In modern Mayan languages the term can refer invariably to 'bee', 'honey', and 'sweets'. Interestingly, talking with Q'eqchi' speakers in Belize in 1999, I noticed that they used *kab'* for 'sugar' and *melkab'* for 'honey' (from Spanish *miel* 'honey'). There appears to be some variance between speakers, as ALMG (2004: 125, 206) has *xya'al kab'* for 'miel de abeja' and *melkab'* for 'miel de caña'.



**Figure 6.** a) Tnn sa, b) T301 bi, c) T590v cho, d) T671 chi, e) T220 ke, f) T66g k'a, g) Tnn k'o, h) T220v ye, i) T673 yo, j) T1000a na, k) T188 le, l) T173 mi, m) T582 mo, n) T115 yo, o) T595[134] no, p) T559v tzu, q) T560v tzu (drawings by Harri Kettunen).

<çalez> and <zalavel> ‘to sweeten / endulzar’. Interestingly, the Ch’oltí’ term does not seem to have reflexes in the modern Mayan languages, adding to the puzzle of the term.

Another human-related sign is the T301 **bi** (Figure 6b)—a well-known sign with a long graphemic history from the dawn of Maya writing until the Landa alphabet, where it received the Yukatekan *be* value to correspond with the Spanish letter *b*. The T301 as **bi** derives undoubtedly from proto-Ch'olan \**b'ih* for 'road' (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 117)<sup>17</sup> and ultimately from Southern Mayan \**b'ihn* 'to go, travel, walk' and proto-Mayan \**b'eeh* 'road' (Kaufman 2017:

<sup>17</sup> Note also proto-Ch'olan \*bix 'to go away' (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 117).

90). T590 **cho** (Figure 6c), on the other hand, quite possibly derives from proto-Ch'olan \*choh 'cheek' (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 118). Interestingly, the Ch'olan-Tzeltalan reflexes of the proto-Mayan \*kooh (Kaufman 2003: 218) have been glossed as 'cheek,' while the Yukatekan reflexes (*koj*) mean 'teeth'. If the intended meaning of the Ch'olan-Tzeltalan reflexes is 'jaw' or 'mandible' (instead of 'cheek'), as pointed out by Christophe Helmke (personal communication 2019), both meanings provide a more fitting match to a sign representing a human mandible with teeth.

Besides these, the human hand is an abundant source for Maya logograms and syllabograms alike. In most cases, such as T671 **chi** (Figure 6d), T220 **ke** (Figure 6e), T669 **k'a** (Figure 6f), Tnn **k'o** (Figure 6g), T220v **ye** (Figure 6h), and T673 **yo** (Figure 6i), we can only guess what the lexical motivation of the signs was. However, one great linguistic source that might shed light on the origins of these signs is the aforementioned work of Berlin (1968).<sup>18</sup> One of the more obvious ones is Tnn **k'o**, based on a term whose reflexes are Tzeltal *k'oj* 'knocks on objects, e.g., door, wood, etc.' and *k'oj* 'to knock (on it)' (Berlin 1968: 202).<sup>19</sup> Kaufman (2003: 916) has also *k'ojk'otay* in Tzeltal for 'tocar puerta'. T220 **ke** is most likely related to Tzeltal *kej* (Zender 1999: 38, 2017: 32) which in Berlin (1968: 200) is a 'measure between knuckle of forefinger and thumb'. T220v **ye**, on the other hand, probably derives from a term that in Ch'ol (Hopkins et al. 2011: 287) appears as *ye'* 'carry hanging from the fingers' and T673 **yo** possibly from *yom*, which in Berlin (1968: 214) is a Tzeltal numeral classifier for 'handful-size bunches' and a verb 'to take handfuls, gather together', although some variants of the sign (see, e.g., Yaxchilan Lintel 37:B6) may point to different origins altogether. Likewise, T669 **k'a** could be any number of things, including being related to Tzeltal *k'aj* 'breaking mature corn from plants, break off mature cane' or *k'al* 'to break into pieces' (Berlin 1968: 201). However, without further evidence, these remain highly speculative.

<sup>18</sup> I thank Marc Zender for pointing out the importance of Berlin's work in the search for potential lexical motivations of the syllabograms incorporating various positions of human hands.

<sup>19</sup> I use <j> here for the velar/glottal fricative, although in Berlin (1968) it is <h> instead of <j>. Generally, in modern Tzeltal, there is no distinction anymore between "hard" velar [x] (graphemically <j>) and "soft" glottal [h] (graphemically <h>), except in some dialects, including certain variants of Bachajón Tzeltal (see Polian 2013: 36–37).

The evolution of T220v *ye* (see Lacadena 1995: 365) extends from at least the Early Classic all the way to the Contact (or early colonial) period. In the “Landa alphabet” the sign appears as part of the names for the Spanish alphabet in where we would expect to have the letter <y>. Although most reproductions of this page show an <xx> with a smudge, a closer inspection of the manuscript<sup>20</sup> exposed clearly the letter <y> which in all likelihood was pronounced /ye/ in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish.

Finally, to visit the relatively scarce *flora* part of the origins of Maya syllabograms, we can observe some noticeable differences within Mesoamerican writing systems. While the inventory of Aztec syllabograms exhibits c. 16% of signs originating in the plant world, the frequency is half of that in the Maya case. By the same token, while every fourth Maya syllabogram derives from the animal world, only every tenth syllabogram in the Aztec script has graphically faunal origins.

As regards Maya writing, the clear cases of flora as graphic (and lexical) origins are scant. Besides the T559 and T560v *tzu* and T115 *yo* (see the analyses below), there are a few indeterminate cases that could be interpreted in numerous ways. An interesting case, bridging the human world above and the flora below, is T1000a *na* (Figure 6j), often analyzed as a female head with the proto-Ch’olan term \*na? for ‘mother’ (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 126) as a suggested lexical source for the sign. However, as Marc Zender (2014: 2) has pointed out, the sign itself represents the Tonsured Maize God (with logographic values of **1/JUN** and **IXIM**<sup>21</sup>) which means that the graphic and lexical motivation of the sign could not be ‘mother’. Instead, according to Zender (2014: 2), it could derive from *nal* ‘mature ear of corn; mazorca’.

Another problematic sign is the T188 *le* (Figure 6k), with analyses ranging from flora to fauna. Yukatekan *le?* as ‘leaf’ is one of the candidates for the origin of the sign. However, this interpretation is problematic for two reasons: one is that the term only appears in Yukatekan languages (although this alone does not rule out *le?* as a lexical candidate for the sign) and the other is that the sign (or

<sup>20</sup> Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, 13 December 2018.

<sup>21</sup> From proto-Ch’olan \*?ixim (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 121), ultimately from Southern Mayan \*?ixi?m ‘maize kernels on or off the cob’ (Kaufman 2017: 87).

a very similar sign) appears as part of the water iconography, e.g., on the panel of Temple XIV at Palenque, on a Tzakol 3 tripod vase from Burial 48 at Tikal, and on the so-called water band at Cacaxtla in an iconographic context of marine(?) creatures (see Kettunen and Helmke 2013: 29). Furthermore, the sign appears also as part of the iconography of the logogram **NAHB** ('waterlily' and rebus for 'lake, sea, pool, body of water' [Kettunen and Lacadena 2014: 21]) where it could represent a leaf, an animal, or a yet unidentified object. To add to the complexity of identifying the origins of the sign, the canine head Tnn **le** with a droopy tongue suggests another motivation for the sign, quite possibly the proto-Ch'olan transitive verb \*lek' 'to lick [it]' (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 124), ultimately from proto-Mayan \*leq' 'to lick it' (Kaufman 2003: 1211).<sup>22</sup>

Other problematic signs include T173 **mi** (Figure 6l) and T582 **mo** (Figure 6m). Some variants of T173 **mi** resemble shells and others bear a resemblance to flowers—while others are more abstract. T582 as **mo** has traditionally been interpreted as a *pars pro toto* sign representing the eye of a (scarlet) macaw (logographically **MO?**). Although this might be the case, especially considering the fact that the term for 'macaw' is *mo'* in many Mayan languages (from proto-Mayan \*moo' [Kaufman 2003: 626]), Alfonso Lacadena (personal communication, 2013) has proposed an alternative solution, suggesting Sokean *mooya'* 'flower' as the origin of the sign.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, as pointed out by Christophe Helmke (personal communication, 2019), some of the early examples of the **mo** syllabogram, such as the Buenavista shell gorget (see Yaeger et al. 2015: 185–186 [Figs. 7–9]), show four large dots in the corners of the sign, highlighting the fact that we might be looking at something else than a macaw eye.<sup>24</sup>

A more straightforward sign appears to be T115 **yo** (Figure 6n) that in all probability derives from a word for 'leaf' that has reflexes in Ch'olan languages, such as Ch'ol *yopol* (Aulie and Aulie 1978:

<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Albert Davletshin (personal communication, 2019) has pointed out that the entire "l-row" in the syllabary (i.e., T178/T534 **la**, T188 **le**, T82 **li**, T580 **lo**, and T568 **lu**) eludes graphic and lexical identification, adding to the complexity of the origins of the syllabograms.

<sup>23</sup> Søren Wichmann (1995: 195, 387) reconstructs the term to proto-Gulf Sokean \*mooya' but no further than that.

<sup>24</sup> Yet another variant of the sign, with a snake going through its center, appears in the corpus from the Early Classic onwards (Felix Kupprat, personal communication, 2019).

143), Chontal *yop'* and *yop'o* (Knowles 1984; see also *yop te'* ‘hoja de arbol’ in Pérez González and Santiago de la Cruz 1998: 80), and Ch'orti' *yopor* ‘hoja, leaf’ (Hull 2016: 520), although other possibilities cannot be ruled out. Other potential flora-related syllabograms include T595[134] **no** (Figure 6o) and T117 **wi** (see the discussion above regarding the **wa** syllabogram), as well as T559 and T560v **tzu** (Figures 6p and 6q). T595[134] **no** appears to originate graphically from cotton imagery in the Maya area, as well as elsewhere in Mesoamerica (see Stuart and Houston in this volume), while the lexical motivation in all probability derives from proto-Ch'olan \*nok' ‘cloth(es)’. In Eastern Mayan languages the term refers to ‘cotton,’ in Southern Mayan (i.e., excluding Wastek [see Kaufman 2017: 68–69]) the term refers to ‘cotton (thread)’ and ‘clothing’ (Kaufman 2017: 99) while both ultimately derive from proto-Mayan \*nooq’ (Kaufman 2003: 1015).

Finally, regarding T559 and T560v **tzu**, an analysis of the history of Maya decipherment is at place. The sign appears to originate from *tzuh* ‘calabash’ (proto-Tzeltal-Tzotzil \**tzuh* [Kaufman 1972: 97], ultimately from proto-Mayan \**tzuhh* (Kaufman 2003: 987, 2017: 101).<sup>25</sup> The graphic motivation of the sign has been a source of much confusion in the history of Maya epigraphy. The two variants, T559 and T560v, i.e. the Classic and the codical version, respectively, have been treated as separate signs. The latter was instrumental in Yuri Knorozov's (1952, 1956) phonetic approach to Maya writing. Two years prior to Knorozov's 1952 treatise, J. Eric S. Thompson (1950: 58, 74, 78–80, 173) published a widely accepted idea that dogs are associated with the underworld and, therefore, the pair of signs corresponding to a dog in the codices, composed of a “rib sign” and a “death sign”, are indications of that underworld connection.<sup>26</sup> Today we know that the “rib sign” and the “death sign” are simply the

<sup>25</sup> Kaufman (2017: 101) notes that the “reconstruction \**tzuhh* does not violate the phono-tactic constraints of proto-Mayan; inasmuch as monosyllables can have the shape \*CVh, \*CV:h, \*CV7h, and \*CVhC they can also have the shape \*CVhh” and that the “reconstruction offered is the one required by the sound correspondences.”

<sup>26</sup> According to Thompson (1950: 78), “[t]he glyph for the dog in the Maya codices is a symbol which has been generally accepted as representing the animal's ribs, combined with a death sign [= reference to **tzu** and **lu** syllabograms (T560v+T568a)] Occasionally, pictures of dogs show the ribs [a reference to an animal figure on Madrid Codex page 37a]; more frequently the symbol of darkness [= the **AK'AB** sign (T504)] is set above the eye [...]. This, as noted [...], probably indicates a connection with the underworld.”

phonetic signs **tzu** and **lu** (T560v and T568a, respectively), producing the term for ‘domesticated dog’ (“perro de meztiço” in Ciudad Real 1577b: 177r) or *tzul*<sup>27</sup> in 16<sup>th</sup>- (Motul [Ciudad Real 1577b: 177r]) and 17<sup>th</sup>-century (Diccionario de San Francisco [Barrera Vásquez 1980: 867]) Yukatek dictionaries.<sup>28</sup>

In the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Léon de Rosny (1876: 53) had recognized the syllabic value of T528 /ku/ in the codices, based on the sign corresponding to <cu> in the Landa alphabet. Later, Cyrus Thomas (1892: 45) proposed a reading for the caption above a turkey on Madrid Codex page 91a, identifying correctly that the third position of the text corresponds to the turkey. He read the caption as: “(1) *U-Zabal*, (2) *U-le*, (3) *Cutz*, (4) *2-yaxkin*: ‘Set (or literally do the setting of) the snare for the turkey on the second day of Yaxkin.’” This analysis was remarkably accurate (only the verb in the first position was misinterpreted). However, Thomas did not advance to explain how the two signs in the third position correspond to <cutz> ‘turkey’, although he had correctly identified the preceding **u** and **le** signs (and earlier in his treatise also the **e** sign; Thomas 1892: 44), and even proposing that the second sign has the sound value /tz/ (Thomas 1892: 45). With Landa’s <cu>, all the components for a phonetic decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing were at place, but were not ensued for one reason or the other. Sixty years later Knorozov (1952, 1956) proposed syllabic readings for both of these signs, resulting in the same reading <cutz> (/kutz/) as Thomas did, but showing systematically the inner workings of phoneticism in Maya hieroglyphic writing. Interestingly, according to Knorozov himself, he merely based his analysis on the earlier work by Thomas who had already deciphered these crucial passages, and simply

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted here that Thompson (1950: 79) was aware of the term *tzul* in Yukatek for ‘domesticated dog’ but he never applied that to the captions of dogs in the codices. He wrote that “Xolotl is really the hairless dog called *xol* in Aztec. In this connection it is worth remarking that the word for dog in the aberrant Maya language of Chicomucelo is *sul*, and *xul* is the Kekchi term for animal in general. There is a possibility of a single origin for this word, because the Aztec sound was between Spanish *u* and *a*, and is sometimes transcribed as *u*, sometimes as *a*. The first augural list of the Kaua manuscript associates *Oc* with ‘the adorned one,’ *Ah zuli*, which Barrera Vásquez translates as he who lives a life of entertainment, a parrot, adulterer, one without judgment or discretion, without understanding. Can it be a corruption of *tzul*, given in the San Francisco dictionary for domestic dog?” (Thompson 1950: 79).

<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, the same term, *tzul*, is also the word for *espinazo* or ‘spine, backbone’ in both dictionaries—something that Thompson may have noticed as well.

continued in his footsteps (Yuri Knorozov, personal communication 1998).

Although strongly impressed with the conviction of the truth of these propositions, it is nevertheless with great deference that I submit them to the judgment of the learned. (Peter Stephen Du Ponceau 1838)

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# The Last Day of Yaxk'in

NIKOLAI GRUBE  
University of Bonn  
(ups402@uni-bonn.de)

**Abstract:** The hieroglyph TI' HAAB, 'the edge of Haab', is used significantly more frequently with the month Yaxk'in than with other months. This can be interpreted based on the fact that Yaxk'in means 'dry season'. In this article the hypothesis is proposed that at the time of the invention of Haab the end of the month Yaxk'in coincided with the end of the dry season and the beginning of sowing, and that this important moment in the agricultural year that originally marked the end of the old and the beginning of the new year.

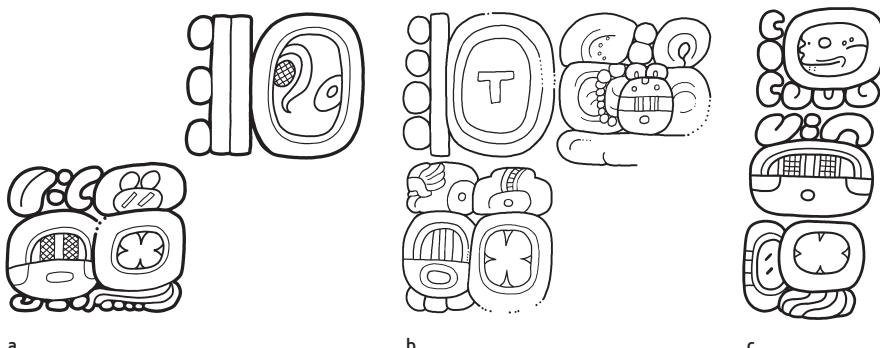
**Resumen:** La expresión jeroglífica TI' HAAB, 'el límite de Haab', se utiliza con mayor frecuencia con el mes Yaxk'in que con otros meses. Esto puede interpretarse basándose en el significado de Yaxk'in como 'estación seca'. En este artículo se plantea que cuando el Haab fue inventado, el fin del mes Yaxk'in coincidió con el final de la estación de secas y el comienzo de la siembra, y que originalmente este importante momento del año agrícola marcó el final del año viejo y el inicio del nuevo año.

The mechanics of the Maya Haab year of 365 days have been known for a long time. It was still in use during the time of the Spanish Conquest and has been described by various colonial authors. Diego de Landa, in particular, has left us a detailed account of the year cycle and the ceremonies associated with the 18 months and the five days of the transition period Wayeb. The months of the Maya year are also mentioned in the Chilam Balam books. In Yucatan, the Haab quickly came into disuse after the conquest because it was replaced by the Christian calendar. In the Highlands of Guatemala, the Haab continued to be used by native scribes and calendar priests deep into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and in some parts of the Cuchumatanes region of northern Guatemala, important stations of the Haab are celebrated even today.

Although the mechanics of the Haab are widely understood, it still holds a couple of secrets for us. The month names which we epigraphers are accustomed to use are the Yucatec names provided by Diego de Landa. The majority of these names do not correspond to the hieroglyphic names recorded in Classic period inscriptions. Although we know how the classic period names were pronounced, many names still evade their translation. Those names which we can

read leave no doubt that all the month names are Maya, suggesting that the Haab itself was invented by the Maya, or that—if the concept of a year of 365 days was borrowed from another culture—the months were reinvented or renamed by the Maya. Another open question for research is the relationship of the Haab to the solar year. It is quite obvious that the Maya did not add leap days after a number of years, so the Haab shifted a day in relation to the solar year every four years. The underlying issue is that we do not know if the Haab was loosely correlated to the solar year in origin, since some of the month names seem to represent plants which blossom during particular months or other phenomena which can be linked to specific stations of the year. If this connection had existed originally, it must have been lost roughly after 80 or a hundred years, when the shift between the Haab and the solar year consisted in more than 20 or 25 days. This would suggest that the link between the meaning of the months and the natural phenomena with which they were associated can only have existed for an astonishingly short period. It is also remarkable that the ancient calendar priests would have continued to use the Haab in spite of the missing link to the solar year.

Diego de Landa reports that all the months of the Haab had specific festivities and deities associated with them, very similar to the Aztec ritual cycle of the *xiuhpōhualli*. In contrast, very little is known about Haab-related rituals during the Classic period. David Stuart has recently shown that Year Bearer rituals were recorded in association with the first day of the New Year, which began, as during the colonial period, with the ‘seating’ of the month Pop (Stuart 2004). The San Bartolo murals prove that the idea of Year Bearers, or the days of the beginning of a new year, goes back deep into the Preclassic period. But how about the other months? Were there other activities in the Classic period related to the Haab, or the solar year? Of course, we know that the Maya observed the stations of the sun along the horizon, as well as the local zenith passages. But otherwise, the inscriptions are suspiciously quiet in regard to the annual cycle and related ritual or political activities.

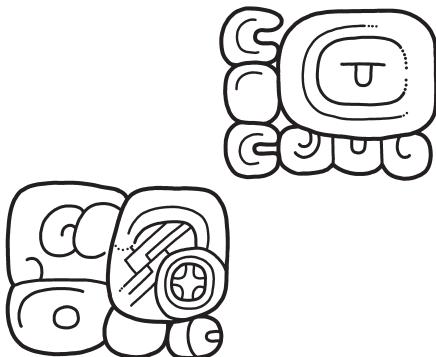


**Figure 1.** The expression **TI' HAAB** in combination with the month name Yaxk'in: *a*) Aguateca Stela 1, *b*) Palenque, Tablet of Temple 17, *c*) Yaxchilan Lintel 9 (drawings by Nikolai Grube).

### The **TI' HAAB'** expression

The Maya divided the year into 18 months of 20 days and a transitional period of five days. The days of the month were counted in a very particular way, beginning with day one. This was followed by the days two, three, etc. until the day 19 of a month was reached. The next day, then, did not get the coefficient of 20, but was recorded with a particular glyptic expression, which consists of the two logographic signs **TI'** and **HAAB'** (Figure 1). The glyph was first identified as a marker for the end of the month by Thompson (1935: 101), who called it 'The last day of the month' in his 1950 summary. Thompson also recognized that the last day of the old month was also considered to be the seating of the new month (Thompson 1950: 121; Figure 2). By his time, Thompson only identified nine examples for the 'last day of the month' expression (1950: fig. 19, 21–27). Linda Schele noticed that the upper sign in this expression could show considerable variation and that it forms part of a substitution set of signs which are all related to Thompson's T128 (Thompson 1962; Schele 1990).

In Maya inscriptions, therefore, the last day of the month was also regarded as the day of the seating of the next month. The last day of the month Xul would be indicated with the **TI' HAAB'** compound. However, this was also the day of the seating of the month Yaxk'in. Scanning through the hieroglyphic corpus, it becomes obvious that there is a clear preference for the use of the 'seating' expression. I have looked through all dates in lowland Maya inscriptions and



**Figure 2.** The expression 'seating of Pop' (**CHUM K'AN-JAL-wa**, *chum k'anjalaw*) on Naranjo Stela 46 (drawing by Nikolai Grube).

have found 60 dates which either record the last day of the previous or the seating of the next month. Out of these dates, 35 record the seating of the new month, and only 25 the last day of the old month. Thirteen of the 'seating of the new month' expressions fall on the month Pop and therefore mark the bearer of the New Year (Stuart 2004). Turning to all the examples for the 'last day of the month' glyph, a remarkable

pattern can be observed: more than half of these expressions occur with the month Yaxk'in (Table 1; Figure 3). This association is clearly significant and suggests that the last day of the month Yaxk'in must have had a particular connotation for the Maya during the Classic period. It is also significant that this day was never recorded as the 'seating of Mol' in the entire corpus of Maya inscriptions, indicating that Maya scribes made a clear choice how to record this particular day. Maya dates are supposed to be historical, yet, it is very likely that Maya scribes narrated history in a way that historical events would coincide with meaningful positions of the calendar. Therefore, I believe that the last day of the month Yaxk'in must have had a particular significance for the Maya; otherwise, this cluster of 'end of the year' expressions with Yaxk'in would be hard to explain.

A first step towards the explanation of this phenomenon can be found in the 'end of month' glyph itself. The glyph usually consists of two elements, the logogram **TI'**, and the logogram for **HAAB**. The logogram **HAAB** stands for 'year', while the superfix **TI'** has a set of related meanings, which include 'mouth', 'lip', and 'edge', 'border'. In combination, these two signs read 'the edge of the year' or 'the border of the year'. The implication is that the last day of Yaxk'in was understood as the transition from the old year to a new one. This is troubling giving that all ethnohistorical sources identify the end of the Maya year with the last day of the five day period Wayeb, so that the first day of the new year was the 'seating of Pop',

1 Dallas Bone	5 K'an	20 Yaxk'in			
2 Caracol Str. B15, Stucco Glyph	12 Ik'	20 Yaxk'in			
3 Palenque T. 18, Stucco R24	?	20 Yaxk'in			
4 Palenque T. of the Cross	13 Ik'	20 Mol	13. 0. 1. 9. 2	Feb 5,	3112 BC
5 Seibal Hier. St.	12 Manik'	20 Yaxk'in	8.18.19. 8. 7	Sep 14,	AD 415
6 Palenque T. 17 Panel	9 Ik'	20 Yaxk'in	9. 2.15. 9. 2	Aug 26,	AD 490
7 Tonina Monument 168	7 Ik'	20 Muwan	9. 7. 9. 3. 2	Dec 22,	AD 582
8 Palenque Sarcophagus	2 Eb	20 Kej	9. 8.11. 6. 12	Nov 7,	AD 604
9 Oxkintok Str. 2B10, Hier. St.	6 Ak'bal	20 Yaxk'in	9.10. 9.11. 3 (?)	Jul 22,	AD 642
10 Palenque House C, West Wall	13 Manik'	20 Yaxk'in	9.11.10.16. 7	Jul 16,	AD 663
11 Tonina Monument 3	5 Eb	20 Xul	9.12.16. 3. 12	Jun 19,	AD 688
12 Tonina Frag. 88	5 Eb	20 Xul	9.12.16. 3. 12	Jun 19,	AD 688
13 Tonina Monument 111	5 Eb	20 Xul	9.12.16. 3. 12	Jun 19,	AD 688
14 Tonina Monument 156	5 Eb	20 Xul	9.12.16. 3. 12	Jun 19,	AD 688
15 Tonina Stucco	3 Eb	20 Pop	9.13.16. 3. 12	Mar 5,	AD 708
16 Tonina Monument 169	5 Manik	20 K'ank'in	9.14.12. 2. 7	Nov 19,	AD 723
17 Piedras Negras Msc. Stone 16	8 Manik'	20 Kej	9.14.16. 1. 7 (?)	Oct 9,	AD 727
18 Piedras Negras Burial 5 Shells	1 Kaban	20 Yaxk'in	9.14.17.14. 17	Jun 30,	AD 729
19 Aguateca Stela 1	13 Kaban	20 Yaxk'in	9.15. 9.17. 17	Jun 27,	AD 741
20 Site R Lintel 3	9 Ik'	20 Yaxk'in	9.15.19. 2. 2	Jun 25,	AD 750
21 Yaxchilan Lintel 9	1 Eb	20 Yaxk'in	9.16.17. 6. 12	Jun 20,	AD 768
22 Comalcalco Urn 26, Spine 8	5 Eb	20 Yaxk'in	9.17. 1. 7. 12	Jun 19,	AD 772
23 Naranjo Stela 19	9 Eb	20 Yaxk'in	9.17. 5. 8. 12	Jun 18,	AD 776
24 Ek Balam Capstone 14	13 Kaban	20 Sek	9.17.10. 7. 17	May 8,	AD 781
25 Tikal Str. 5D-46, Burial PNT 009	1 Ik'	20 Yaxk'in	9.18. 3.13. 2	Jun 14,	AD 794

**Table 1.** Occurrences of the TI' HAAB expression in the corpus of Maya inscriptions. Dates are calculated with a correlation constant of 584 285 and are provided in the Gregorian Calendar.

a date which for this reason is very often recorded in the corpus of Maya inscriptions.<sup>1</sup> David Stuart has shown that already during the Classic period, the 'seating of Pop' was regarded as the date of the Year Bearer for the current year (2004). There is overwhelming evidence that during the Classic and Postclassic periods, the year began with the month Pop. So, why would the Maya call the last day of the month Yaxk'in 'the edge of the year'? The answer may probably rest in the month Yaxk'in itself.

<sup>1</sup> The seating of Pop is recorded on Palenque, Temple of the Cross (11 Kaban *chum Pop*, 5.8.17.15.17); Caracol Stela 3 (10 Ik' *chum Pop*, 9.9.4.16.2); Naranjo Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 (2 Eb *chum Pop*, 9.10.3.2.12); Chichen Itza, pectoral bead from cenote (9 Manik' *chum Pop*, 9.13.2.17.7); Yaxchilan Lintel 26 (12 Eb *chum Pop*, 9.14.12.6.12); Naranjo Stela 18 and Stela 46 (9 Ik' *chum Pop*, 9.14.14.7.2); Tikal Temple 4, Lintel 3 (6 Eb *chum Pop*, 9.15.12.11.12); Comalcalco Pendants 8a, 8b, Spine 4 (7 Manik' *chum Pop*, 9.17.0.0.7); Copan, Stela 29 (3 Eb *chum Pop*, 9.17.9.2.12) and Altar U (3 Eb *chum Pop* 9.17.9.2.12 and 3 Kaban *chum Pop*, 9.18.2.5.17); Site R Lintel 5 (2 ? *chum Pop*).

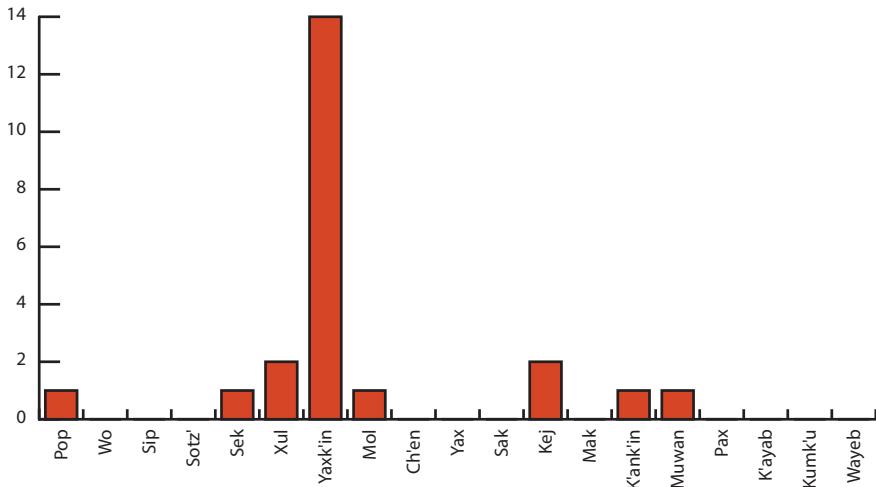


Figure 3. Frequency of the TI' HAAB expression.

## The month Yaxk'in

We now know that in Classic times, many Maya month names were different from those which we are using today by convention. The old month names can be read in the hieroglyphs; however, in the course of Maya history, many month names changed or were replaced by new ones, such as, for example, in the case of K'anjalab, which was replaced by Pop by the time of the conquest. The month names which we use today are the Yucatec names provided to us by Diego de Landa and other colonial sources. Some of the month names, however, have remained stable and are the same in Yucatec as well as in Classic Mayan. One of these names with historical depth is Yaxk'in. This month name appears in many ethnohistorically documented calendars from the lowlands and adjacent highland regions.<sup>2</sup> The hieroglyphic name of the month already appears as YAX-K'IN on the Early Classic Leiden Plaque. The original meaning of the month name, without doubt, was 'dry season'. In all major

<sup>2</sup> In addition to Yucatec sources, the month name Yaxk'in is documented among the Ch'ol Maya of Manche (Tovilla 1631, in Scholes and Adams 1960: 184–185), by the Ixil of Chajul (Lincoln 1942: 116–18), the Q'eqchi' of Cajabon (Haeserijen 1979: 317), the Tzeltal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Pineda 1887: 130–31) and the Tzeltal of Oxchuc in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1939: 107, 117), and the Tzotzil (Guiteras Holmes 1946: 188).

lowland languages, cognates of the word *yaxk'in* still mean ‘dry season’ and ‘summer’:

Ch'orti'

*yaxk'injaja'r* Sequía, verano (Hull 2016: 515)

Cholti

*yaxquin* verano (Morán 1935[1695])

Tzeltal

*yax habil q'uinal* (el) verano (Slocum and Gerdel 1971: 206)

Yucatec

*yax k'in* el estío y otoño de esta tierra en que no llueve y se secan y agostan los campos; tiempo de seca; primavera desde febrero hasta abril (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 973)

Itza

*yax-k'in* verano; Meses de (enero), febrero, marzo, abril, mayo (junio, julio, agosto, septiembre);

*yax-k'inal* verano de, tiempo seco de un período temporal (Hofling and Tesucún 1997: 689)

Lacandon

*yáax-k'iin* año, verano (marzo-abril) (Hofling 2014: 405)

Mopan

*ya'ax-k'in* verano (Hofling 2011: 475)

These entries leave no doubt that the name of the month Yaxk'in translates as ‘dry season’ or ‘summer’. It is very likely that the month originally corresponded to the time of the dry season, but that the relation of the month to the dry season shifted because of the lack of a leap year.

### The end of the dry season as the original end of the year

The dry season was a very critical moment in the agricultural year of the Maya. The end of the dry season was the time when milpas were prepared by burning the wood which had been cut in the weeks before. Although the time of the arrival of the first rains can shift, in most Maya communities, the end of the dry season and the

beginning of the rainy season conceptually begins at the end of April. Many modern accounts mention that the first days of May are regarded as the best days for sowing the fields. In these days, ceremonies for the seeds are realized. Today, the day which marks the start of the sowing period is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, the Día de la Santa Cruz. This day is also close to the first annual zenith passage of the sun in many parts of the Maya lowlands. Many years ago, Zelia Nuttall (1928, 1931) argued that the sun's zenith passages were observed throughout the tropical latitudes of the American continent, their significance being attributable to the fact that one of these two annual events marks the transition from the dry to the rainy season. In regard to the Yucatec Maya, she cites Juan Pío Pérez' manuscript on Yucatec chronology:

To this day the Indians call the year Jaab or Haab, and, while heathens, they commenced it on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July. It is worthy of notice that their progenitors, having sought to make it begin from the precise day on which the sun returns to the zenith of this peninsula on his way to the southern regions [...] erred only forty-eight hours in advance." (Pérez Bermón 1963[1843]: vol. 1, 280)

Ivan Šprajc (2018: 110) notes that, in fact, the starting date of the calendrical year could not have been fixed by zenith passage dates, both because the Maya used the same calendar over an extensive area and because their 365-day year, due to the lack of intercalations, did not preserve a permanent concordance with the tropical year.

Nonetheless, Juan Pío Pérez' reference to the efforts of the colonial Maya to place the beginning of the year close to the zenith is of importance in regard to the interpretation of the 'end of Yaxk'in' cluster. I suggest that the end of Yaxk'in might have been the original end of the year and the start of a new year when the calendar was invented. If this explanation holds true, the original end of the Maya year would have coincided with the end of the dry season and the coming of the first rains, a point in time which is still celebrated very prominently all over the Maya lowlands. The only period of time during the Preclassic period when Yaxk'in would have coincided with the end of the dry season was between 600 and 500 BC. I suggest that this is also the time when the Haab calendar was developed. Because of the lack of intercalations, within a period of a century only, the Haab would have drifted 25 days in regard to the tropical year, and

the association of Yaxk'in with the dry season would have been lost only a short time after the calendar was invented. However, it seems that the Maya still remembered the original meaning of the month name Yaxk'in in the Classic period, although it did not overlap any more with the actual dry season.

During the Late Classic period, all examples of the 'end of Yaxk'in' glyph fell on dates in June and July, in a range between June 14 and July 22 using the Gregorian Calendar and the 584 285 correlation. These dates oscillate between 8 days before and 30 days after the summer solstice. It is possible that the meaning of the 'end of Yaxk'in' expression had shifted in such a manner that it became associated with this important solar station. This would probably also explain why the **TI' HAAB** expression is used with the end of the month Xul in four cases at Tonina. These dates correspond to June 19, 688 in the proleptic Gregorian calendar, close enough to suggest an association with the summer solstice.

Another, much more speculative interpretation of the 'end of Yaxk'in' cluster may also be related to climatic irregularities. We should keep in mind that the beginning of the rainy season can delay very much; often, Maya farmers wait for many weeks and even months until the rains start and the hot summer comes to an end. Could these June and July references provide a hint to extended dry periods and droughts? Could this also explain the (albeit very rare) examples of the use of **TI' HAAB** glyph with the months Muwan and Kej, which fall into the months of October, November and December? It is possible that these dates fell in years with prolonged droughts and a late beginning of the rainy season, so that the entire agricultural year might have shifted.

The idea of an end of the year towards the last days of the dry season and that the rainy season coincides with the beginning of a new year suggests that there has been the concept of an agricultural year which coexisted with the calendrical year beginning on the day 'seating of Pop'. Both ideas could probably exist side by side. The coexistence of a solar year side by side with an agricultural or religious year is known from many ancient cultures, for example, in the beginning of the church year (*annus ecclesiasticus* or *annus liturgicus*). According to Catholic and Protestant tradition, the church year begins with vespers on the eve of the first Sunday in Advent; the

Orthodox churches begin the church year on September 1, in preparation for the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary on September 8. The analysis of calendar expressions and clusters in the Long Count can therefore actually help us to better understand the Haab' year and the Mayan calendar as a whole.

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# Cotton, Snow, and Distant Wonders

DAVID STUART

University of Texas at Austin

(davidstuart@austin.utexas.edu)

STEPHEN HOUSTON

Brown University

(stephen\_houston@brown.edu)

We seldom think of wintry wonderlands when considering mostly tropical Mesoamerican landscapes. But parts of the Maya highlands in Guatemala sometimes see very occasional snowfall during the winter months, always exciting curiosity and wonder, if not a little consternation and concern over crops (Figure 1). Whenever snow falls and coats the ground, public media must explain the phenomena to local readers, describing its distinction from hail (see Toc and Ixcot 2017; also Hemeroteca PL 2016). Recently, the national disaster agency (CONRED) even thought it necessary to report that snow can be “associated with precipitation and low temperatures” (CONRED 2013). While rare and noteworthy, snow was ever-present in a few select areas of the central Mexican highlands, atop prominent volcanic peaks such as Orizaba, Popocatépetl, and others. During his many stays in Mexico, our dear friend Alfonso Lacadena would have seen and admired these mountains. We first prepared this essay during, as it proved, his final week, hoping that Alfonso would live a bit longer to read it. That was not possible. We do trust he can now receive it with pleasure, in the cheerful company of other greats who have passed on.

For those who have never experienced snow, it might come as a challenge to describe verbally its many sensations and textures—slushy, clump-flaked, powder-dry, and so on. Then there is the messy residue as it melts, along with its endurance, over months, at altitude or to the far north. At root, to show distant wonders or to talk about them is an imaginative task, drawing on all the tools of the storyteller and the wiles of visual artists. For this, analogies or metaphors work well, especially when distances are great and the unfamiliar acutely strange.



**Figure 1.** A rare snowfall in Cerro Cotzic, Ixchiguan, San Marcos, Guatemala, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013 (Creative Commons 2.0 Generic).

As one example, taking us closer to the Precolumbian past, an unknown maker of woodblock prints devised the first known European image of the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan. Published, probably, in Augsburg, Germany, in 1522, it refers to the city of “dem konig



Figure 2. Earliest European depiction of Tenochtitlan (Unknown 1522: 5, John Carter Brown Library, Providence, RI).

Madotzoma...herr von grossen Venedig," displaying the causeways or dikes of that city as arching bridges, sailboats passing underneath, and the many temples as turreted buildings (Figure 2). Square-shoed burghers with hose stockings, flat caps, belt purses, and fur collars would have dumbfounded the Mexica Aztec they depict. But they do at least try to describe the unfamiliar. There are settlements like European ones (if walled and likened to Venice, a frequent comparison of the time, going back to Cortés and others [Kim 2006]), and people dressed in the everyday garb of Augsburg. Indeed, Elizabeth Boone (personal communication, 2018) notes that this image was likely lifted from another, unrelated publication of the time.

The Classic Maya may have been no different. Among the texts linked to contact with the civilization of Teotihuacan, and almost surely with Teotihuacan itself, is the famous "Marcador" of Tikal, found during excavations overseen by Juan Pedro Laporte south of the Mundo Perdido Group (Figure 3, Laporte and Fialko 1995: 66–70).



**Figure 3.** Tikal Marcador, Group 6C-XVI, on display in the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala (screenshot of 3D model, by Alexandre Tokovinine, Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, with permission of the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala © President and Fellows of Harvard College).

This object is strikingly similar to so-called “ball markers” from Teotihuacan, ranging from one depicted in the murals of Tepantitla (perhaps a goalpost for a stick game) to a carving with separable components at La Ventilla; the latter is well-garnished with yet other cultural references, to the volutes of El Tajín, Veracruz (Solís 2009: #124). The semantic layering in these images and carvings is rich and only partly understood, as there must also have been a reference to standing, banner-like shields (e.g., Taube 2009: figs. 2b, c). The Tikal find, from Group 6C-XVI, potentially bears another link to

ballplay. A large raised area nearby, thought by earlier investigators to be a natural hill, is revealed by LiDAR to be eerily close in orientation and layout, if at halved-scale, to the Ciudadela at Teotihuacan (processing and interpretation by Houston and Thomas Garrison of Ithaca College). As if by cue, the Ciudadela has just been shown to contain, in an earlier phase of its existence, a large ballcourt (Gómez Chávez and Gazzola 2015).

In part, the historical links between Tikal and Teotihuacan (or its proxies) have been understood for some time (Proskouriakoff 1993: 8–9; Stuart 2000; see also Martin and Grube 2000: 29–31). An enigmatic personage whose name was probably Sihyaj K’ahk’, “Born from Fire” (coming from a fiery war dart to boot), “arrived” (*huliiy*) or “completed” a journey (*tzutzyi*) to Tikal on 8.17.1.4.12, 11 Eb 15 Mak in the Maya calendar, or January 16<sup>th</sup>, AD 378 in the Maya-Christian correlation we favor. His presence was clearly martial, as indicated by the Marcador glyph that situates the arrival in terms of conquest, using the familiar term *ochi ch’een*, “to cave-enter.” Most likely too, Sihyaj K’ahk’ galvanized or even reorganized the political geography of much of what is now northern Guatemala. Every few years or so a new reference to him comes to light, suggesting that many more are to be found (e.g., Estrada-Belli et al. 2009; Stuart 2014; note that the Maya could also hint at later ambivalence about Teotihuacanos [Houston et al. 2016]).<sup>1</sup>

The Marcador text is relevant for another reason. In addition to the “arrival,” which highlights the first part of the inscription, the second side of the monument reaches back to two dates: (1) May 5<sup>th</sup>, AD 374 [8.16.17.9.0, 11 Ajaw \*3 Wayeb, an unusual, perhaps dire date, presumably, as it falls in the five final days of the year], the evident accession of another figure associated with Teotihuacan, “Spearthrower [**ja-tz’o?-ma**] Owl” (Stuart 2000: 483; Martin 2003:

<sup>1</sup> In 1983 or so, Houston saw another text referring to Sihyaj K’ahk’. It was on an exquisitely inlaid shell in the temporary keeping of Gordon Ekholm, then a curator at the American Museum of Natural History. Etched lightly with glyphs, the shell displayed areas of jade and Spondylus, inserted by some clay-like adhesive into drilled areas of the surface. A scene of emergence, with a single head looking upwards through a symmetrical effusion of foliage, served as the principal image. At the time, Houston made a quick sketch of the text, including an evident statement of overlordship by Sihyaj K’ahk’. Considerably damaged by erosion, the object has since disappeared from scholarly view. It may have been in the process of evaluation by Ekholm and his associate, Robert Sonin, an authenticator and former curator at the Brooklyn Museum, who came to Ekholm’s office during Houston’s visit.



**Figure 4.** Tikal Marcador, E1–H9 (rubbing provided by Juan Pedro Laporte, with heightened contrast).



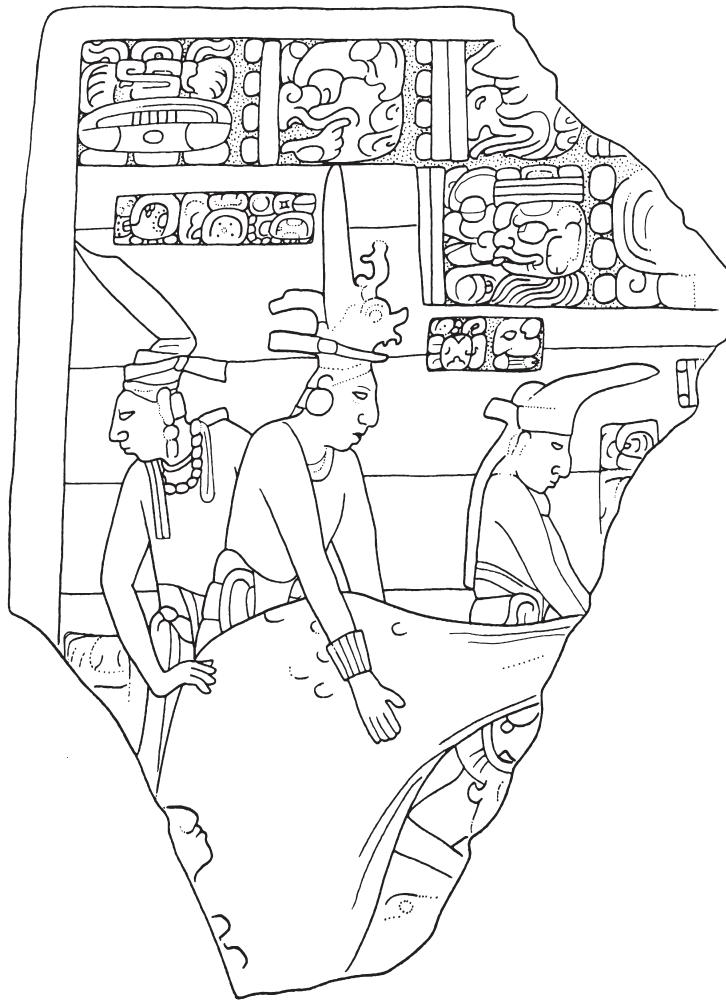
**Figure 5.** Place name associated with Spearthrower Owl, Tikal Marcador, E4, G6 (screenshot of 3D model, by Alexandre Tokovinine, Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, with permission of the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala ©President and Fellows of Harvard College).

13); and (2) January 24<sup>th</sup>, AD 414 [8.18.17.14.9, 12 Muluk 12 K’ank’in], the dedication of Marcador itself (Figure 4).

In part, the Marcador remains a highly opaque text. Yet an apparent place name tied to Spearthrower Owl contains recognizable elements, including the number 5, a glyph known since the time of Eric Thompson to represent the downy texture of “cotton” (Thompson 1972: 82–83), a syllabic ma (shown in its fuller form, as a prefix and suffix framing the main sign), and the well-known **WITZ** “hill, mountain” (Figure 5). Thus: the “5 ‘something’ Hills/Mountains,” and as locations or a single place affiliated in some way with a person tied to Teotihuacan or its proxies.

The one undeciphered sign is probably a representation of “cotton.” The rows of small “u”-shapes are standard in Mesoamerican art as markers for spun cotton or cotton as shown by iconographic clues assembled by Karl Taube and others (e.g., Taube 1993: 657). In Maya art we also see the same “u”-shapes on cloth, as on the panel fragment from Palenque shown in Figure 6, depicting the ruler K’inich Ahkal Mo’ Nahb aiding with what might be a cotton bundle containing tribute goods (Stuart 1998: 413).

John Dienhart suggested that the hieroglyphic sign with these same u-shapes reads **NOK'**, “clothes, cloth” (Dienhart 1986: 53). Almost all epigraphers have accepted, from multiple sets of evidence, a syllabic value of **no**, derived, following Dienhart’s lead, from *nok'*, “clothes, cloth” in Common Ch’olan (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 127). The decipherment makes sense. It explains expressions with antipassive suffixes such as ‘a-AK’-no-ma, ‘ak’-n-oom, in the area of Cancuen (Príncipe Maya Panel: E5), ‘a-k’-a-no-ma, ‘ak’-n-oom, at



**Figure 6.** Panel fragment from Palenque, showing large cloth tumpline bundle with “cotton” markings (drawing by David Stuart).

Palenque (Temple of the Inscriptions, West Tablet:C6) or the “shaker” title employed frequently by later rulers of Calakmul (**yu-ku-no-ma**, *yuk-n-oom*, Martin 2017; for more on *yuk*, see Esparza Olguín and Velásquez García 2013, drawing on earlier work by Stuart 2001).

Dienhart may have been both wrong and right: wrong because the “cotton” sign, as a logograph, was perhaps incorrectly deciphered as **NOK'** (“cloth”), but right because it did correspond to a word for “cotton.” The logical candidate we propose here is *tinam*,

read **TINAM** as a glyph, a term well-attested as meaning “cotton” in Common Ch’olan and all its descendant languages (Norman and Kaufman 1984: 132). On the Marcador, the term explains the **ma** syllable—here serving as a reinforcement for **TINAM**. A **no** syllable would not account for this usage, yet there can be little doubt that, as a visual form, the glyph corresponds to that fluffy substance.

There may even be a more general protocol in place for generating signs. A Maya innovator (it is hard to see this as anything other than a singular, intentional act) first extracted a syllable **no** from *nok'*, the former no longer having any meaning. The scribe then used that sign to record a distinct if conceptually related term, one for the material itself. The motivating word had been left behind, to be replaced in logographic usage by another, loosely linked term. To our knowledge, a “fish” sign, a **ka** syllable, never references its motivating word, *kay*, a **to** syllable fails to deliver *tok*, “cloud, fog,” and so on. One of the few exceptions may be **bi** and **BIH**, “road,” a handy term for a people who liked to move in processions and on various journeys.

But why “cotton” mountains? Why “5” of them, why the tie to Teotihuacanos? And how is this an evocative, analogical description, of the unfamiliar made familiar to readers in a tropical zone?

Central Mexico, the general setting for Teotihuacan, is a far colder place than steamy Tikal, Guatemala. Peaks in visible range of Teotihuacan—at least in times prior to urban pollution—are girt with snow, some of it seasonal, some few examples perennial. A poetic analogy for someone describing this distant, fantastical land might be to reach for the familiar (cotton) to picture the radically foreign (snow). The scribe composing the Marcador text, masterfully proficient in Maya writing, knew much about Spearthrower Owl’s civilization—the text of the Marcador contains several non-Maya signs, and the overall carving exhibits many Teotihuacano elements. It may thus have been referring to a place he had not visited but could describe in terms of fluffy white “down” on high mountains, five of them in fact, perhaps Popocatépetl, Iztaccíhuatl, Orizaba, and others. (One of the authors [Stuart] is collaborating with David Carballo in a future study that will consider these specific connections in more detail.)



**Figure 7.** “Cotton-covered” mountains, possibly Icpantepec Nieves, Mixteca Baja, Codex Nuttall, p. 11, detail, British Museum ADD.MSS 39671 (© Trustees of the British Museum, Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 4.0).

The analogy might have been familiar in parts of Mexico. In Oaxaca, the Codex Nuttall, a Mixtec pictorial book from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, portrays a couple between two peaks (Figure 7). They are a pair, Lady 1 Flower and Lord 1 Jaguar, who founded a particular Mixtec dynasty (Anders et al. 1992: 108). Cotton marks, a spread of small “u”-shapes, cover and streak down the peaks, and a small cotton spool at the base of the mountain to the right both accentuates this conceit and employs, according to one interpretation, a Mixtec homophone, *yuhua*, “cotton spool” or “snow” (Anders et al. 1992: 107, n. 5). A commentary on the Nuttall describes these as the “Montes Nevados” (the snowy mountains), and possibly as a particular location, Icpantepec Nieves in the Mixteca Baja of Oaxaca, Mexico (Anders et al. 1992: 33). Snow may have been as unfamiliar to them as to the Lowland Maya of the Early Classic period, but, as on the Marcador, they invoked a metaphor that worked with wit to excite the imagination.

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# **Apuntes epigráficos: La temporada 2015 del Proyecto Naachtun**

PHILIPPE NONDÉDÉO

CNRS, ArchAM

(philippe\_nondedeo@yahoo.com)

ALFONSO LACADENA

Universidad Complutense de Madrid

ALEJANDRO GARAY

Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala

(agaray\_22@hotmail.com)

Junto con Alfonso viví experiencias de campo muy intensas por poco más de diez años. Coincidimos por primera vez en el encuentro “Los Investigadores de la Cultura Maya” en Campeche en 1996, cuando ambos hacíamos nuestras tesis doctorales. Después nos vimos varias veces en París, donde Alfonso participaba en los seminarios pluridisciplinarios organizados por Aurore Monod-Becquelin en el marco del GERM (Grupo de Enseñanza y de Investigación sobre los Mayas). Sin embargo, hasta 2003 inició nuestra amistad, cuando Alfonso fue por primera vez a Río Bec y analizó, entre otros materiales, las inscripciones encontradas el año anterior en Kajtun, un sitio identificado en el marco de reconocimientos arqueológicos posdoctorales (Nondédéo y Lacadena 2004). Esta amistad se reforzó en 2007, también en Río Bec, cuando Alfonso llegó con Ignacio Cases. Los tres íbamos de noche a tomar fotos con luz rasante de los monumentos del sitio (en particular de los grupos II y V), por un camino largo que nos hacía regresar al campamento de Zoh Laguna a la una de la mañana. Había una atmósfera indescriptible para este trabajo nocturno y también mucho cansancio, pues a las 5:30 de la mañana iniciaba de nuevo mi día normal de campo.

En aquella temporada, nuestra relación se fortaleció a raíz de una pequeña expedición que organicé para ver los edificios y monumentos de Pechal, un sitio muy poco visitado y retirado en el interior de Campeche, en la frontera entre las regiones Río Bec y Chenes



Figura 1. Céline Gillot, Philippe Nondédéo y Alfonso Lacadena rumbo a Pechal en 2007.

(Figura 1). Alfonso sufrió mucho físicamente durante esta expedición y tuvo durante muchos años un recuerdo especial de esta aventura.

Finalmente, nuestra experiencia más fuerte y, sin lugar a dudas, más emocionante a nivel científico fue cuando lo invité, junto con Nacho Cases, a participar en el estudio de las inscripciones de Naachtun en el Norte del Petén. Los avances epigráficos logrados, tanto en la identificación del Glifo-Emblema del sitio como en la descripción del papel y de la participación activa de Naachtun en los famosos eventos de la “Entrada” de 378 d.C. —en particular, la relación explícita de alianza militar entre el gobernante local de Naachtun y Sihyaj K’ahk’—, generaron momentos inolvidables de alegría, felicidad, orgullo y de muchos abrazos colectivos (Figura 2).

Philippe Nondédéo

## Introducción

En 2013 iniciaron los trabajos epigráficos en el sitio de Naachtun con la llegada de Ignacio Cases quien documentó, al estilo del *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, una gran parte de los monumentos



Figura 2. Ignacio Cases, Philippe Nondédéo, Alfonso Lacadena y Alejandro Garay, de noche, al pie de la Estela 24 de Naachtun en 2014.

del sitio. Estos monumentos, de gran importancia para la geopolítica maya, estaban erosionados, además de que habían sido poco estudiados, probablemente por el difícil acceso a Naachtun. Ignacio, como asistente y mano derecha de Alfonso —quien se iba a incorporar al proyecto el año siguiente— documentó en aquel entonces 66 monumentos, incluyendo 37 con inscripciones o elementos iconográficos (Cases y Lacadena 2014a: 377). Hoy en día, gracias al avance de las excavaciones e investigaciones en el sitio, estas cifras ascienden a un total de 76 monumentos (cuatro estelas y seis altares se agregaron después), aunque la cantidad de monumentos esculpidos permaneció igual (Nondédéo 2017: 1218). Ignacio logró, en aquella temporada 2013, un avance mayor en la investigación, a raíz de la identificación del Glifo-Emblema de Murciélagos de Naachtun (*K'uhul Suutz' Ajaw*) en monumentos del Grupo C. Sobresale el de la Estela 24 donde aparece en posición de Glifo-Emblema local y no como referencia foránea, como se pensó anteriormente (Grube 2005: 97–98). Ignacio (comunicación personal, 2013) también reconoció elementos parciales, pero diagnósticos de este Glifo-Emblema de Murciélagos en varios monumentos del sitio, en particular en la muy temprana Estela 23 —ubicada en el Grupo C—, así como en monu-



Figura 1. Figura 3. Mapa del epicentro de Naachtun localizando las estelas mencionadas en el texto (modificado de Ruppert y Denison 1943; Morton 2004; Lemmonier y Coto 2016).

mentos del Clásico Tardío ubicados al otro extremo del sitio, en la plaza Río Bec del Grupo B, en especial en las Estelas 15 y 19 (Figura 3).

En 2014, Alfonso e Ignacio estuvieron juntos en Naachtun, en compañía de Alejandro Garay, y fue cuando establecieron firmemente la presencia del Glifo-Emblema de Murciélagos en Naachtun, en la Estela 23, asociado con la fecha más temprana detectada en el sitio, de 361 d.C. (Cases y Lacadena 2014b: 371–377). En aquella temporada también se dilucidó la mención de Sihyaj K’ahk’ en la Estela 24 y el papel desempeñado por la dinastía real de Naachtun en los famosos eventos de 378 d.C. (Nondédéo et al. 2016a, 2016b).

En 2015, Alfonso regresó a Naachtun, en compañía de Alejandro, para la que sería su última temporada de campo, cuyos resultados quedaron en gran parte inéditos. Durante su corta estancia, los dos epigrafistas se centraron principalmente en cuatro monumentos:

- la Estela 26, del Clásico Temprano, sepultada en el Complejo Tríadico y revelada por el anterior proyecto canadiense a raíz de un saqueo (Mathews 2013; Rangel y Alonso 2013)
- la Estela 21, fechada para un poco más tarde en el Clásico Temprano, encontrada cabeza abajo a un lado (norte) de la Acrópolis V, y que llevaba la representación (de frente y no de perfil) de una reina importante del sitio (Morley 1938: fig. 129a, b)
- la Estela 27, del Clásico Tardío, sepultada en la escalera de acceso al Complejo Amurallado, también encontrada por el proyecto canadiense (Arredondo 2013; Mathews 2013)
- la Estela 2, una estela importante para la historia de Naachtun por su larga inscripción, su fecha del inicio del Clásico Tardío (642 d.C.) y su ubicación en la Plaza Este.

En esta contribución presentamos los bocetos inéditos realizados por Alfonso de las estelas 26 y 27, que complementan los dibujos realizados anteriormente por Peter Mathews (2013). Exponemos también algunas hipótesis de trabajo e intuiciones formuladas por Alfonso, con la idea de que, en el futuro, con el paso del tiempo y el avance de la investigación, se puedan —o no— validar.

## La Estela 26

Al inicio de los trabajos de excavación en 2015 en el Complejo Tríadico, a cargo de Dominique Michelet (2016), se decidió aprovechar la presencia del epigrafista del proyecto para volver a desenterrar la Estela 26 y averiguar, por una parte, si tenía inscripciones fuera de su cara frontal y, por otra, precisar algunos elementos iconográficos complejos registrados en su frente. Esta estela del Clásico Temprano es importante ya que muestra en su cara frontal a una mujer que debió tener un papel significativo en la política de Naachtun. Además, el monumento recibió un tratamiento especial al ser sepultado en uno de los edificios del Complejo Tríadico, después de haber sido dañado intencionalmente.

En un reporte preliminar en posesión del primer autor, Alfonso escribió:

Especialmente interesante fue el trabajo con la Estela 26, un importante monumento descubierto a finales de la Temporada de 2004 por el Proyecto Arqueológico Naachtun (2004–2009), excavada en la Temporada de 2005 (Rangel y Alonso 2013) y dibujada por Mathews a partir de fotografías (Mathews 2013). La estela fue liberada de nuevo para terminar su documentación, dado que sólo se había registrado el frente del monumento, pudiéndose inspeccionar además del frente los costados —aunque no la parte trasera— donde se habían reportado la presencia de inscripciones destruidas intencionalmente (Rangel y Alonso 2013: 37).

Los trabajos de esta temporada (2015) han permitido completar algunos detalles del dibujo de Mathews del frente del monumento, entendiéndose ahora mejor la parte frontal del tocado del personaje, donde se aprecia el cuello doblado de un ave que sujetaba en el pico una sarta de cuentas formando un pez estilizado, así como las plumas de las alas de la figura aviforme<sup>1</sup> de la parte inferior (Figura 4). La presencia del ave con pez en el pico refuerza —y a nuestro juicio resuelve— la identificación del tocado del personaje como la representación del dios GI, como sugería la insignia cuatripartita parcialmente conser-

<sup>1</sup> Aunque Alfonso no detalla en su reporte el tipo de ave representada en el tocado del personaje, un análisis comparativo de algunas vasijas efígie contemporáneas con la representación del dios GI, indica que se trata de un ave acuática, probablemente una garza o cormorán. Esta identificación refuerza el reconocimiento inicial del tocado de GI, que incluye el Tazón K'in. Además, siguiendo el estudio reciente de Rogelio Valencia Rivera y Daniel Salazar Lama (2017) acerca de la presencia del ave Chan en algunos contextos iconográficos del Clásico, existe la posibilidad de que el ave en la sección inferior de la Estela 26 sea una forma combinada de las aves CHAN y CH'EN, configurando juntas la expresión *chan-ch'e'n*, literalmente traducida como “cielo-cueva”, pero que funciona como un disfrazismo que podría significar ‘ciudad’ según Lacadena et al. (2010).

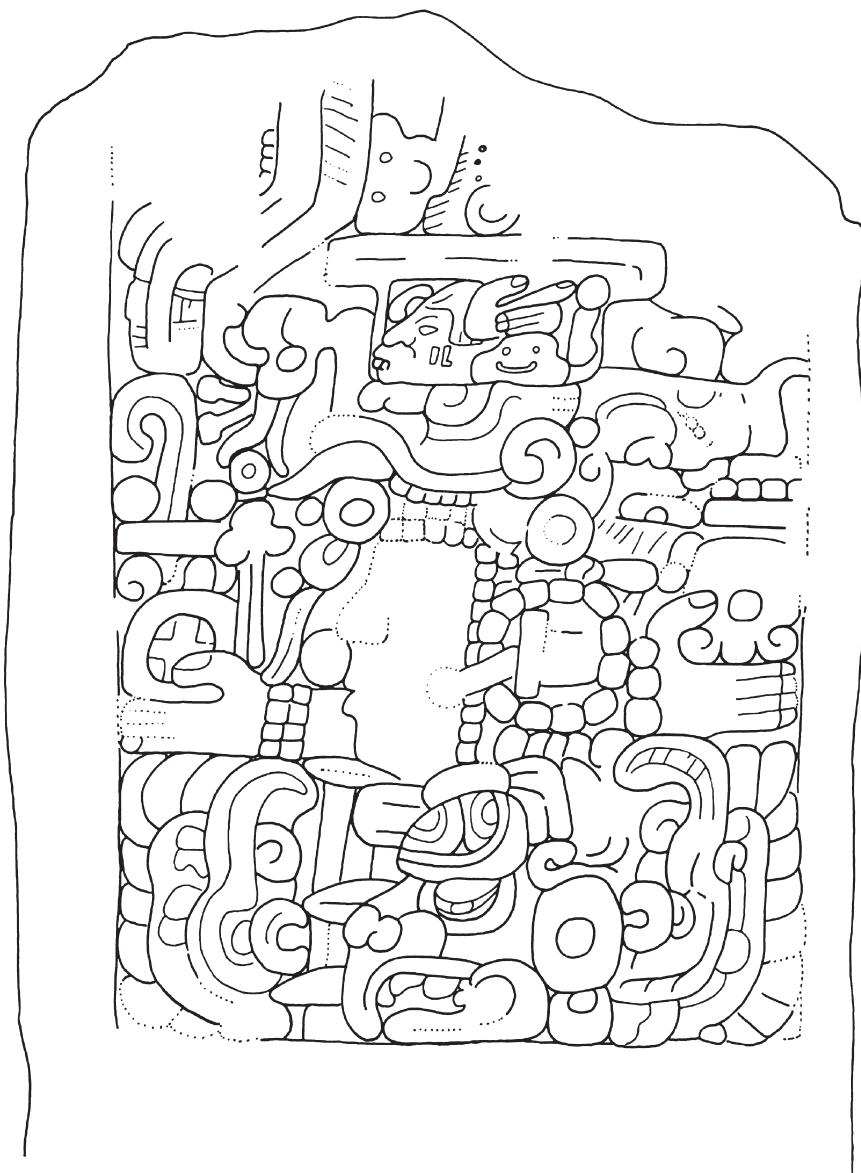
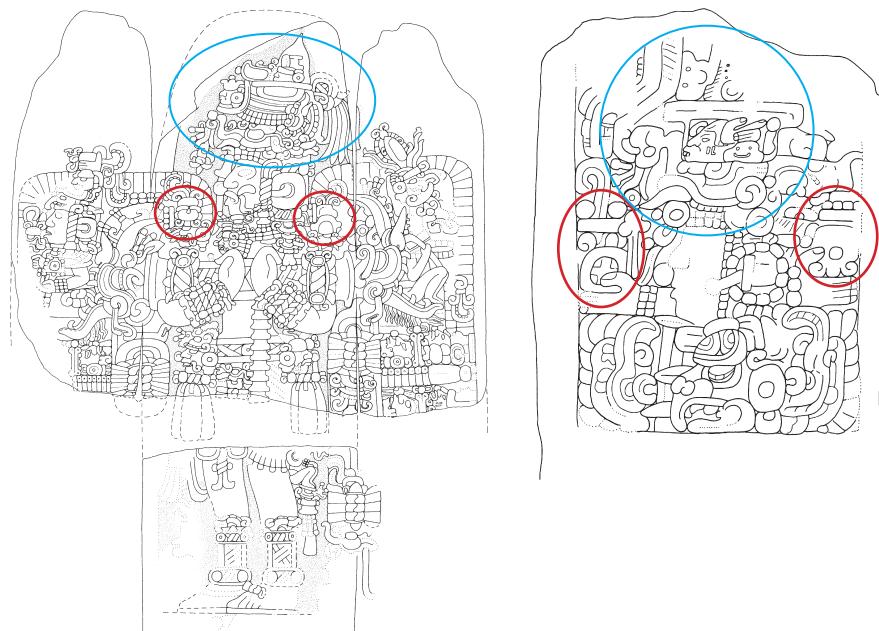


Figura 4. Estela 26 de Naachtun (dibujo de Peter Mathews, modificado por Alfonso Lacadena).

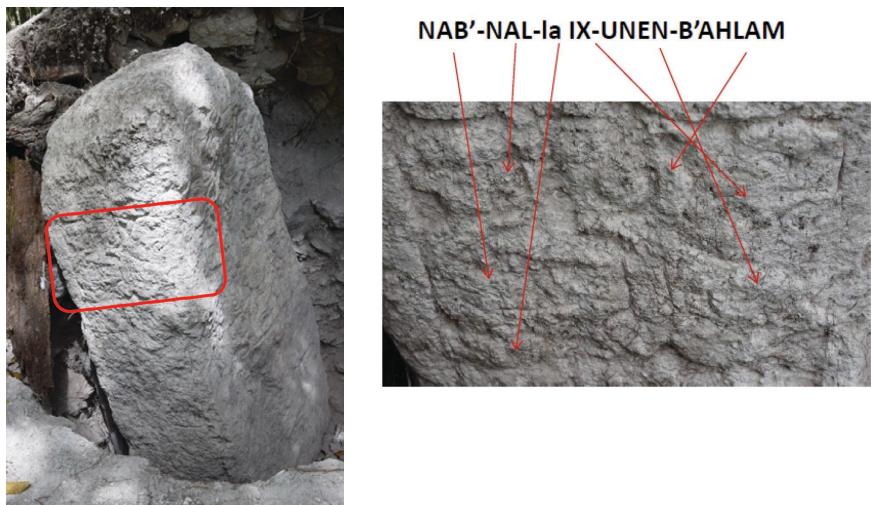


**Figura 5.** Comparación a nivel de composición entre la Estela 2 de Tikal (dibujo de William Coe) y la Estela 26 de Naachtun (dibujo de Peter Mathews, modificado por Alfonso Lacadena).

vada en la parte superior, lo que ya había sido apuntado por Mathews (2013: 92), quien también había señalado la semejanza entre el tocado de la Estela 26 de Naachtun con la Estela 2 de Tikal (Figura 5). La asociación se hace ahora más estrecha —la Estela 2 de Tikal lleva también el ave con el pez en el pico<sup>2</sup>—, más aún si consideramos que la Estela 2 de Tikal también presenta sobre los hombros del individuo representado las dos expresiones jeroglíficas pareadas compuestas con 7 y 9 que en la Estela 26 de Naachtun aparecen sobre las manos extendidas del personaje.

El estudio epigráfico de la Estela 26 permitió identificar la presencia de bloques de glifos en los laterales del monumento, lo que no se había reportado al documentar el monumento en 2005. En el lado izquierdo, se leen claramente los glifos de la Señora Unen B'ahlam de Tikal, la cual ha sido mencionada en monumentos de El Zapote y Tikal, entre otros (Figura 6). Identificar en el costado del monumento el nominal UNEN-BALAM, es ciertamente relevante ya que, además, sigue la expresión ?-NAL-la, quizás relacionada con el título *Naahb'nal* (*K'inich*), un título frecuente en las cláusulas nominales de los gobernantes de Tikal. Lo deteriorado del contexto y el no haber podido comprobar si la espalda del monumento conservaba aún signos legibles nos impide determinar

<sup>2</sup> En el dibujo de William Coe publicado por Christopher Jones y Linton Satterthwaite (1982: fig. 2) no se distingue bien el ave, pero sí se aprecia claramente dicha ave en las fotos de la estela (Jones y Satterthwaite 1982: fig. 84b; Beliaev y de León 2013: 458).



**Figura 6.** Costado izquierdo de la Estela 26 con la mención de Ix-Unen-B'ahlam (fotografía de Alfonso Lacadena).

si el personaje mencionado es Unen B'ahlam, el enigmático gobernante de género incierto de Tikal, que gobernó hacia el 317 d.C. (Martin 2003; Martin y Grube 2008: 26-27; Stuart 2011), o si constituye una referencia a la deidad Unen B'ahlam, que aparece mencionada en textos tempranos de Tikal. Sea como fuera, en todo caso la iconografía y la epigrafía de la Estela 26 sugiere una fuerte conexión entre Naachtun y Tikal en esta época del Clásico Temprano (Lacadena 2015).

En otra sección de sus notas de campo, Alfonso, al relacionar la Estela 26 de Naachtun con la Estela 2 de Tikal y al identificar la presencia de la frase nominal de Unen B'ahlam, mencionó la posibilidad de que la señora representada en la parte frontal de esta estela fuera

la señora Tzutz Niik<sup>3</sup>, esposa del rey K'an Chitam de Tikal [y madre de Chak Tok Ihch'aak II], lo cual ilustraría los vínculos muy fuertes y estrechos que existieron entre Tikal y Naachtun. La presencia de esta mención mítica de esta reina Tzutz Niik aquí en la Estela 26 de Naachtun indicaría tal vez el lugar de procedencia de este ilustre personaje (Lacadena 2015).

Esta identificación deriva del elemento glífico en el centro del tocado del personaje en la Estela 26, que guarda mucha similitud con

<sup>3</sup> Los editores de este volumen señalan que Tzutz Niik era una lectura preliminar y que, en lugar de Niik, una buena propuesta reciente, aún no publicada, podría ser la de David Stuart que propone leer este signo como SAK saak.

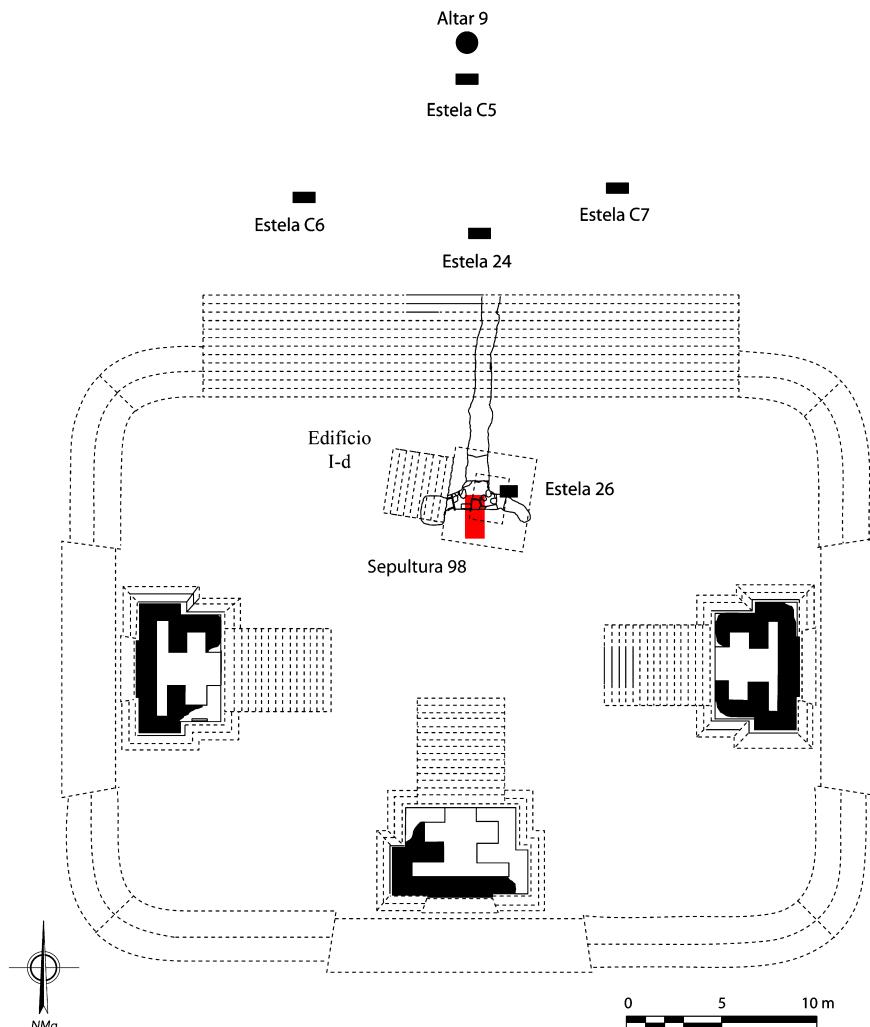
el nombre de esta reina, tal como aparece registrado en la Estela 3 de Tikal. Si esta reina Tzutz Niik de Tikal fuera originalmente de Naachtun<sup>4</sup>, como lo supuso durante algún tiempo Alfonso, el tratamiento que recibió la Estela 26 de Naachtun mostraría todo el respeto y la consideración que la dinastía local de Naachtun le tuvo a esta princesa local. Cabe recordar que esta estela fue desplazada de su lugar original y sepultada en el interior del Edificio I-d (es decir, la estructura al norte del Complejo Tríadico) junto con su ofrenda original de dedicación, compuesta por dos platos con pestaña basal, dispuestos labio contra labio, que contenían los restos de un infante (Rangel et al. 2013: 46). Esta estela parece haber sido enterrada ritualmente para protegerla después de haber sido deteriorada intencionalmente al borrar algunas de las inscripciones de su cara posterior (Rangel et al. 2013: 46).

Conviene añadir ahora, después de las investigaciones de 2017, que esta estela no fue sepultada al azar, sino que se encuentra justo por encima de una cámara funeraria real saqueada (Sep. 98) y que fue acomodada en el basamento del Complejo Tríadico. Esta cámara ha sido construida al lado de una pequeña plataforma sub y precede la construcción del Complejo Tríadico que la cubre. Se fecharía tentativamente alrededor de 300 d.C. según el material cerámico recolectado, es decir, en la transición entre las fases Balam I y II (Hiquet 2018). Tanto la estela como la tumba real marcan el eje central de todo este conjunto (Figura 7). No sabemos aún si esta cámara funeraria corresponde a la del gobernante **?-b'u-JOL**, el protagonista de la cercana Estela 24, el “capitán de guerra” de Sihyaj K'ahk<sup>5</sup>, o si se trata de una cámara más antigua, que se remontaría al fundador de la dinastía de Naachtun<sup>6</sup>. En todo caso, se trata de una de las primeras

<sup>4</sup> Su nombre aparece también en unas orejeras saqueadas que se han relacionado con Río Azul (Mayer 1987). El texto, difícil de entender, parece indicar que esta mujer fue nieta de un gobernante de Río Azul, otro argumento que sitúa su origen en la región norte de Petén. Cabe agregar también que varias vasijas cerámicas encontradas en Naachtun y fechadas para el Clásico Temprano (Caal Rojo Policromo; Totbol Mate Café sobre Crema: variedad Totbol), proceden posiblemente de los talleres de Río Azul y corresponderían a bienes de prestigio obsequiados en el marco de alianzas matrimoniales y/o políticas entre ambas ciudades (Forné y Patiño 2012; Nondédéo et al. 2016a).

<sup>5</sup> En este caso, se conservarían en su ajuar tipos cerámicos de la fase anterior.

<sup>6</sup> El fechamiento por radiocarbono (<sup>14</sup>C) junto con el análisis isotópico de los restos óseos permitirán, en los meses que vienen, esclarecer esta duda y revelar el origen de este personaje. Por otra parte, varias cámaras funerarias muy tempranas (desafortunadamente sa-



**Figura 7.** Ubicación de la Estela 26 en relación con la cámara funeraria 98 y la Estela 24 (modificado de Hiquet 2018; Levantamiento de Céline Gillot, Dominique Michelet y Julien Hiquet).

cámaras funerarias reales construidas en el sitio, asociada a una plataforma-sub colocada por debajo del Complejo Tríadico. Lo interesante es que la Estela 24 se encuentra también alineada (al norte) con la tumba. Con base en esta evidencia, además de la calidad de la

queadas) fueron encontradas en Naachtun, tanto en la Acrópolis V como en la pirámide La Perdida. No podemos aún afirmar cuál de ellas podría corresponder a la del fundador de la dinastía local.

arquitectura funeraria y la composición de su ajuar (objetos de pirita entre otros) que lo relacionan con Teotihuacán, el ocupante de esta Cámara 98 debió ser un personaje de alto rango. La superposición de la Estela 26 con la tumba, en una relación vertical entre ambos vestigios, sugiere tal vez una filiación directa entre ambos personajes o, al menos, la pertenencia a un mismo linaje.

## La Estela 21

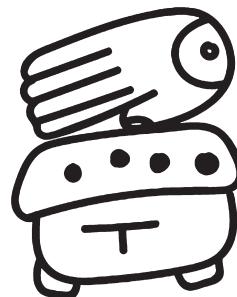
Cerca del Complejo Tríadico se encuentra la Acrópolis V —de carácter funerario— asociada con varias estelas, la mayoría de ellas lisas, excepto por la Estela 21 que se fecha para finales del Clásico Temprano. Si bien no tenemos notas o comentarios escritos de Alfonso sobre este monumento, Alejandro, asistente de Alfonso en aquella temporada 2015, pudo rescatar alguna información al respecto.

Se había sugerido que en la Estela 21 se encontraba una referencia al topónimo Maasu'l en el costado izquierdo del monumento (en la antepenúltima fila en la columna del lado derecho), escrita como **ma-su-la**, con una supuesta variante zoomorfa de la sílaba **su** (Figura 8a). La revisión del monumento en 2014 y 2015 demostró que en realidad éste es otro signo, por lo que hasta la fecha el topónimo Maasu'l sigue sin ser identificado en un monumento local, descartándose la relación de Naachtun con este reino del Clásico (Lacadena, comunicación personal, 2015).

Al final de este lado del monumento se encuentra una aparente frase de parentesco que señala el vínculo de padre e hijo, siendo el hijo un individuo cuyo nombre estaba compuesto por un signo **AK?** y el bloque donde se encontraba el supuesto topónimo de Maasu'l. El nombre del padre se lee parcialmente como ... **Ahk** (el primer signo es poco claro, seguido por una construcción silábica **a-ku**). Tras su nombre se encuentra un bloque glífico que puede ser un título que claramente representa una mano tocando un tambor. Este signo no ha sido registrado en otras partes del corpus glífico maya y quizás pueda indicar que este personaje fue un tamborilero, aunque también puede ser que este signo se refiera a la acción de tocar el tambor y no al oficio en forma de título (Figura 8b).



a



b

**Figura 8.** a) Detalle de la inscripción en el lateral izquierdo de la Estela 21 de Naachtun donde aparecen los restos de una frase de parentesco de padre e hijo, donde se menciona al padre como ...Ahk, cuyo título está asociado con la práctica de tocar el tambor, y donde aparece el falso Maasu'l (fotografía de Alfonso Lacadena). b) El título de tamborilero (dibujo reconstructivo del bloque glífico de Alejandro Garay).

Del otro lado de la estela aparece una extensa fecha anotada con una cuenta larga acompañada por una serie suplementaria, que lamentablemente se encuentra muy erosionada por el agua. De la misma forma, los coeficientes de la cuenta larga están muy deteriorados para ser leídos con seguridad, aunque quizás indicaban una fecha histórica, ya que posteriormente aparece un signo de *k'atun* (**WINIKHAB'**), que podría estar indicando un aniversario de 20 años *haab'*. En la espalda del monumento no se detectaron restos de inscripciones.

Más allá de las inscripciones laterales que sobreviven con diferentes niveles de erosión, también se puede señalar la cara del monumento (Figura 9), que llevó el retrato de una mujer de frente



**Figura 9.** El frente de la Estela 21 de Naachtun que porta el retrato de una mujer noble. Nótese la erosión en la parte superior de la estela que afectó tanto al frente como a los lados del monumento (fotografía de Alejandro Garay).

que vestía un largo huipil, en forma muy parecida a lo que se ve en la Estela 1 de Piedras Negras. Lamentablemente, el rostro y el tocado de la mujer se encuentran muy erosionados, mientras que el huipil sí conserva en buenas condiciones sus detalles, observándose el fino trabajo de escultura que se realizó para proveer de detalles realistas a la representación.

La representación frontal del rostro humano es escasa en las estelas mayas en general, más aún en las del Clásico Temprano. Existen, sin embargo, algunos ejemplos de este periodo, en parti-

cular de inicios del siglo VI y otros más o menos contemporáneos con la Estela 21 de Naachtun: la Estela 23 de Tikal y la Estela 20 de Uaxactun. Ambos sitios tuvieron relaciones estrechas con Naachtun y presentan ejemplos con representaciones frontales del individuo. Todo ello podría indicar la existencia de una tradición de este tipo de representaciones en el norte de Petén. El hecho de que las estelas 23 de Tikal y 21 de Naachtun muestren a una mujer podría sugerir que estas representaciones concernieran principalmente a las reinas. No obstante, es preciso mencionar que se trata de casos muy contados y que varias de estas estelas fueron voluntariamente dañadas y/o desplazadas (Martin 1999). La Estela 20 de Uaxactun, por su parte, representa a un gobernante sujetando una barra ceremonial acompañado de cautivos (Valdés y Fahsen 1997), por lo que se aleja un poco de los otros dos monumentos.

## La Estela 27

Otro monumento que mereció cierta atención en la temporada 2015 fue la Estela 27 descubierta por Ernesto Arredondo en 2005 (Arredondo 2013) y dibujada por Peter Mathews (2013) a partir de fotografías. Se trata de una estela del Clásico Tardío, rota y sepultada debajo de una escalera de acceso al Complejo Amurallado. Sólo se conserva la parte inferior que muestra el huipil o túnica de red de una princesa, tal vez originaria de la dinastía Kanu'l de Calakmul (García Barrios y Vázquez López 2012). En 2015, se volvió a liberar esta estela para precisar algunos detalles iconográficos e intentar descifrar los bloques colocados por debajo de los pies del personaje (Figura 10).

En sus notas, Alfonso indicó:

Se buscó recuperar más trazos del relieve, sobre todo los de la erosionada banda jeroglífica inferior. Se pudieron, finalmente, completar algunos detalles de la representación, sobre todo en la parte del cinturón del personaje. En lo que se refiere al texto jeroglífico, pudo determinarse que está compuesto, interesantemente, por el conocido par 7-IK'-K'AN-NAL 9-?, situado uno bajo cada pie del personaje representado (Lacadena 2015).

Este topónimo sobrenatural se encuentra ampliamente atestiguado en las inscripciones mayas del periodo Clásico, aparece en varios lugares como Toniná, Copán y Palenque, entre otros (véase



**Figura 10.** Foto y dibujo de la Estela 27 de Naachtun (fotografía y dibujo de Alfonso Lacadena).

una muestra de ejemplos en Moholy-Nagy y Coe 2008: fig. 57). En Naachtun se observa una referencia muy parecida en los bloques que sostiene el personaje representado en el frente de la Estela 26 (Figura 4)—que se leen como 7-K'AN-NAL? y 9-CH'ICH'?—, quien los sostiene como elementos iconográficos, como ocurre en otras representaciones. Es posible que estos topónimos hagan referencia a lugares primordiales de origen y abundancia, identificados por Alejandro Sheseña (2007) como una especie de Chicomoztoc maya.

Según Alfonso (comunicación personal 2015), esta información epigráfica nueva, junto con el traje de red típico que lleva la princesa, refuerzan los vínculos con Calakmul y la dinastía Kanu'l durante una parte del Clásico Tardío, siendo tal vez Calakmul el lugar de procedencia de esta princesa de sangre real. La identificación de la procedencia de esta princesa se basa esencialmente en los datos iconográficos presentes, así como en el contexto del monumento: una estela ritualmente matada mediante su destrucción y su enterramiento (cabeza arriba) por debajo de la escalera de acceso al complejo pala-

ciego. Cada vez que se subía por la escalera, se pisaba este monumento, literal y simbólicamente; aunque no de manera directa, ya que estaba protegido por un piso de estuco. Esto significa que el control de los Kanu'l sobre Naachtun nunca fue bien aceptado localmente, a diferencia de otros sitios como Uxul o La Corona que consideraban la relación con los Kanu'l benéfica, ya que representaba un auge social, político y económico para ellos (Nondédéo et al. 2017).

Aún no se puede esclarecer la relación entre este monumento dañado y la mención epigráfica de una princesa Kanu'l presente en Naachtun alrededor de 761 d.C., tal como lo indica la Estela 10 fechada para el 9.16.10.0.0 (Vázquez López y Kuprat 2018: 85) (Figura 11). Según Alejandro, quien analizó en 2018 los pocos fragmentos que quedan de este monumento, esta princesa Kanu'l parece, además, haber jugado un papel importante en la ciudad ya que su nombre está estrechamente asociado con el verbo dedicatorio *k'al tuun* (atadura de piedra), lo que significaría que este personaje habría presidido una ceremonia de conmemoración en Naachtun. A estas alturas, no tenemos ninguna certeza de que la princesa de la Estela 10 sea la misma que la de la Estela 27 pues es probable que el dominio Kanu'l en Naachtun —aunque tenemos aún poca evidencia material sobre esta hegemonía— sucediera durante gran parte del siglo VII (Nondédéo et al. 2017) y que varias princesas Kanu'l hayan ocupado sucesivamente cargos importantes en la ciudad. En todo caso, esta referencia sugiere un vínculo entre la dinastía Kanu'l —o lo que aún subsistía de ésta en aquella fecha— y la dinastía local de Naachtun hasta mediados del siglo VIII d.C.

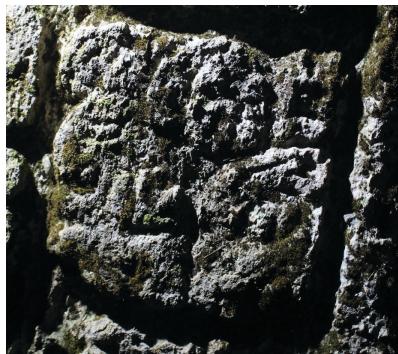
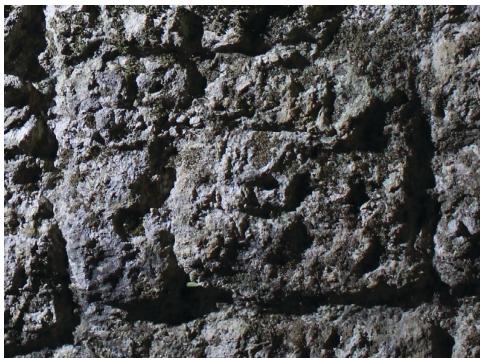


Figura 11. Detalle del título de la señora de Kanu'l en la Estela 10 de Naachtun (fotografía de Alejandro Garay).

## La Estela 2

Finalmente, el último monumento revisado de forma preliminar durante la temporada 2015 fue la importante Estela 2 ubicada en la Plaza Este, al pie del gran Palacio 50-5, fechado para el inicio del



**Figura 12.** Detalle del posible nombre Sak Tz'ikin en la Estela 2 de Naachtun (fotografía de Alejandro Garay).

Clásico Tardío. Sobre esta estela, Alfonso nos informa:

En relación a la Estela 2, se procedió a comenzar su proceso de documentación, realizando fotografías convencionales y bocetos de campo, a la espera de un registro más preciso en el futuro próximo con nuevas tecnologías digitales y, sobre todo, de una intervención que permita moverla. En su posición actual, la Estela 2 está caída sobre uno de sus costados por lo que el importante texto que contiene no es accesible —

presumiblemente el que se refiere a la fecha de dedicación del monumento. Contiene un texto muy largo, difícilmente legible por el momento pero que reveló el posible nombre de un rey de inicios del Clásico Tardío, un tal Sak Tz'ikin (Figura 12). La identificación del signo **SAK** ‘blanco’ es segura; la cabeza de animal como **TZ'IKIN** ‘águila’ es aún preliminar, pero de momento es la que se considera más probable por la forma del ojo, el pico y la posible presencia de un ‘elbow’ en la parte posterior de la cabeza. Otro elemento importante es el gran número de distancia que parece remontar a los orígenes de la dinastía Murciélagos en el sitio, al inicio del Clásico Temprano (Lacadena 2015).

Lo que nos pareció interesante sobre este monumento es el hecho de que se encuentre, primero, en esta nueva Plaza Este, la cual marca una refundación de la ciudad al edificar una nueva sede del poder y, posiblemente, una ruptura en la dinastía real de Naachtun (Nondédéo et al. 2017). Al mismo tiempo, existe una voluntad clara de arraigarse en el pasado dinástico-histórico, haciendo referencias, mediante este enorme número de distancia —aún no totalmente descifrado—, al primer cuarto del siglo IV y, probablemente, al fundador de la dinastía de Naachtun, como suele ser el caso en textos que incluyen grandes números de distancia (por ejemplo, el Altar 1 de Naranjo o el Panel del Templo de las Inscripciones de Palenque). Una de las frustraciones que tuvimos ante el estado de deterioro de este monumento clave para la historia del sitio en el Clásico Tardío, fue la imposibilidad de determinar cuáles fueron las relaciones de este gobernante local con la poderosa dinastía Kanu'l ya que el monumento fue dedicado en 642 d.C., en un momento en

el que la dinastía Kanu'l estaba bien establecida en la cercana ciudad de Calakmul con Yukno'm Ch'e'n II en el poder.

A manera de conclusión, el trabajo pionero realizado en Naachtun por Alfonso Lacadena e Ignacio Cases, acompañados por Alejandro Garay, ha arrojado nueva luz sobre la historia político-dinástica compleja e intrincada de esta gran capital regional maya del norte de Petén. A pesar de la limitación que constituye el estado altamente erosionado de la piedra caliza de los monumentos de Naachtun, este trabajo merece seguimiento en el futuro para poder precisar las relaciones cada vez más ambiguas que esta potencia tuvo a lo largo de su historia con sus dos vecinos Tikal y Calakmul, en particular en el momento del dominio Kanu'l.

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# New Glyptic Appellatives of the Rain God

DMITRI BELIAEV

Russian State University for the Humanities

National Research University Higher School of Economics

(lakamha@mail.ru)

ALBERT DAVLETSHIN

Russian State University for the Humanities

National Research University Higher School of Economics

(aldavletshin@mail.ru)

SERGEI VEPRETSKII

Russian State University for the Humanities

(servepr@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** In this paper we present evidence for previously unknown appellatives of the Rain God: *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Chaahk*, *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Yopaat* and *K'ahk' Mison Chaahk*. These names describe aspects of the Rain God related to meteorological phenomena, such as lightning and hurricanes. We also provide arguments for the readings of two new logograms HOP ('burn') and KAMIS ('centipede').

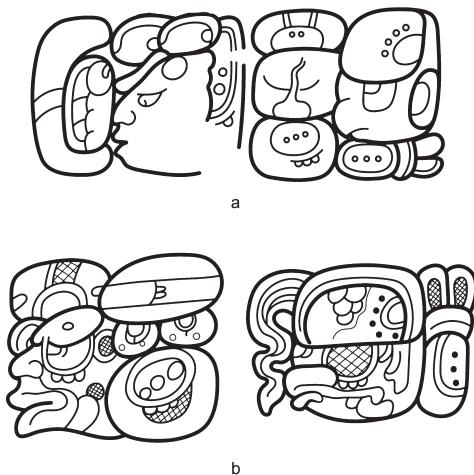
**Resumen:** En este trabajo se presentan evidencias sobre ciertos apelativos, antes desconocidos, del dios de la lluvia: *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Chaahk*, *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Yopaat* y *K'ahk' Mison Chaahk*. Estos nombres describen aspectos del dios de la lluvia relacionados con fenómenos meteorológicos como relámpagos y huracanes. Además, planteamos propuestas para leer dos nuevos logogramas, HOP ('quemar') y KAMIS ('escolopendra, ciempiés').

During the 5<sup>th</sup> European Maya Conference in Bonn in December of 2000, Alfonso Lacadena presented a paper dedicated to the analysis of two glyptic appellatives of the Maya Rain God *Chaahk*: *Yax Ha'al Chaahk* and *Uk'uw Chan Chaahk* (Lacadena 2004). It was part of a broader discussion of the Classic Maya royal names initiated by Stephen Houston and David Stuart (1996) and continued by Nikolai Grube (2002). Houston and Stuart noted that in complex names like "Chaaak is born from the sun", "K'inich is born in the sky", "K'awil is conjured" or "K'awil is born" "preceding glyphs simply provide subtle, adjectival modifications of the god name" (Houston and Stuart 1996: 295). Grube also examined names that include verbal phrases and observed that their structure corresponds to the

basic word order in Mayan languages. He also mentioned a specific subcategory of royal names wherein nouns like *k'ahk'*, 'fire', precede verbs as a part of an emphasizing or topicalizing strategy. Grube considered those verbs suffixed by -Vw to be transitive active (see his analysis of "K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak"; Grube 2002: 329).

Alfonso was the first to suggest that these names in fact include antipassive verbs: "[t]heonyms of this class take the shape of sentences formed by three basic elements: a verb, the noun 'sky' and the name of a god (VERB-SKY-GOD). These appellatives describe actions performed in the sky by the god mentioned. Some of the verbs involved in these actions are suffixed by -VV<sub>1</sub>w (in later times shortened as -V<sub>1</sub>w), like **ja-sa-wa**, **TIL-wi/ti-li-wi**, **jo-po-wo**. This suffix could be an antipassive morpheme" (Lacadena 2004: 94). Later on, the list of these names was expanded and analyzed in detail by Pierre Robert Colas (2004: 103–112). More or less at the same time, Marc Zender analyzed verbs ending in -laj in the same class of theonyms. He suggested that they should be interpreted as affectives (Zender 2001; summarized in Zender 2010), including the verbs *bahlaj/ba[h]laj*, *joplaj* and *yuklaj*.

One of these verbs remained opaque. It appeared in several theonyms with the names of various gods in the monumental and ceramic inscriptions of Xultun, Caracol, Uaxactun, Naranjo and the still unidentified Yootz site. The central sign of the glyptic collocation looks identical to the syllabic sign T559 **tzu** (Knorozov 1952: 113–114). Therefore, it was initially believed to be read **tzu-la-ja** or **tzu-la** and to represent a verb *tzuulaj* (Colas 2004: 115–116) or an affective verb derived from *tzu'-/tzuh-/tzuj-* (Zender 2010: n. 24; Krempel and Matteo 2013: 12). Variation in spelling is not unusual in affective verbs (see, e.g., **BAJ / BAJ-la** and **ba-la-ja / ba-la** in renderings of the name of Bajlaj Chan K'awiil from Dos Pilas; Zender 2010: 2). Later on, Simon Martin noted that on Altar 2 from Naranjo this name is written with a sign that is practically identical to **tzu** but includes a sun element (**K'IN**) (cited in Zender 2010: 13, n. 24). This grapheme was recognized by David Stuart as the logogram **TAAK** (Stuart et al. 1999: II-25). Thus, Marc Zender (2010: n. 24) concluded that the reading could well be *taklaj*.



**Figure 1.** The appellative *Chak Hoplaj Kamis* at La Corona: *a*) Element 33, Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 (drawing by Philipp Galeev), *b*) Element 56, pE1–pF2 (drawing by Sergei Vepretskii).

## Evidence for the reading HOP

Two recently discovered inscriptions from La Corona provide clues to a different reading of this verb. One of the most famous rulers of La Corona, whose reign began in 689 is best known by his common name, which was recently read as *Chak 'Ak' Paat Kuy* (Houston et al. 2017). On two occasions he bears extended theophoric appellatives.

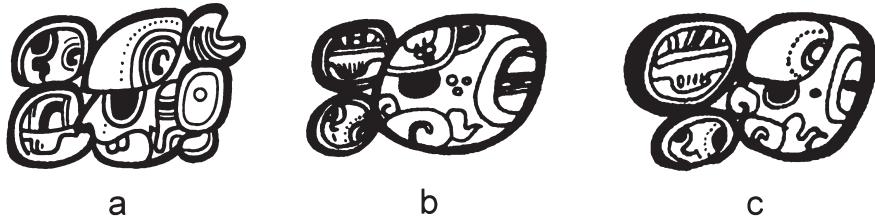
The first example can be found on Element 33 from La Corona found in 2012 (Stuart et al. 2014: 446, fig. 6b). It is a part of the secondary phrase that describes the visit of Kaanul king *Yuhkno'm Yich'aahk K'ahk'* to La Corona in 9.13.3.16.17 8 Kaban 10 Kumk'u (February 1, 696) (*Ibid*: 440) and ballgame event:

(C5) ?i-HUL-li ha-?i (D5) 18-?u-BAAH-KAN-nu (C6) yu[ku]-no-YICH'AAHK-ki-K'AHK' (D6) K'UH-KAN[?'AJAW]-wa (C7) yi-ta-pi-tzi-ja (D7) CHAK-T559-ja-“STONE-HEADED CREATURE”-si (E1) CHAK-?AK'-ku[yu] (F1) SAK-WAYIS-si

?i-huli ha?i? Waxaklaju?n ?Ubaah Kaan[u?] Yuhkno?[m] Yich'aahk K'ahk' k'uh[ul] Kaan[u?] ?ajaw yita-pitzijj Chak ...[l]aj ...is Chak ?Ak' Kuy [Paat] sak wayis

‘and then he arrived here, Waxaklaju?n ?Ubaah Kaanu'l Yuhkno'm Yich'aahk K'ahk’, divine king of Kaanul. He played ball together with ... Chak ?Ak' Kuy Paat, sak wayis.’

The theophoric appellative of *Chak ?Ak' Paat Kuy* consists of two parts (Figure 1a). The first one includes the **CHAK** sign above the eroded main sign and a **ja** sign below. Our examination of the inscription in



**Figure 2.** The “Stone-Headed Creature” in the nominal clause of “Animal Skull” of Tikal: a) Vase K772, b) Vase K 1261, c) Vase MT-217 (drawings by Dmitri Beliaev after photographs by Justin Kerr and the Epigraphic Atlas of Peten Project, CEMYK).

the bodega of the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Guatemala showed that additional vegetation-like elements are part of the internal elements of T559. The second part contains a sign in the form of a zoomorphic creature with a large eye, a stone-like element in the forehead and a “celt” element on the right side, accompanied by a **si** syllabogram below it.

In 2015 a new sculpted block (Element 56) was found during the excavations of the La Corona palace (Barrientos et al. 2016: 119, fig. 10). It is an all-glyphic block, similar in dimensions, format and style to Element 33. It was probably part of a longer text because the initial date and phrases are missing. The inscription mentions *Chak Ak’ Paat Kuy*’s accession to kingship on 9.12.17.8.1 12 Imix 4 Zac (September 9, 689) (pD6b–pC7a). The king’s name phrase again includes additional theonyms. The common rendering **CHAK-’AK’-PAAT-[kul]yu** is found at pF2–pE3, preceded by the same name we saw in the inscription on Element 33 but written in a different way (Figure 1b). Block pE2 consists of the stone-headed creature followed by a **si** syllabogram, but in this case, the details are much clearer and we observe skeletal traits and a large hatched (i.e. black) eye.

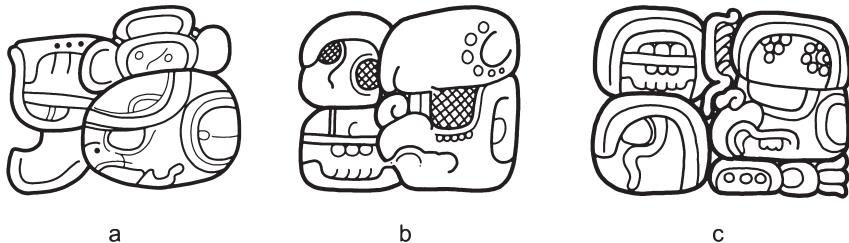
Until now, the “Stone-Headed Creature” sign did not have a reading. Although this sign is not very frequent, it appears in several other contexts. One of them is the theophoric appellative of “Animal Skull” (*K’ihnich Waaw?*) from Tikal. The 22<sup>nd</sup> king of Tikal nicknamed “Animal Skull” (Martin and Grube 2000: 40–41) is known from numerous inscriptions on plates and vases. Several of them, including K772 (Kerr 1989: 118), K1261 (Martin and Grube 2000: 40) and MT-218 (Culbert 1993: fig. 50e), contain the “Stone-Headed Creature” glyph. In the majority of the examples it forms part of the



**Figure 3.** Vase MT-218: *a*) The sequence *Chan Kab 'Akuuy Kamis*, *b*) the spelling **ka-KAMIS** (photographs by the Epigraphic Atlas of Peten Project, CEMYK).

sequence **CHAN-KAB**-“STONE-HEADED CREATURE” (Figure 2), but on the fragment of the vase MT-218, which was recovered in Tikal Burial 196, **KAB-CHAN** is followed by the syllabic sequence **?a-ku-yi** (Figure 3a).

Another context is Glyph X5 of the Lunar Series (see a recent overview in Grube 2018: 9–10). In the early examples it is often combined with a **mi** sign (Figure 4a). Another small sign that can be attached to the “Stone-Headed Creature” sign consists of an element that looks like a **pu** sign and a scroll element. In several Late Classic inscriptions (Quirigua Stela F, Ceibal Hieroglyphic Stairway and Yaxchilan Hieroglyphic Stairway 3, Step 3) it is preceded by the **CHAN-KAB** combination we saw earlier (Figure 4b–c). The most complex form of Glyph X5 can be found on Stela U from Pusilha and includes the **?a-ku-yi** sequence that is identical to the one on MT-218.



**Figure 4.** Glyph X5 of the Lunar Series: *a*) Brussels Stela, A13, *b*) Ceibal, Hieroglyphic Stairway, Tablet 1, E2, *c*) Quirigua, Stela F, west side, D7 (drawings by Nikolai Grube 2018: 10, fig. 17).

Several examples of the “Stone-Headed Creature” glyph include phonetic complements that provide a key to its reading. Four examples (two from La Corona, Quirigua Stela F and Yaxchilan Hieroglyphic Stairway 3, Step 3) feature a syllabic sign **si** below (Figure 4c). Grube suggested that it marks the glyph as referring to an inalienable body part (Grube 2018: 9). However, if **si** is optional—and in the majority of the cases we do not see it—it should be a final phonetic complement.

The inscription on the ceramic fragment MT-218 from Tikal includes a clear example of the syllabogram **ka** preceding the “Stone-Headed Creature” sign (Figure 3b). We suggest that the comb-like element attached to its forehead on Stela F from Quirigua is also a **ka** syllabogram (Figure 4c). One more possible example of a preceding **ka** sign might be found on Stela 35 from Piedras Negras, although its preservation is not as good.

What creature could be represented by the “Stone-Headed” sign? It is always marked by the “shiner” (?LE’M) element at the back of its head. Sometimes it looks like a bird, similar to the logogram **TZ’IKIN**, but variants from La Corona Element 56 and the vase K772 show a distinct motif. Both instances include skeletal traits, particularly a large black eye, fleshless jaw and pitted lines typical of bone (Figure 1b, 2a). In Maya writing, these traits are associated not only with the underworld and dead beings, but also with centipedes and insects (Stone and Zender 2011: 179, 189).

Initial complementation with **ka** and final complementation with **si** give us a logogram **KA...S**. Various dictionaries of Ch’orti’ include entries for *kamis* ‘centipede’ (Pérez Martínez et al. 1996: 92; Oj ronerob’ Ch’orti’ 2000: 41; Hull 2016: 188–189). Kerry Hull

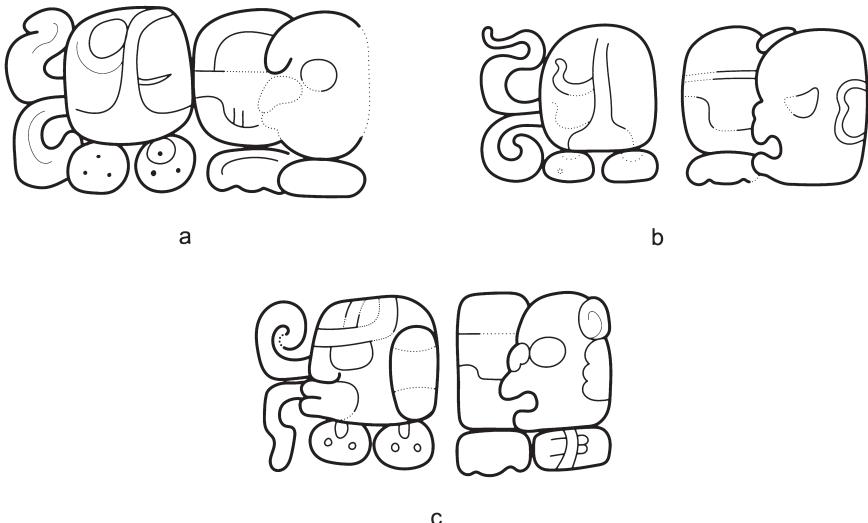
provides two separate entries for *kamis* / *kames*. One is translated as ‘comalío, ciempiés (de la tierra), a kind of centipede’ (Hull 2016: 188) and the other as ‘rosquillo, a kind of centipede’ (*Ibid*: 189). He further explains that “[t]here are two kinds of *kamis*, one that eats the cornfield and one that does not” (*Ibid*: 188).

We suggest that the “Stone-Headed Creature” sign is a logogram **KAMIS**. The main term for centipede in the Maya inscriptions is **CHAPAHT** (Grube and Nahm 1994: 702; Boot 2000: 191–193; Kettunen and Davis 2004: 2–15) and **KAMIS** may refer to a distinct kind or species. It is worth noting that in Charles Wisdom’s dictionary we do not find the term *kamis*, but there is an entry for *chapaht* (Wisdom n.d.: 694).

Going back to the theophoric appellative of *Chak ’Ak’ Paat Kuy* on Element 56, its first part also starts with a **CHAK** logogram, but thereafter we see a sequence of syllabic signs: a “Thick-Lipped Head” or **ho**<sup>1</sup> followed by the syllabograms **la** and **ja**, providing a spelling **CHAK-ho-po-la-ja**, *Chak Hoplaj* (Figure 1b). As Sergei Vepretskii noted, this is a clear substitution pattern that implies that in this context the sign T559 has to be read **HOP**. Thus, the theophoric appellative of *Chak ’Ak’ Paat Kuy* is based on the affective verb *hoplaj* and is read *Chak Hoplaj Kamis*. It refers to the aspect of a specific mythical centipede.

Another substitution pattern can be found in the extended name of *Kokaaj? K’awiil* who ruled at Naranjo from 784 to 810, previously known as *Itzamnaaj K’awil*. The full chain of theophoric appellatives of *Kokaaj? K’awiil* was recorded on Naranjo Stela 35 (Graham 1978: 92) and consists of three elements. The first occupies blocks E3 and F3. Its closing part (**CHAN-na-YOPAAT-ti**) is a reference to *Yopaat*, a specific aspect of the Rain God. The reading *Yopaat* was suggested by David Stuart in 1999 (Martin and Grube 2000: 231). Iconographic evidence from San Bartolo (Taube et al. 2010: 70–71) provides a basis for a straightforward interpretation of the theonymic appellative *Yopaat* as consisting of the nouns *yop[ol]* ‘leaf’ and *’aat* ‘penis’, given that the deity who holds the infant maize baby in his hands (individual P15) appears adorned with an oversized leaf hanging from his belt. The **YOPAAT** logogram is represented by a penis sign topped by

<sup>1</sup> Evidence for the reading of “Thick-Lipped Head” as **ho** (with glottal spirant) and not **jo** (with velar spirant) will be presented in a forthcoming paper (Davletshin n.d.).



**Figure 5.** The appellative *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Chaahk* in Naranjo inscriptions: a) Stela 35, E4–F4, b) Stela 12, G13–F14, c) Stela 14, D11–C12 (drawings by Sergei Vepretskii).

cloudy scrolls.<sup>2</sup> The initial part of the name phrase of *Kokaaj? K'awiil* on Stela 35 includes three graphemes: the logogram **NAAH**, an eroded sign and the specific sign which is similar to the syllabogram **lu**, but has three dots inside. It is used as a main sign of the royal title at Uxul (Grube 2005: 94, 96, fig. 6). Phonetic substitution in the titles of the sculptors on Calakmul stelae 51 and 52 indicates that the **lu**-like sign in question should be read **KUUM** or **KU?M** (Martin et al. 2015).<sup>3</sup> The second appellative from Stela 35 (E4–F4; Figure 5a) starts with the collocation **K'AHK'-HOP-la** followed by a reference to the rain god *Chaahk* (**CHAN-na-CHAAHK-ki**). The third part of this long sequence (E5–F5) is the common **?KOKAAJ K'AWIIL**.

<sup>2</sup> In the present paper we abstain from the discussion whether *Chaahk* and *Yopaat* are two aspects of the same deity or different entities and unite them under the general category “Rain God”.

<sup>3</sup> This identification is confirmed by the text of the Naranjo Stela 8, commissioned by *Kokaaj? K'awiil* (Graham and von Euw 1975: 28), where the same theophoric appellative was recorded in a slightly different way (blocks C10–D10, E1). C10 opens with the head of the Tonsured Maize God, a syllabic sign **na** (Zender 2014: 6–7). It is followed by a well-preserved **ku** syllabogram placed on top of a supposed **KU?M** sign. The theonym *Yopaat* is found in a separate position (E1) and depicts the head of the rain deity with cloud scrolls on his head and holding an eccentric in his hand (Stone and Zender 2011: 159). The sky sign in D10 is written with the head of a celestial bird.

The same chain can also be found on Naranjo Stela 14 (Graham and von Euw 1975: 38) after the reference to the accession of *Kookaj? K'awiil*, whose common name can be found in D12 (Figure 6). D10 is rather unclear in Ian Graham's drawing, but our photos taken in the bodega of the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Guatemala City in 2016 show that the glyph block starts with the logogram **NAAH** followed by a possible **KU'M** sign and, in final position, with a syllabogram **ma** (again providing support for the reading **KU'M**). It is followed by **CHAN-na-YOPAAT** in C11 (**YOPAAT** written with the head sign). The theophoric appellation is read *Naah Ku'm Chan Yopaat 'Yopaat is the First Egg(?) in the Sky'*.<sup>4</sup>

The most interesting are blocks D11 and C12 (Figure 5b). The latter is clearly read **CHAN-na-CHAAHK-ki**. D11 starts with the fire sign **K'AHK'** and ends with **la**, but the central sign does not seem to be the **HOP** logogram, but a head sign. The inspection of the fragments of the original monument preserved in the bodega of the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Guatemala City in 2016 showed that this head is the syllabic sign **ho**. It is marked by thick elongated lips, a large eye and a "celt" element on the forehead. Another ovoid sign with two out curved lines is inscribed into the back part of the **ho** head. There is no doubt that it is a **po** sign, thus providing a syllabic spelling **ho-po** that substitutes for the **HOP** logogram.



Figure 6. Theophoric names of *Kookaj? K'awiil* on Naranjo Stela 14 (photograph by the Epigraphic Atlas of Petén Project, CEMYK).

<sup>4</sup> Compare Ch'orti' *ku'm* 'egg' (Hull 2016: 215), 'egg, testicle, any round or ovoid fruit' (Wisdom n.d.: 604); Ch'ol *<qicum>* 'camote' (Aulie and Aulie 2009: 4).



**Figure 7.** Theophoric appellatives including *Hoplaj* in inscriptions on ceramic vessels: a) Vase K4572, b) Vase K9271, c) Plate K4669, d) Vase K4997 (drawings by Sergei Vepretskii after photographs by Justin Kerr).

The full sequence of titles of *Kokaaj? K'awiil* is read *Naah Ku'm Chan Yopaat K'ahk' Hopla[j] Chan Chaahk Kokaaj? K'awiil* and can be spelt in two different ways:

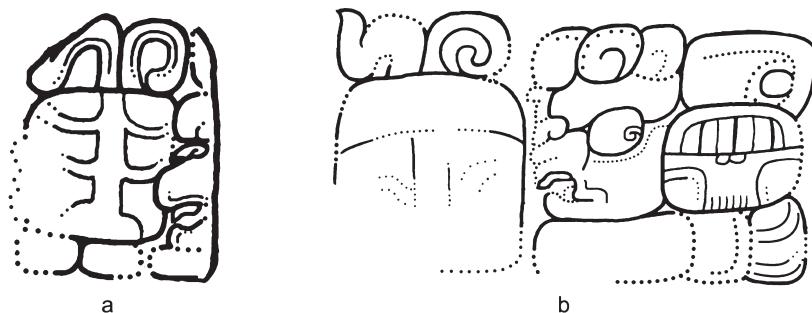
- (1) NAAH-ku-KU'M CHAN-na-YOPAAT-ti K'AHK'-HOP-la CHAN-na-CHAAHK-ki ?KOKAAJ K'AWIIL (Stela 35) and
- (2) NAAH-KU'M-ma CHAN-na-YOPAAT K'AHK'-ho-po-la CHAN-na-CHAAHK-ki ?KOKAAJ-K'AWIIL (Stela 14).

Stela 12, bearing another important text of *Kokaaj? K'awiil* (Graham and von Euw 1975: 36), mentions the appellation *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Chaahk* twice (C13-B14a and G13-F14). In both cases it is written using the **HOP** logogram (Figure 5b).

Another version of the same appellation is recorded on Naranjo Altar 2 (Grube 2004: 208, fig. 13). The last date in the text is 1 Imix 19 Suutz' (9.17.19.9.1 or April 9, 790) (Grube 2004: 207–209). Surprisingly, the sign that should be read **HOP** looks exactly like the logogram **TAAK** (T559 with an infix **K'IN** element).

### Other theophoric appellatives with the verb *hoplaj*

Another aspect of the Rain God—*Yopaat*—is also associated with the affective verb *hoplaj*. Two tall cylindrical vases (Zacatel Cream Polychrome, Panela variety) K4572 (Kerr 1994: 555) and K9271 (Kerr n.d.: No. 9271) were created in the workshop of Baaxwitz (Xultun) king *Yax We'en Chan K'iñich* (Matteo and Krempel 2011; Krempel and Matteo



**Figure 8.** The name *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Yopaat* in the inscriptions from Uaxactun: a) Stela 7, pB12, b) Stela 13, A9 (drawings by Alexandr Safronov).

2013). His extended name phrase includes an additional theonym, *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Yopaat*, written as **K'AHK'-HOP-la CHAN-na yo-YOPAAT-ti** (K4572; Figure 7a) and **K'AHK'-HOP[CHAN]-la yo-YOPAAT-ti** (K9271; Figure 7b, note unusual ligature of the HOP and SKY logograms). In both cases, the final **ja** syllable is omitted due to either underspelling or possible phonological changes.

Another example is found at Uaxactun. Working on the drawing and analysis of the Uaxactun monumental inscriptions, Dmitri Beliaev and Alexandr Safronov reconstructed the dates of birth and accession of a previously unknown Uaxactun king. He is the protagonist of Stela 7 (Graham 1986: 151–152) and events from his life were described in a lengthy but fragmented inscription on the sides of this sculpture (Beliaev and Safronov 2018). On the right side, where his birth date, 8 Ix 7 Wo (9.17.0.1.14, February 23, 771), is found, the name is not preserved. The left side, where the Period Ending of 9.19.0.0.0 is described, contains the nominal glyphs **K'AHK'-HOP-la** (pB12a) and the rests of the sign that represents the name of the Rain God (pB12b) (Figure 8a). Remains of the same sequence, **K'AHK'-HOP-la**, can be seen on the right side, after the inauguration date 9.18.1.16.0 2 Ajaw 8 Sak (August 21, 792).

This ruler was responsible for the production of Stela 13 dated to AD 830 (Graham 1986: 163), where his full name was recorded. The erosion and unusual format of the inscription did not permit its proper understanding until 2015 when, while working with the originals of the rubbings of the monument during the Bratislava

Maya Meeting in the Comenius Bratislava University, Dmitri Beliaev identified the name of the local ruler in position A9 (Figure 8b). It consists of the fire logogram **K'AHK'** on top of an eroded rectangular sign. The analysis of night-time photos by Carlos Pallán as well as a personal inspection of the stela in the field (August, 2018) showed that this rectangular sign features vegetation elements, just like those found in other instances of the **HOP** sign. To the right, we see the head of the rain deity with scrolls on its head, complemented by a **ti** syllabogram, thus pointing out the reading **YOPAAT**. Usually, this variant of the logogram **YOPAAT** has a hand holding a stone or axe, but in this case the hand is covered by a **CHAN** logogram in the lower left corner, so the stone element seems to be placed on top of the sky sign. Hence, the text on Stela 13 is read:

(A1) 7-**AJAW** (A2) ...-**CHAK**-**AT-ta** (A3) **?u-10-PIK** (A4) **yi-?ILA-la-ja**  
 (A5) **?o-[lo]mo** (A6) **ka-...-...** (A7) **?OCH-K'IN-ni KAL-TE?** (A8) **?u-K'AL-TUN-ni**  
 (A9) **K'AHK'-HOP-... [CHAN]YOPAAT-ti** (A10) **?u-...-...** (A11) **?AJ-...-...-ma**

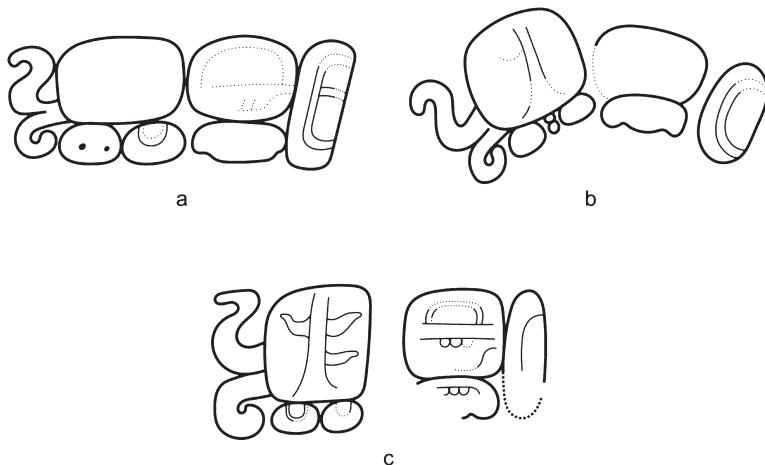
*huk ?Ajaw [huuxlaju?n] Chakat ?u-laju?n-pik y-ilaj ?Olom Ka... ?ochk'in kal[o?m]te?  
 ?u-k'altuu K'ahk' Hop[laj] Chan Yopaat ?u-... ?Aj ...m*

'On the day 7 Ajaw 13 Sip, tenth baktun, he saw it, Olom Ka..., the western emperor. He presented the stone, K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Yopaat, ... he from ...'

A similar theophoric appellative including the name *Yopaat* appears on the plate K4669 (Kerr 1994: 582). This *jawte'* plate belonged to **'Ahk Nikte'**, a court official (**'ahk'uuh?n**) of **K'ahk' Yohl K'ihnich**, king of Yootz (Boot 1999: 40). The long nominal clause of the ruler also includes **CHAK-HOP-la-ja CHAN-na-YOPAT-ta** (Figure 7c). In this case we see the same reference to the action of *Yopaat* in the sky, but it is preceded by a *chak* qualifier like in the case of *Kamis* at La Corona.

A rare example of the names of this type can be observed on the vase K4997 (Kerr 1994: 639), an unprovenanced ceramic bowl. Its short inscription describes it as a clay vessel (**?u-jaay**) of an otherwise unknown lord named **K'AHK'-HOP-la CHAN-na-K'IHNICH**, *Kahk' Hopla[j] Chan K'ihnich* (Figure 7d). It is remarkable that the actor of this phrase is not a centipede or one of the storm deities, but the sun god *K'ihnich Ajaw*.

Nikolai Grube identified the sequence *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan* as a part of the name of Caracol lord *K'ihnich Tobil Yopaat* (Grube 2002: 344). He considered it to be read **#tzu-la**, spelling the word *tzuul* 'dog',



**Figure 9.** The appellative *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Le'm* in inscriptions from Caracol: a) Altar 13, E-F, b) Altar 13, W-X, c) Stela 19, H7-G8 (drawings by Sergei Vepretskii).

and suggested that it was a reference to the ‘Fire Dog’ that is represented in the Dresden Codex. However, a careful examination of the photos of these two inscriptions demonstrated that we are dealing with an extended theophoric appellative, whose structure is similar to the previously analyzed compounds. The unusual thing is that the actor of the phrase was not a supernatural being. The photos of the first passage containing this name on Altar 13 (E-F) shows traces of the sign for “Celt” or ?LE?M<sup>5</sup> (Figure 9a). Therefore, we transliterate this name as K’AHK’-HOP-la CHAN-na-?LE?M. This sequence can be found again in the same inscription (W-X; Figure 9b) and on Stela 19 (H7-G8; Figure 9c).

### Lightning aspects of the Rain God

The names *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Chaahk*, *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Yopaat* and the less frequent *Chak Hoplaj Chan Yopaat*, *Chak Hoplaj Chan K'ihnich* and *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Le'm* belong to a group that also includes the name of Ruler 14 of Copan, who is commonly referred to as *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan K'awiil*. Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube (2000: 206) were the first to relate his name to that of one of the rain gods or “chaacs” of the Yucatec Maya recorded by Villa Rojas in the 1930s. However,

<sup>5</sup> The reading ?LE?M was proposed by David Stuart (2010: 291–294) but is still under discussion. Another possible value is ?SAS as proposed by Alexandre Tokovinine.

they relied on an erroneous transcription of the name as *Hopop Caan Chac* (Thompson 1970: 255). Based on this, Marc Zender proposed that “[t]he -VC<sub>2</sub> reduplication in Hopop Kaan Chak (< \*jop-op ká'an cháak) suggests an affective derivation” (Zender 2010: 10). The revised Mexican edition of the work by Villa Rojas includes this name as “*hohop-caan-chac* (el relampagueante-chac-celestial) el que ocasiona el relampaguedo” (Villa Rojas 1978: 293). The form *hohop* is a typical example of Yucatec affective derivation; compare *hohopáankil* ‘flicker (light)’; *hohopkil* ‘flammable’ (Bricker et al. 1998: 111).

In his discussion of the root #*jop*, Zender commented that “there are no relevant Ch'olan-Tzeltalan cognates beyond (possibly) Ch'oltí' hopmez”. However, Chontal preserved this root with a very similar meaning (*jop* ‘picante’; *Tä' jop ni ich jini* ‘Ese chili es muy picante’. *Jop tan cä jut* ‘Me arden los ojos’ [Keller and Luciano 1997: 139]; *hop* ‘peppery’ [Knowles 1984: 424]). Close semantic connections between Chontal and Yukatecan words can be seen if we compare it not only with contemporary Yucatec, Mopan, Itzaj and Lacandon cognates (Yucatec *hop* ‘revive fire’ [Bricker et al. 1998: 111]; Mopan *jop* ‘prender / light’ [Hofling 2011: 221], *joop* ‘arder, soplar, sonar (fuego), burn, sound (fire)’ [Hofling 2011: 223]); Itzaj *jop* ‘prender, hacer llama, light, make flame’ [Hofling and Tesucún 1997: 320]; Lacandon *jo'par* ‘prenderlo, be lit’ [Hofling 2014: 160]) but also include Colonial Yucatec glosses from the “Calepino de Motul” <*hoplac*> ‘cosa que se escuece o quema como ají, mostaza etc.’ / ‘thing that stings and burns as chili, mustard, etc.’, <*hoplancil*> ‘escocer así la boca o la lengua con chile, etc.’ / ‘to burn in this manner the tongue with chili, etc.’ (Ciudad Real 1995: 351).

In our opinion, the best translation of the appellatives that feature the sequence *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan Chaahk / Yopaat* is ‘As for Fire, *Yopaat / Chaahk* is Burning in the Sky’ We consider that the majority of appellatives involving the verb *hoplaj* represent various aspects of the Rain God and related phenomena. The meaning of *Chak Hoplaj Chan Yopaat* (literally ‘*Yopaat* is burning red in the Sky’) probably refers to an association of lightning with the color red, which is attested among various Mayan groups. Based on contemporary folklore, Staller and Stross indicated that the red lightning is considered to be the most powerful of the lightning deities. For example, in Bachajon Tzeltal tales, Red Lightning Bolt was successful in opening



**Figure 10.** Name glyph of *K'ahk' Mison Chaahk* in the Dresden Codex, page 67a (drawing by Albert Davletshin after a digital photograph by the Saxon State and University Library Dresden; <http://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/2967/71/0/>).

the rock mountain in which maize was hidden while others failed. Red lightning is stronger than green lightning among the Cancuc Tzeltal, Ch'ol and Pokomchi' (Staller and Stross 2013: 186–189).

In his description of the beliefs of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Maya of Quintana Roo, Villa Rojas noted that there were other numina responsible for various types of rain and lightning, besides the four major aspects of the Rain God:

Cada uno de estos otros es considerado como responsable de alguna clase de lluvia o de ciertos truenos y relámpagos. Así: el *ah-thoxon-caan-chaac* (“Chaac repartidor del cielo”) produce la lluvia fina y persistente; el *bulen-caan chaac* o “chaac que causa inundación” es el que trae aguaceros torrenciales”; el *hohop-caan-chaac*, o “chaac encendedor del cielo” es el causante de relámpago; el *mizen-caan-chaac*, o “chaac barredor del cielo”, es el que se ocupa de limpiar el cielo después de las lluvias. (Villa Rojas 1985: 180)

It is worth mentioning that one more of these variants has his counterpart in the hieroglyphic texts. On page 67 of the Dresden Codex (D67a.3), the Rain God is represented walking armed with spear and shield and holding an unidentified object in his right hand. This object looks like a net or sack, half-painted with blue, and *K'awiil* is depicted inside it. The accompanying text explains the scene: **JOY-ja K'AWIIL mi-K'AHK'-k'a-so-no CHAAHK-ki ?EK'-no-KAN-na ?-?AJAN** (Figure 10).

All other sections of this *t'ol* (D65–69a.1) mention various aspects of Rain God (?*Ehm Kan Chaahk*, *Ha'äl ?Ook Chaahk*, *Jo Kan Chaahk*, ?*Ek' Xib Chaahk*, ?*Ajan Chaahk*, *Bolon ?Okte' Chaahk* etc.). So, **mi-K'AHK'-k'a-so-no CHAAHK-ki** should also describe a particular aspect of his. We suggest that the reading order should be reinterpreted as **K'AHK'-k'a-mi-so-no CHAAHK-ki** and transcribed as *K'ahk' Mison Chaahk* or “Fire Whirlwind Chaahk” (cf. Classic Yucatec <mizon, mozon> ‘remolino o tormelino’ [Ciudad Real 1995: 522], *Itzaj mison* ‘remolino de

viento, whirlwind' [Hofling and Tesucún 1997: 446], Mopan *mison-?ik'* 'remolino de aire, tornado, whirlwind, tornado' [Hofling 2011: 308], stemming from the root *mis-* that evolved from proto-Mayan \**mehs* 'broom' [Brown and Wichmann 2004: 174]). Although in the contemporary dictionaries the noun *mison* 'whirlwind, tornado' is limited only to Yucatecan languages, Yuriy Polyukhovych (2009) identified the spelling **mi-so-na**, possibly in the name of a way, in the text on the Late Classic vase K1811, which is now at the de Young Museum in San Francisco.

The fifth block, **?IK'-no-KAN-na**, should refer to some meteorological phenomenon. We suggest that the **no** syllable is used to render *nok* with the elision of the final /k/ before *kan* (\**ka?**an*) 'sky'. The root *nok-* is found in Yucatecan languages with the meaning 'cloudy': Yucatec *nóokoy* 'cloudy' (Bricker et al. 1998: 199), Itzaj *nokoy* 'nublado, oscuro, cloudy, foggy, dark' (Hofling and Tesucún 1997: 476), Mopan *nokoy* 'nublado, cloudy, foggy', *nokoytal* 'nublarse, get cloudy' (Hofling 2011: 326), and especially Lacandon *no'kar* 'nublarse, get cloudy' (Hofling 2014: 239). Hence, the whole passage could be transcribed as [?*u*]-*joyaj K'awiil K'ahk' Mison Chaahk ?ik' no[k] kan ?ajan*, 'Fiery Whirlwind *Chaahk* bound *K'awiil*, black cloudy sky, [many] young maize cobs'.

## Final comments

The reading of the logogram **HOP** shows that the affective verb *hoplaj* was quite frequent in Classic Maya onomastics. It was used in theonyms related to aspects of the Rain God (*Chaahk* and/or *Yopaat*) as lightning. We believe that *K'awiil* (like in Copan) or *Le'm* (like in Caracol) in the theonyms refer to lightning, too. The association of *K'awiil* with lightning and rain is well known (see overview in Taube 1992: 73–79). In Cholan languages, *lem* is also related to lightning (Stuart 2010: 291) like in Cholti <*ulem chahac*> 'relámpago, resplendor de rayo' (Morán 1935[1695]: 56) or Chontal *lemchawäc* 'relámpago, rayo' (Keller and Luciano 1997: 148).

The appellative *K'ahk' Hoplaj Chan K'iñich* ('As for Fire, *K'iñich* is Burning in the Sky'), although structurally identical to those referring to the Rain God and lightning, shows distinct semantics. It probably describes the powerful heat of the Sun God. It is also quite

likely that the name *Chak Hoplaj Kamis* ('Centipede is Burning Red') is also connected to the Sun God, since Taube (2003: 410–413) demonstrated that among the ancient Maya the centipedes were closely associated with sun.

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# **Daylight Upon Dark Waters: A New Reading for the Digraph T501[544]**

BARBARA MACLEOD  
Independent scholar  
(chacbolay@mygrande.net)

PÉTER BÍRÓ  
Independent scholar  
(bpetr30@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** The grapheme T501[544] in the Maya script is a digraph of a sort first proposed by Alfonso Lacadena, wherein two existing signs combine to form a third with a unique value. This uncommon digraph appears in several contexts, one of which makes it a major player in the arena of Classic Maya geopolitics. It has thus been one of the more vexing and tantalizing undeciphered signs. An exhaustive investigation of its environments yields neither a substitution with a known sign in the same environment nor an unequivocal path to the identification of its vowel or consonant(s). While it is possible to partially delimit it phonologically, the reading proposed here has relied heavily upon its generation of meaningful spellings in every known context. We offer a CV value for T501[544] and demonstrate its productivity. This value is shared with a well-known CV sign which has enjoyed consensus for four decades. That these do not (yet) substitute has led the authors to explore other constrained sign sets like this one and to modify or qualify time-honored assumptions about free substitution within the Classic scribal repertoire.

**Resumen:** El grafema T501[544] de la escritura maya es un dígrafo del tipo propuesto por primera vez por Alfonso Lacadena, en el que dos signos existentes se combinan para formar un tercero con un valor único. Este dígrafo poco común aparece en varios contextos, en uno de los cuales el signo se convierte en un jugador importante en la arena de la geopolítica maya clásica. Por lo tanto, ha sido uno de los signos no descifrados más desconcertantes y tentadores. Una investigación exhaustiva de sus contextos no produce ni una sustitución con un signo conocido en el mismo contexto, ni un camino inequívoco hacia la identificación de su vocal o consonante(s). Aunque es posible delimitarlo parcialmente en el ámbito fonológico, la lectura propuesta aquí se basa en gran medida en su capacidad de generar composiciones significativas en todos los contextos conocidos. Ofrecemos un valor CV para T501[544] y demostramos su productividad. Este valor es compartido por un conocido signo CV que ha gozado de consenso durante cuatro décadas. El hecho de que éstos no se sustituyan (todavía) ha llevado a los autores a explorar otros conjuntos de signos restringidos como éste y a modificar o calificar supuestos tradicionales sobre la libre sustitución dentro del repertorio de los escribas clásicos.

In a brilliant paper about the origin of Maya writing presented at the Tenth European Maya Conference in Leiden, the Netherlands, Alfonso Lacadena (2005, 2010) considered within the Maya writing system evidence suggestive of non-Mayan origins. In this presentation he introduced the concept of the *digraph* to the community of Maya epigraphers. He detailed two processes wherein a given writing system had to respond to new demands, such as a change of language or changes *within* a language. In the case of a borrowed script, a newly adopted system may lack the signs to transcribe the phonemes belonging to the adopting language, while in the second case, new phonemes may arise in a language which cannot be accommodated by an older script without the creation of new signs. Drawing upon other ancient writing systems, he offered several models: for example, the adoption of the Sumerian writing system by Akkadian scribes in Mesopotamia in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE or the adoption of Cretan linear writing by continental Mycenaean Greeks in the middle of second millennium BCE.

In the process, the scribes might have only partially reformed the adopted writing system, thus unwittingly engendering an awkward situation. Mycenaean Greek maintained the terrible ambiguities of the inherited sign inventory, wherein there were no written distinctions between *l* and *r* or *k*, *kh*, and *g* nor between *p*, *b*, and *f*—ambiguities arising from the absence of such distinctions in the original system. A practical option is to create new signs representing the phonemes lacking in the adopted writing system. As Lacadena pointed out, the mechanisms for creating new signs are independent of the epoch and the writing system—that is, scribes across great spans of time and distance have used the same processes to form new graphemes. One option is to modify an existing sign to form a new sign, while in another process the scribe could combine two existing signs to form a *digraph*.

Lacadena carefully identified the modified and digraph signs in the Maya syllabary. He noted new signs containing the phonemes /b'/ or /m/, /ch/, /h/, /l/, /x/ and the glottalized consonants /ch'/, /k'/, /t'/ and /tz'/. He suggested from this pattern that the origin of Maya writing lay in the Olmec (or Epi-Olmec writing) system, and that this dovetailed with the absence within the reconstructed Mixe-Zoquean proto-language of phonemes which were present



Figure 1. T501[544] (drawings by Péter Bíró).

archaically in written Mayan languages and which persist in their daughter languages today.

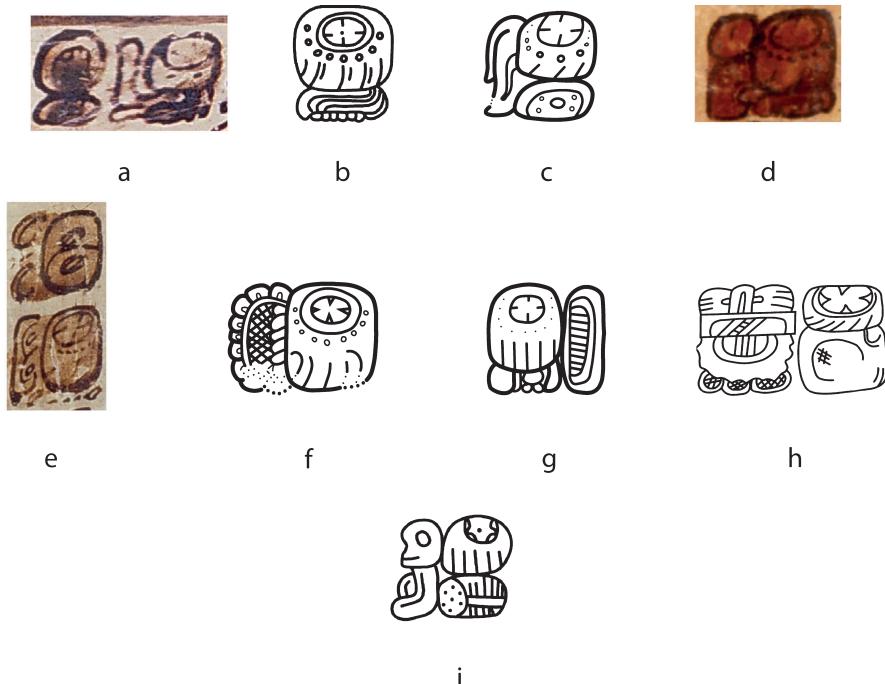
Our paper concerns a hitherto undeciphered digraph which in the Thompson catalogue system is designated T501[544] (Figure 1). This grapheme is one of a series of digraphs which are composed of the sign T501 into which is infixes another sign:

- T501[617] **b'a**,
- T501[533] **ma** and
- T501[528] **t'u**.<sup>1</sup>

As is obligatory with any new decipherment, we have analyzed each context for the sign with attention to phonology, morphosyntax, sentence syntax and semantics. We have grouped the examples thematically, and as needed, we note temporal and geographic distribution as well as the medium in which the text occurs. To this methodology we add Lacadena's study of digraphs as well as other intra-script spelling patterns. We are thus able to constrain the possible candidates for T501[544].

The temporal distribution of T501[544] ranges from 623 to 881 CE, or during the Late Classic Period. More than half of the examples occur in one environment—that is, they have the same spelling and a preposed numerical coefficient. The sign is equally distributed throughout all major regions—the Western, Petexbatún, Southeast, and Central regions and the Northern Lowlands (the Textdatenbank und Wörterbuch des Klassischen Maya, courtesy of Christian Prager). It also appears on a number of painted ceramic vessels which by

<sup>1</sup> The assumptions about the phonology of the language, especially the vowel system and its representation, lead to the problems of orthography, transliteration and transcription, the latter forming a hotly debated topic among epigraphers. The phonological structure of Classic Ch'olan might have had a 10-vowel system, or better said, it may have differentiated between short and long vowels, but its presence in the script cannot yet be proven satisfactorily. Therefore, we will not use the disharmonic principle suggested by Houston, Stuart and Robertson (1998), later modified by Lacadena and Wichmann (2004).



**Figure 2.** The contexts of T501[544]: a) K'AN wi-X-ni (K1485), b) X-ni, c) yo-X-b'i, d) wa-X-li (K5847), e) (ya-lo) u-X-la (K5450), f) ju-X, g) X-sa(-a), h) tza-ma-X-pa-xu?, i) X-ta (drawings by Péter Bíró, photographs courtesy of Justin Kerr).

style date to the Late Classic Period. It fits a phenomenon wherein—for reasons unclear—several new signs were either invented by Late Classic scribes or introduced from codices into more durable but perhaps more limiting media.

### The Contexts of T501[544]

This important but uncommon sign has long been elusive. It occurs in contexts of sufficient geopolitical significance that its undeciphered status has been frustrating. In proposing that it is a CV syllabogram, one finds that its various environments only partially constrain its vowel. This problem had previously led one of the authors to suggest it to have both a syllabic and a logographic value. That suggestion has now been superseded in favor of a single CV proposal.

Its spelling environments—grouped thematically—are as follows (Figure 2a-i):

K'AN wi-X-ni , X-na, X-ni and ya-X-ni  
 yo-X-b'i  
 wa-X-li  
 (ya-lo) u-X-la  
 ju-X  
 X-sa(-a) and X-su  
 X-ta  
 tza-ma-X-pa-xu?

Although recognized phonological and spelling-rule constraints do not leave one vowel standing, there are two which can be eliminated due to the scribal conventions of their use: **Ce** and **Co**. While the **yo-X-bi** context in isolation invites both **Ci** and **Co**, **Co** is highly unlikely in the environment **ju-X**.

**Ci** is by default appealing, but exhaustive testing by various epigraphers has yielded no satisfactory result to our knowledge. The remaining options **Ca** and **Cu** have also been subjected to thorough evaluation. The **ju-X** and **X-su** environments favor **Cu**.

An often-useful approach with regard to the consonant—unfortunately not productive in this case—has been to narrow the search to the still-empty slots in the syllabary. With the elimination of \**p'V* from the inventory due to its probable absence from the Classic-period languages, and finding no candidate among the empty slots, we were obliged to assume the sign to have a value already represented by a known syllabogram, but with which it is not yet known to substitute. As an example, we have recently published (cf. Gronemeyer and MacLeod 2010; Bíró et al. 2014) a decipherment of T271 as **xi**. The two **xi** allographs substitute only once over a great span of time and distance, but they do so unequivocally. Notably, one has the shape of an affix and the other that of a main sign—a circumstance found here as well. We believe the scribal syllabic inventory included sign-shape options for every CV member.

### Prior Proposals for T501[544]

Christian Prager (n.d.) in 1994 shared with colleagues a compilation of all contexts then known for the sign nicknamed “Sun Imix” or “K'in Imix”. He suggested a syllabic value **p'u** for it and offered reasonable interpretations for those contexts as they were understood in the mid-1990s. While Kaufman and Norman (1984: 85), have argued that the contrast between /b'/ and /p'/ was an inno-

vation within Greater Tzeltalan, justifying their reconstruction for proto-Ch'olan of a handful of /p'/-initial words (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 129–130), there has been no viable **p'V** proposal in the syllabic inventory. However, Wichmann (2006: 48–54) concludes that the phoneme /p'/ is *not* reconstructible to proto-Ch'olan due to its absence from Ch'orti'; therefore, it would not have been present in the Classic script except very late and in very restricted areas. For this reason and for lack of support among colleagues, Prager's reading was set aside. Epigraphers are now in agreement that the phoneme /p'/ is not represented in the script, and syllabaries of the last two decades (cf. Stuart 2006: 29; Tokovinine 2015: 37) do not include a **p'V** column in the syllabic grid.

A proposal by Marc Zender (2014: 55–59) was prompted by the discovery of T501[544] in a “name tag” on two incised bone rings from a tomb at Cahal Pech, Belize (Santisilia 2013: 53–54; Zender 2014: 52–60). This remarkable context, in which the elusive sign was positioned between **yo-** and **-b'i** syllables, led Zender to suggest an **sV** value in positing a word \*y-osib' (<\*y-och-es-ib') ‘his ring’ (literally ‘entering instrument’). His argument is based on phonological processes within two Ch'olan languages involving the causative derivation of the root \*'och ‘enter’ (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 127). But while an **sV** value is explanatory in naming a “ring” it does not work in the other contexts for T501[544].

Following Zender's proposal, an early draft of MacLeod (in press) offered the hypothesis that the bone rings originally encircled a wooden shaft, likely that of a paintbrush, since the tomb assemblage included a shell inkpot containing paint residue (Santisilia 2013: 40, 51–52). To explain this context, MacLeod suggested a logographic value **HOB'ON** *hobon* ‘color’ (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 215) yielding \*yo-(h)ob'on-ib' ‘his coloring instrument’. The additional entry *ah bolon hobon* ‘el que sabe muchos oficios’ (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 63) appeared to fortify the proposal in explaining the numbered title as that of a master artisan or craftsman. And following Prager, MacLeod suggested that T501[544] had an additional syllabic value **b'u** found in \*b'uC words which would later have p'uC reflexes. This in turn might account for the contexts in which Prager's **p'u** proposal seemed attractive. These readings have been set aside, however, in favor of the proposal offered here.

Rogelio Valencia Rivera and Alejandro Sheseña Hernández (2016: 107–109) have carried forward the “ring” proposal by Zender, suggesting a logographic value **'OCH** for T501[544]. This would yield \*y-och-ib ‘his entering instrument’ for the ring text while accounting for a recurring association between T501[544].116 and the **CH'EN** ‘cave’ logogram (Valencia Rivera and Sheseña Hernández 2016: 113–114)—an observation which we share and consider below. Their analysis of the sequence T501[544].116 as \*’ochin ‘sumidero’ relies upon a word *ochin* in the de Ara Dictionary (1986: 351) meaning ‘entrar a ver a alguno’. It is in the leap from this entry—which we analyze as the intransitive root *'och* derived by the transitivising usative suffix *-in*—that their interpretation of the numbered title as a count of caves most notably fails to persuade. Another piece of evidence they cite is from a text on the carved back of a pyrite mirror published by Matteo and Krempel (2011: 960) naming an individual as *Yochin Ajaw*, which they translate as ‘Señor de la Entrada’. We don’t offer a better analysis, but nothing in the scene confirms the suggested translation. The authors also argue for logographic **'OCH** in contexts such as **ju-T501[544]** and **T501[544]-su** wherein they must repeatedly invoke underspellings (\**ju[l]*) or postulate unknown toponyms (\**su*). Their paper does a great service, however, in mapping the distributions of the numbered titles, in illustrating most of the known contexts for the sign, and in making a committed effort to explain them all in terms of a single proposed value.

### A Proposed Syllabic Value **tz'u**

Motivated initially by K1485 (Figure 3), we have explored a **tz'u** value for this sign. This works acceptably to very well in almost all contexts but one. That single outlier (Caracol Stela 3, A20) is compromised by major damage—likely intentional in antiquity—to the signs which follow T501[544]. We will nonetheless share a tentative solution. Following are the known thematic contexts for T501[544] or “K’IN IMIX”.

#### Context 1: **T501[544]-ni/na**

On K1485 an *Itzam Tun* is named **K'AN wi-tz'u-ni** *K'an Wi' Tz'un* ‘Precious Root of the Plantation’/‘Lineage’. Here *Itzam Tun* denotes



**Figure 3.** Kerr 1485 (courtesy of Justin Kerr).

an aspect of the Old Earth Lord in a set of four. \**tz'unh* 'sembrar' is reconstructed by Kaufman (2003) for proto-Western Mayan. With epigraphic support it may be assumed to have been present in Classic Ch'olan. The word *wi'* is widespread with the meaning 'root' and the syllabogram's iconic origin is obvious as such. We acknowledge that K1485—a vase without provenience—has had modern restoration (overpainting) and that this apparent example of T501[544] may have originally been a different sign.

Following are relevant entries from Kaufman (2003: 1039):

WM	* <i>tz'unh</i>		
TZO	<i>tz'un</i>	vt	sembrar
TZE	<i>tz'un</i>	vt	sembrar
TOJ	<i>tz'un</i>	vt	sembrar
QAN	<i>maxstz'unu7</i>		lo sembró
POP	<i>tz'un</i> (sic)	vt	sembrar
POP	<i>xstz'unu</i>		lo sembró
TUZ	<i>tz'unh</i>	vt	sembrar
TUZ	<i>tz'unh</i>	vt	sembrarlo
QAN	<i>tz'un.b'al itaj</i>		huerto, huerta, hortaliza
TUZ	<i>tz'unh.e:n</i>	s	siembra
TUZ	<i>tz'unh.en.laq</i>		huerta
TUZ	<i>tz'unh.o:m</i>		finquero
TUZ	<i>tz'unh.ub'</i>		cacao



**Figure 4.** Kerr 1599 (courtesy of Justin Kerr).

Tzotzil (Laughlin 2010: 121):

*tz'unbal, -s.* el animal pie de cría, la costumbre, la raza, la semilla escogida para sembrar, discurso denunciatorio, refiriéndose a alguien disgustado o mal dispuesto

*Jna'tik butalem atz'unbal?*      ¿Quién sabe de donde viene tu semilla?

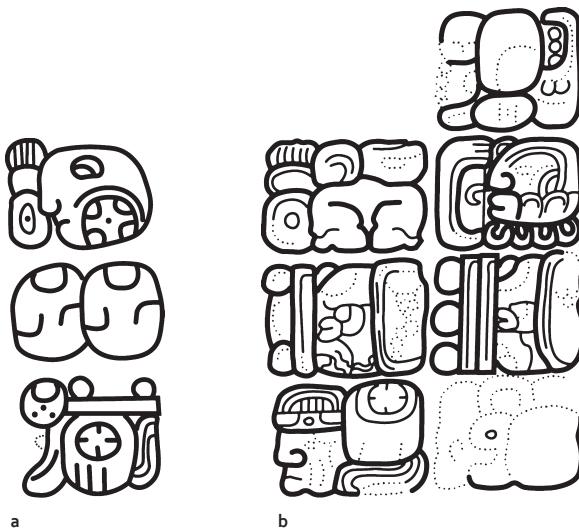
Colonial Tzendal (Ara 1986: 401):

<i>tzumbaghib</i>	heredad ('land as property')
<i>tzunbalti</i>	ramo para plantar, y los que hincan en las procesiones
<i>tzunbaghon</i>	sembrar
<i>tzumbaghel</i>	hortelano

Note in particular the use of *tz'unb'al* above in reference to lineage (*raza*) and to progeny of animals and humans as well as to seed for planting. Pertinent also is the translation 'heredad', signaling the land and usufruct rights of a lineage. The *-b'al* suffix is a nominalizer in Tzotzil and Tzendal. The term *tz'un* and its ramifications will be addressed in more detail following several related occurrences.

On K1599 (Figure 4) we note **u-b'a-hi ti ye-hi K'AWIL-la tz'u-na ub'ah ti yeh k'awil tz'una(l?)**: 'it is his image (the king) amid the display of sustenance of the plantation'. The scene depicts offerings by subordinates of food and drink in bowls and jars amid an audience with the Dos Pilas king.

This lexeme was regularly spelled **tz'u-ni** and once **tz'u-na**. If one accepts the disharmonic principle originally suggested by Houston, Stuart and Robertson (1998), modified later by Lacadena and Wich-



**Figure 5.** *a)* Aguateca Stela 19, caption text (drawing by Péter Bíró after Ian Graham). *b)* Naranjo Stela 30 (D12-D15; drawing by Péter Bíró after Alexandre Tokovinine).

mann (2004), then the reconstructed form would be \*tz'u'n/tz'u'un and then later \*tz'uun (cf. Lacadena and Wichmann 2004: 116–118, table 6.4). The competing hypothesis by Kaufman (2003), modified by Mora-Marín (2010), suggests that the spellings **tz'u-ni** and **tz'u-na** mark different grammatical or semantic categories, each with its own common suffixes. As a compromise, we propose that one of these terms (the numbered toponymic title) is political/geographic and the other is purely agricultural.<sup>2</sup>

'7 tz'un, 9 tz'un' as a pair, as well as single examples with coefficients of 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 or 10, represent collectives with predictable regional distributions. While these might be understood as large *tz'un* 'plantations' or agricultural regions, with the term functioning as (1) titles of persons from these regions, and (2) nouns representing these locales, we see in the Tzotzil *tz'unb'al* 'raza' and the Tzental *tzumbaghib* (\**tz'un-b'aj-ib*) 'heredad' a specific relationship to both lineage and land ownership, concepts also shared by 'polity'. The sense of 'another's region/another's polity' is conveyed by the example from Aguateca St. 19 (Figure 5a), wherein a conqueror

<sup>2</sup> In the absence of a reconstructible complex vowel we will transliterate this noun as *tz'un*, acknowledging that its form is likely not identical to the CVC transitive root form.



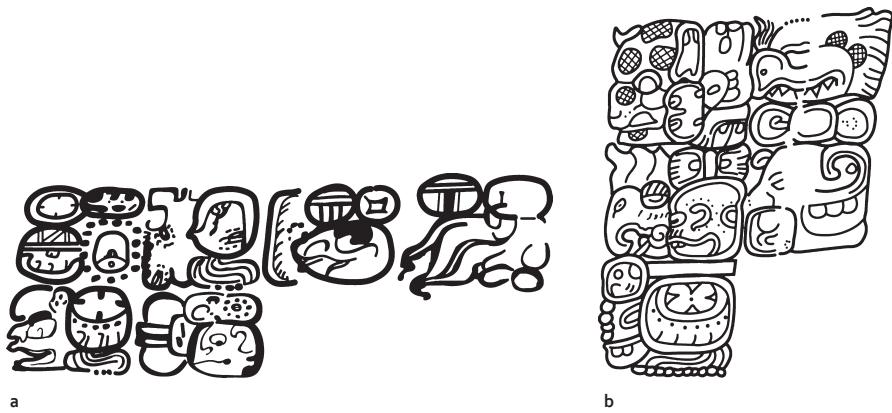
**Figure 6.** *a)* Cancuen Panel (E1-E4; drawing by Péter Bíró after Yuriy Polyukhovych). *b)* Calakmul Fragment (drawing by Péter Bíró after Simon Martin).

displays a captive with the title. He should not be, one assumes, from the captor's own satellite polity.

The numbered *tz'un* title is one of several numbered regional titles which are connected to a given king and his territory; these are all still poorly understood. The most prominent is the numbered *tzuk* title (*tzuk*: 'province, division'), which was widely distributed in the Maya Lowlands (Tokovinine 2013: 91–104). Each *tzuk* encompassed several sites; occasionally its coefficient was preceded by 'east' or 'west' as further geographic qualification. The numbered *tz'un* title may associate with the numbered *tzuk* 'divisions' title within a paradigm perhaps relating polity cores and boundaries. On Naranjo Stela 30 (Figure 5b) a dance ceremony of the king was attended by visitors from both the 7 *tzuk* divisions and the region of 5 *tz'un*.

In the narrative of the looted panel from Cancuen (Figure 6a), the young heir K'iib' Ajaw on his long walk home journeys from Calakmul (Figure 6b) through territory termed 7 *tz'un*, 9 *tz'un* and over what we suggest to be 6 *k'a(h)* 12 *k'a(h)* 'six bridges and twelve bridges' (proto-Ch'olan \**k'ah-te'* 'bridge' [Kaufman and Norman 1984: 123]).

On several occasions he visits sacred shrines to make offerings. We will return to this monument with the discussion of *jutz'* 'ritual retreat'. As we now understand this, 7 *tz'un* 9 *tz'un* designates two



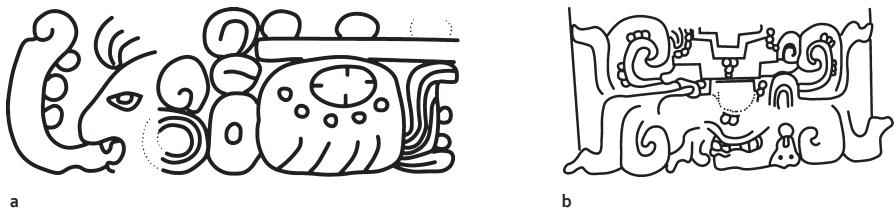
**Figure 7.** *a)* Naj Tunich Drawing 82 (E1-H1; drawing by Péter Bíró after Andrea Stone). *b)* Randel Stela (E1-E3; drawing by Péter Bíró after Simon Martin).

collectives of territories-with-lineages of the Central Lowlands known from other contexts to be associated with Calakmul.

Following are relevant ‘bridge’ entries from Kaufman (2003: 64–65):

pM	*q'aH..	bridge
QEQ	<i>q'a</i>	puente
QEQu	<i>q'ah</i>	puente
GTz	* <i>k'aaj</i> < * <i>q'a7j</i> or * <i>q'ahj</i>	
pCh	* <i>k'ah=te7</i>	ridge
CHL	<i>k'aj=te7</i>	puente
TZO	# <i>coh</i>	puente
TZE	<i>k'a7=te7</i>	puente
TOJ	<i>k'aj=te7</i>	puente
MCH	<i>q'aj</i>	palo travesado por río, palo para travesar río [makeshift bridge across stream]
MCH	<i>q'a7j-u'</i> ~: <i>q'a7j-i'</i>	botar palo para pasar río
TUZ	<i>q'aj</i>	arroyo

There are more references to ‘numbered tz’un’ found on ceramics and stone monuments than we can feature here. One of special significance occurs in the text of Drawing 82 in Naj Tunich Cave (Figure 7a), wherein the polity of Baax Tuun (likely adjacent to nearby Little Quartz Ridge in Belize) is qualified as belonging to the region of 7 tz’un. A titular function appears on the “Randel Stela” from Sak Tz’i’ (Figure 7b), where the main protagonist has the title *Aj Ho’ Tz’un*.

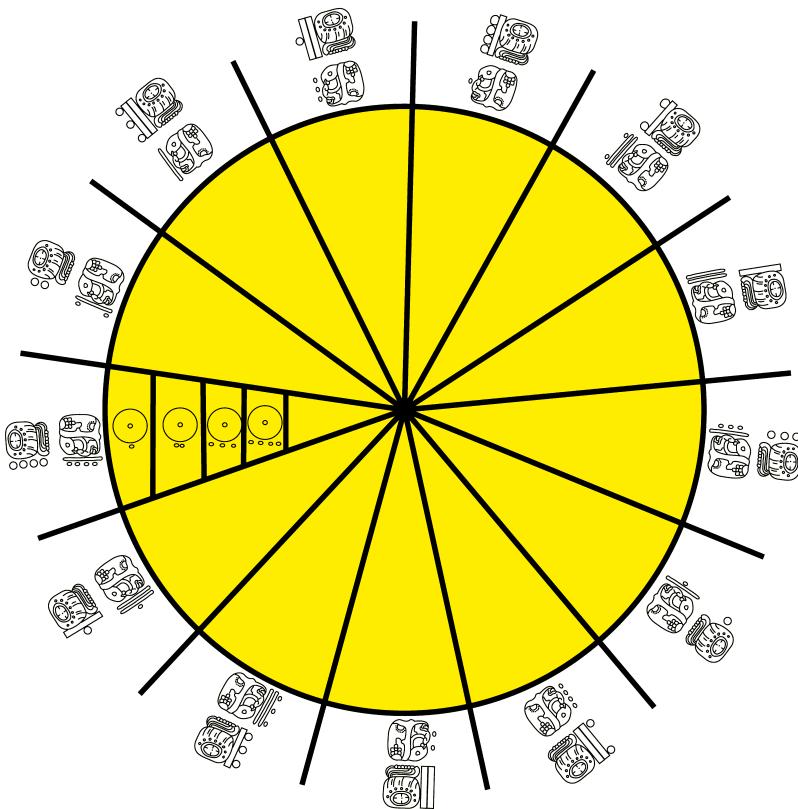


**Figure 8.** *a)* Copan Temple 18 Panel text. *b)* Copan Temple 18 Panel text (drawings by Péter Bíró after Linda Schele).

The wall panels of Copan Temple 18 (Figure 8a, b) depict the king Yax Pasaj dancing upon animate mountains with sprouting vegetation—an iconographic representation of the *tz'un*. The building contained a bench with eight chthonic masks as well as a tier of two chambers (the lower one being the tomb of the king) containing eight niches which may have held effigies representing territories under the hegemony of Copan.

The Copan Temple 18 case leads to a more precise understanding of *tz'un* as the precinct of sacred usufruct rights of a lineage. Land rights were granted by the Earth Lords who—as suggested by K1485—are the *K'an Wi' Tz'un*, ‘precious root(s) of the plantation’, without whose authority no human claim nor use was permissible. The term *tz'un* ‘precinct of a lineage's usufruct rights’ was thus tied to *ch'en* ‘cave’, ‘sacred center of a lineage and residence of its gods and ancestors’ and was concomitantly sacrosanct. The physical *ch'en* was the locus of rites of negotiation for the metaphysical attributes of the *tz'un* (MacLeod in press).

The word *ch'en* has sometimes been given the problematic translation as ‘town, village, world’. This dilutes it and distracts from its core meaning. We consider the *ch'en* to be a natural or perhaps constructed cave where the gods (*k'uh, way*), the ancestors (*mam*), and living humans (*winik*) reside or are anchored to the Earth. It is a place where all rights to the land and its boundaries are negotiated, and it is this sacred and ancestral authority alone which permits the land and its inseparable lineage to bear offspring, to yield sustenance. Ritual is central to the *ch'en*; it is the locus of a living contract of reciprocity with the sacred. As we now understand the *tz'un*, it is the greater circle of land surrounding the *ch'en*, tied deeply to the lineage, whose use, boundaries, inhabitants and productivity are



**Figure 9.** *Tz'un, tzuk and pet in an ideal k'atun wheel* (drawing by Péter Bíró).

contracted with the Earth Lord(s). It cannot exist independently of a lineage nor of the blood offerings that must be poured back onto it.

In the vocabulary of Classic Maya political organization epigraphers have recognized *kab'*, *ch'en*, *tzuk*, *pet* and *tz'un*—all of which appear as numbered titles. They seem to behave at times as synonyms, but they are not, as will likely be demonstrated amid progress in analyzing them. They represent a relationship between humans, gods, ancestors and land that is fundamentally non-European; thus, we struggle to find appropriate translations in English. It is better to describe them as a network of related concepts.



Figure 10. K2914 (courtesy of Justin Kerr).

In the Maya corpus, the better-understood *tzuk* has the meaning of ‘division, province’, although in one instance ‘thirteen *tzuk*’ (on the famous Altar 3 at the site of Altar de los Reyes) refers to an inventory of thirteen major polities whose Emblem Glyphs appear on the side of the altar. Tokovinine (2013: 106) argues that the signs on the top following the number thirteen are likely to be ***tzu-ku*** rather than a second ***ka-ba***; we concur. In this context, each *tzuk* would be understood as a division; the whole calls to mind the drawing of the *k'atun* wheel in the Chilam Balam of Chumayel (Gordon 1913: 72; Roys 1967: 132–137, fig. 28). In another context from Yula, the 4 *tzuk* expression refers to the four cardinal directions, likely in association with the four parts of a plaza. In both examples, the term reflects a system of ‘mytho-geopolitics’ akin to the 13 *winaq* and 7 *amaq* expressions in the Highland Maya narratives (Beliaev 2000: 76). We understand *tz'un* to be a geopolitical concept similar to *tzuk* in behavior and co-occurrences, but we have also previously suggested an inherent relationship to *ch'en*.

In Colonial Yucatec *pet* means ‘round, circle’ and its derivation *peten* means ‘island, province’ (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 647–648). But as a numerical classifier (# -*pet*) it has a more restricted meaning as ‘a unit serving to count *milpas* (agricultural fields)’ (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 648). In the Classic corpus *pet* occurs at least in two different contexts. In numbered *pet* expressions (4 *pet*, 9 *pet* etc.) it also seems to mean ‘province’ or ‘division’. Otherwise, it operates as a numer-



Figure 11. K5070 (courtesy of Justin Kerr).

ical classifier for agricultural fields within a single polity, as in *ho' pet ux hab'te'* at Río Azul (Figure 9).

Examples from K2914 (Figure 10), which originated at Río Azul, and a panel fragment from the Calakmul Ballcourt (Figure 6b) demonstrate co-occurrences of *ch'en* 'cave' with *tz'un*. On K2914 *Ho' Tz'un Ho' Ch'en* appears in the nominal phrase of the vase's owner.

On K5070 (Figure 11) one notes **u-WAY ya-tz'u-ni uwahy y-a[*j*]** *tz'un* 'the wahy of the [cacao] planters'. These are the naguals or spirits who aid human arborists in the care of the cacao plantation. The monkey holds a cacao pod. Note above the Tuzantec reference to a cacao plantation.

## Context 2: yo-501[544]-b'i

Burial 7 of Structure B-1 at Cahal Pech (Santisilia 2013; Zender 2014) contained two incised bone rings of approximately 1.5 cm in diameter and height, each with a phrase including the spelling **yo-tz'u-bi y-(h)otz'-ib** 'instrument for extracting'—as a spoon for taking something from a vessel (cf. Yucatec *hotz'* [/h/-initial; Arzápalo 1995: 1763]) (Figure 12a). This we interpret as a name-tag encircling the handle of an implement of perishable material (presumably wood) rather than a designator of the ring itself.



**Figure 12.** a) “Ring” of the Burial 7 of Str. B1, Cahal Pech (drawing by Péter Bíró after Marc Zender). b) K5487, c) detail of K5487. d) K5450, e) detail of K5450 (photographs courtesy of Justin Kerr).

We acknowledge that a **yo-Cu-b'i** spelling is unexpected. Perhaps the root had a complex vowel, or formed a \*hotz'-u(-n) transitive stem in Ch'olan which dictated a **Co-Cu** spelling. No cognates are known outside Yucatec, but as with Tzeltalan sources, there are numerous precedents for assuming a word from Yucatecan sources to have been available to Ch'olan speakers when script evidence is present.

### Context 3: wa-501[544]-li

On K5847 (Figure 12b) the vertical text before the seated effigy begins with **CHUM-ku wa-tz'u-li** *chumuk wa' tz'u'-il* 'it (the effigy) is seated here in the center' (Figure 12c). *Tz'u'* entries appear below:

Itzaj (Hofling 1997):

*tz'u'* center (of town, milpa, land, tree, body, head, eye...)

Yucatec (Barrera Vásquez 1980):

*tz'u'* centro, meollo, tuétano; centro de la tierra o del mundo...

### Context 4: 501[544]-la

On K5450 (Figure 12d) we note the spelling **ya-lo u-tz'u-la NAH-i-la** *y-al-o(b') u-tz'ula(l) nahila(l)* 'the children of the high-ranking lady's household' (Figure 12e). The scene features four male youths in conversation or play while the adults engage in more courtly protocols. The phrase **ya-lo (-o) tz'u-la** appears three times on the vase, but only once with **NAH-i-la**. We acknowledge that the literary integrity of the texts on this vase has been challenged by several colleagues (Yuriy Polyukhovych, personal communication, 2018); we nonetheless suggest readings that seem useful in relation to the depicted scene and to a text which may be partly pseudoglyphic.

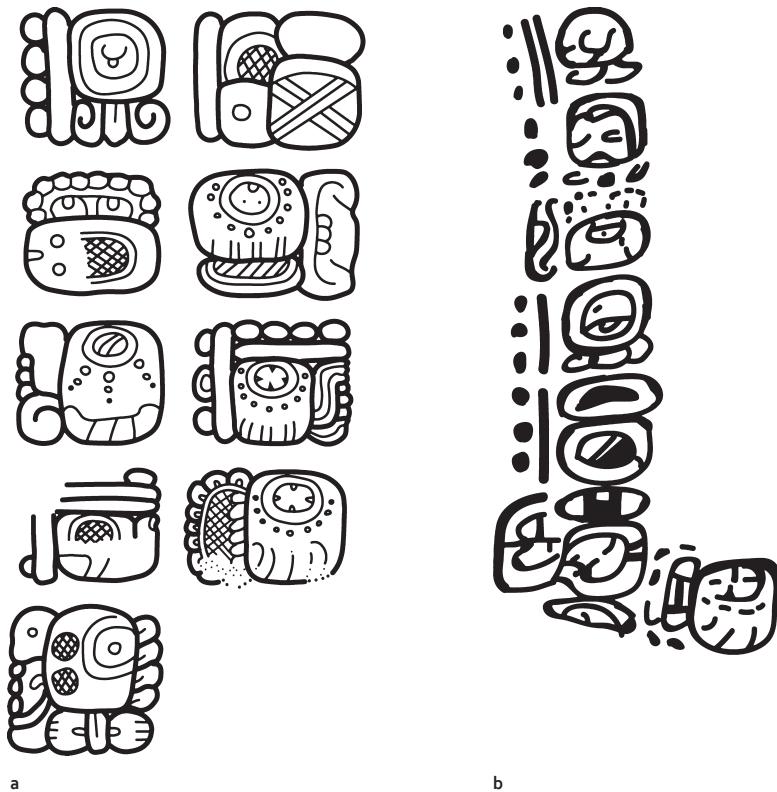
Below are Kaufman's (2003: 69) entries for *tz'ul*:

Yu	#tz'uhl YUK	<i>tz'u:l</i>	gentleman, master
ITZ		<i>tz'ul</i>	rico, adinerado
cf. XNK		<i>tz'uulhi</i>	ladino

### Context 5: ju-501[544]

Returning to the Cancuen looted panel (Figure 13a), we find a juxtaposed, perhaps alliterative use of T501[544] in the phrase **ju-tz'u a'-AK'-no-ma** *hutz' ak'nom* 'pilgrim offerer' (cf. Yuc *hutz'* 'apartarse, desviar, arredrar').

In Drawing 88 of Naj Tunich (Figure 13b), the short sentence **'i ko-jo-yi ju-tz'u** *'i kohoy hurtz'* 'and then descended the pilgrims' appears. A more precise translation—one consistent with the Yucatec entry—would be 'person in ritual retreat', as was true of these individuals. The entry is under /h/ in the (Colonial Yucatec)

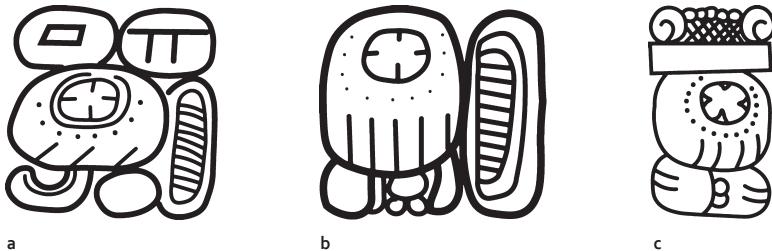


**Figure 13.** *a)* Cancuen Panel (E1-F4; drawing by Péter Bíró after Yuriy Polyukhovych). *b)* Naj Tunich Drawing 88 (drawing by Péter Bíró after Andrea Stone).

Motul Dictionary, so we must assume loss of the /j/ vs. /h/ distinction by the horizon of these examples at Cancuen and Naj Tunich. The likelihood of this is strengthened by the **ko-jo-yi** spelling for *kohoy* ‘descend(ed)’—a matter considered in more detail elsewhere (MacLeod in press).

### Context 6: 501[544]-sa/sa-a/su

One notes **tz'u-sa AJAW-wa** *Tz'us([h]a') Ajaw* (Figure 14a), **tz'u-sa-a** *Tz'us-(h)a'* (Figure 14b) and **AJ tz'u-su** *Aj Tz'us* (Figure 14c) spellings in toponymic titles at Waka', La Mar and Sak Tz'i', respectively. These may (but might not) have shared the same root *tz'us*. Alternatively, two homophones may be present; a resolution requires further inquiry into the geography and ecology of these places.



**Figure 14.** a) El Peru Stela 7 (B10; drawing by Péter Bíró after Ian Graham). b) La Mar Stela 1 (A5; drawing by Péter Bíró after John Montgomery). c) Brussels Panel (Sak Tz'i'; A7a; drawing by Péter Bíró after Alexander Safronov).

Tz'us in Colonial and Modern Tzeltal is ‘to enclose’; there are tz'us cognates in Yucatec and Itzaj meaning ‘close (off)’. Thus tz'us-(*h*) *a'* may be ‘enclosed water’ (perhaps a dammed arroyo forming a pond?). Tz'us alone could be ‘enclosure’ in either the geographic or constructed sense. Alternatively, we find tz'us (Mopan: Ulrich and Ulrich 1976: 227) and tz'usub’ (proto-Ch'olan) as ‘uva silvestre’/‘wild grape’. Aj Tz'us—listed among allies in a battle—would perhaps be ‘person from the enclosure’, unless a spot with grapes in abundance warranted its own toponym.

### Context 7: AJ-501[544]-ta

A unique title spelled **AJ-501[544]-ta aj tz'ut** appears on Lintel 2 of the Temple of the Four Lintels at Chichen Itza (cf. the Textdatenbank und Wörterbuch des Klassischen Maya) (Figure 15). In Yucatec (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 893) tz'ut is ‘vender, comprar cera, logrear’ and *aj tz'ut* is ‘vendedor, logrero’. The various entries suggest a role of broker, retailer, moneylender or perhaps tribute collector.

### Context 8: 501[544]-pa-xu

Caracol Stela 3 (Figure 16) provides a uniquely challenging environment in which to test a **tz'u** value for T544.501. Fortunately, the other contexts collectively offer a strong-enough argument that the damaged glyph block at A20a may be approached with one piece of the puzzle provisionally in hand. The task here is to make sense of it. The process requires a thorough review of earlier events not only in the St. 3 text but in the incomplete stucco text from beneath Caracol

Structure B16. Additionally, a war trophy—a panel taken from Caracol and installed at Naranjo (cf. Helmke and Awe 2016) following the crushing defeat of the former offers valuable constraints on this marginally-readable peak episode in the narrative. The following is our reconstruction of the timeline of these three texts (primary sources for this timeline are Grube and Martin 2004; Martin and Grube 2008; Helmke and Awe 2016):

After the (9.9.10.0.0) half-period/scattering by K'an II on St. 3 at C15-D15, two records occur on the same date:

- a. On CRC St. 3, reached via a DN counted from the PE: (9.9.13.4.4) 9 K'an 2 Kasew *jub'uy Aj Sa'al ukab'ijiy* K'an II.
- b. On the CRC B16 stucco: (9.9.13.4.4) 9 K'an 2 Kasew *jub'uy ko-?CHA'* (formerly *ko-'metate'*) *Aj-Kuy ukab'iy* K'an II.

**Ko-?CHA'** is a satellite of Naranjo previously conquered and absorbed by its Early Classic king (NAR Altar 1); *Aj Sa'al* and *Aj Kuy* name Naranjo allies at **ko-?CHA'**.

There are two more concurrent statements in these Caracol texts and one on the block in the Naranjo HS:

- a. On the CRC B16 stucco: (9.9.13.8.4) 11 K'an 2 Ch'en *upatil* ('after the foregoing') *jub'uy ko-?CHA'* (a second attack on this town four winals after the first); then a DN of 13.1 counts forward to (9.9.14.3.5) 12 Chikchan (the drawing has Ak'bal) 18 Zip *jub'uy tza-* the first part of **tza-ma** etc. (the rest is missing). Because this event occurs on the same date as that of Caracol Stela 3, we accept Grube and Martin's (2004: II-32) proposal that the first part of **tza-ma** appears here.

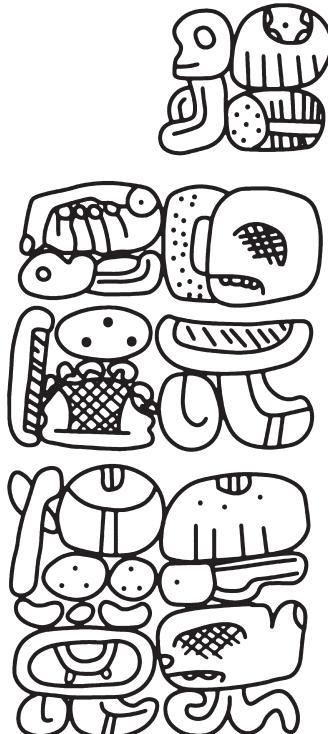
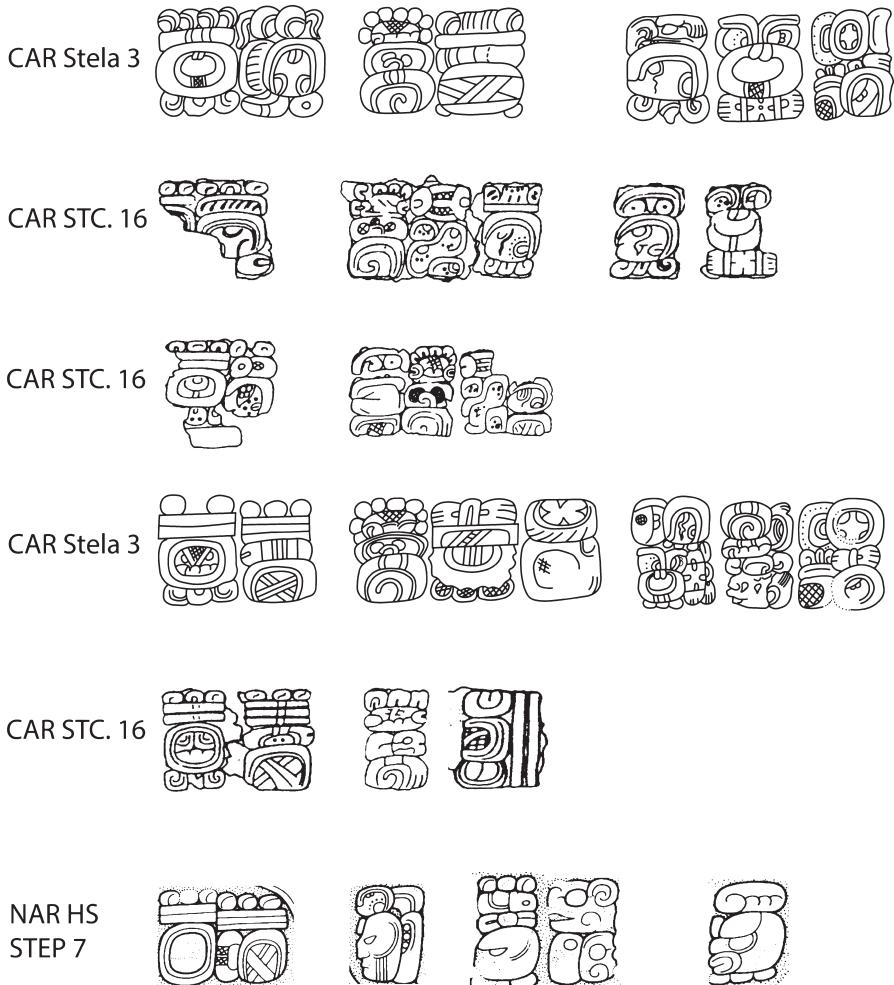


Figure 15. Lintel 2 of the Temple of the Four Lintels (H4-H8; drawing by Péter Bíró after Ruth Krochock).



**Figure 16.** Comparative Texts of Caracol Stela 3, Caracol Stucco 16 and Naranjo HS Step 7 (drawings by Ian Graham and Péter Bíró after Ian Graham).

- b. On St. 3, a DN counts from the 9.9.13.4.4 date (skipping the intervening one) to (9.9.14.3.5) 12 Chikchan 18 Zip *jub'uy tza-ma tz'u-?-?* The agents are K'an II and Yuknom "Head" of Calakmul.
- c. On Step 7 from Naranjo HS 1, now known to have been carried there from Caracol as a war trophy, one reads: (9.9.14.3.5) 12 Chikchan 18 Zip *pitzaj Ux Ahal Ehb'ul Tajom Uk'ab' K'ahk': he played ball at the Three-Victories Stair (Ballcourt) Tajom Uk'ab K'ahk.*

He was still the king of Calakmul, but was soon to be superseded by Yuknom “Head” (Helmke and Awe 2016).

Even though the greatest wars had yet to occur, these three events—two attacks on a satellite of Naranjo eighty days apart followed by a sacrificial ballgame 261 days later (not a coincidence)—highlight the importance of these earlier conflicts with Naranjo. According to Helmke and Awe (2016), these conflicts bear witness to the schism in the Kaanul dynasty and Caracol’s role in choosing sides.

The framing of these events as a narrative unit is one of several signifiers that the third *jub’uy* on 12 Chikchan 18 Zip represented not a new attack on a place called Tzam-? as originally suggested (Martin and Grube 2004: II-31-II-32; 2008: 91–92) but rather the dispatching of Naranjo prisoners held from the attacks 261 days before and 80 days before that. Specifically, the grammatical subject of the third *jub’uy* verb is visually absent but understood to be the collective of captives from **ko-?CHA’** who were kept for a future extravaganza amid a sacrificial ballgame rigged against them; this took place on 12 Chikchan 18 Zip. According to the chronology of these three texts, K’an II of Caracol and Yuknom “Head” and Tajom UK’ab K’ahk’ of Calakmul were all agents of this single event, specified as a ballgame on Step 7 from Naranjo HS 1—itself a war trophy carried there from Caracol. Another signifier: let us consider the size of the alleged **tza** in the stucco text: it is so big the scribes laid it sideways. And on Stela 3, amidst increasingly crowded text, **tza-ma-tz’u-?-?** was accorded disproportionate space. Another signifier is that this event is the peak event of the Stela 3 narrative, and yet another is seen in the deliberate hacking at this block when the monument was broken during the ensuing reprisal against Caracol by Naranjo and its allies (Helmke and Awe 2016; Martin 2017). We thus infer that **tza-ma tz’u-?-?** refers to something prized by the Caracol dynasty and not by one of its defeated enemies. Epigraphic evidence below suggests that it refers to one of the two Caracol ballcourts (cf. Holden 2009). One of these—as noted on the panel taken as a trophy by Naranjo a few years later—bears the mythological name ‘three victories stair’; if our hypothesis below is correct, the other may have had its own unique name and function.

To summarize: we propose that the Stela 3 phrase beginning with **tza-ma** T501[544] represents a location at Caracol where a sacri-

fice of prisoners (taken earlier) was enacted. This supersedes the proposal that the phrase represents an initial attack on an unknown site. The foregoing discussion of the chronology and protagonists stands as evidence independent of the decipherment of this phrase.

Finally, we arrive at a suggested reading. There are two signs in the damaged block below T544.501. The first—after much examination—appears to be the syllabogram **pa**. The second—the object of even more midnight oil—appears to be the back of an animal head with ear and wrinkled cheek. David Stuart (personal communication, 2018) has tentatively suggested that it might be a bat. This possibility has led us, after considerable thought, to propose **pa-xu** for the damaged signs in a sequence (*jub'uy*) **tza-ma tz'u-pa-xu** *jub'uy tzama[ll]* *tz'u'* *pax* ‘they (the Naranjo affiliates taken prisoner many months before) went down (in defeat) at the death-center ballcourt’.

*Tz'u* ‘center’ entries were provided above.

Colonial Tzendal (Ara 1986: 395):

<i>tzames</i>	matar ( <i>tzam</i> die + causative transitive -es)
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Ch'ol (Aulie 1978: 120):

<i>tzänsa</i>	homicidio
<i>tzänsan</i>	matar (* <i>tzam</i> - <i>tzan</i> ‘die’ + -sV causative transitive)

Yucatec (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 875):

<i>tzames</i>	gastar, consumir (* <i>tzam</i> be used up + -es causative transitive)
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Colonial Tzendal (Ara 1986: 360):

<i>paxluy</i>	rechazar como en el juego de pelota, jugar a la pelota
<i>paxlughel</i>	jugador asi

It would be premature to add layers of speculation to a tentative reading, but what we already know of the Classic Maya ballgame and its function as a venue for bloody public spectacles ratifies both the concepts ‘three victories stair’ (widely accepted) and ‘death-center-ballgame/-court’ (speculative, based on effaced signs).<sup>3</sup> Holden

<sup>3</sup> The grammar of the sentence in which our provisionally deciphered phrase is embedded—were *pax* to mean ‘ballgame’ (an event) rather than ‘ballcourt’ (a location)—should, we feel, obligate a preposition, as in *jub'uy ti tzamal tz'u'* *pax* ‘they went down amid/ in the death-center ballgame’. It seems a minor point, but it has possible bearing on the accuracy of this reading, since no preposition appears.

(2009) in her thesis on Caracol ballcourt iconography argues—echoing others' research—that these courts are cosmograms oriented to zenith and nadir as well as to east and west (and thus are 'centers'), and were portals to the underworld (and thus are death-related). The iconography of the Caracol ballcourt markers features the sprouting of earth deities and vegetation symbolic of sacrificial reciprocity, as seen in the image of Ballcourt Marker 2 (Figure 17).



**Figure 17.** Caracol Ballcourt Marker 2 (drawing by Patsy Holden).

## Why Do Tnn-203/608 and T501[544] Not Substitute?

Tnn-203 is a syllabic sign whose **tz'u** value has long been universally accepted (Knorozov 1967: 103; Schele and Grube 1997: 103).

As is true of the aforementioned **xi** syllables T271 and the skull T1048v, T501[544] is obligatorily a main sign due to its shape, and Tnn-203 is an affix. While the **xi** signs substitute only once (in G8 of the Lords of the Night) at sites both temporally and geographically distant, they operated independently and productively in the script in syllabic spelling sequences where their respective shapes served them well.

Tnn-203, the "suckling fish" **tz'u**—which perhaps derived acrophonically from \**tz'ub* 'to suck' (cf. Kaufman and Norman 1984: 134)—is an affix sign whose iconic form requires prefixed or superfixed placement. While T501[544] can serve as a main sign in either initial or final position, it is a *rare sign* outside the numbered-polity context (numeral-T501[544]-**ni**). Of the other examples in this thematic category, one has **-na** and one has **ya-**. Furthermore, /*tz'*/ is an uncommon phoneme in Ch'olan and Yucatecan languages. These factors are partially explanatory. There may have been venerating or archaizing cultural constraints upon the toponymic "polity" term such that Tnn-203 was prohibited. Finally, the fish **tz'u** and

the common **ni** are both affix signs; their preferred orientations do not suggest a compatible partnership. While the head variant of syllabic **ni** was theoretically available, it was rare and relegated to grammatical usage (-**wa-ni**: -wan); it does not substitute into spellings of venerable words like *k'iin* 'sun, day'. A proper title—especially for a word meaning 'usufruct rights of a polity'—needed an easily recognized and consistent main sign, either a logogram or a visually prominent syllable.

While it would be a surprise to find a numbered toponymic **tz'u-ni** example employing the Tnn203 "fish" syllabogram, we are considering as a possible substitution a toponym including the spelling Tnn203.592 **tz'u-nu** on Quirigua Stela C, west, C10.

In the **ju-tz'u** spelling of *jutz* 'ritual retreat' at Naj Tunich a main sign is called for because the **tz'u** syllable occupies the second position. According to the data arising from the Textdatenbank und Wörterbuch des Klassischen Maya (courtesy of Christian Prager) the suckling-fish **tz'u** Tnn-203 is a patently unpopular suffix or postfix; it does not occur in this position.

Even as we delight in the exceptions,<sup>4</sup> we have a tendency to trust that scribal practice was more uniform than it actually was. Certainly, thousands of deciphered texts bear witness to a high degree of consensus and standardization. Perhaps Classic Maya scribes and astronomers enjoyed a remarkable detente even when their kings were at war. But there was never a true empire, nor one body controlling the formal language and script; there were regional traditions and restricted categories. Perhaps one day we will find T501[544] in a new spelling of *tz'unun* 'hummingbird' or *tz'utz'ih* 'coati' juxtaposed to an image of the animal. Or perhaps not.

## Conclusion

In this article we have suggested that the T501[544] digraph, one of a series of 501[X] digraphs, has the value **tz'u**. We have analyzed every passage in which the sign occurs and have demonstrated its productivity in each, with the exception of the badly damaged portion of Caracol St. 3. In this last context we have considered the

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<sup>4</sup> Often animating these exceptions was Alfonso's astute recognition of "percolations" of local grammar and syntax.

entire relevant narrative and have proposed a workable—albeit tentative—solution.

We have noted that half of the total known occurrences of T501[544] feature the spelling pattern **tz'u-ni** *tz'un*, usually with a preposed coefficient designating a toponymic collective and commonly—not always—employed as a title. Tzeltalan dictionary entries include root transitive and derived noun forms which—together with the script contexts—signal the meanings ‘plantation, lineage, domain, land ownership’ and perhaps even ‘polity’, as we understand this term with respect to Classic Maya society. The numbered regional titles are still elusive in function and purpose, but less so as a result of this study. Other new script lexemes or phrases arising from our research such as *hutz'/jutz'* ‘pilgrim’/(one in) ritual retreat’, *tz'u* ‘center’, *k'awil tz'un* ‘sustenance of the plantation’, *tz'us-a* ‘enclosed water’ and *aj tz'ut* ‘salesman’ have opened new windows onto the lives and practices within Classic Maya courts hitherto hidden from us.

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# Una charla acerca del jeroglífico Guerra Estrella

GABRIELA RIVERA ACOSTA  
(gab\_1287@hotmail.com)

**Resumen:** En este trabajo se exponen de manera breve las implicaciones políticas y sociales del verbo al que refiere el llamado jeroglífico “Guerra Estrella”. Se plantea una nueva propuesta para la lectura no fonética del complejo jeroglífico, que se sostiene en la idea de que éste es en realidad una alegoría a un pasaje mítico que alude a la destrucción y renovación del mundo, que en los textos del Clásico referiría el orden político. Este texto rememora el trabajo que Alfonso realizó con nosotros, sus alumnos, al formar parte de una de las últimas asesorías que pude recibir de él.

**Abstract:** This paper briefly exposes the political and social implications of the so-called “Star War” hieroglyph. A new proposal is offered for a non-phonetic reading of this hieroglyphic compound, stating that it is an allegory to a mythical passage about the destruction and renovation of the world, applied to the political order in Classic texts. This work recalls one of the last study reunions we had with Alfonso as his students.

Querido Alfonso...  
Tú que siempre te dijiste “enano en hombros de gigantes”,  
sin saber que el gigante siempre fuiste tú.

**S**i fuiste alumno de Alfonso sabrás lo que fueron las citas de trabajo: horas de café, ojos secos frente al monitor de la computadora, algunas bromas, temas personales entrecruzados entre dudas epigráficas, eternas listas de bibliografía que deberías de consultar y mil tareas que “quedan pendientes”; todo ello envuelto en la característica calidez de su compañía y del humo de su cigarro. Fuera de dicha cotidianidad, una noche durante su última visita a México nos encontramos para trabajar en uno de los temas pendientes (y un “poco” escabrosos) de mi tesis doctoral: el jeroglífico “Guerra Estrella”.

El interés que tengo en hablar sobre dicho tema en este homenaje a tan entrañable persona, busca reconocer su labor con todos aquellos que tuvimos el honor de ser sus alumnos. Así, al recordar la última sesión de trabajo que pude compartir con él y hacerla llegar a los lectores interesados, es recordar y hacer valer su trabajo académico como profesor, pero también como la persona que siempre

veló por nuestro bienestar. De tal suerte, aquella noche hablamos de la importancia del desciframiento de aquel complejo jeroglífico, y con ello de la importancia de crear nuevas propuestas que como alumnos cimenten nuestro lugar como investigadores. Si bien Alfonso siempre procuró inculcar en sus alumnos la idea de una comunidad, un grupo fraternal de trabajo entre amigos-colegas, igualmente buscó despertar en nosotros la curiosidad y el goce por un trabajo arduo —que siempre le caracterizó—, elementos que consideraba impulsarían nuestras carreras a nivel personal. Con este preámbulo quiero presentarles de manera abreviada los resultados de la charla/asesoría de aquella linda noche.

### **El jeroglífico Guerra Estrella**

“Estrella sobre tierra”, “estrella sobre concha” o incluso “estrella sobre Glifo Emblema” son las variantes del complejo jeroglífico que se encuentran en la famosa expresión de “Guerra Estrella”. Las interpretaciones que se han dado a este término desde su descubrimiento son muy variadas, explicaciones en torno a ideas basadas en fenómenos astronómicos esencialmente. La propuesta que aquí presento se ciñe desde dos posturas: una que se ocupa de un probable origen y valor de la expresión jeroglífica, y la que afronta el tema desde su significado como recurso literario que hace referencia al resultado de la guerra.

Este complejo jeroglífico es uno de los verbos asociados a la guerra y tiene la particularidad de ser el que cuenta con mayor número de menciones, casi 40 en el corpus jeroglífico. A diferencia del resto, no muestra regionalización en su uso. Descubierto por Berthold Riese en 1977 (Justeson 1989: 105–106) se encuentra compuesto por un jeroglífico de estrella sobre uno de tierra o concha y, en ocasiones, sobre un Glifo Emblema o algún locativo. En todos los casos, de la estrella parece gotear algún tipo de líquido que se ha interpretado como sangre. Por su contexto, Linda Schele y David Freidel en su obra *A Forest of Kings* (1990) propusieron llamar a este complejo jeroglífico como evento “Guerra Estrella”. Su primera aparición —documentada hasta la fecha— corresponde a un conflicto que involucró a *Mutu'l* y *Kaanu'l* en 562 d.C.

Su naturaleza aún es incierta y no cuenta con una lectura completamente aceptada hasta la fecha, pero sabemos que la estrella en la parte superior debe de comportarse como un prefijo o logograma, que la sílaba *yi* que puede aparecer al final indica que el verbo debe finalizar con -*Vy*, lo que marca al verbo como un completivo medio pasivo (Stuart *et al.* 1999: II-9-II-12, citado en Aldana 2005: 313); y que aparece únicamente cuando la jurisdicción o el lugar sobre el que recae la acción de este verbo Guerra Estrella es especificado. La variante de estrella sobre tierra se encuentra ligada al nombre del entonces administrador de dicha jurisdicción, por lo que el énfasis no sólo es en el *kab'* como ‘jurisdicción’ o la locación específica señalada, sino que hace énfasis en la persona que la administraba. Aunque esta relación se hace patente, su acción nunca recayó en personas. Aldana en su momento hizo la propuesta de leerlo como *ek'emej*. A últimas fechas se ha planteado su lectura como *jub'uuy* basado en el complemento *yi*, y el par de ocasiones que parece estar sustituyendo a dicho verbo, como en los textos de Tikal. A diferencia de *jub'uuy*, el jeroglífico Guerra Estrella no presenta regionalización, usándose por igual a lo largo y ancho del área maya, además de que los argumentos para esta propuesta de lectura no parecen ser suficientes; y he de decir que al respecto Alfonso estaba completamente de acuerdo.

Sobre su significado, al inicio algunos autores como Michael Closs (1979) y Floyd Lounsbury (1982) siguieron la propuesta de David Kelley (1977) que asegura la asociación de este compuesto jeroglífico con los ciclos de Venus, mientras que Riese (1984) demostró su vinculación con sucesos bélicos. Así, muchos investigadores por varias décadas dieron por sentado que las sociedades mayas hacían coincidir sus conflictos armados con determinados eventos celestes. Posteriormente, John Justeson (1989: 108–111) y Lorren Hotaling (1995: 34–35) trataron el tema desde una perspectiva estacional, y notaron que estos eventos eran más frecuentes entre noviembre y mayo. Como Venus no siempre era visible en estas épocas, usaron los puntos estacionarios de Marte, Júpiter y Saturno para explicar el resto de sus menciones fuera de dicho lapso. Werner Nahm (1994: 7) intentó explicarlo dividiendo el periodo de Venus en meses lunares. Como réplica, Hotaling (1995) y Anthony Aveni (Aveni y Hotaling 1994) dijeron haber demostrado que los mayas preferían los fenó-

menos venusinos muy elongados (venusticios). Al notar la dificultad de asociar las fechas y los eventos astronómicos, los investigadores prefirieron pensar que los puntos clave de la trayectoria de la estrella de la mañana fueron interpretados por los mayas como signos favorables para emprender la guerra (Martin y Grube 2002: 16). Ahora sabemos que dicha relación no puede establecerse pues, como lo demuestra Gerardo Aldana (2005), las fechas no tienen correspondencia real con los eventos de Guerra Estrella, por lo que en realidad estamos observando un fenómeno diferente; por lo que este complejo jeroglífico no necesariamente tiene que tener una traducción literal que signifique derrota o caída, sino que en realidad podría estar reflejando algo más complejo.

Por ejemplo, Aldana (2005: 311) propone que el significado de este evento se debe en buena parte al entendimiento y lectura del jeroglífico de estrella, pues este no debe de ser leído como *chak ek'*—como en el Códice Dresden— y que, por el contrario, *ek'* sin prefijo en realidad tendría que entenderse como ‘cuerpo celestial’. Con base en esto, y tomando en cuenta que en toda Mesoamérica las estrellas y otros cuerpos celestes similares son asociados a sucesos funestos de enfermedad, guerra y muerte, es que este autor propone que el valor de ‘cuerpo celestial’ alude a la calamidad que este cuerpo celeste puede concebir, por lo que dicha relación explica su asociación a la guerra, o bien, su forma de referirla (Aldana 2005: 314). Más allá de la lectura que el autor plantea a partir de los discernimientos mencionados, la propuesta es interesante, pues reconoce que la complejidad de este tipo de eventos va más allá que la lectura estricta del mismo.

A grandes rasgos, en al actualidad se habla de este complejo jeroglífico con base en la postura de Martin y Grube (2002: 16) en la que se afirma que los puntos clave en la trayectoria de Venus eran interpretados como favorables para la guerra y por lo que algunas batallas se sincronizaban con éstos por sus beneficios sobrenaturales; que generalmente señalaron “las acciones más decisivas, la conquista de ciudades o la caída de dinastías” (Martin y Grube 2002: 16). El que Venus se encontrara en su máxima elongación en las temporadas del año en que los registros de guerra son más recurrentes, no significó que los mayas así lo buscaran. En realidad se refiere a que los ciclos del astro marcan fechas clave del año agrícola, de forma que la temporada comprendida de principios de noviembre a finales

de febrero, reconocida como la de mayor recurrencia de eventos bélicos, es exactamente la época de descanso en el calendario agrícola, y que naturalmente concuerda con determinadas fases de la trayectoria de Venus. Ahora comprendemos que la temporada más favorable para emprender una campaña bética siempre ha sido la época de secas. Es normal que al concordar la guerra con el ciclo agrícola, el cual dependía de la temporada de lluvias, estas actividades resultaran relacionadas con el ciclo de Venus. Pero en realidad no es tan simple, pues esta situación a la que podríamos llamar “coincidencia”, en realidad no debió de haberse entendido de esa forma y seguramente la explicación de aquel fenómeno concibió algún tipo de relación entre ambas actividades que ahora desconocemos.

Así, la expresión Guerra Estrella siempre estuvo relacionada con eventos bélicos que señalan la captura de algún personaje importante, el ataque o la caída de algún *kaaj* (asentamiento) o incluso una parte específica de él, pero el efecto de la Guerra Estrella recae únicamente sobre el Glifo Emblema del *kab'* que fue derrotado. El registro de uno de estos eventos siempre involucró un futuro funesto para el linaje sobre el que recayó y, por consecuencia, sobre su *kab'*. En el Escalón 6 de la Escalinata Jeroglífica 1 de Naranjo se habla de la derrota de *Sa'aal* por *Kaanu'l* en 631 d.C., la cual concluyó en una Guerra Estrella. En la inscripción se refiere que se atacó la cueva, por referir al asentamiento del linaje de *Sa'aal*, el sitio arqueológico de Naranjo (Martin y Grube 2002: 106). Aunque las inscripciones en pocas ocasiones son tan explícitas como en este caso al relatar las implicaciones de uno de estos sucesos, sabemos, por otros registros epigráficos e incluso arqueológicos, que el uso de la expresión Guerra Estrella siempre hace referencia a eventos que parecen generar un cambio o por lo menos una crisis de grandes magnitudes en el gobierno, el linaje o el orden sociopolítico del derrotado. Esto, usualmente, lo hemos encontrado reflejado en el registro de las llamadas “caídas de dinastías”, a partir de la muerte de su *ajaw*, la destrucción del *kaaj*, etc. y esto tiene un porqué:

Cuando encontramos el registro de una Guerra Estrella de principio no nos está hablando de un tipo de guerra sino de la forma en que concluyó una batalla. Así que el decir que “Tikal emprendió una Guerra Estrella en contra de Calakmul” es un error desde distintos puntos de vista. De principio, no fueron las ciudades las que hicieron

la guerra, fue un *kab'* (como jurisdicción / entidad política) quien emprendió una campaña bética en contra de otro al haber atacado algún *kaaj* (asentamiento) perteneciente a la red de su contrincante, usualmente el principal donde residía el *ajaw*. Pero el punto nodal ahora es entender que no pudo “emprenderse” una Guerra Estrella al no haber sido un tipo de campaña con pretensiones determinadas. Prueba de ello es que, como lo arrojan los datos, la Guerra Estrella en diversos casos fue registrada como un acontecimiento ocurrido en el contexto de una guerra, lo que implica inequívocamente que esta expresión se refiere a la forma en que concluyó una batalla o una campaña y no a una variedad de guerra como se considera comúnmente. De tal suerte, los eventos de ‘hachear’, ‘capturar’, ‘quemar’ y, obviamente, Guerra Estrella están refiriendo no al tipo de combate o encuentro, sino a los resultados del mismo. Entonces, cuando los mayas registraron lo que llamamos Guerra Estrella en realidad expresaron que la guerra tuvo un coste tan alto que involucró un cisma en el *kab'* derrotado. Como argumentan Martin y Grube (2002: 16), este suceso corresponde a momentos decisivos y quiebres en los linajes. Comúnmente, son guerras en las que el *k'uhul ajaw* murió o fue capturado, siendo él el receptor de poder y autoridad sacralizada, regente de su *kab'* y frente al resto, su derrotado en la guerra, implicó el abatimiento del poder que representaba; es decir, de su Glifo Emblema. Por ello es que la expresión de Guerra Estrella siempre tiene efecto sobre el Glifo Emblema.

Por ejemplo, en 680 d.C. *Uxwitzta'* sufrió el abatimiento de su *kaaj* —el sitio de Caracol— que resultó en una Guerra Estrella ocasionada por su principal rival, *Sa'aal* —el cercano Naranjo. En este caso específico, la Guerra Estrella se refiere a la derrota que obligó a *K'ahk' Ujol K'inich*, *k'uhul Uxwitzta' ajaw*, a salir de su ciudad por dos meses. Tras estos sucesos, los registros en Caracol se interrumpieron bruscamente por 118 años. El hiato en las inscripciones locales, aunado a la suspensión de construcciones principales, fue el síntoma de un trauma profundo y prolongado (Martin y Grube 2002: 94–95). La misma situación, en la que la huida del señor derrotado es referida por una Guerra Estrella, se presentó cuando *Nuun Ujol Chaahk de Mutu'l* fue derrotado en 657 d.C. por *Yuhkno'm el Grande de Kaanu'l* (Martin y Grube 2002: 42). En otros casos se habla de diferentes tipos de consecuencias a las que puede aludir una Guerra Estrella, como

en el dintel de madera del Templo IV de Tikal, en el que se menciona la captura del palanquín de *Sa'aal* capturado por *Mutu'l* en 744 d.C., o el pasaje del Soporte 1 del Trono 1 de Piedras Negras, que menciona el descenso del Dios Jaguar del Inframundo tras una Guerra Estrella. Otro caso es el registrado en el Monumento 122 de Toniná, donde se habla de la captura de *K'an Joy Chitam* de *B'aakal*, pero sabemos que este evento no desencadenó su muerte, ya que posteriormente comisionó algunas obras arquitectónicas en su *kaaj*, pero si fue un acontecimiento que suscitó problemas en el linaje, pues su sucesor accedió al poder con él aún vivo — situación sumamente inusual. Estos son algunos buenos ejemplos que muestran las desgracias que pueden estar reseñando el complejo jeroglífico Guerra Estrella.

Ahora, sobre el valor de la expresión Guerra Estrella más allá de su lectura, la propuesta mas notable hasta hoy se basa en la idea de que Guerra Estrella es la abstracción de un pasaje mítico, formulada por Christophe Helmke y James Brady (2014: 11). Ésta tomó como eje la aparición de dicha expresión en las escenas mitológicas del hundimiento de la canoa en la que viajan los dioses remeros con la deidad del maíz y algunos animales. En esta escena el verbo no tiene contexto bélico y debe referir el hundimiento de la embarcación según los argumentos de dichos autores. De esta manera, la imagen debe aludir a Venus como estrella de la mañana poniéndose o ‘hundiéndose’ en el horizonte. En otros contextos, según Helmke y Brady (2014: 11), el verbo Guerra Estrella se refirió al acto de destrucción y no a la simple acción de entrar a un asentamiento, implicando el vandalismo de objetos y espacios rituales.

Ahora quiero presentar otra propuesta. La Plataforma Jeroglífica del Templo XIX de Palenque habla de sucesos que ocurrieron en el último *b'ak'tun* de la era anterior, antes de la última creación. Entre ellos, se narra la decapitación de un ser estelar en 3320 a.C., el degollamiento de un cocodrilo o caimán con atributos de estrella y venado a la vez, a quien se le ha nombrado en la literatura académica como “Cocodrilo Venado Estelar” (Velásquez García 2006), y en las inscripciones llamado *Way(?) Paat Ahiin(?) / Tz'ihb'al Paat Ahiin(?)* ‘caimán con cavidad [en la] espalda’/‘caimán de espalda pintada’, interpretación sugerida por David Stuart (2005: 70). Es el mismo personaje que se presenta como la personificación del jeroglífico de ‘estrella’ **EK**’ (Förstemann 1906; Thompson 1960; Kelley y Kerr 1974; Kelley

1976; Closs 1979; Aveni 1991). Con base en las investigaciones de diversos autores (Wagner 2001; Stuart 2005; Velásquez García 2006), todo parece indicar que dicho ser sobrenatural pudo haber sido una de las formas que tomó el cielo del inframundo o la bóveda celeste durante la noche, pues en varias de sus representaciones iconográficas, estrellas cuelgan de su cuerpo, el cual siempre representa la parte superior de la escena. Estos mismos estudios han revelado que referencias existentes a él y la decapitación que sufre, son alusiones indirectas que indican que el sacrificio del Cocodrilo Venado Estelar es una metáfora de “destrucción y renovación cósmica” (Velásquez García 2006: 4). Puesto que este suceso fue un acontecimiento mítico, como lo señaló Stuart (2000a: 29; 2005: 68, 180; 2006: 101, citado en Velásquez García 2006: 4), se refiere a la “creación de un nuevo orden cosmológico”. Este acto pudo haber sido realizado por GI, o quizá GII, lo cual aún no es muy claro. El referido pasaje de Palenque nos habla de un proceso de destrucción, creación y renovación del universo que se generó a partir del degollamiento de este ser en la fecha 1 *Etz'nab'*, provocando un diluvio de sangre / agua preciosa. Según Erik Velásquez García (2006: 4), este líquido divino puede asociarse al mismo tiempo con el fluido “sagrado de la línea dinástica”, como se muestra en las estelas 6, 11, 14, 25 y 33 de Piedras Negras, donde la ceremonia de entronización se presenta como un evento de relevancia cósmica que involucra el diluvio de sangre, el sacrificio y la transición del sucesor a una nueva condición como *k'uhul ajaw*, siendo así un acto de destrucción y creación de un nuevo orden político. Este diluvio es un continuo referente, a lo largo de la historia de la cultura maya, de la destrucción y renovación.

El traer la naturaleza y valor del Cocodrilo Venado Estelar al tema se debe a que a los ojos de esta investigación, todo parece indicar que el complejo jeroglífico Guerra Estrella es una abstracción del mito que refiere el fin y la renovación del mundo a partir de su decapitación. Esta propuesta supone que en su forma jeroglífica lo que se observa es una abstracción del acontecimiento por sus elementos diagnósticos. Usando el principio de *pars pro toto*, la estrella es la simplificación del caimán venado como ser estelar —tomando en cuenta el valor funesto que en determinados contextos estos astros suelen representar en toda Mesoamérica— mientras que las gotas que se derraman a los costados aluden al momento de la decapitación

de este ser mítico. Así, el jeroglífico de concha, tierra, Glifo Emblema o locativo son de alguna manera el marcador sobre el que recayó la acción del verbo, que en este caso implicaría el fin y la renovación de un linaje, jurisdicción o un lugar específico. Como mencionamos arriba, este mito alude a una destrucción para generar la nueva creación y un nuevo orden político. Esto debió de haber implicado, por la magnitud y valor de la referencia mítica, un evento de gran escala y, sobre todo, con efectos contundentes (Rivera Acosta 2018).

## Conclusiones

De esta manera, la Guerra Estrella es el resultado de una batalla o, en su defecto, una campaña incluida dentro de una guerra, que si bien se refirió a momentos decisivos para reconocer a un vencedor, no se habló de uno definitivo. Dentro de lo que parece haber sido la guerra, pudo haber varias Guerras Estrella entre las entidades en conflicto, en las que no siempre la misma resultaba ganadora. Todo esto nos permite comprender que la Guerra Estrella fue un tipo de recurso usado para indicar la caída de una administración y no del *kab'* completo, ya que después de estos eventos se perdió el registro por varios años, se rompió la línea de descendencia y se detuvieron las construcciones. Sin embargo, no se abandonaron los centros poblacionales, ni hubo ocupaciones de algún *kaaj* involucrado por parte de los vencedores. Este complejo jeroglífico no indicó una conquista como tal.

... Al final de aquella noche, Alfonso preguntó el porqué de “esa cara” (refiriéndose a mi expresión dubitativa). Yo le hablé de mi temor a plantear ésta y otras propuestas sobre temas epigráficos en la tesis, pues no me sentía lista o lo suficientemente preparada para generar nuevos planteamientos. Él me contestó con un pequeño pero dulce sermón sobre la importancia de creer en nuestro trabajo, el compartirlo, en lo importante del equivocarse, el saber repensar y volver al principio para hacer las cosas bien. Al final de la noche, nos despedimos con mucho cariño y un gran abrazo — tratándose de Alfonso los abrazos siempre eran grandes. Se despidió pidiéndome que no viera su enfermedad como una limitante, pues siempre estaría esperando recibir mensajes y correos electrónicos con dudas, inquietudes y, por supuesto, nuevas propuestas. Yo lo acompañé a su hotel

y regresé a casa pensando lo afortunada que era por haberme encontrado con alguien tan grande (literal y retóricamente) en mi vida académica y personal.

El legado de Alfonso es inmenso y consistente en la academia. Investigadores y alumnos somos testigos de la huella que ha dejado a su paso con innumerables trabajos y colaboraciones, mientras que su presencia en nuestras vidas ha dejado marcas a través de ejemplos y lecciones de vida. Gracias a nuestro querido homenajeado es que me decidí a cruzar el mar para encontrarme con una linda cara en Madrid dispuesta a acogerme con todo el cariño que ese gran corazón pudo albergar. Me regaló el placer de ampliar mi mundo académico, pero sobre todo me dio la oportunidad de encontrarme con otros alumnos suyos, a grandes amigos —ahora, para toda la vida—, con quienes no sólo intercambio y genero conocimiento, sino con quienes también comparto una visión de la vida definida por la honradez, amistad, trabajo y humildad; herencia de aquel motivo y razón que en un principio fue quien nos unió, Alfonso.

*Alfonso, ni mitz yolmajtok.*

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# The *-n-ib* and *-l-ib* Suffixes in Ch'olan Languages and Ancient Maya Writing

CHRISTOPHE HELMKE  
University of Copenhagen  
(cgbh@hum.ku.dk)

**Abstract:** This paper presents an analysis of the compound suffixes *-n-ib* and *-l-ib* in lowland Mayan languages. In order to better elucidate the function of these suffixes in the Classic Mayan language recorded in the glyphic texts, their reflexes are examined in the Ch'olan languages, revealing that these serve to derive a variety of verbal roots, through passivization or intransitivization and ultimately nominalizing these through the instrumental suffix *-ib*. Instrumental and locative nouns are the resultant derived forms, the latter functioning as a particular class of toponyms that specify where a particular action occurs or feature is found. The examples involving these suffixes in the glyphic corpus are reviewed on a text-by-text basis, before providing a more global revision that presents the diachronic development and spatial distribution of these suffixes. Taken together the evidence suggests that these suffixes underwent some inflectional changes over the centuries and are diagnostic of differing dialects, already in evidence during the Classic period.

**Resumen:** Esta contribución presenta un análisis de los sufijos compuestos *-n-ib* y *-l-ib* en las lenguas mayas de las Tierras Bajas. Para aclarar la función de estos sufijos en la lengua maya del periodo Clásico, registrada en los textos jeroglíficos, se examinan sus reflejos en las lenguas cholanas, lo que revela que sirven para derivar una variedad de raíces verbales, a través de la pasivización o la intransitivización y, en última instancia, la nominalización mediante el sufijo instrumental *-ib*. Las formas derivadas son sustantivos instrumentales y locativos que funcionan como una clase particular de topónimos que especifican dónde ocurre una acción o se encuentra una característica particular. Los ejemplos que involucran estos sufijos en el corpus jeroglífico son revisados de texto a texto, antes de proporcionar una revisión más global que presenta el desarrollo diacrónico y la distribución espacial de estos sufijos. En conjunto, la evidencia sugiere que estos sufijos sufrieron algunos cambios flexivos a lo largo de los siglos y son diagnósticos de diferentes dialectos, que ya se encuentran en evidencia durante el período Clásico.

With growing awareness of the linguistic intricacies recorded in the glyphic texts of the ancient Maya (c. AD 250–950), the field of epigraphy has graduated in recent years from an effort focused solely on decipherment—pushing the identifications of signs and providing detailed transliterations of text—to a more refined and linguistically-informed philological field. There are several researchers that have been at the forefront of this advance, following in the path carved out by pioneers such as Linda Schele (1980), Barbara MacLeod (1984) and Victoria Bricker (1986). With the

recognition that the majority of Classic Maya texts were written in an early Ch'olan language (Houston et al. 2000; Law et al. 2009) and that early features of Tzeltalan and Yukatekan are also identifiable (Lacadena and Wichmann 2002), the stage has been set to examine the linguistic materials recorded in these ancient texts. At the vanguard of this movement was Alfonso Lacadena, whose insights have allowed the reconstruction of the transitive and intransitive paradigms of the Ch'olan language recorded in the glyphs (1997, 2000, 2003, 2004), including the first morphological sketch (2010a), as well as identifying a series of literary devices and poetic features of ancient Maya literature (2009, 2010b, 2012).

As an homage to this great figure in our field, I have prepared a paper that presents two derivational suffixes, namely *-n-ib* and *-l-ib* that is very much inspired by his work and that I hope would have pleased him. Although many epigraphers have come across these suffixes, remarkably little has been written on these, save for a few comments made by Stephen Houston and his colleagues (2001: 17, 50, n. 7) and Søren Wichmann (2002: 6–12). As such, it should come as no surprise that no concrete consensus concerning these has been achieved, nor that their essential equivalence has been established, and it is as an effort to clarify their inflectional performance and diachronic change that this paper has been prepared.

My own interest in these suffixes came in 2001 with the discovery of the Late-to-Terminal Classic Panel 2 at Xunantunich, Belize. Although fragmentary, this glyptic panel bore two references to derivational constructions involving precisely the *-n-ib* suffix. This was then written up as part of a chapter synthesising the glyptic corpus of Xunantunich, undergoing a very protracted gestation, before finally seeing the light of day (Helmke et al. 2010). Shortly after the discovery of the panel at Xunantunich and in corresponding with Erik Boot, we considered the links to widespread instrumental forms ending in *-(V)b ~ -ib* that prompt references to places, such as *chon-hbal ~ txonbal* for ‘market’ in Greater Q’anjobalan, ultimately diffused from early Ch’olan (see Boot 2002: 61; Kaufman 2003: 796). As part of the European Maya Conference hosted in Madrid in 2003, I had the pleasure to work through some of the more recently discovered texts of the Belize Valley with Alfonso Lacadena and we spoke excitedly about these forms, especially those suffixed by *-n-ib*, and concluded

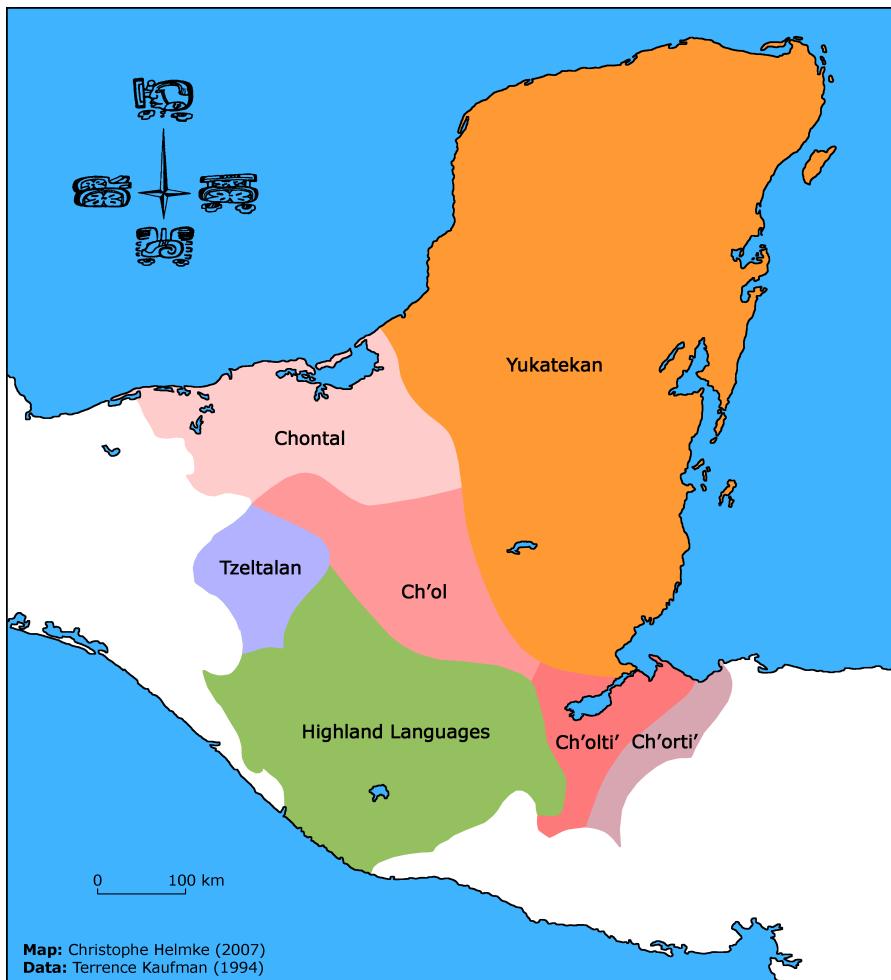
that although these were found in titular sections predominantly, these must represent toponyms of some sort. Building on that initial encounter, and furthered by other furtive meetings at the annual European Maya Conferences, we decided that we should write up our observations as a paper together. Considering the linguistic evidence and casting a wider net we also deliberated the role of *-l-ib* suffixes, which has been explored by Søren Wichmann (2002: 6–12) for the light that these may shed on the evolution and descent of eastern Ch'olan languages. A single entry in the dictionary of Chontal by Kathryn Keller and Plácido Luciano (1997: 428) seemed to us to provide the solution to these suffixes and it was at that juncture that we began to view the *-n-ib* and *-l-ib* suffixes as allomorphs, fulfilling essentially the same derivational role, despite the variations of the dialectal and linguistic contexts in which these occurred. Schedules and obligations being what they are, this paper was side-lined time and again in favour of more pressing deadlines, conference papers, workshops, fieldwork and the latest glyptic finds. It is now, after all of these years, and as a very small token of my appreciation for Alfonso and our friendship that I finally have made the time to prepare the paper. Whereas this paper builds on the rudiments of ideas that we exchanged in dimly lit pubs at several cities across Europe, it will unfortunately not benefit from the knowledge, keen insight and intuitive rationalisation that characterize Alfonso's work over the years. All that I can do is present this paper as a means of completing a vow and can only sorely regret that I am unable to receive Alfonso's comments on this paper, which would have greatly benefitted it in every conceivable way. If Alfonso could look on this paper, I hope that he would be able to recognize some of the seeds of his ideas and that they, in these protracted years, have ultimately borne good fruit.

### The *-l-ib* and *-n-ib* suffixes in lowland Mayan languages

Based on the form of these suffixes it is readily apparent that these are polymorphemic and represent a compound, involving two sequential affixes. The initial suffix typically exhibits partial syncopation, through the suppression of the vowel ( $-Vn > -n-$ ;  $-Vl > -l-$ ), and the final suffix in both cases is *-ib*. This *-ib* suffix marks or derives the instrumental and is widespread in Mayan languages. It can be

reconstructed as an integral feature of proto-Ch'olan, reconstructed as \*-ib (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 106) and traced back to proto-Maya as \*-eb (Campbell 2013: 67; Kaufman 2015: 84, 115). In most instances, this suffix is appended to verbal roots to nominalize them and produce an instrument, or the implement of the action. Interestingly, in several Mayan languages the same instrumental suffix also appears to form substantives that function as references to places, rather than implements *per se*. This semantic dichotomy is in part reflective of the inherent valency of the verbal root that is derived, since some, such as positional verbs, for instance 'to sit', necessarily take a spatial argument (i.e., 'where one sits'), whereas others, such as 'to shoot', necessarily take an instrumental argument (i.e., 'with what one shoots'). This equivalence is part and parcel of the dependency between valency and syntax, in the sense that intransitives are more liable to create locative nouns, whereas transitive roots are motivated to derive purely instrumental nouns, as these verbs can take a direct object. The semantic dichotomy between 'implement' and 'place', for the nominalized forms that take this instrumental suffix -ib, is of great interest, as these surface differently in the different Mayan languages investigated.

From a diachronic perspective, this diversity appears to be brought about by convergent evolution, as derived forms using only the -ib suffix, preferentially served to mark the instrument, in exclusivity. Thus, in Classic Mayan, as recorded in the glyphs, we have *uk'-ib* 'drink-<sub>INST</sub>' > 'drinking implement' > 'vase, cup' as well as *chum-ib* 'sit-<sub>INST</sub>' > 'seating implement' > 'seat, bench' (see Wichmann 2002: 16–17; Stuart 2005: 126). These purely instrumental forms, derive the object or implement as the primary argument of the verb. These are here contrasted to the more complex derived forms with -n-ib and -l-ib, which based on present evidence, appear to have been devised in the Classic period to preferentially target locative constructions. Some of these locative constructions were repeatedly used in reference to specific loci, to such an extent that we can speak of these derivational suffixes as marking a particular class of toponyms. It is this category of instrumentals, serving as either locatives—and at times as toponyms—that are of interest here. With time, these have merged or converged to some extent with the base instrumental, thereby creating this melding or semantic dichotomy of imple-



**Figure 1.** Distribution of Mayan languages at the time of European contact in the sixteenth century. Note the distribution of the Ch'olan languages in comparison to the Tzeltalan and Yukatekan branches as well as highland Mayan languages (map by Christophe Helmke, after Kaufman 1994: Map 13).

ment vs. space, observed in the daughter languages descended from Classic Mayan. In most Ch'olan languages the *-n-ib* and *-l-ib* suffixes remain productive and serve to derive either purely instrumental forms or locative constructions, or both, depending on the language and the root involved.

In order to establish the inflectional properties of the suffixes involved in the epigraphically-attested examples dated to the Classic period (c. AD 250–950), I will review how the reflexes of

these compound suffixes operate(d) in the daughter languages, by providing a geographically-motivated overview, sweeping from west to east, by examining Chontal (a.k.a. Yokot'an), Ch'ol, tCh'olti' and Ch'orti' (Figure 1). Each language is introduced in turn, with accompanying lexical entries derived on the basis of the relevant suffixes.

## Chontal

The composite or polymorphemic *-l-lib* suffix occurs predominantly in western Ch'olan languages, which is to say in Chontal and Ch'ol. In the former, the grammar of Chontal elaborated by Kathryn Keller and Plácido Luciano (1997: 419–489) presents a series of “derived suffixes”, involving compound and polymorphemic suffixes that are particularly productive in the language. Among these they segregate a *-lib* suffix (and its derived from *-liba* and what may be its allomorph *-iba*) and gloss it as “indica el lugar de la acción del verbo” (Keller and Luciano 1997: 428). This succinct description is highly revealing since it illustrates that the resulting lexemes form substantives derived from verbal roots, which inherently acquire locative qualities, referring to where a particular action takes place.

Accounting for the fact that *-lib* is polymorphemic, involving the instrumental suffix *-ib*, which is widespread in Mayan languages and primarily derives instrumental nouns from verbs, this prompts the morphemic segmentation as *-l-lib*. In Chontal the same instrumental suffix *-ib* is described as “agregado a raíces verbales, indica el instrumento usado para el acto, o la cosa concreta que resulta de la acción” (Keller and Luciano 1997: 428; see also Knowles 1984a: 179–180), a description that for the most part can be applied to all Mayan languages. A selection of substantives formed on the basis of the *-l-lib* suffix in Chontal include the following, and serve to illustrate the derivational process:

<i>chumlib<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>chum-l-lib<sup>2</sup></i>	‘asiento, silla (mueble)’	(Keller and Luciano 1997: 96)
<i>ch'a'lib</i>	<i>ch'a'-l-lib</i>	‘camilla, cama, catre’	(Keller and Luciano 1997: 99)
<i>lucbälib</i>	<i>luk-bä-l-lib</i>	‘carnada’	(Keller and Luciano 1997: 152)
<i>mucliba</i>	<i>muk-l-lib-a<sup>3</sup></i>	‘sepultura’	(Keller and Luciano 1997: 197)
<i>wäyiba</i>	<i>wäy-[l]-ib-a</i>	‘dormitorio’	(Keller and Luciano 1997: 279)

These forms are based on a series of simple CVC verbal roots including *chum-* (vi) ‘sentarse’ *ch'a-* (vi) ‘acostarse’, *muk-* (vt) ‘enterrar’ and *wäy* (vi) ‘dormir’, as well as the composite *luk-ba* ‘pescar con anzuelo’ (verbalized noun), involving a suffix *-ba*, a type of emphatic marker (Keller and Luciano 1997: 152, 428, 489). At a semantic level, based on the locative usage of the *-l-ib* suffix in Chontal, these resulting composite forms can be understood on a more literal level as ‘place where sitting happens’ > ‘seat, chair’, ‘place where lying-down happens’ > ‘bed’, ‘place where burying happens’ > ‘burial’, and ‘place where sleeping happens’ > ‘bedroom’.<sup>4</sup>

The range of roots upon which the derived forms are based is of note, since these are drawn from both transitives and intransitives as well as derived nouns that are verbalized in the intransitive. Acknowledging the function of *-ib* as an instrumental marker, this leaves us to explain the initial portion of the composite suffix. The composite suffix undoubtedly stems from paired *-Vl-ib* suffixes, wherein the first is a derivational suffix, possibly the now mostly unproductive *-äl* suffix of Chontal, which serves not as a locative marker, but modifies the verbal root to make it suitable for receiving the instrumental suffix (see Keller and Luciano 1997: 447).

## Ch'ol

The same or a similar derivational process is documented for Ch'ol. In Wilbur and Evelyn Aulie's grammar of Ch'ol the suffix *-lib* is segregated and described as occurring “con raíces neutras para formar una raíz sustantiva que indica el instrumento” (Aulie and Aulie 1978:

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<sup>1</sup> Each entry is presented here in its original form, as published in the sources cited, but in the accompanying analyses, when roots, morphemes and other analytical elements are presented, these are rendered in a standard phonemic orthography.

<sup>2</sup> Dialectal variants include *chumli'* [b > ?] (Keller and Luciano 1997: 96) as well as *chumlip* [b > p] (Knowles 1984b).

<sup>3</sup> The *-a'* suffix in the final two entries is probably a type of locative marker (Keller and Luciano 1997: 428), a suffix that is productive in a range of lowland Mayan languages and attested in the glyptic corpus of the Classic period (Stuart and Houston 1994: 5, 7, 27–28, 52–53; Zender 2005a; Helmke 2009: 196).

<sup>4</sup> The entry *lucbálib* is intriguing for its complexity and appears to break the locative pattern discernible here. On a literal level the analysis would be ‘place where fish hook-fishing happens’ > ‘bait’, but there seems to be a disconnect between the resulting gloss and the instrumental derivation, perhaps owing the morphemic complexity of the root.

73, 278). By and large this gloss has some merit, although it does not convey the intricacies of the data. Salient examples, drawn from this same source include:

<i>buchlib</i>	<i>buch-l-ib</i>	'asiento'	(Aulie and Aulie 1978: 33)
<i>c'älib</i>	<i>k'äk-l-ib</i>	'base'	(Aulie and Aulie 1978: 45)
<i>chumlib</i>	<i>chum-l-ib</i>	'habitación'	(Aulie and Aulie 1978: 50)
<i>joc'lib</i>	<i>jok'-l-ib</i>	'garabato, gancho o clavo para colgar cosas'	(Aulie and Aulie 1978: 66)
<i>majlib q'uin</i>	<i>maj-l-ib k'iñ</i>	'oeste' (reg. Tila)	(Aulie and Aulie 1978: 78)
<i>ñaclib</i>	<i>nak-l-ib</i>	'base (de una casa)'	(Aulie and Aulie 1978: 84)
<i>t'uchlib</i>	<i>t'uch-l-ib</i>	'tapezco, percho (lugar para pararse)'	(Aulie and Aulie 1978: 116)
<i>wa'lib</i>	<i>wa'-l-ib</i>	'el lugar donde el cazador espera la caza; andamiaje'	(Aulie and Aulie 1978: 128)
<i>wejlib ja'</i>	<i>wej-l-ib ja'</i>	'caída de agua'	(Aulie and Aulie 1978: 129)
<i>yeclib</i>	<i>yek-l-ib</i>	'mesa'	(Aulie and Aulie 1978: 142)

Much as with Chontal, no regular pattern can be detected as to the valency of the verbal roots represented in these examples since about a third are transitive (*buch*, *k'äk*, *jok*) whereas the remainder are intransitive. As with Chontal, some of the intransitives involve positional verbs that refer to body postures and stances, which form a separate category of verbs in Mayan (and Mesoamerican) languages. The final entry is a neologism and is found in a glossing phrase that reads *yeclib i bal ñac'al* and is glossed as 'mesa para comer' (Aulie and Aulie 1978: 142). The segment *bal ñac'al* is 'food, sustenance' preceded by the third person possessive pronoun, leaving the initial construction to function as an instrumental 'table'. Yet, no verbal root *yek* is recorded in the various dictionaries of Ch'ol, making this rare lexical construction all the more intriguing. Based on these examples it seems clear that the original verbal valency is negated by the initial -*Vl* suffix, rendering what may be a derived intransitive form that is liable to receive an -*ib* instrumental (see Feldman 1986: 42).

In the introduction to their great Ch'ol dictionary, Nicholas Hopkins and Kathryn Josserand isolate the various instrumental suffixes and their allomorphs according to function. In so doing, they clearly identify the resulting substantives as functioning either

as instrument or place (Hopkins and Josserand 2010: 78). According to Hopkins and Josserand, *-ib* is suffixed predominantly to intransitive verbs to form instrumental substantives, whereas *-on-ib* is suffixed to transitives to form instrumentals and *-l-ib* is suffixed predominantly to positional verbs (see also Feldman 1986: 42). The *-on-ib* category is evocative for the following examples:

<i>ch'äxonib</i>	<i>ch'äx-on-ib</i>	'pot'	< tv 'boil'	(Hopkins and Josserand 2010: 78)
<i>julonib</i>	<i>jul-on-ib</i>	'gun'	< tv 'shoot'	(Hopkins and Josserand 2010: 78)
<i>k'elonib</i>	<i>k'el-on-ib</i>	'window'	< tv 'see'	(Hopkins and Josserand 2010: 78)
<i>tek'onib</i>	<i>tek'-on-ib</i>	'stair'	< tv 'tread, step'	(Hopkins and Josserand 2010: 78)

Whereas these terms differ from the derived forms with *-l-ib*, these nonetheless constitute highly comparable derivational forms. Thus, whereas in Ch'ol *-l-ib* may affix preferentially to intransitives (and positionals in particular), as we have seen in the examples above, this compound suffix is also appended to transitives. The *-on-ib* suffix is notable for its phonological integrity, preserving the vowel of the initial suffix and also for providing an alternate means of deriving instrumentals from transitives. Also, whereas the gloss for *jul-on-ib* is 'gun', perhaps suggesting some kind of neologism, it is more probable that this pertains to the displacement of the semantic domain from 'blowgun' to 'gun' with the introduction and replacement of Native American hunting weapons with those of European origin. As such, even though the *-on-ib* suffix remains productive in Ch'ol, the resulting forms presented here need not be of recent origin, and may well stem from Pre-Columbian culture.

## Ch'olti'

For the eastern Ch'olan languages we have yet more examples of the compound suffix *-l-ib*, although only in the extinct language Ch'olti', likely an older sister language of eastern Ch'olan (see Kaufman and Norman 1984; Wichmann 2002). Owing to the sources for this language, confined especially to the dictionary and grammar,

compiled and described by the Dominican friar Francisco Morán in 1625, the lexical entries at our disposal are limited (see Stross 1990; Law 2012). Yet, despite these limitations, there are a few entries that are promising with regards to the present line of investigation. Some of the original entries are assumed to be defective and the consonants of CVC roots are thereby amended where necessary.

< <i>tzuclib</i> >	<i>tz'uk-l-ib</i>	'asiento'	< vi 'settle, sit down'	(Morán 1625: fol. 2)
< <i>u tzuc lib</i> >	<i>u-tzuk-l-ib</i>	'ijada'	< vt/n 'partition'	(Morán 1625: fol. 38)
< <i>chunlib</i> >	<i>chum-l-ib</i>	'lugar'	< vi 'sit'	(Morán 1625: fol. 40)
< <i>punlib</i> >	<i>pul-l-ib</i>	'quemadero'	< vt 'burn'	(Morán 1625: fol. 55)

As has been pointed out by Mareike Sattler, instrumental nouns in Ch'oltí' were derived from verbs and in addition to describing the means that are used to execute an action, these "may also indicate the location of the action expressed in the base verb" (Sattler 2004: 384). She further notes a separate category, wherein positional verbs appear to serve as the base for instrumental nouns, when suffixed by *-lib* (Sattler 2004: 385). Although four examples are found in Morán that are affixed with *-l-ib*, only two of these are based on positional verbs, making this perhaps a hasty categorization.

The entry for <*chumlib*> is glossed solely as *lugar*, 'place', in the original, revealing the locative function of the compound suffix, although a more detailed gloss may be 'place where one is seated', based on the positional verb *chum*, and via analogy to the examples reviewed for Chontal and Ch'ol. In much the same way <*punlib*> for 'censer' can be understood as an instrument as in 'implement with which one burns'. The first entry with <*tzuc*> involves the verbal root *tz'uk*, 'to settle, sit down' and as such follows the precedent of positional verbs. The second entry with <*tzuc*> is a lexeme with widely distributed cognates in lowland Mayan languages, with reference to divisions of land, towns and settlements (e.g., Martínez Hernández 1929: 266–268; Smailus 1975: 132). When this lexeme is used as a numeral classifier, it serves as part of counts of settlements and geographic partitions as 'provinces' (Beliaev 2000; Tokovinine 2013: 98–103; Helmke et al. 2015: 26–28). The use in Ch'oltí' for Spanish <*ejyada*> ~ 'ijada' for 'flank of an animal'—here as used in butchery—draws its meaning from the sense of 'partition'. Despite the semantic

breadth of the root in *tzuk-l-ib*, we can see that it derives a substantive within an inherently spatial register, referring to a section of meat, or the primal cut, from a butchered animal.

In sum, from these four examples it would seem that *-l-ib* in Ch'olti' served to derive instrumental and locative substantives from both transitive and intransitive verbal roots, and perhaps even from a noun, providing the same broad palette, and derivational paradigm as that seen for the western Ch'olan languages.

### **Ch'orti'**

Ch'orti', the more dominant eastern Ch'olan language, is that which preserves the greatest number of traits of the Ch'olan recorded in the glyptic texts of the Classic period (Houston et al. 2000; Lacadena and Wichmann 2002; Law et al. 2009). The prevalence of these traits is now well-recognized, which makes the place of this language all the more distinctive, especially with regards to the analysis of diachronic features and reflexes of Classic Mayan. Unlike the other Ch'olan languages, Ch'orti' does not have a *-l-ib* suffix, nor its anticipated reflex \*\*-r-ib. Yet, we find another compound suffix *-n-ib* that appears to fulfil precisely the same functions as those found in western Ch'olan languages reviewed above. In fact, this is probably the allomorph of the *-on-ib* suffix seen for Chontal and Ch'ol. The close equivalence between these suffixes suggested to both Alfonso and me that these were essentially variant allomorphs, something that I will return to in the discussion at the end of the paper.

In Ch'orti' *-n-ib* constitutes a particular class of instrumental suffix (Hull 2016: 21). For an intransitive verb, an instrument is formed by the addition of *-ib* (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 106). For a transitive this requires prior intransitivization, particularly from the form realized in the passive voice (CVC > CVjC), which results in the verbal root being treated as a non-CVC form (see Pérez Martínez 1996: 71–72; Lacadena 2004). As a result, these forms are further marked by an *-on* suffix (often realized as *-n* with the mid-back vowel syncopated) that intransitivizes non-CVC roots (Wichmann 1999: 79, 96).

<i>chajrnib</i>	<i>ch'ajr-n-ib</i>	'strainer, sifter'	(Wichmann 1999: 104)
<i>ch'ijrnib</i>	<i>ch'ijr-n-ib</i>	'objecto para freír o toastar'	(Hull 2016: 122)
<i>kojknib</i>	<i>kojk-n-ib</i>	'place for watching or guarding'	(Wichmann 1999: 106)
<i>kojrnib</i>	<i>kojr-n-ib</i>	'moledor'	(Hull 2016: 204)
<i>k'ajk'nib</i>	<i>k'ajk'-n-ib</i>	'spit (for open fire cooking)'	(Wichmann 1999: 104)
<i>k'ajtnib</i>	<i>k'ajt-n-ib</i>	'contada'	(Hull 2016: 218)
<i>tz'ijbnib</i>	<i>tz'ijb-n-ib</i>	'lápis, pluma, bolígrafo'	(Hull 2016: 457)
<i>wajrnib</i>	<i>wajr-n-ib</i>	'soplador, ventilador'	(Hull 2016: 476)
<i>yujknib</i>	<i>yujk-n-ib</i>	'mecedor, cuna, hamaca de niño'	(Hull 2016: 521)

All of these forms are derived from non-CVC transitive verbs of the form CVjC, based on the verbal roots *chajr* (vt) 'sieve, strain', *ch'ijr* (vt) 'toast, fry', *kojk* (vt), 'guard', *kojr* (vt), 'scrape, scrub', *k'ajk* (vt), 'burn, roast', *k'ajt* (vt), 'pedir, suplicar, orar', *tz'ijb* (vt), 'write, paint', *wajr* (vt), 'blow, fan', and *yujk* (vt), 'move around, shake'.

Additional non-CVC verbal roots, such as those conforming to VC (irrespective of whether these are transitive or intransitive verbs) or derived forms such as CVC-VC and CVC-V are treated in the same way, and receive the same suffixation, to intransitivize and nominalize as follows:

<i>burutnib</i>	<i>burut-n-ib</i>	'kiln'	(Wisdom 1950: 593)
<i>irnib</i>	<i>ir-n-ib</i>	'espejo'	(Hull 2016: 155)
<i>och(e)nib</i>	<i>och(e)-n-ib</i>	'entrada'	(Hull 2016: 311)
<i>pojch'anib</i>	<i>pojch'-a-n-ib</i>	'lavadero'	(Hull 2016: 337)
<i>tajpesnib</i>	<i>tajpes-n-ib</i>	'interruptor'	(Hull 2016: 385)
<i>uch'nib</i>	<i>uch'-n-ib</i>	'vaso, taza'	(Hull 2016: 466)
<i>warenib</i>	<i>ware-n-ib</i>	'regalo para una visita'	(Hull 2016: 479)

The roots in these examples are more varied, representing transitive (*uch'*, 'drink'), and intransitive verbs (*ir* 'see', *och* 'enter'), as well as causative forms (*oche(s)* 'entrar', *tajpes* 'apagar', *warajse* 'visitar') and a nominalized form (*bur-ut*, burnt.<sub>ADJ-NOM</sub>, 'something burnt').

Forms that appear to constitute exceptions—and which do not appear to conform to these observations—are few, since all the examples below are realized on the basis of CVC roots, irrespective of valency.

<i>che'nib</i>	<i>che'-n-ib</i>	vt 'instrumento, herramienta'	(Hull 2016: 97)
<i>ch'ubníb</i>	<i>ch'ub-n-ib</i>	vt 'colgador'	(Hull 2016: 128)
<i>jurnib</i>	<i>jur-n-ib</i>	vt 'arma [...] flecha, arco'	(Hull 2016: 183)
<i>purnib</i>	<i>pur-n-ib</i>	vi 'incensario'	(Hull 2016: 346)
<i>wayníb</i>	<i>way-n-ib</i>	vi 'dormitorio'	(Hull 2016: 481)
<i>we'nib</i>	<i>we'-n-ib</i>	vi 'mesa'	(Hull 2016: 485)

The verbal roots involved in these examples are *chen* ~ *che*' (vt) 'to do', *ch'ub* (vt) 'to hang', *jur* (vt) 'to throw, hurl', *pur* (vi) 'to burn', *way* (vt) 'to sleep, dream', and *we'* (vi) 'to eat'. One possibility is that these are based on nouns and are nowadays fossilized forms that represent an earlier stratum of the language. This is certainly plausible given the forms involved and their referents. In this view, I see the *-n-ib* suffix as having lost its productivity with this last set of examples, unlike the forms that were reviewed above, as these require non-CVC roots to form productive derivations. Nonetheless, these examples may be deceptive in that at least some of these may stem from syncopated forms. For example, *jurnib* 'arrow' is probably the surface form of *jur-on-ib* (like the Ch'ol cognate *julonib* cited earlier) and a rare dialectal variant of 'censer' is documented as *purunib*, revealing that syncopation of /u/ in certain contexts (Kerry Hull, personal communication, 2018). A similar process is documented with the instrumentals of positional verbs, which are derived from the participial. Thus *ket-* 'hold back' has *keter* as the participle and is realized as *ketr-ib* 'leftovers', in much the same way as *muk-* 'to bury' > *mukur* > *mukr-ib* 'hiding place' (Hull 2016: 195, 289).

The productivity of this compound suffix is made all the more apparent for its use in neologisms such as *ch'ubníb* 'coat hanger' and *tajpesníb* 'light switch'—with the status of *we'nib* unclear, although cited at least as a candidate for replacement of the Spanish loanword *mesa* (see Pérez Martínez 1994: 35; Hull 2016: 10). Some items that are used for modern appliances and utensils (including those now made of metal and plastic) include *tz'ijbnib* for 'pencil, ballpoint pen', as well as *uch'nib* 'drinking cup, pourer', *irnib* 'mirror', *kojrnib* 'grinder' and *wajrnib* 'fan', but in all probability, these are older terms that labelled the commensurate objects used in Pre-Columbian times.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> One of the examples, *k'ajtnib*, is of particular interest since it is the only construction in Ch'orti' that cannot refer to an actual physical and tangible object, but is rather a signifier

Yet whereas the more recent forms suggest that the resulting lexemes form a more distinct category of instrumentals (Hull 2016: 21), what are undoubtedly older terms betray their more locative connotations and the formation of toponyms. This is particularly clear in items such as *burutnib* ‘kiln’ (*bur-* ‘burn’), *ch’ijrnib* ‘frier, frying pan, toaster’ (*ch’ijr-* ‘fry, toast’), *kojrnib* ‘grinder’ (*kojr-* ‘scrape’), *ochnib* ‘entrance’ (*och-* ‘enter’), *waynib* ‘bedroom’ (*way* ‘sleep’), *we’nib* ‘table’ (*we* ‘eat’) and *yujknib* ‘baby-hammock’ (*yujk-* ‘shake, move, swing’). Further instances include *pojch’anib*, glossed specifically as ‘place where one washes clothes’ (Hull 2016: 337), with related entries including *pojch’nib-tun* ‘washing stone’ (Hull 2016: 338) as in the many flat stones by the rivers where women go to wash clothes. Similarly, the *t’ojt’nib cha* describes not only the implement with which one pecks out a *cha*, a *metate* or ‘grinding stone’, but also the place where *metate* are pecked out of bedrock (Hull 2016: 434). Accounting for the locative features of these resulting forms, we can understand these in more literal fashion as ‘place where burning happens’ > ‘kiln’, ‘place where entry happens’ > ‘entrance’, ‘place where sleep happens’ > ‘sleeping quarters, bedroom’, ‘place where eating happens’ > ‘table’ and ‘place where rocking happens’ > ‘baby-hammock’.

The incidence of suffixes of the form *-Vn* in lowland Mayan languages, and Mayan languages in general, is rare. There are two that stand out above others, including an existential particle or enclitic *-a'an ~ -an* that is affixed to predicates (see Bricker 1986: 26–30; Nehammer Knub et al. 2009: 180) and an antipassive suffix *-oon ~ -on* that can be reconstructed all the way back to proto-Mayan *\*-oon* (Kaufman 2015: 122, 248, 321, 324, 338–340). The antipassive in the Ch’olan of the Classic period has been adeptly reconstructed by Alfonso (Lacadena 2000) based on script-internal evidence as well as working back from the reflexes attested in greater Tzeltalan languages. Agent-focusing antipassive constructions in most Mayan languages involve a suffix of the form *-on* (as in Chontal, Tzotzil, Tz’utujil, Kaqchikel and Ixil), preserved in K’iche’ as *-oon* (and in

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for a more ephemeral entity, since it is glossed as ‘voiced narration’, such as those wherein mythic episodes are recounted. Given that *-ib* serves as a nominalizer, it is thereby unlikely to mark an instrument, but once more must convey locality. As such, *k’ajtnib* may better be understood as ‘where recounting/tales takes place’ and almost serves as means of specifying a space for oratory as well as prompting an audience to find its place.

certain contexts in Tz'utujil), as direct descendants of the proto-Mayan, and due to phonotactic constraints is often reduced to just *-n* (as in Yukatek, Jakalteko, Q'eqchi', and Mam) (see Lacadena 2000: Table 1). The widespread occurrence of these suffixes not only substantiates that these are foundational features of Mayan languages, but also makes it highly probable that this is the suffix involved in the Ch'orti' examples presented above, not the least since Classic Mayan also preferentially represents this suffix as *-n*, especially for non-CVC passives (Lacadena 2004). For the antipassive voice, certain non-CVC forms appear to have maintained the more dated *-oon* suffix in Classic Mayan, such as with *il-oon-Ø* 'he saw' and *uk'-oon-Ø*, 'he drank', which is highly interesting as to the original form of this suffix and the contexts in which the various allomorphs occur. One might conclude that the same phonotactic constraints governed the suffixes in question with the syncopated *-n-ib* affixed preferentially to either CVC or CVC-VC forms and more complex *-oon-ib* affixes seen with non-CVC forms.

Relevant here are the examples cited for Chontal and Ch'ol, where at times the *-on* suffix emerges even when it is part of compound affixation. In Ch'ol *-on* is no longer productive as an antipassive and can only be used to nominalize transitive roots (Michael Dürr, personal communication, 2018). Illustrative exceptions are also found in Ch'orti' where *jur* (vt) is 'to throw, hurl, shoot, hunt', and *jusr-ib* 'bullet, gunshot' whereas *jur-on-ib* 'shotgun, weapon, bow or arrow' (see Wichmann 1999: 96). This regularity speaks in favour of its reconstruction across all of the Ch'olan languages. The use of this suffix in the compound form *-(oo)n-ib* therefore suggests to me that it operates primarily in derivational processes, deriving intransitive constructions from inherently transitive roots. In much the same way as the passive reduces the valency of the verb, the antipassive equally reduces the arguments of the verb, with the sole argument being the subject, wherein the agent is elevated through the deletion of the object (likewise, for the passive the agent is deleted and the object is raised to the subject). These shared features of the passive and antipassive, namely the reduction of syntactical arguments appear to be at the heart of these constructions, thereby reducing the root to an intransitive, no matter its original form or valency, and thereby rendering it liable to suffixation by an *-ib* instrumental.

As such, the *-n* in *-n-ib* appears to function primarily to demote valency—as a passivizer, and thereby secondarily as an intransitivizer—enabling the suffixation of the instrumental suffix, and thus creating not only a derived substantive, but also a locative construction that echoes the semantic thrust of the verb.

### **The *-n-ib* and *-l-ib* suffixes in ancient Maya writing**

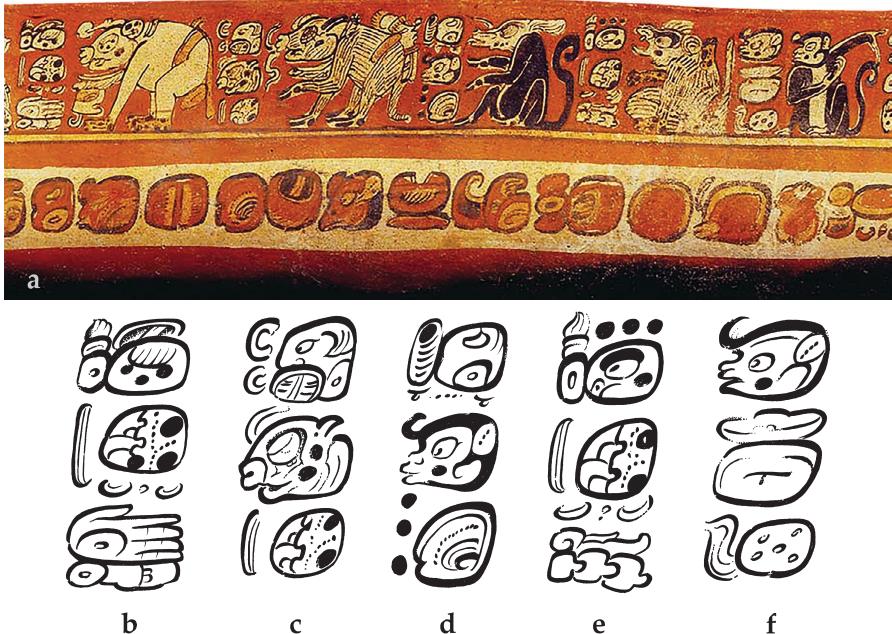
Below I will review the glyptic corpus of the Classic period for examples of derived forms written with the compound suffixes *-n-ib* and *-l-ib*. Based on this evidence it will be argued that these form a specialized class of locatives—which through accrued use formed toponyms—and in order to better understand the semantics and the contexts in which these occurrences are found, some information will be provided on the locality of the text, its dating, ties to historical figures and narrative content of the relevant clauses. On account of differential ubiquity, I will first review the evidence for the *-n-ib* suffix and then go on to examine the cases exhibiting *-l-ib*, according to thematically contiguous groups.

### **Into the Underworld: Named places of *wahy* and kings**

A good place to start, which helps to establish the toponymic function of derived instrumental nouns as a special class of locative constructions, or toponyms in the narrow sense, are the texts that accompany polychromatic ceramics adorned with spirit companions or *wahy* to use the Classic Maya term. When these supernatural entities were first identified in the corpus of the Classic period (Houston and Stuart 1989; Grube and Nahm 1994), these were perceived as more benign spiritual counterparts, each inherently tied to a particular human being, based in large measure on the results of comparative ethnographic work in traditional Maya communities. Since then, there has been a growing appreciation of that these are much more holistic entities, and a more nuanced understanding reveals that these *wahy* were also decidedly malign and demonic, almost as poltergeist entities that roam the night and nightmares, and when wielded by sorcerers inflict harm and cause illness in others (Stuart 2005: 161–164; Helmke and Nielsen 2010).

No matter the particulars, these were of great importance to the ancient Maya and perhaps even more so to the royal elite, and it would seem that in the Classic period that distinct *wahy* were tied to specific places and/or royal dynasties. This is made patently clear in the glyptic captions that accompany the depictions of such *wahy*, as found on a particular genre of Late Classic Maya ceramics. These captions exhibit the same general syntax: 1) first providing the name or description of the particular *wahy*, 2) then offering a possessive statement that us read *u-wahy*, ‘it is the way of’ and 3) then making a reference to the owner of that particular *wahy*, usually expressed through a place name or a royal title (Houston and Stuart 1989: 6–7; Grube and Nahm 1994). It is precisely through reiteration to place and the dynasties ruling particular polities that we can establish the link between *wahy* and given localities.

One particularly interesting specimen in this regard is a polychrome bowl (K7525) produced at the ancient city of El Zotz, which above a dedicatory text represents a series of six *wahy* (Kerr 2000: 998) (Figure 2a). The captions to these entities are written with three glyphs each, leading to a curious set of truncations, but knowing the standard syntax and semantics of such captions, these are nonetheless relatively easy to parse. One of these represents a melding of a tapir and an ocelot and appropriately enough the associated caption reads **ti-li-HIX** for *ti[h]l-hix* ‘tapir-ocelot’ (Figure 2b). This is then followed by **u-WAY-ya** for *u-wa[h]y*, the standard, possessive, bridging construction and, as can be expected, the last glyph provides a reference to the owner, here written **K'AB-TE'**, *k'abte'*, a title used by the nobility of Xultun (Garrison and Stuart 2004). Besides this *wahy* is another, and its caption can be read *k'ahk' u-ti' chitam u-wahy*, or ‘fire-eating peccary, it is the *wahy* of ...’. The end is truncated without providing the name of the place to which this entity is tied (Figure 2c). Just besides is yet another, the body of spider monkey with the head of a deer, a melding that is corroborated in the caption as **o-chi-la / MAX / 3-WITZ** for *o-chi[j]il maax [u-wahy] uxwitz[a']* (Grube and Nahm 1994: 695–696), here naming the *wahy* as a ‘great-deer spider.monkey’ that is tied to a place named *Uxwitza'*, the ancient toponym of the site of Caracol, in present-day Belize (Figure 2d). Thus, in this instance the medial segment, the possessive construction, has been omitted, but otherwise forms a



**Figure 2.** Red-background polychromatic bowl from El Zoot depicting a series of *wahy* creatures with their accompanying captions (rollout photograph K7525 © Justin Kerr, after Kerr 2000: 998; drawings by Christophe Helmke).

complete caption. Further to the right is another *wahy*, depicted as a long-haired feral dog and yet named *sak ux ook*, ‘white three dogs’, connected to a locality named *Och-nal*, ‘entry-place’ (Grube and Nahm 1994: 697) (Figure 2e). This then brings us to another depiction, that of a seated spider monkey that is scratching his armpit, a fairly leisurely pose, drawn from nature, for such an otherworldly entity. The caption of this entity is written **MAX / IK'** / **ni-bi**, for *maax ik'�ib* (Figure 2f). In that case the name of the *wahy* has been reduced to just one element *maax* ‘spider monkey’ and the place that is tied to this entity is recorded over two glyph blocks as *ik'-n-ib*, using our composite suffix of interest. This toponym can probably be translated as ‘where there is wind’ and may either be a heretofore unknown locality, or could be a variant form of the toponym *Ik'-a*, which uses another toponymic suffix, that is usually tied to the polity that had its capital at the archaeological site of Motul de San José (Stuart and Houston 1994: 28). Interestingly, the same *Ik'-n-ib* location also occurs on other vessels, including a polychromatic vase designated

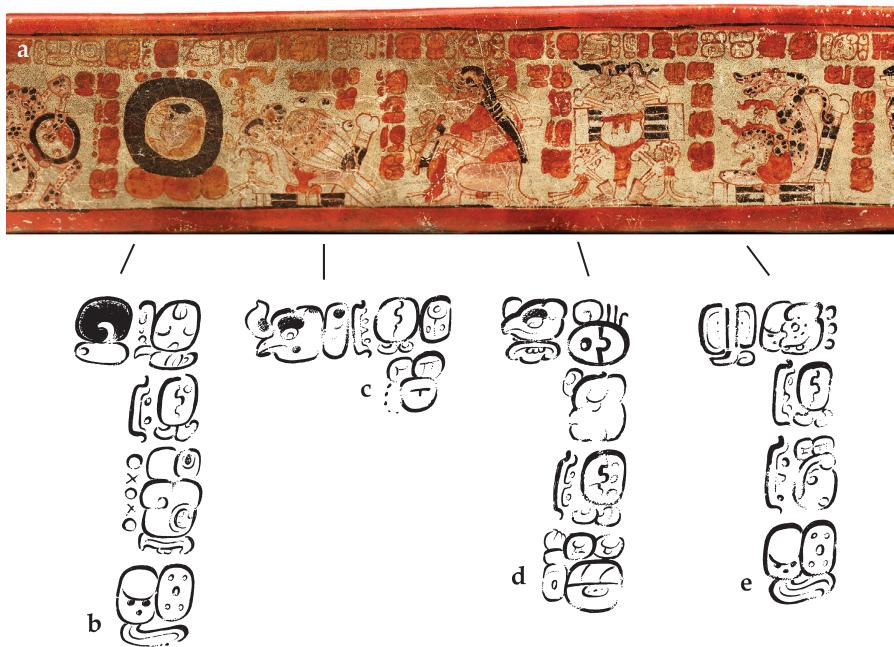
as K5847 where it accompanies the caption of a subsidiary figure (see also Lopes 2005) (Figure 3).

On the wonderful Castillo bowl (K3395) in the collections of the Museo Popol Vuh, in Guatemala, we see another array of altogether scarier *wahy* creatures (Reents-Budet 1994: 272) (Figure 4a). The reference made to *Jasaw Chan K'awil I*—king of Tikal from AD 682 to 734 (Martin and Grube 2000: 44–47)—in the rim text of the vase allows us to place its production in a royal workshop at the site and at some point in the late seventh to early eighth century. Due to the manner in which the red slip was applied, its interplay with the subsequently-applied orange wash, and the way in which these seeped into the clay, the glyphic captions are rather blurry, but details can nonetheless be teased out.

One of these *wahy* represents a raptorial bird, perched on a throne made of human long bones, appears to belch a human from its beak and is referred to rather sedately as a *kuy-o'*, combining the names of an owl with a raptorial bird of prey (Figure 4c). In this case the entity is referred to as a *wahy-al*, using what may be an arcane absolute suffix marking inalienable possession (see Zender 2004a: 207), that is tied to the *Ik'[a'] ajaw*, or lords of Motul de San José. Another, altogether more grisly figure is a dancing skeleton that is named as *chan hut jo'l* ‘four-faced/eyed skull’ (Helmke 2013: 6, fig. 2e) (Figure 4d). Besides this skeleton is what can be described as an acrobatic feline, tumbling headlong on one such throne of long bones. This entity is named **sa-wa HIX-xi-no?**, *saw hix ...* (Grube and Nahm 1994: 691), which is tied to a place written **HIX-ni-bi**, for *hix-n-ib* ‘where



**Figure 3.** Detail of a palatial scene labelling a subsidiary courtier as being from *Ik'nib* in the associated caption (drawing of K5847 by Christophe Helmke, after Kerr 2000: 943).



**Figure 4.** Detail of the Castillo bowl with its *wahy* creatures (rollout photograph K3395 © Justin Kerr, after Reents-Budet 1994: 272–273) and details of the associated glyptic captions (drawings by Christophe Helmke).

ocelots are found' (Figure 4e). The same toponym occurs on the same vase as the locality to which another *wahy* is connected, this one named *k'ik'el winik* or 'rubber man', here represented as a male figure confined within a large rubber ball (Figure 4b).

This *Hix-n-ib* toponym is also known from other comparable sources, particularly on a vase produced at Naranjo, under the reign of one of its greatest kings, *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, who reigned from AD 693 to 728+ (Martin and Grube 2000: 74–77; Grube 2004: 200–202). This vase represents a wild multitude of *wahy* creatures, duplicating some of the ones that we have already seen on the bowl from El Zotz at the onset (K0927; Coe 1982: 108–113) (Figure 5). Among these is the *Tihl-hix* 'tapir-ocelot', *K'ahk' Utí Chitam*, the 'fire-eating peccary' as well as the *Sak Ux Ook* 'white three dogs'. It is the latter that is of interest here (Grube and Nahm 1994: 697), since the proprietary segment is expanded over three glyphs blocks. The first provides the toponym *Och-nal*, as we have seen before, and then goes on to append **BAH[TUN]-ni / HIX-ni-bi**, or *baah-tuun hix-n-ib*. This latter

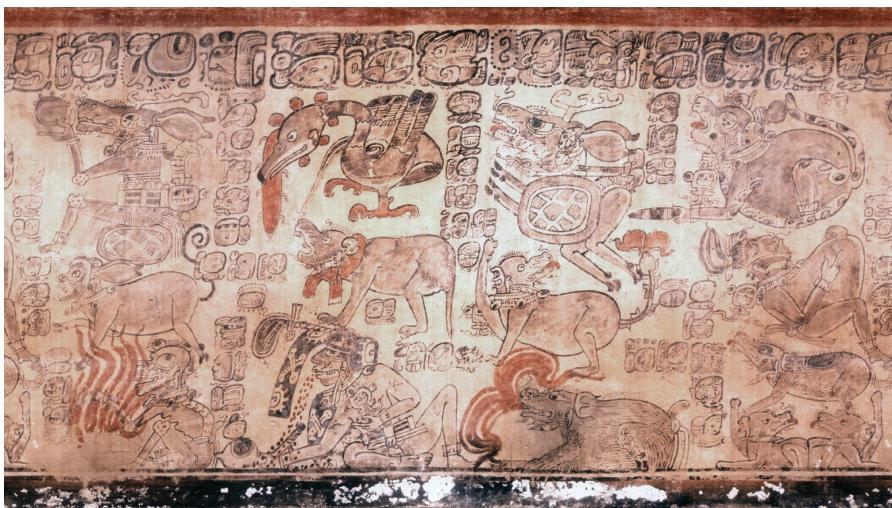
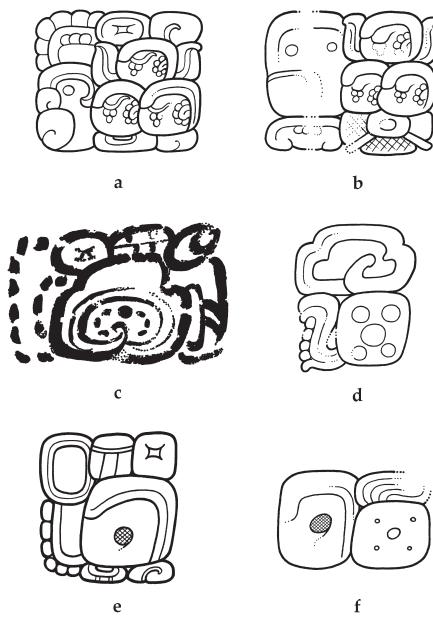


Figure 5. One of the vases owned by Naranjo's king, *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak*, representing a wild array of *wahy* entities (rollout photograph K0927 © Justin Kerr, after Coe 1982: 109).

segment provides a specification concerning the owner of this *wahy*, as a *baah-tuun*, literally 'head-stone' an obscure title that is known from a variety of contexts (see Boot 2010: 256–263, 274–276), and provides another example of the *Hix-n-ib* toponym, as though the title-holder was of this specific place—possibly a particular place within greater *Ochnal*. This is one of these rare instances wherein *wahy* are connected to more than just place names, their otherwise veiled historical owners specified in more pronounced detail.

## A Look at Emblem Glyphs

This connection and overlap between place and title is made apparent in other examples, especially wherein the primary toponymic element of Emblem Glyphs, the exalted title of ruling monarchs (Mathews 1991), are isolated and used as basis for deriving toponyms (see Stuart and Houston 1994). This is a highly productive process in the Classic period, since Emblem Glyphs are inherently titles that are based on toponyms, such as that of Seibal for instance. In that case the complete Emblem Glyph involves three stones, forming the *tenamaste*, or central hearthstones of domestic structures, which is an as yet undeciphered logogram. In the Emblem Glyph this provides the royal title that is read *k'uhul...ajaw*, or 'godly



**Figure 6.** Emblem Glyphs and their constituent toponyms: *a*) Seibal Emblem Glyph, *b*) toponym of Seibal, *c*) Water Scroll Emblem Glyph, *d*) Water Scroll toponym with *-n-ib* suffix, *e*) Y2 Emblem Glyph at Yaxchilan, *f*) Y2 toponym with *-n-ib* suffix (drawings by Christophe Helmke).

hearthstone king' (Figure 6a), and at that royal court, as with other polities, this title was the exclusive preserve of reigning rulers. The central segment, the hearthstones, was the primary place name of Seibal (Figure 6b) and thereby styles the king as the ruler of that particular place (Stuart and Houston 1994: 26, 28).

Another Emblem Glyph, that which may name the dynasty of Altun Ha, uses at its main sign an as yet undeciphered logogram that may represent a wave or a body of water (Helmke et al. 2018). As a result, this sign has been nicknamed the Water-scroll Emblem Glyph (Figure 6c). In that case, in addition to forming an integral part of the regnal title of the kings

of that dynasty, we see examples wherein the Water-scroll sign has been isolated from its titular context and used in narratives to function as a toponym. This is seen, for instance on Stela D at Pusilha, in southern Belize, where the account records the defeat of the local dynasty and the 'splintering of stelae' in AD 595 (Wanyerka 2003: 23; Prager 2013: 261, 277). The agents of this action are twice referred to by a Water-scroll sign suffixed by **-ni-bi**, providing the toponymic construction that we examining here (Figure 6d). In this instance, the Water-scroll is not only disassociated from its titular usage but is also identified as a place name, and syntactically here this functions to attribute the origin of the agents of the actions.

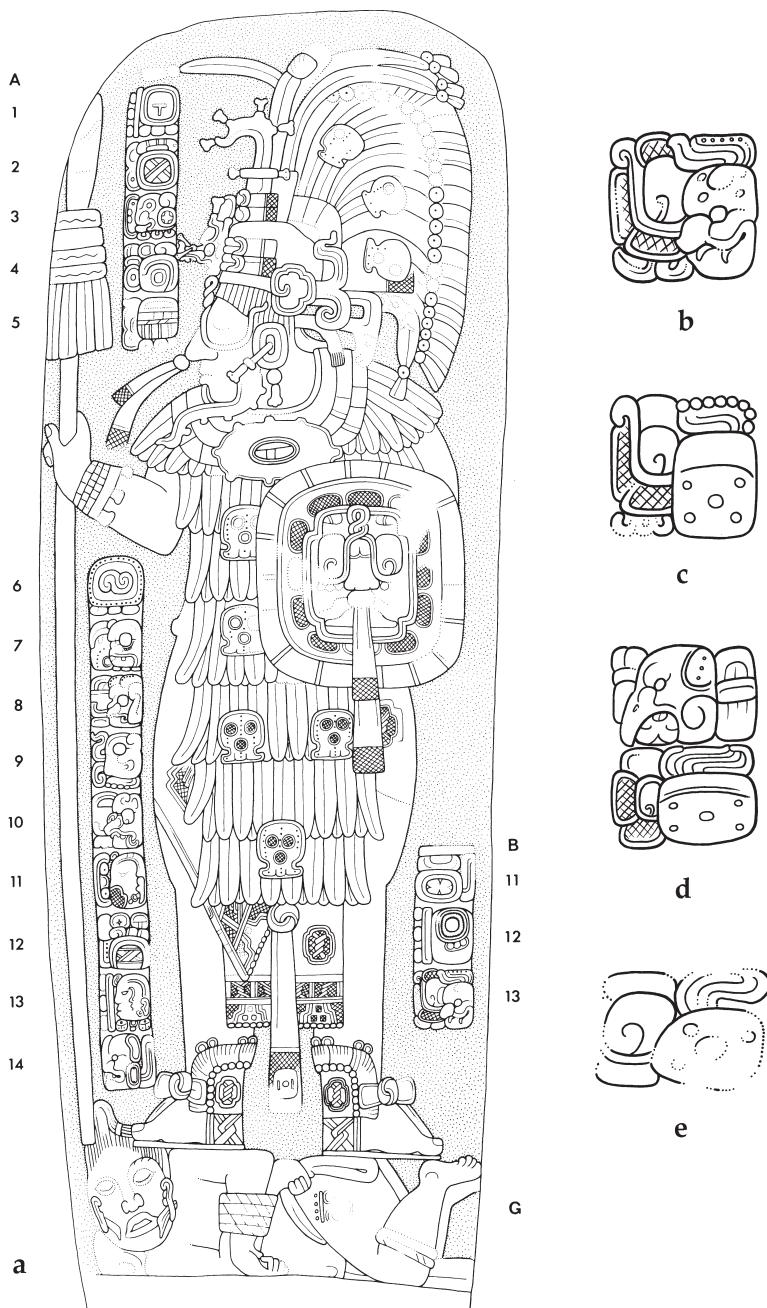
Similarly, at Yaxchilan, the Late Classic kings were styled with Emblem Glyphs, although these dynastic incumbents had the distinction of bearing two distinct Emblem Glyphs. This practice

appears to have been introduced during the reign of “Itzamnaaj” *Bahlam* II, with the second Emblem Glyph apparently inherited from his mother (Mathews 1988: 371; Martin and Grube 2000: 119). This thereby seems to signal a type of dynastic melding. The original Emblem Glyph of Yaxchilan kings can be read in full as *k'uhul pa'chan ajaw*, or ‘godly Pa'chan king’, with the medial segment once more serving as the primary name of the royal court. The toponym literally means ‘broken-sky’ and I have argued elsewhere that this is a place name of mythic origin, or at least a reference to a celestial locality of significance in an important etiological myth (Helmke 2012: 100–107). The second Emblem Glyph may find its origin in the prerogatives of the royal court of the site of El Zotz in Guatemala, located over 135 km to the north-east (Houston 2008a: 1–4; Houston et al. 2012: 177). Although this Emblem Glyph was among the first identified by Heinrich Berlin, who labelled it Y2 (Berlin 1958: 115–116), the main sign of this second Emblem Glyph remains undeciphered (but appears to end in *-j* given phonetic complementation with *-ji*) (Figure 6e). These uncertainties notwithstanding, the main sign also occurs in mythic texts revealing that this was a place of great importance to the ancient Maya. Despite the great longevity attributed to this locality in Maya mythology, at Yaxchilan, the same toponym occurs, interestingly enough as part of a so-called title of origin of one of the sculptors of Hieroglyphic Stair 3, raised around AD 732 during the reign of “Itzamnaaj” *Bahlam* III (Mathews 1988: 160). There, in the final clause of Step 4, we see an abridged dedicatory expression, followed by the name of the first sculptor, one *Yaxuun Sajal* who is connected to a second individual by the conjunctive *yitaaj* ‘companion’, who is named *Lahchan ~ Lahcha'* Pat and identified as **a-TAN-na / CH'EN-na / Y2-ni-bi**, for *aj-tahn ch'een ...j-n-ib*, ‘he of the middle of the settlement of ...j-n-ib’ (Figure 6f). Based on this example we can see that during the eighth century a particular settlement still bore that name and was the place of origin of one of the sculptors employed by the court of Yaxchilan. Once more, this shows the productivity of the suffix in Classic Mayan, and the specific use to form toponymic constructions.

## Naranjo and the Jaguar God of the Underworld

Probably the most common toponym involving the *-n-ib* suffix is one associated with the ancient Maya city of Naranjo, in Guatemala. These examples are found predominantly on public monuments, including better-known examples on Stela 13 and 21. Stela 21, the earlier of the two, was raised in AD 706, during the reign of the king *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, who on its front face is depicted victorious, trampling a defeated foe, and dressed in martial attire, complete with long lance and circular shield (Figure 7a). The king is shown dressed bearing the attributes of the primary tutelary deity of Naranjo, an anthropomorphic entity with feline traits, usually described in the literature as the Jaguar God of the Underworld (Schele and Miller 1986: 50). On this monument, the face of the feline deity is represented prominently on the circular shield, and the king wears the distinctive features of the deity including the shell beard, the twisted cruller around the eyes and a feline ear in the headdress that is topped by a sign for flames. Related to the deity known as God M from the later codical sources (Taube 1992: 88–92), during the Classic period this deity may have been known as *Ik' Chuwaaj*, perhaps ‘the black burnt one’ (Lopes 2003). The name and spots of this entity are associated with an etiological myth explaining the advent of jaguar spots (see also Thompson 1962: 134), which also explains the flames bristling from the feline ear on Stela 21.

In the caption describing the victorious king, he is provided with a range of titles, including the regal *k'uhul sa'uul ajaw*, ‘godly Sa'uul king’ (A12), that styled ruling monarchs, involving the toponym *Sa'uul* ‘where atole abounds’, one of the ancient place names of Naranjo (see Lacadena and Wichmann n.d.: 21–28). This long titular string is closed by the collocation written **CHUWAJ-wa-ni-bi** (B13), read *Chuwaajnib* (Figure 7b). Based on the context in which it occurs it provides a toponym that serves to qualify the king as ruler of that place. That toponym provides an alternate name for the city, which is derived from the theonym—the name of this deity—and based on our understanding of the suffix *-n-ib* is best translated as ‘where Chuwaaj is found’. Another example of the same toponym is found on Stela 13, raised in AD 780 by *K'ahk' Ukalaw Chan Chaak*, the son and successor of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak*. Much like on the monument of his father, *K'ahk' Ukalaw* is given a lengthy string of titles, which is



**Figure 7.** The Jaguar God of the Underworld at Naranjo: *a*) Front of Stela 21 (drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM#2004.15.6.2.37). Examples of the *Chuwaajnib* toponym at Naranjo: *b*) Stela 21, *c*) Stela 13, *d*) Altar 2 (reverse), *e*) Altar 1 (drawings by Christophe Helmke).

closed by the same toponym, here written **CHUWAJ-ji-ni-bi** (F16), *Chuwaajnib* (Figure 7c).

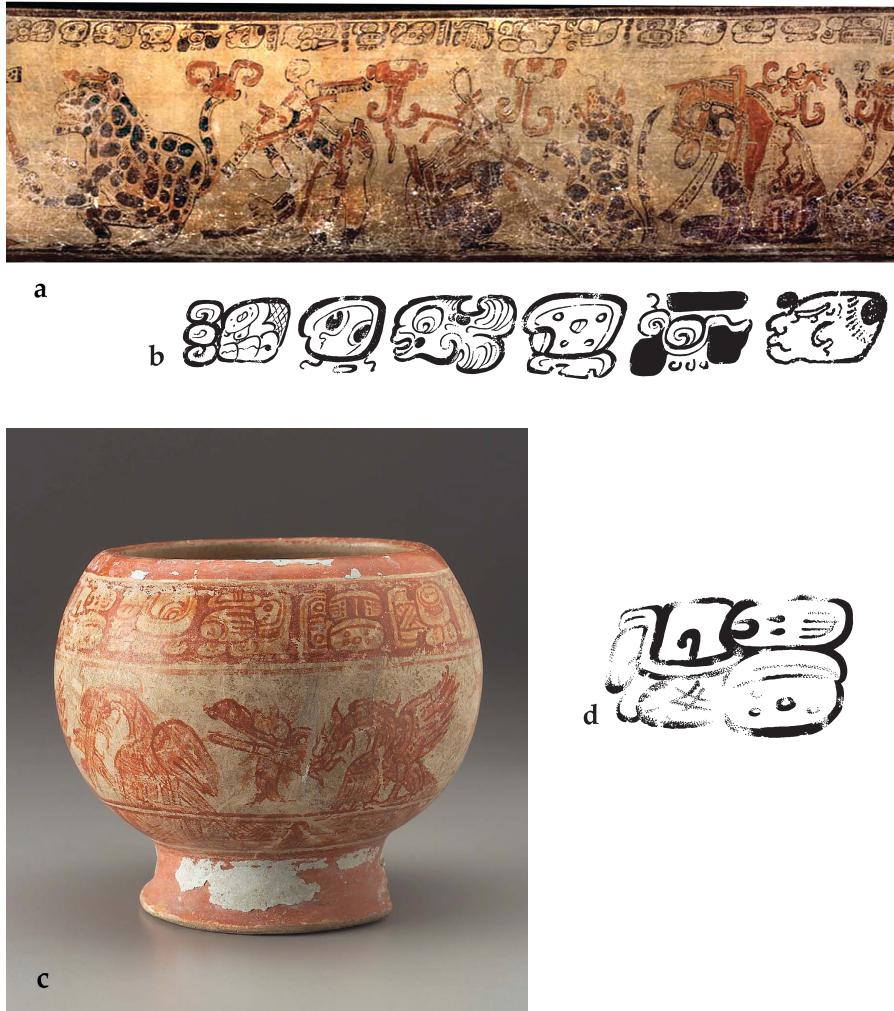
Although nearly eight decades separate these stelae, another intervening example is also found on Altar 2. This interesting altar was commemorated by a successor in AD 790, recycling part of the stela that had been broken, by reshaping the sides to a circular form and adding a glyptic text to the top. It is in the untouched carving of the stela, preserved on the inferior face of the altar, that this third example is found. This preserved section represents the lower, frontal face of a stela, which based on style must have been raised by an eighth century king (Grube 2004: 206). Once more the toponym occurs in the final segment of a titular string where it is introduced by T1036b-**HUN?** (pAp2), **CHUWAJ-ni-bi** (pAp3), ...*huun Chuwaajnib* (Figure 7d). The logogram in the preceding glyph block represents the head of a vulture that is devouring the glyph for *winik*, ‘man, person’, designated as T1036b in the Thompson catalogue (1962: 458). Although this logogram remains undeciphered, it may well serve to record a type of aviform headdress, with the human wearer peering out from the maw, hence the graphic motivation for this sign, which is bolstered by the apparent inclusion of the word *huun*, literally ‘paper’, but often used to qualify particular headdresses, since many of these were originally made of bark paper (see Stuart 2012). All in all, this segment preserved on Altar 2 may refer to a particular headdress that was deemed to belong to the city.

Another interesting and heretofore undocumented example is found on the finely incised Altar 1 of the site. This altar was dedicated in AD 596, just three years after the important Period Ending of 9.8.0.0.0, during the long reign of “Aj Wosal”, the longest-reigning monarch of Naranjo (Martin and Grube 2000: 71–72; Grube 2004: 197). The relatively lengthy text on the altar is impressive for its extensive chronology. It delves nearly 22 000 years into mythic times, and in addition to grand Period Endings celebrated by the venerated king, prognosticates 230 years into the future, as if the king’s reign might prove endless (Martin and Grube 2000: 70–71; Helmke and Kettunen 2011: 6–15). Close inspection of the end of the third clause—recording an early event in 258 BC—reveals another example of the toponym in question (Figure 7e). In this case, the toponym is written **CHUWAJ-ni-bi** (C6), *Chuwaajnib*, and is paired with *Wak Kab-nal*, ‘six earth-

place', a territorial designation for the Naranjo polity (Martin 1996: 226), further corroborating that *Chuwaajnib* is a locality within the larger territory of the polity. The appearance of these toponyms at the end of the main clause suggest that these provide the titles of a quasi-mythical ancestral figure. A secondary sub-clause is headed by an agency expression, crediting another mythic king for the action recorded in the main clause, the whole succinctly concluded with *uhti maxam*, 'it happened at Maxam', naming yet another Naranjo locality (Stuart and Houston 1994: 21–23). Clearly this portion of the text serves to explain the advent of the Naranjo dynasty, and by introducing the most prominent toponyms of the realm, compositionally explains their existence for time immemorial.

The reign of "Aj Wosal" is also well known for the many highly decorated, polychromatic ceramics that were produced under his patronage at workshops attached to the royal court. Most of these bear elaborate decorative scenes and glyphic texts along the rim that record an abridged dedicatory segment, as well as specifying the designation of the ceramic container and its intended contents, the whole closed by a statement of ownership, naming "Aj Wosal" and providing a selection of his titles. One such vessel, a polychromatic bowl (K0681) (Figure 8a), specifies the intended contents as **CHAB-li / ka / TAN-na / 5-CHUWAJ-ji / KAB**, or *chab[aa]l ka[kaw] ta[h]n ho' [yatik] chuwaaj[nib] kab*, '(honey-)sweetened kakaw [from] the central ... Chuwaajnib lands' (Helmke et al. 2010: 105) (Figure 8b). The use of the locative preposition *tahn* 'middle, center' once more confirms that *Chuwaajnib* is a toponym. The inclusion of this toponym here serves to qualify the origin of the agricultural produce, almost like an *appellation d'origine* ascribed to the *kakaw* produced in the orchards of Naranjo. True Naranjo *kakaw*, for true naranjeños.

A further ceramic vessel to bear this toponym is a small drinking cup (c. 10.8 cm high × 9.5 cm diameter), with a low pedestal base, now in the collections of the Boston Museum of Fine Art (Inv. No. 1988.1284, MS1079) (Figure 8c). Although unprovenanced, this charming little vessel is decorated with red waterfowl on a cream background, a distinctive feature of ceramics produced in the greater Naranjo region (see Reents-Budet et al. 1994: 179–187). The text of this cup was first analysed by Erik Boot (2009) who remarked that it is referred to as a *yotoot*, literally a 'home', but here with the



**Figure 8.** *a*) A bowl of the Naranjo king "Aj Wosal" (roll-out photograph Ko681 © Justin Kerr, after Kerr 1989: 35), *b*) the segment detailing the vessel type and intended contents of the bowl (drawing by Christophe Helmke). *c*) Drinking cup of the Holmul area (photograph © Boston Museum of Fine Arts), *d*) detail showing the *Chuwajilb* toponym (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

intended meaning of 'container', for *tzih*, a maize-based beverage (see Houston 1998: 349–351; Stuart 2005: 143–144). The owner is named as *K'awil Bahlam*, and based on the synharmonic spellings with the phonetic complements **-li** and **-ma** on both parts of his name, we can estimate that this vessel was produced sometime after AD 800, given its region, since it is from then on that we see spellings

reflecting the loss of vowel complexity, with the shortening of long vowels in particular VV > V, as in *K'awiil* > *K'awil* (Lacadena and Wichmann 2002: 299–302). Once more, the titular string is closed with a toponym, in this case written **CHUWAJ-li-bi** (M1), presumably pronounced *chuwajlib* at this date (Figure 8d). This is a fascinating example since it undoubtedly refers to precisely the same locality as *Chuwaajnib*, accounting for the region of production of this cup, and yet, the suffix appears to have been supplanted, as though *-n-ib* was more arcane and *-l-ib* more progressive. This key example illustrates not only the inherent equality between these two compound suffixes, as though allomorphs of one another, but also for understanding their diachronic development and spatial distribution; features that I will comment on more, in the final discussion at the end of the paper.

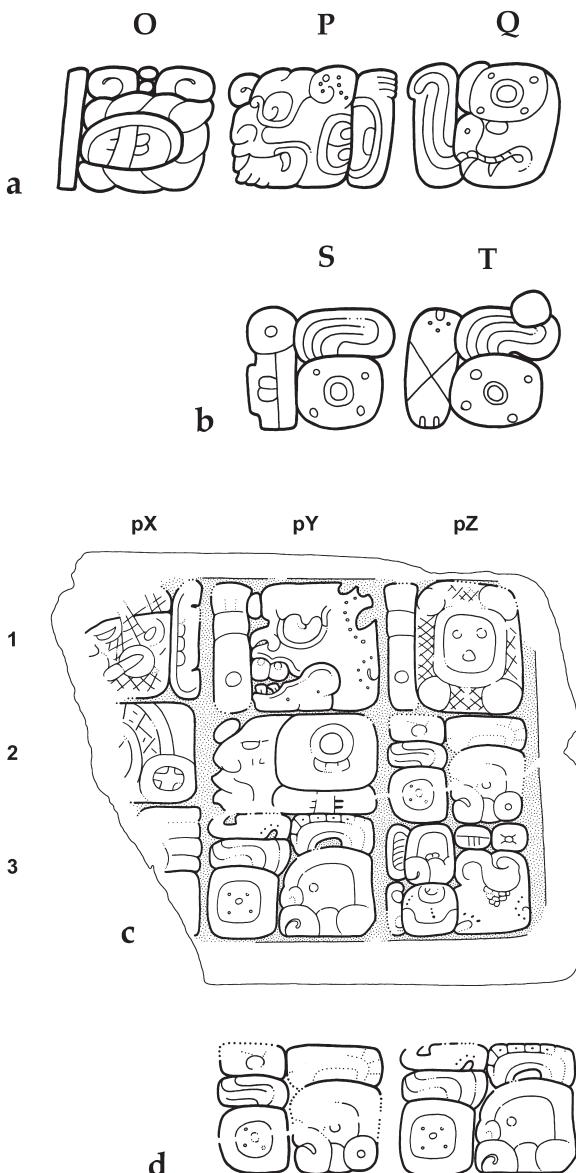
### **Farther Afield: *Te'nib* and *Took'nib***

Outside of Naranjo, the *Chuwaajnib* toponym is found on the side of Stela 2 at Oxpemul, located in Campeche, Mexico, some 142 km to the north-west of Naranjo. The text of Stela 2 recounts a scattering ritual conducted in AD 771 on the occasion of the 9.17.0.0.0 Period-Ending, a ritual officiated by the local ruler, named *Chak Tajal Wahy* (Grube 2008: 198–199). The text is then closed by a parentage statement, naming his mother, and it is as the very final glyph of her nomino-titular string that this glyph appears, written **CHUWAJ-ji-ni-bi** (see Grube 2008: fig. 8.23). As such, we can conclude that the mother of *Chak Tajal Wahy* hailed from Naranjo. Assuming that she was drawn from the royal house of Naranjo, and given the date of Oxpemul Stela 2, she may have been a sister or daughter of the contemporary *K'ahk' Ukalaw Chan Chaahk* (r. AD 755–780+) (Martin and Grube 2000: 80–81).

The same toponym is also associated with the name of the original owner of the delicately inscribed slate mirror backing discovered in a lavishly furnished tomb at Topoxte, located some 19.7 km to the south-west of Naranjo (Fialko 2000: 144–149, fig. 102–103). The text on this mirror backing is remarkable for its detail and its fine preservation, providing an abridged dedicatory section at the onset and then going on to label it as the **u-ne-na** or *u-ne'n*, ‘his mirror’ of a person named *Took' Naah Bahlam*. He is attributed a long string of

titles, including the exalted *baah-kab*, lit. ‘head-earth’, or ‘first of the land’, essentially for *princeps*, and a series of three toponyms. The first is the by now well-known **CHUWAJ-ji-ni-bi** (P1–Q1), preceded in this case by a modifier written **5-ya-YATIK[ki]** (O1) (Figure 9a). The full reading is *ho' yatik chuwaajnib* and explains the truncated form presented on the bowl of “Aj Wosal” (K0681) that we have just seen above. This may be a more expanded form of the name of the tutelary deity of Naranjo, once again providing an alternate name for that city, as the place where this deity is found. After an intervening segment, the titular section is closed by two paired toponyms, written **TE'-ni-bi** (S1) and **TOK'-ni-bi** (T1) for *te'-nib* took'-nib. These may be translated as ‘where trees are found’ and ‘where flint is fint’, focusing on natural features of the landscape (Figure 9b).

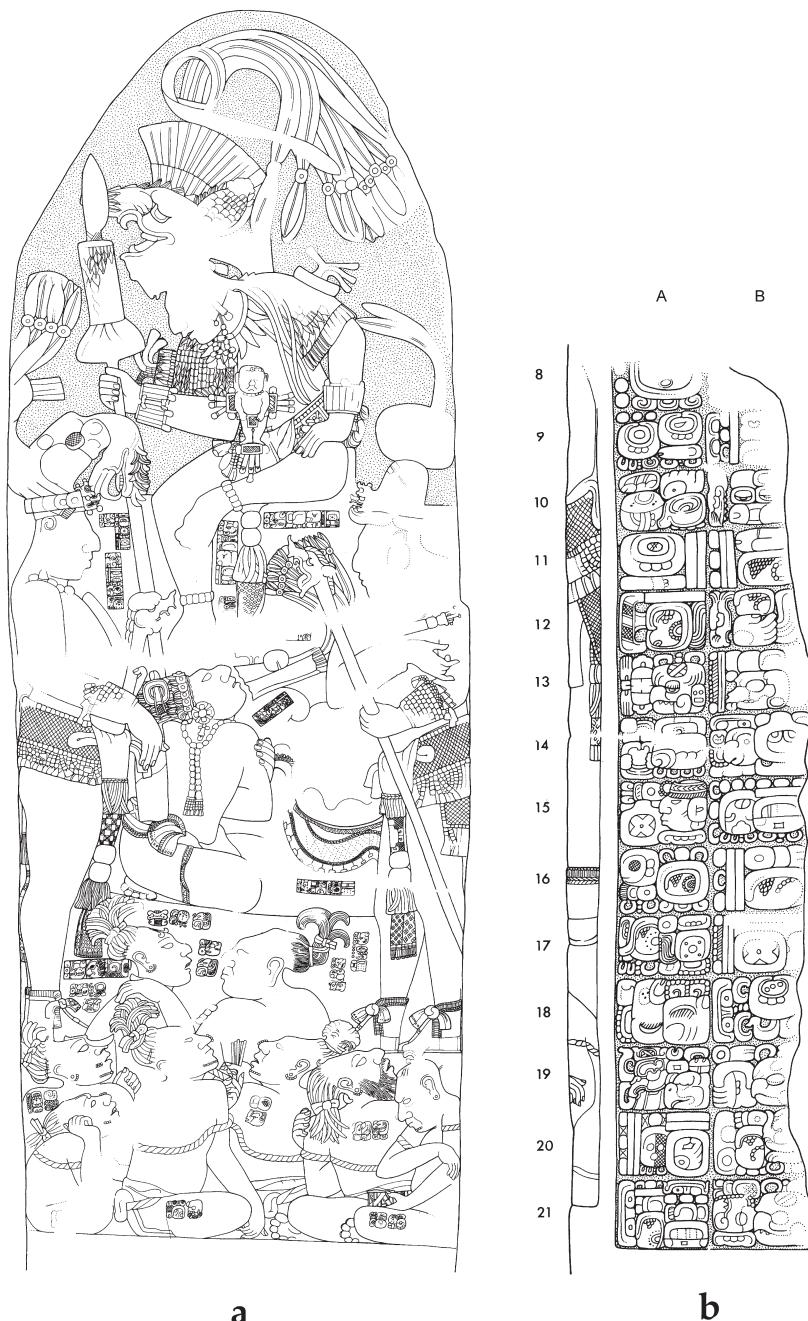
This set of paired toponyms has been of interest to me for some time since these are also found in a Late-to-Terminal Classic text found at Xunantunich, in what is now Belize. The text in question is Panel 2, which was found in a secondary context one of the primary administrative structures of the palatial complex known as El Castillo (Helmke et al. 2010: 101–107). Panel 2 is but a part of a larger text, which may once have formed a set of carved risers for a hieroglyphic stair (Figure 9c). The text refers to the king of Xunantunich, apparently as part of a ritual in which he took on the guise of a deity, probably one of the aspects of the solar deity *K'inich Ajaw*, donning the attire of a warrior—here recorded rather lucidly as *ti took' ti pakal* ‘with flint, with shield’ (Helmke in press). Preceding his Emblem Glyph, which closes the titular section, we can identify the segments {**TE'**}-ni-bi-K'UH (pZ2) and **TOK'-ni-bi-K'UH** (pY3), read as *te'nib k'uh* and *took'nib k'uh* (Figure 9d). This may well continue to qualify the supernatural entity that was impersonated as part of the ritual, since these toponyms serve to qualify deities of a set of localities, as ‘*Te'nib god*’ and ‘*Took'nib god*’. However, these may not just be two terrestrial toponyms as such, located in the greater Naranjo region, since we see similar pairings forming part of *difrasismos*, or diphrasitic kennings, such as *te'-baah* and *took'-baah*, with the *-baah* probably serving as a reflexive, ‘self’ (as recorded for instance on the so-called Regal Bunny pot, K1398 from Naranjo, and Element 7 of the site of La Corona) (see Kaufman and Norman 1984: 138; Kerr 1989: 81; Hull 2012: 94–95). As part of such *difrasismos*, the semantic thrust



**Figure 9.** *a)* Topoxte, Burial 49, slate mirror backing, recoding *Ho' Yatik Chuwaajnib*, *b)* detail of the same text with *Te'nib* and *Took'nib*, *c)* Xunantunich, Panel 2, *d)* detail of the same text highlighting the couplet *Te'nib k'uh*, *Took'nib k'uh* (drawings by Christophe Helmke).

of the pairing of ‘wood’ and ‘stone’ adds up to more than its constituent parts, and may signify something along the lines of ‘war’. This is especially true if the lexemes refer to martial implements, with *te'* for ‘staffs’ and *took'* for ‘spear’, on a par with the martial titles documented in the corpus of Bonampak where we have *baah-te'* ‘chief-staff’ and *baah-took'* ‘chief-spear’ (see Houston 2008b). From this vantage the paired toponyms *Te'niib* and *'niib*, may literally refer to ‘wood’ and ‘flint’, but when combined probably refer to the totality of a realm of war, continuing the martial theme of the text as a whole.

Stela 12 of Piedras Negras, raised in AD 795 during the reign of Ruler 7, is one of the truly great sculptures of the Classic Maya (Martin and Grube 2000: 152–153). In many ways it is also one of the last great war narratives that we have, at the cusp of the Late Classic, as the Terminal Classic times of turmoil would see the rhetoric of kings change dramatically, with references to wars replaced by the propitiation of deities through age-old rituals (Stuart 1993: 336–344). On the front of the stela, we see the triumphant king, seated on his throne, courtiers and high-standing military leaders standing in attendance, the steps up to the throne littered with a jumble of near-naked male bodies, bound together in rope, dejected captives, stunned in shock, pitiful, bowing in humility or disdainful over the hurt inflicted, both physical and emotive (Figure 10a). In addition to small glyphs labelling each of the captives by name, the front of Stela 12 of Piedras Negras is speckled with the signatures of no less than eight sculptors, testifying to the labour and attention that was lavished on this monument (see Montgomery 1995). The lengthy narrative is recorded on the sides of the stela and much space is devoted to attacks made on the site of Pomona (located 50 km downriver to the north-west), the first inflicting a “Star War” in AD 792, an action repeated again in 794, resulting in the seizure of the captives depicted on the front of the stela (see Martin and Grube 2000: 152; Zender 2002: 176–181). The disarray of war that culminates the narrative is started with the celebration of the Period Ending of AD 795, an event that is said to have been undertaken in the presence of a set of celestial deities (Helmke and Awe 2016: 11–12; Stuart 2016) (Figure 10b). This is then followed some eight years later, by the capture of a subordinate of the king of the site of Santa Elena (37.4 km to the north) who bears the warrior-priest



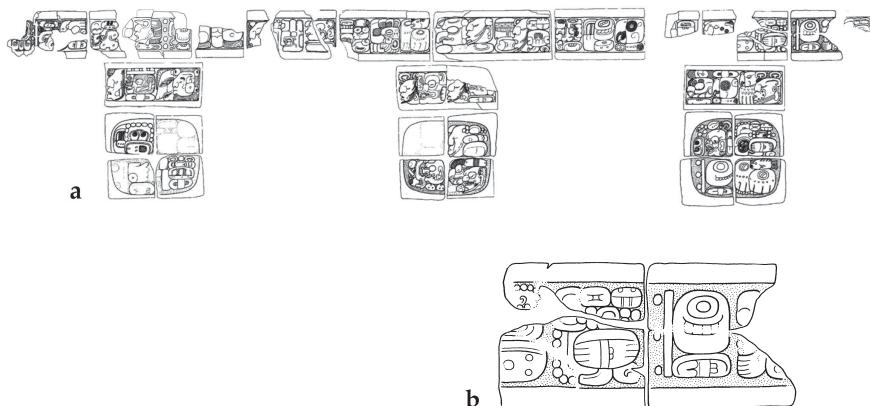
**Figure 10.** Piedras Negras, Stela 12: *a*) front showing the captives massed at the feet of Ruler, *b*) right side (at greater scale) with relevant glyphic segment (drawings by David Stuart © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM#2004.15.6.19.38 and 39).

title *yajaw k'ahk'*, 'vassal of fire' (Zender 2004: 195–210). This martial encounter is of great interest in the way that it is phrased since it is written **chu[ku]-[ji]ya** (A17a) **TE'-ni-bi-K'UH** (A17b), *chukjiiy te'nis k'uh*. This segment can be translated as 'was captured the *Te'nis* god' and undoubtedly refers to the capture of a deity effigy as part of this martial encounter. In addition to informing us as to the practice of war, wherein defeat could be spelled by the capture of deity effigies (perhaps specifically martial ones), we once more have a reference to a deity tied to a place suffixed by *-n-is* and the parallels with the texts of the eastern central lowlands, and of Xunantunich in particular, are more than coincident.

### Other Toponyms with *-n-is*

For the sake of completeness, I will present another four toponyms that are suffixed by *-n-is*, although these only occur once each in the glyptic corpus. The first is found on a partial polychromatic dish found at the site of Dos Hombres in northern Belize (Robichaux and Houk 2005: fig. 4). The Late Classic dish was found in the palatial group of the site. The text decorating the rim preserves the final portion of the name of the original owner as well as his titles. Among his titles we see *baluun tzuk*, 'nine partition', a territorial designation for certain provinces. Whereas the spatial extent of *huk tzuk* 'seven province' and *uxlajuun tzuk* 'thirteen province' are relatively well known, spanning over large parts of the eastern central lowlands (see Beliaev 2000; Tokovinine 2013: 98–103) that of *baluun tzuk* is little known (Helmke et al. 2015: 27–28). The titular string is closed with a toponym, written **wi-tzi-li** (pD1) **mu** (pE1) **ni-bi** (pF1), which I surmise should be read as *witzil mu[l]-n-is*, involving *witz* 'mountain', *mul* 'hill' and the by now well-known compound suffix. Together this may be translated as 'where mountainous hills are found' (Helmke in press). Interestingly, the text goes on to mention that he is the vassal of another king, although the name of the latter is not well preserved.

Another interesting example is found on the hieroglyphic bench of Structure 4 at Machaquila (Figure 11a). The beautiful calligraphy of the stone blocks that comprised the bench have been recognized and appreciated since Ian Graham first documented these in 1961



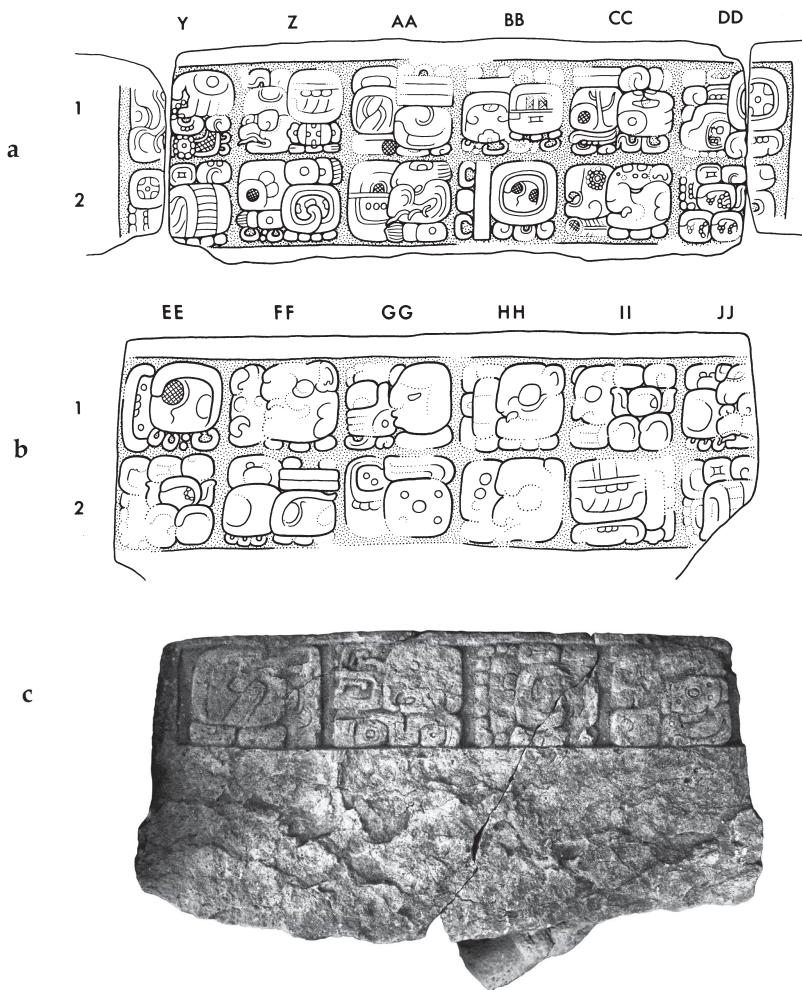
**Figure 11.** The hieroglyphic bench of Structure 4 at Machaquila: *a*) Hypothetical reconstruction (adapted after Lacadena 2011: fig. 13a), *b*) one of the final carved blocks listing the titles to the Machaquila king as well as a *-n-ib* suffixed toponym (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

(Graham 1963, 1967: fig. 39). It was as part of the investigations at the site by the Spanish team, headed by Andrés Ciudad Ruiz, that Alfonso served as project epigrapher (Lacadena 2005), and it was he who first conclusively proposed that these fragments joined together to form a bench. In his outstanding study of the epigraphy of the site, Alfonso presented a preliminary restoration of the bench (Lacadena 2011: 225, fig. 13a), comparing it to other such architectural features, most notably the hieroglyphic bench of Dos Pilas (see Krempel, this volume). The bench of Machaquila is the most important monument of the reign of a little-known king, named “Scorpion” *Ti’ Chaahk*, who ruled in the ninth century. The text on the bench commemorates, among other things, the dedication of Structure 4, which may have been named the *Huunal Naaj Yoot*, ‘Headband House Home’, as well as the jubilee of an arrival event, and makes mention of a lady from the kingdom of *Mahk* (Zender 2005b: 11–12; Krempel 2011; Lacadena 2011). It is at the very end of the text forming the tabular frame, that the titles of the king of Machaquila are listed. Just before the Emblem Glyph of the site, which precedes the regional title *28 ajaw* (see Tokovinine 2013: 113–115, Fig. 61), another *-n-ib* suffixed toponym occurs (Figure 11b). It is the joint of several different fragments that reveals this toponym, which has been overseen in previous studies, but restored by Guido Krempel and myself (see also Krempel, this volume). The example in question is only partly preserved, but appears to be written {*a-to/TOK*}-

**ni-bi**, quite possibly *a[j]to[C]-n-ib* ~ *a[j]tok-n-ib*, forming a title of origin, probably prefixed by the male agentive *aj-*. The root of the toponym is not sufficiently preserved and probably conveyed a CVC form, *toC* with the final consonant underspelled, or simply *tok*. Based on the context in which this toponym occurs, it serves to label the king as hailing from this place, an interesting assertion given that he was king of Machaquila.

Two final examples are found at sites in the Pasión region to the west of Machaquila. One is found on the hieroglyphic stair of Seibal, raised in AD 751 during the reign of *Yihch'aak Bahlam*, when the site was under the dominion of Dos Pilas (Houston 1993). The hieroglyphic risers adorn the axial stair on the west side, leading up to the *audiencia* structure (Str. A-14) that defines the formal entrance into the palatial complex. The text of the hieroglyphic stair records, among other things, the ritual circuit made by *K'awiil Chan K'inich*, the king of Dos Pilas (r. AD 741–761+) (see Houston 1993: 116–119; Martin and Grube 2000: 62–63), performing a ritual circuit at a series of vassal capitals, including Seibal, as part of the 9.15.15.0.0 Period Ending of AD 746. The narrative goes on to recount a tomb-entry ritual the following year, re-sacralizing the final resting place of an ancestral king of Seibal named *K'an Mo' Bahlam* (BB2-DD2) (see Stuart 1998: 397–398) (Figure 12a). This action is specifically credited to *Yihch'aak Bahlam* (EE1–EE2), and although the glyphs remaining on that particular riser are poorly preserved, some of the details can be made out (Figure 12b). This tomb-entry event is specifically said to have been ‘witnessed’ (*yilaaj*) (FF2a) providing a means of introducing at least another figure who served as observer. A second figure is introduced, who is said to have acceded to power that day (GG1a), the nominal segment of which is none too clear, but appears to be named *K'inich Bahlam* (HH1), and it is this individual who is identified as **UH?-ni-bi** (GG2), specifying his place of origin as *Uh-n-ib* ‘where the moon is found’. Unfortunately, little else is known about this figure, but the text goes on to specify that these actions took place in the centre of Seibal (II1) and were witnessed by *K'awiil Chan K'inich* of Dos Pilas (JJ1–JJ2).

Finally, one additional example may occur on Hieroglyphic Stair 3 at the site of Tamarindito, located almost midway between Seibal and Dos Pilas, the dominant power in the area during the eighth



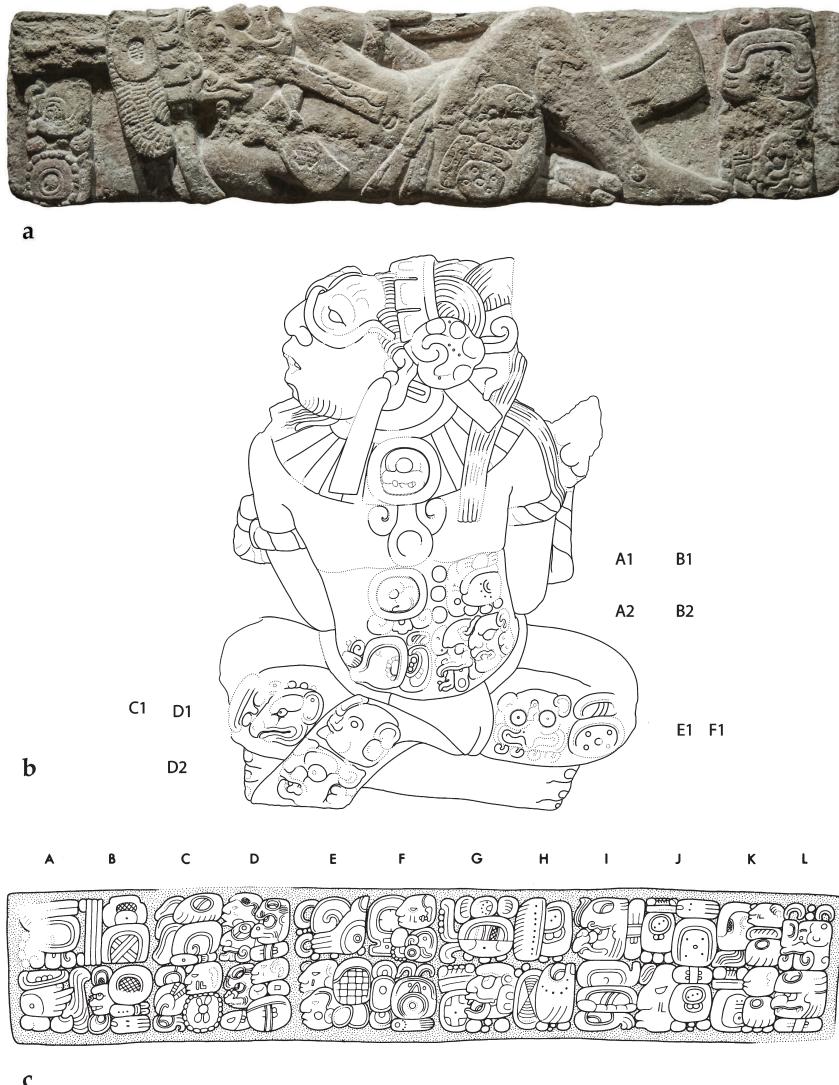
**Figure 12.** Seibal, Hieroglyphic Stair: a) Tablet 5 (drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM#2004.15.6.17.27), b) Tablet 6 (drawing by Christophe Helmke), c) Tamarindito, Hieroglyphic Stair 3, Step 7 (photograph by Sven Gronemeyer; after Gronemeyer 2013: 86–89).

century. Although texts from the site span AD 513–764 (Houston 1993; Valdés 1997; Gronemeyer 2013), the text of Hieroglyphic Stair 3 does not preserve any calendrical records. Nevertheless, a reference made to “Itzamnaaj” K’awiil (r. AD 698–726), the king of Dos Pilas (Step I: C1–D1), suggests that this may date to sometime in the early eighth century (see Martin and Grube 2000: 58–59). It names the king of Tamarindito, his pedigree and possibly the dedication

of the structure that was adorned by this stair, as ... *Nikte' Naah* or the ‘... Plumeria House’ (Step V: A1–B1). The text may have then recorded an impersonation statement and closes by referring to a mythical ancestral figure, possibly named *K'inich Kuhkay Mo' Ek'* ('radiant firefly macaw star') (see Houston 1993: 100–101, fig. 4-5a-b), who is styled with the Emblem Glyph of Tamarindito (Step VII: A1–C1) (Figure 12c). Significantly, this mythic figure is also ascribed a partly preserved *-n-ib* toponym (Step VII: D1), here written with a logogram known as the “Chinstrap” glyph, followed by **-ni-bi** (see Houston 1993: fig. 4-17). The Chinstrap glyph represents a human profile, wherein the side of the face and the jaw are covered by what may be a band that is embellished with large dots. Undoubtedly a logogram, it remains to be deciphered, but appears as part of a rare ritual cycle, commemorated in the texts of Tonina, involving a type of staff, which based on ordinal counts were performed by kings at least once or twice during their reigns (Stuart 2002). Although this does not greatly help our comprehension of this sign, it suggests that the locality mentioned was where this type of event transpired. As a toponym associated to the mythic founder of the Tamarindito dynasty, a figure that is also cited in the texts of Tikal and Dos Pilas (Houston 1993: 101), we now know that this ancestor was thought to hail from a specific location.

### Derived forms suffixed by *-l-ib*

After the extensive review of the *-n-ib* suffixed toponyms presented above, I will now turn to those suffixed by *-l-ib* and it may come as some surprise that these are remarkably few. One of the best known examples, and which has attracted some commentary in earlier research is an example from Tonina. The example in question is found on a carved slab, designated as Monument 27 (Figure 13a). Although the original context is unknown, it undoubtedly served as a carved step or a riser to a ritual structure at the site. The riser is decorated with a captive, arms bound behind him, writhing on his back in an attempt to lift his head. Although he still wears his headdress, he has otherwise been stripped down to his loincloth and paper strips have been fed through his earlobes, the proper manner of dressing a captive (Schele and Miller 1986). This captive was seized in a battle



**Figure 13.** *a)* Tonina Monument 27 (photograph by Christophe Helmke). *b)* Tonina Monument 180 (drawing by Guido Krempel, after Sánchez Gamboa et al. 2018: fig. 7b). *c)* Yaxchilan Lintel 23 (drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM#2004.15.6.7.3).

instigated by Tonina's king *K'inich Baaknal Chaahk* (r. AD 688–704+), who in 692 launched an attack on Palenque, to the north (Martin and Grube 2000: 181). The main captive taken in this encounter is a figure named *K'awiil Mo'*, depicted on a series of monuments, including Monument 27. Prior to his capture, he appears to have

served as a warrior-priest given his distinctive headdress, exhibiting features of central Mexican sacerdotal vestments, including the characteristic goggles of the Storm god (Miller and Martin 2004: 185, Plate 104; Zender 2004: 313–314). The text on the riser names him (A1–A2) and concludes by stating that his capture is the ‘deed of *K'inich Baaknal Chaahk*’ (C1–C2). It is the two intervening glyphs that are of greatest interest here, written **ch'o[ko]** (B1) **CHAK-li-bi** (B2), for *ch'ok chak-l-ib*. The initial term expands the reference to the captive, using the titular element *ch'ok*, which is used to refer to male ‘youths’ (Houston 2009). The second part, the toponym, is *chak-l-ib* and may well signify the transitive verbal root ‘to bind’, rather than functioning as the more commonplace and homophonous adjective ‘red’ (Wichmann 2002: 7–8). This construction would differ from the previous examples that we have seen with *-n-ib* since these are predominantly based on nouns as their root, whereas *chak* here is a transitive verbal root, with *-(V)l* serving to intransitivize the root so that it can be nominalized in *-ib*. Based on this analysis, this would form a locative that can be understood as ‘where binding occurs’, and based on its context undoubtedly serves as a referring phrase to *K'awiil Mo'*, since these such place names typically close nomino-titular segments, as we have seen above. Whereas *chaklib* may name the place of origin of *K'awiil Mo'*, I think it more likely that it is the location where the humiliation took place, in this instance the structure that was adorned by his image, which named as the place where captives were bound.

Another, recently published example is also known from Tonina (Sánchez Gamboa et al. 2018). This is Monument 180, which represents yet another captive taken by *K'inich Baaknal Chaahk*, this time one of a set of figures adorning the niches of a small structure known as the Altar Rojo, on the fifth terrace of the imposing acropolis at the site (Yadeun 1990: 39–43; 1993: 62, 101, 106a; Sánchez Gamboa et al. 2018). All of these figures are represented seated, with arms bound behind their backs and once more paper strips have been fed through their earlobes (Figure 13b). All have also been attired in the guise of the feline deity known as the Jaguar God of the Underworld, as is made clear by the cruller that frames their eyes and the feline ear that is bound to notched headbands. Suggestively, these effigy feline ears are embellished with stylized flames, pointing both to the

mythic narrative that explains the advent of jaguar spot as well as the pivotal episode wherein this deity is defeated by another supernatural entity. As such, these captive are represented just before their public defeat at the hands of the supernatural entity—which undoubtedly the king of Tonina impersonated during this expressive display. The glyphic text of Monument 180 adorns the abdomen, the calves and the loincloth of the captive. This text is initiated by a partly weathered Calendar Round (A1–B1) and goes on to recount that *Muwaan Bahlam* (B2) was captured on this date (A2), revealing his name. The remainder of the text provides us with additional information regarding this individual, including his relationship (C1), either as grandfather or grandchild, of another person called *Suutz' Kooj?* (D1–D2). The last bit of information is that which is of greatest interest to us here, since it is written **KUJ-ji** (E1) **li-bi** (F1) for *kuj-l-ib*. This last segment provides another locative construction and specifies in this case the place of origin of the captive or his cosanguine relation, and involves the root *kuj* 'owl', here a Tzeltalan cognate of the Ch'olan lexeme *kuy*, with the same meaning (see Kettunen 2016: 128, fig. 5b, see also 127). In this instance the locative construction can thereby be translated as 'where owls are found', and probably names a place to the east of Tonina—to gauge from the localities attacked during that part of the reign of *K'inich Baaknal Chaahk*.

Contrasting evidence is provided by the lengthy text of the looted panel of Cancuen, which provides a comparable toponym with *-l-ib*. This text was commemorated during the reign of *Tajal Chan Ahk*, one of the city's great rulers, and although only the latter half of the text remains, it provides a synthesis of events in the latter half of the eighth century culminating in a tomb re-entry ritual in AD 799, delving back to record events in AD 651 (Guenter 2002; Kistler 2004). The dynastic history of Cancuen features the accession of a series of earlier kings and their overlords, the kings of the *Kanu'l* dynasty, who make frequent appearances in the narrative, serving as legitimators and overseers of key events. In the clause recording events of AD 657, we can read of an arrival event to a place called *Makan Witz*, which is then promptly followed by a dance ritual celebrated by the contemporary king of Cancuen, dubbed "Kiib Ajaw" (based on a partial reading of his name). It is in the titles that designate this monarch that we find **CHAK-ka-ja-li-bi** for *cha[h]kajlib* (Guenter

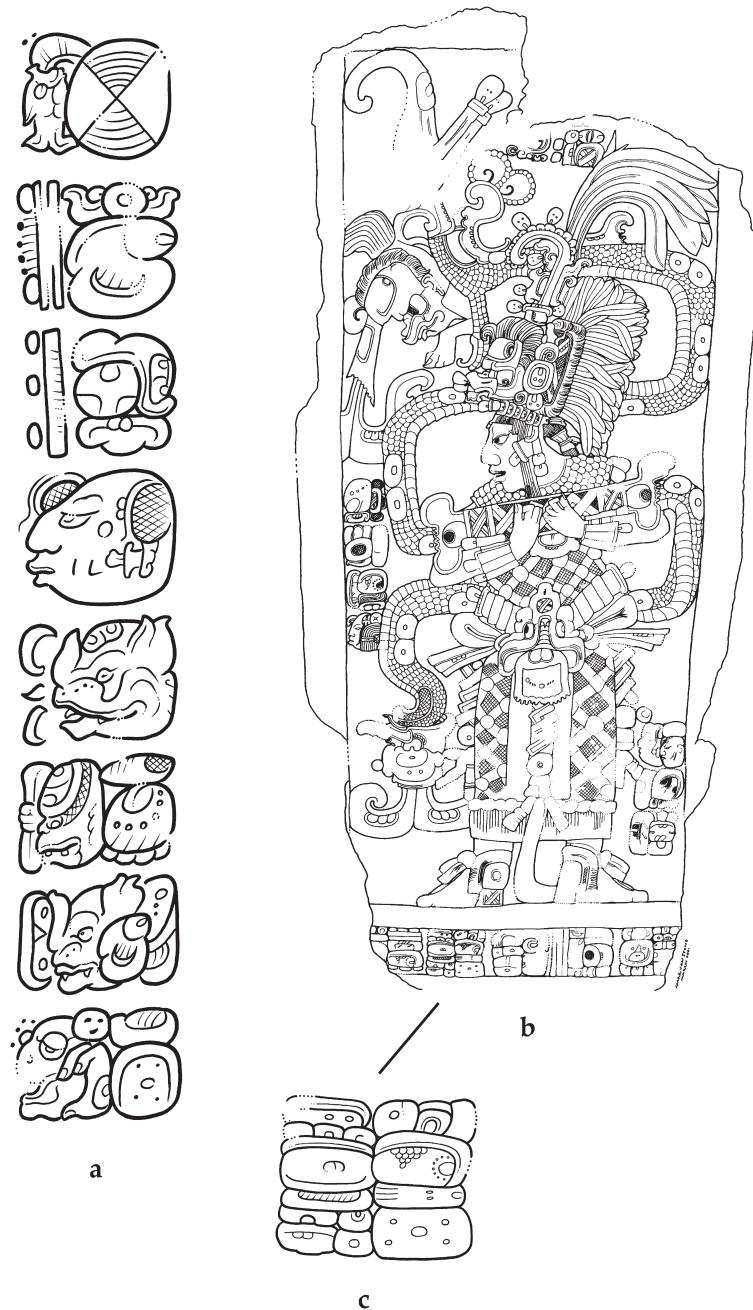
2002: 7). As with the other examples seen above, this serves as a title of origin, designating the ruler as being from that place. This example also demonstrates that the root *chak* is verbal and transitive, through the passive derivation attested here.<sup>6</sup> Together this can be translated as ‘where binding occurred’, although whether this has a relation to the locative construction attested at Tonina or is a homonymic toponym remains unknown at present.

Another relevant text to review is that which adorns Lintel 23 of Yaxchilan (Figure 13c). Based on the dates recorded in the text of the lintel it is clear that it was dedicated sometime around AD 726, during the lengthy reign of “Itzamnaaj” *Bahlam* II (r. AD 681–742) (Martin and Grube 2000: 123–126). The text on the front of this lintel, however, serves to commemorate the dedication of Structure 23, which is said to have taken place sometime in the third or fourth decade of the reign of “Itzamnaaj” *Bahlam*. The start of the text records the dedication of the structure as *k’al-waan u-pa[h]s-il*, the ‘the placement? of the doorway’ (A2–B2), which is connected through possessive pronouns to the name of the structure. This is given as *y-otoot Ix-yahkan? Xook* ‘the home of Lady Yahkan? Xook’ (C1–D1) and follows the patterns seen in other texts of Yaxchilan, wherein kings dedicated particular structures to some of their favoured wives (Martin and Grube 2000: 125–126; McAnany and Plank 2001: 111–113). The remainder of the text serves to name all of the individuals in attendance, who witnessed the dedication as well as specifying how these all relate to each other. Thus, after the initial reference to the king’s wife, we see the conjunctive *yitaaj* ‘companion’ (C2a) followed by a reference to another woman, named *Ixjanaab Xook* (C2b–D2). Her pedigree follows, naming her noble mother (E1–E2) and her father—who served as the provincial governor of a place called *K’an-te’el*, literally ‘yellow-woods’ (F2–G2)—is named *Nun K’abal Xook* (H2–I1). But in addition to Lady *Janaab Xook*, here is yet another, again introduced by *yitaaj* (I2), who is named in part *Ixtajal ...n* (J2–K1a), who is none other than the mother of *Ixk’abal Xook* (‘lady shark fin’), the principal wife of “Itzamnaaj” *Bahlam*. Clearly only the finest were in attendance at the dedication of this structure. The construction of interest here is one that qualifies the origin of the father of *Ixja-*

<sup>6</sup> Alternatively, the *-aj* suffix serves as a nominaliser to the root (see Lacadena 2003), in which case the morphemic segmentation would be *chak-a-l-ib*.

*naab Xook*, who in addition to being said to rule over *K'ante'el* is also identified as **a-ja-ma-li-bi** (J1), read *a[jl]-jam-l-ib*. In this case, the male agentive prefix *aj-* makes it clear that this construction serves as a title of origin, and consequently also distinguishes *jam-l-ib* as a toponym, referring to the place of origin. Much as in the case of Tonina, the root in this instance is probably verbal, perhaps cognate with the transitive verb *jam* 'to open' (Kaufman 2003: 852; cf. Wichmann 2002: 29, n. 3). As such, the toponym is probably best understood as 'where openings are found', although which feature of a landscape this may refer to is unknown.

From the site of La Corona stem two wonderfully incised stone slabs, that once formed part of the same monument, now designated as Panel 2. The two sections of the monument are now split between two different collections (the right portion designated as K4677; see Stuart et al. 2015: 8). Despite the great distance that now separates these, it is pleasing to think that Panel 2 once served as a panel, mounted into the wall of a structure. The finely incised text records a swathe of the site's dynastic history, spanning from the accession of a royal figure named *Sak Mabs* in AD 625, to a tomb censing ritual conducted in 668. Whereas the initial portion of the text records a series of accessions and dance rituals the second half is more macabre, listing a series of deaths and ending with the aforementioned tomb ritual, with the comings and goings of a young prince woven into the greater narrative (Stuart et al. 2014). A smaller caption of eight glyphs (O1–O8) has been appended to the very end of the text, to provide a sculptor's signature (Figure 14a). The first five glyphs provide a series of personal names and these are then qualified by the third person plural independent pronoun (O6) *ha'-o'b*, 'they / it is them', which precedes a verbal construction **u-xu[lu] ja** for *uxul[iij]*. This appears to be a derived intransitive verb, based on the nominalized form *uxul* 'carving', which is verbalized through *-iij* (see Lacadena 2003) to yield 'it is they who carved it'. The very final glyph is what interests us here since it is written **e-ke-li-bi**, for *ek-l-ib*. As has been cogently argued by Søren Wichmann (2002: 8–10) this construction appears to involve the transitive verbal root *ek* 'to hang', which I see as being intransitivized and nominalized as the instrument through *-l-ib*. Rather than a locative, in this instance this designates the panel as an instrumental, designating the wall

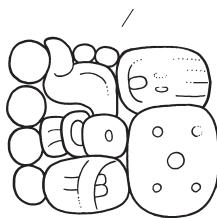


**Figure 14.** a) La Corona, Panel 2, sculptor's signature at the end of the text (drawing by Christophe Helmke). The San Francisco stela: b) front face (drawing by Mark Van Stone), c) *-l-ib* suffixed toponym of the basal text (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

panel, as ‘something which is hung’. Given the self-referentiality of Maya texts, this is a very precise analysis that corroborates the inner workings of the composite *-l-ib* suffix.

One interesting example is found on an unprovenanced stela, now in the collections of the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. The stela represents a standing female figure, wearing the netted dress of the Maize god, and bracing a large ceremonial bar across her chest (Figure 14b). Although the stela is unprovenanced, based on the style of the stela, I would expect that this monument had been found at a site in the upper Usumacinta region. The woman is named *Ix-mutul ajaw*, suggesting descent from the royal house of Tikal or Dos Pilas (Miller and Martin 2004: 102). The stela records three separate events in AD 761, including the erection of the stela, and the concomitant celebration of the 9.16.10.0.0 Period Ending. The third event is recorded in the basal register and only the very first portion of it is preserved (Figure 14c). Following the Calendar Round that records an event that took place seven months before, written **u-tz'a-ka-wa-TE'**, *u-tz'ak-[a]w-te'*, literally ‘the stacking of the wood’. This is an arcane expression and it is accompanied by a place name written **a-ku-li-bi**, *a[h]k-l-ib*, ‘where turtles are found’, undoubtedly specifying where the event took place.

A final example with *-l-ib* is found at the eastern margins of the Maya area, at the site of Copan, in present-day Honduras. The example in question was rendered on Altar GI (CPN13) dedicated in AD 800 by Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat, Copan’s last great king (Baudez 1994: 55–58, fig. 21) (Figure 15). The altar is one of the wonderful examples of Copan sculptural achievements, its iconography symbolizing the heavens and the motions of the diurnal sun through a variety of supernatural entities. The accompanying text starts on the north side of the monument and records the dedication of the altar (A1–B2) on the great plaza (A3) and credits Yax Pasaj for this action (B3–A5). Following the emblem glyph of Copan (B5), the text continues on the south side of the monument and next glyph block of the nomino-titular section is written **4-wi-ti-ki-li-bi**, for *chan wi[n]tiklib* (C1). This construction is fascinating since it involves a variant of the toponym of Copan, which is usually written **3-wi-ti-ki**, *ux wi[n]tik* (Stuart and Houston 1994: 24–26; Tokovinine 2013: 63–66), although the discrepancy in the numerals is difficult to explain, but may anticipate the



**Figure 15.** The south side of Copan Altar GI (CPN13) with its medial glyptic text (photograph by Alfred Maudslay © Trustees of the British Museum) and example of toponym with *-l-ib* (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

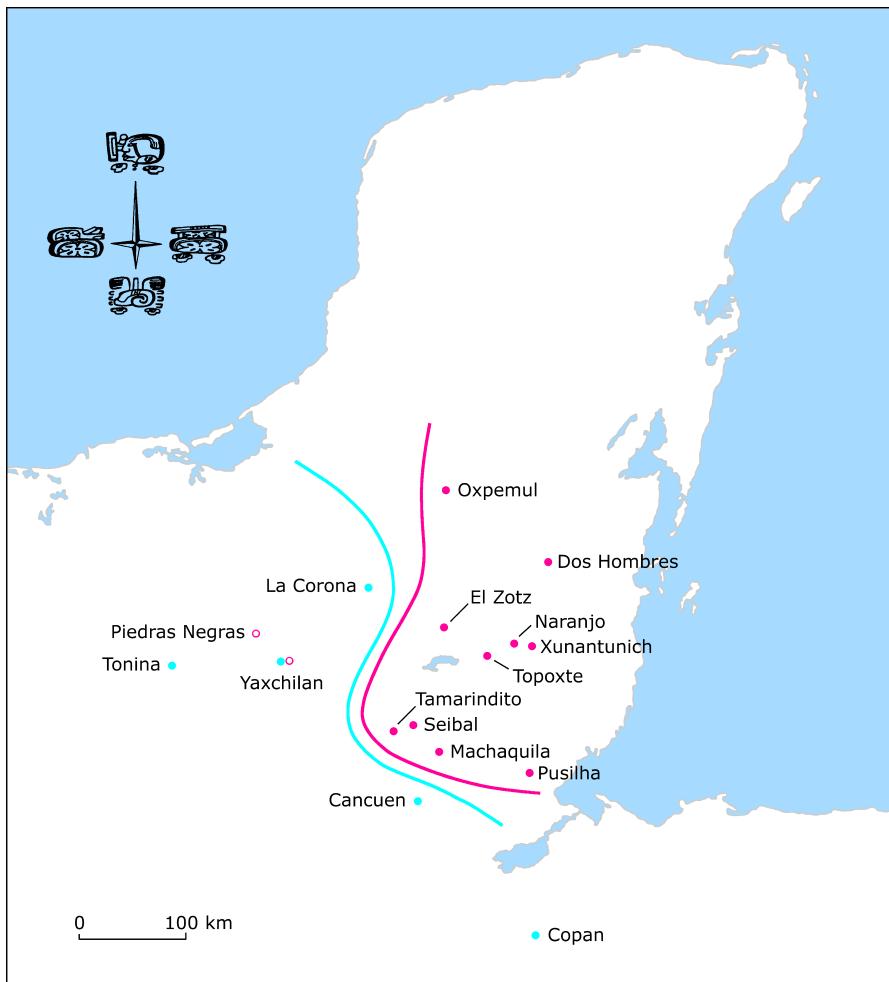
references to the four tutelary deities of Copan, cited later in the text. Regardless, this is undoubtedly a mention to the toponym of Copan and in this instance, it is written with the *-l-ib* suffix, confirming its locative function. It also follows the pattern seen above for Naranjo, Holmul, Seibal, Yaxchilan and Machaquila, wherein toponymic constructions with *-n-ib* and *-l-ib* function essentially as titular designators, ascribing origin to a variety of monarchs. In the case of Copan, this marks *Yax Pasaj* as a decided Copanec.

## A Bit of Perspective

With all of the linguistic and epigraphic evidence mustered above, we can now attempt to gather these different lines of evidence together in order to gain an inclusive view of the data, which considers both the spatial and temporal distribution of the various suffixes, before contemplating the inflectional changes observed over time.

A few comments are in order concerning the geographic distribution of the *-n-ib* vs. *-l-ib* suffixes during the Late Classic period. For one, the vast majority (c. 76 %, N = 29) of attested cases pertain to *-n-ib* with the remainder (c. 24 %, N = 9) making use of *-l-ib* (see the appendix). In addition, it should be remarked that by and large the examples with *-n-ib* are found in the eastern half of the central Maya lowlands, especially at sites such as Tikal, Motul de San José, El Zottz, Naranjo, Topoxte, Seibal, Tamarindito and Machaquila in the Peten of Guatemala, as well as Dos Hombres, Xunantunich and Pusilha in what is now Belize (Figure 16). In contrast, *-l-ib* suffixed forms are solidly represented in the western Maya lowlands at Tonina, Yaxchilan, and the upper Usumacinta region, Cancuen, as well as, interestingly enough, La Corona and Copan. Just delineating the incidence of these examples creates two distinct and non-overlapping zones. These are the main divisions of the examples and based on that partition it seems highly likely that these distributions reflect dialectal features, since lexical, phonetic and inflectional differences were already sufficiently marked, by the Late Classic—in written sources no less—to be able to speak of eastern vs. western Ch'olan dialects (Lacadena and Wichmann 2002). This leaves us to account for what might appear to be exceptions, especially the occurrence of *Te'-n-ib* at Piedras Negras and the one instance of *Y2-n-ib* at Yaxchilan. In both of these cases, I think that we should recall that these are references to localities outside of the sites themselves, in the case of Piedras Negras referring to a deity that is captured from enemy forces, whereas at Yaxchilan providing a title of origin for an individual who probably comes from the eastern Ch'olan dialect area.

In terms of temporal distribution, there are also a few patterns of interest. For *-n-ib* the very earliest examples are found at Naranjo, during the reign of “Aj Wosal” in particular, with the earliest securely attested example dating to AD 596. For the centuries to follow, the



**Figure 16.** The distribution of the *-n-ib* and *-l-ib* suffixes during the Classic period with approximate isogloss lines delineating the dialect areas wherein each suffix predominated. Foreign mentions in the western Ch'olan dialect area are marked by hollow circles (map by Christophe Helmke).

site would continue to be referred to by its alternate place name *Chuwaaj-n-ib* ‘where the Burnt One is found’, until at least AD 780. Toponyms with that suffix are also found at a series of other sites, with the two latest examples being the polychromatic plate found at Dos Hombres (c. AD 800–820) and the fragmented bench of Machaquila, probably raised sometime after AD 840. This temporal distribution stands in contrast to that of *-l-ib* toponyms, since the earliest example is that of La Corona, dated to AD 668, with the very last

examples being that of Copan, dated to AD 800, and that recorded on the little drinking cup from the Holmul region, probably dated to sometime after AD 800. Thus, in all, whereas the temporal distributions of *-n-ib* and *-l-ib* overlap to a great degree, it is significant that the former is recorded first in the written corpus, with *-l-ib* appearing later. The last dated instance of *-l-ib* is of interest for it is involved in recording *Chuwaj-l-ib*, undoubtedly in reference to Naranjo, but here with the *-l-ib* suffix supplanting the earlier iterations with *-n-ib*. As these are temporally sequential and discrete, with the demarcation between the two occurring at between AD 780 and 800, we are probably observing a diachronic shift from one to the other derivational suffix. The Copan example is also noteworthy in this regard, since it also dates to AD 800, and because it may show the influence of western Ch'olan dialect traits this far to the east. The interaction between Copan and the west during this time (the mother of the Copanec ruler Yax Pasaj hailed from Palenque) may be partly responsible for these linguistic influences.

The displacement of *-n-ib* with *-l-ib* in the margins of the eastern Ch'olan dialect area, would eventually become entrenched and form an integral feature of the dialect that would develop into Ch'olti', where this suffix is attested as late as AD 1625, in the Morán dictionary. This duplicates the patterns seen for the inflectional suffix of intransitive positional verbs such as *chum-laj* > *chum-waan* 'he sat', with the earliest example of the more innovative affixation in the eastern central lowlands attested at Tikal in AD 695 (Hruby and Child 2004). Even now the *-wan* suffix serves to form an intransitive from a positional in Ch'orti' (Pérez Martínez 1994: 39, 1996: 77) revealing the pervasiveness of the spread and the integration of innovative western Ch'olan form. Similarly, the abstractivation suffix for institutional stations, or occupations, saw a similar shift over the course of the Classic period as seen in *ajaw-il* > *ajaw-lel* ' kingship' (Lacadena and Wichmann 2002: 293, 296–298), with relict areas such as Caracol witnessing the adoption of *-lel* no earlier than AD 680 (Helmke 2010). This is an important observation, given that a more archaic and codified form of the prestige language recorded in the glyphs was maintained in the eastern central lowlands, even when other more innovative features had already been adopted at sites to the west (Helmke and Kettunen 2012). The comparable time

frame for the intrusion of all of these innovative features of western Ch'olan into the eastern Ch'olan dialect area (c. AD 680–700) indicates that we are observing features that are part and parcel of the same sociolinguistic shift, at a time of adaptation and reorganisation in the final centuries of the Late Classic.

Given the spatial and temporal distribution of these suffixes, we can conclude that *-n-ib* was first devised in eastern Ch'olan and was preserved in descendant languages that were less affected by western Ch'olan innovations, particularly in Ch'orti' where it continues to form a productive polymorphemic suffix. In contrast, the two earliest attested *-l-ib* suffixes date to nearly eight decades after the first securely dated instances of *-n-ib*, suggesting that this is a later innovation, in the opposing dialect area. This fits the pattern of other grammatical features, with the western Ch'olan dialect area proving to be more innovative than the eastern Ch'olan area, which was considerably more conservative. We can therefore see that with the innovation of *-l-ib* in western Ch'olan, sometime in the latter half of the seventh century, this derivation eventually came to spread into the eastern Ch'olan dialect area all the way to Copan, displacing the more antiquated *-n-ib* of old. This is made most explicit on the cream-polychrome cup from the Holmul region, a displacement that is all the more remarkable when we consider that toponyms are typically regarded as features of languages that are resistant, or at least more impervious to linguistic change (Campbell 2013: 436–438). However, such processes of replacement, with less productive suffixes in toponyms replaced by more current and progressive suffixes are also attested for other classes of suffixes in the Late-to-Terminal Classic (Table 1).

Interestingly, for the Tzeltalan languages, positional instrumentals are formed as CVC-*l-ib* constructions (Kaufman and Norman 1984: 106). These are intransitive verbs, wherein the *-l* suffix is seen as integral to the derivational paradigms of positional verbs, as manifested in early Ch'olan as *-l-aj* (see Hruby and Child 2004). Considering the rarity of these forms in Tzeltalan and the absence of *-n-ib* forms, I believe that the situation for these languages is one of diffusion from western Ch'olan languages, rather than inheritance of an early derivation suffix. In this regard it is important to recall that Tzeltalan languages branched from greater Ch'olan languages

Locality	predominant form	variant	textual source
Naranjo	<i>chuwaaj-n-ib</i>	<i>chuwaj-l-ib</i>	Boston Museum of Fine Arts
Motul de San José	<i>ik'-a'</i>	<i>ik'-iil</i>	K2573; K4996; Tamarindito vase
Piedras Negras	<i>k'ihn-a'</i>	<i>k'ihn-nal</i>	Palenque, House C
Caracol	<i>uxwitz-a'</i>	<i>uxwitz-nal</i>	Caracol, St. 17; La Rejolla, St. 3

**Table 1.** Actualisation of suffixation on select Classic Maya toponyms (after Helmke and Kupprat 2016: table 1).

around the third century or slightly later (Kaufman 1976), with populations moving to the highlands in what are now the Tzeltal- and Tzotzil-speaking areas of Chiapas (Kaufman 1972). Considering the time of the split and the absence of the suffixes examined here, had *-n-ib* been an original feature of greater Tzeltalan, or even proto-Ch'olan, we might expect it to be preserved in some of the descendant languages in the Tzeltalan branch, yet this is not what is observed. If *-l-ib* and *-n-ib* were autonomous developments of an early date, with their distribution geographically conditioned, then *-l-ib* is the attendant suffix that is expected in Tzeltalan, yet there is no evidence at present that *-l-ib* is an early compound suffix of greater Tzeltalan. As such, its presence in Tzeltalan languages is therefore best explained through areal diffusion. The absence of the *-n-ib* suffix in Tzeltalan languages also suggests that it is a relatively late development in Ch'olan languages, likely after the split of proto-Tzeltalan from early Ch'olan. This is in part substantiated by the epigraphic evidence as the earliest contemporaneously attested example is found at Naranjo and is dated to AD 596, with the examples of Stela D at Pusilha referring to events in AD 595 (although this monument dates to AD 647). Both of these examples postdate the split of proto-Tzeltalan from Ch'olan by several centuries, which explains the absence of the reflexes of this suffixation in Tzeltalan languages.

Considering dialect evolution and the distinction between a more conservative and archaic form of the language in the east and a more progressive form in the west—seen with the development of intransitive positional inflections and also the evolution of *ucha'an* as a possessive particle in western Ch'olan languages, ultimately inherited in Ch'ol as the particle *cha'an* (Aulie and Aulie 1978: 46)—and given the patterns of predominance with *-n-ib* found preferentially in the east and the occurrence of *-l-ib* in the west, we are

left to conclude that the *-l-ib* suffix is more innovative than *-n-ib*. This spatial pattern is also preserved in the descendant Ch'olan languages, since Ch'orti' has preserved *-n-ib* and it still functions as a productive compound suffix in that language, whereas *-l-ib* is unattested in the same language. The same is true for *-l-ib* as preserved in Chontal and Ch'ol, where this suffix functions productively, and as such we can see these spread to the two extremes of the central Maya lowlands with one in the east and the other in the west. The case of †Ch'olti' in this regard is interesting also, since it only exhibited *-l-ib*, suggesting that in this language the process of assimilation was complete and the earlier *-n-ib* had been supplanted completely. The occurrence of the suffix *-on-ib* in both Ch'ol and Chontal is of note for the phonological integrity of the first suffix in the compound, which may suggest that these preserve earlier forms, and are thereby more fossilized forms of the *-n-ib* suffix, preserved from the shared linguistic stratum that was prevalent up until the sixth century across the central lowlands.

These observations also prompt the query as to the inflectional qualities of these suffixes in a diachronic perspective. As has already been suggested above, as part of the discussion of the Ch'orti' evidence, the *-n-ib* suffix probably stems from an earlier and more complete *-oon-ib* suffix, involving an antipassive and an instrumental suffix, which persists to this day in the sister languages Ch'ol and Chontal (Wichmann 2002: table 1). The evidence being what it is, I reconstruct \**-oon-ib* as the underlying form in the Classic Mayan language, with *-n-ib* as the surface realization and that which was recorded in the glyphs. Examination of the glyptic evidence also reveals that *-n-ib* was affixed without fail, to nouns. This differs from the Ch'orti' evidence in that this suffix is appended preferentially to non-CVC verbal roots. A shift in the inflectional properties of the *-(o)n* suffix is thereby apparent, which initially served to derive intransitives from nouns, and eventually served exclusively as a thematic suffix for non-CVC verbs, probably through analogy of the verbal paradigm and patterns of affixation of non-CVC passives and antipassives (see Lacadena 2000, 2004, 2010a). Ch'ol provides an interesting case, with *-on-ib* affixed exclusively to transitive verbal roots, preserving an intermediate phase in the evolution of this compound suffix, with *-on* serving to detransitivize the verbal root.

These differences highlight the shifts in utilization that the suffix has undergone, ultimately affecting the selection of the differing roots that form the basis for the derivations, and yet, despite these significant changes, we can see that the resultant forms, still serve to nominalize the grammatical instrument and form locative and instrumental constructions.

With the temporal dimension established, with *-l-ib* developing in direct response to *-n-ib*, we can also see differing inflectional properties of the *\*-äl ~ -Vl* suffix of *-l-ib*. In Chontal and Ch'ol the *-l* serves to intransitivize the root (irrespective of their valency, although at times the compound suffix is preferentially appended either to transitive verbs and other times to positionals). Perhaps because of this situation, the *-l-ib* suffix has also been adapted to more specifically target verbal roots for derivation. This is certainly supported by the diachronic evidence, since unlike the noun roots involved with *-n-ib* in the Classic period, all contemporaneous examples of *-l-ib* are affixed to transitive verbal roots. The diversification of verbal roots to which this suffix can be appended in Ch'olan languages today is probably an areally diffused feature, since the inflectional qualities and developmental trajectories of the two compound suffixes are otherwise distinct.

To close, the toponyms examined here exhibit several of the features of New World toponymy, including more transparent etymologies, which are reflective of continuous processes of adaptation, with toponyms and their constituent parts recurrently revised to more current linguistic forms. This stands in stark contrast to many of the toponymic processes of the Old World where unintelligible toponyms of displaced languages are often reiterated according to the phonology of the intrusive group as well succumbing to abbreviation, convergence and elaboration, as responses to toponymic stasis (e.g. Gelling 1984). In the Amerindian case, we thereby see a greater fluency of toponymic references, especially as part of multilingual and diglossic environments, with toponyms frequently involving both endonyms and exonyms, which are frequently translations of one another (Helmke and Nielsen in press). It is perhaps precisely on account of such linguistic fluency and reiterative translation processes that the semantics and etymology of place names are preserved, thereby lending them to actualization with greater

ease across differing speech communities. Thus, even though we have examined the formation of locative nouns that serve as toponyms, using suffixes that have withstood phonetic alteration for the better part of fourteen centuries, we can also see how locative suffixation has changed over time, having documented several instances wherein particular toponyms have been actualized to more progressive forms. And although the suffixes examined here have maintained their surface forms over the past millennium and a half, so too clearly their inflectional properties have changed to better adapt to the changing linguistic matrix, as a single language diversified into two distinct dialects, which in turn descended into the four attested Ch'olan languages.

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## Appendix: *-n-ib* and *-l-ib* suffixed toponyms in the Classic Maya glyptic corpus

n	Site	Text	Date	Reference	Transliteration	Transcription
1	Cancuen	Panel 1	799	E7	<b>CHAK-ka-ja-li-<i>bi</i></b>	cha[ħ]kajilib
2	Copan	Altar GI (CPN13)	800	C1	<b>4-wi-ti-ki-li-<i>bi</i></b>	chan wi[ñ]tik-l-ib
3	La Corona	Site Q, Panel 2	668	O8 (H8)	<b>e[ke]-li-<i>bi</i></b>	ek-l-ib
4	Dos Hombres	Poly. dish	800–820?	pD1-pF1	<b>wi-tzi-li / mu / ni-<i>bi</i></b>	witzil mu[ɿ]-n-ib
5	Machaquila	Structure 4, Bench	> 840	n.a.	<b>{a-to/TOK}-ni-<i>bi</i></b>	aʃʃj-taC/tok2-n-ib
6	Naranjo	Altar 1	596	C6	<b>CHUWAJ-ni-{bi}</b>	chuwaaj-n-ib
7	Naranjo	Altar 2	790	pAp3	<b>CHUWAJ-ni-<i>bi</i></b>	chuwaaj-n-ib
8	Naranjo	Stela 13	780	F16	<b>CHUWAJ-[ʃʃ]-ni-<i>bi</i></b>	chuwaaj-n-ib
9	Naranjo	Stela 21	706	B13	<b>CHUWAJ-wa-ni-<i>bi</i></b>	chuwaaj-n-ib
10	Oxpemul	Stela 2	771	D9	<b>CHUWAJ-jí-ni-<i>bi</i></b>	chuwaaj-n-ib
11	Piedras Negras	Stela 12	795	A17b	<b>TE'-ni-<i>bi</i></b>	te'-n-ib
12	PNK / Naranjo	K0681	546–615+	E1	<b>5-CHUWAJ-ji</b>	ho' [yatik] chuwaaj-n-ib
13	PNK / Naranjo	K0927	693–728+	fig. 1	<b>K'AB-T'E' / HIX-bi-<i>ni</i></b>	hix-n-ib
14	PNK / Naranjo	K0927	693–728+	fig. 5	<b>K'UH-?-? / bi-HIX-<i>ni</i></b>	hix-n-ib
15	PNK / Naranjo	K0927	693–728+	fig. 12	<b>[OCH]NAL-la / BAH[TUN]-ni / HIX-bi-<i>ni</i></b>	hix-n-ib
16	PNK / Naranjo	K0927	693–728+	fig. 6	<b>cha-TAN-na li?-<i>bi</i></b>	chatan-l-ib
17	PNK / Tikal	K3395	682–734	?-? Hix	<b>HIX-bi-<i>ni</i>?</b>	hix-n-ib
18	PNK / Tikal	K3395	682–734	K'ik'el Winik	<b>HIX-bi-<i>ni</i></b>	hix-n-ib
19	PNK / Tikal	K3395	682–734	Saw Hix...	<b>HIX-bi-<i>ni</i></b>	hix-n-ib
20	PNK / Motul de San José	K5847	700–800	Q1–R1	<b>IK'-ni-<i>bi</i></b>	ik'-n-ib
21	PNK / Motul de San José	K5847	700–800	V4	<b>?ya-ni-<i>bi</i></b>	?y-n-ib

## Appendix: *-n-ib* and *-l-ib* suffixed toponyms in the Classic Maya glyptic corpus (continued)

n	Site	Text	Date	Reference	Transliteration	Transcription
22	PNK / Uaxactun	K7525	650–750	F2–F3	<b>IK'-ni-bi</b>	<i>ik'-n-ib</i>
23	PNK / Holmul	MS1079	> 800	M1	<b>CHUWAJ-l-i-bi</b>	<i>chuwaj-l-ib</i>
24	PNK	San Francisco stela	761	basal reg.	<b>a-kul-li-bi</b>	<i>ahk-l-ib</i>
25	Pusilha	Stela D	647	C13	T578-ni-bi	?-n-ib
26	Pusilha	Stela D	647	E14	T578-ni-bi	?-n-ib
27	Seibal	HS, Tablet 6	751	GG2	<b>UH2-ni-bi</b>	<i>uh-n-ib</i>
28	Tamarindito	HS 3, Step VII	698–726	D1	{CHINSTRAP-ni}-bi	?-n-ib
29	Tonina	Monument 27	c. 692	B2	<b>CHAK-l-i-bi</b>	<i>chak-l-ib</i>
30	Tonina	Monument 180	c. 692–699	E1	<b>KUJ-j-i-l-i-bi</b>	<i>kuj-l-ib</i>
31	Topoxte	Mirror backing	c. 771	N1–P1	<b>5-ya-YATIK[ki] / CHUWAJ-ji / ni-bi</b>	<i>ho'yatik chuuaj-n-ib</i>
32	Topoxte	Mirror backing	c. 771	R1	<b>TE'-ni-bi</b>	<i>te'-n-ib</i>
33	Topoxte	Mirror backing	c. 771	S1	<b>TOK'-ni-bi</b>	<i>took'-n-ib</i>
34	Xunantunich	Panel 2	780–820	pC2a	{TE'}-ni-bi	<i>te'-n-ib</i>
35	Xunantunich	Panel 2	780–820	pB3a	<b>TOK'-ni-bi</b>	<i>took'-n-ib</i>
36	Yaxchilan	HS 3, Step IV	732	C7	T511-ni-bi	?-n-ib
37	Yaxchilan	HS 5, Step I	800	Glyph 149	<b>k'aay?l-bi-ni</b>	<i>k'aa'y?-n-ib</i>
38	Yaxchilan	Lintel 23	726	J1	<b>ja-ma-li-bi</b>	<i>jam-l-ib</i>

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# **Adjetivos relacionales en la lengua de las inscripciones jeroglíficas mayas clásicas**

ALEJANDRO SHESEÑA

Universidad de Ciencias y Artes de Chiapas

(sesena@hotmail.com)

**Resumen:** La presente nota profundiza en el tema de la gramática de los adjetivos atributivos mayas clásicos. Explora en concreto la presencia de adjetivos atributivos de los llamados relativos en la lengua de las inscripciones jeroglíficas, y discute las particularidades sintácticas y morfológicas que estos adjetivos habrían tenido así como los tipos semánticos que los caracterizarían.

**Abstract:** The present article delves into the subject of the grammar of the Classic Mayan attributive adjectives. In particular, it explores the presence of attributive adjectives of the so-called relational in the language of the hieroglyphic inscriptions and discusses the syntactic and morphological particularities that these adjectives would have had as well as the semantic types that would characterize them.

**A**lfonso Lacadena fue sin duda uno de los artífices de la epigrafía maya moderna. A él se le debe, entre otros muchos logros, parte del importante avance que en los últimos años se ha alcanzado en la comprensión de la gramática de la lengua usada por los antiguos mayas en sus inscripciones jeroglíficas (Lacadena 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2004, 2010, 2013; Lacadena y Wichmann 2002, s.f.).

La presente nota comparte el interés por el estudio de la gramática maya clásica y profundiza concretamente en el tema de los adjetivos atributivos. Explora la presencia de adjetivos de los llamados relativos en la lengua de las inscripciones jeroglíficas mayas clásicas. Gracias a sus detallados estudios sobre la lengua maya tseltal de Oxchuc, Chiapas, Gilles Polian ha propuesto recientemente que en esta lengua determinados sustantivos sufijados pueden conformar, por determinados rasgos sintácticos, morfológicos y semánticos, adjetivos atributivos relativos semejantes a los de las lenguas española o inglesa (Polian 2013: 545–551). Originalmente formulados de acuerdo con la lengua francesa (Bally 1944), los adjetivos relativos fueron identificados no solo en otras lenguas europeas (véase por ejemplo Bartoš 1980; Warren 1984) sino también en lenguas de otras regiones del mundo (véase Bisetto 2010). Considerando que en las inscripciones mayas se han registrado sustantivos

similares a los estudiados por Polian, en los siguientes párrafos se explorará si dichos sustantivos jeroglíficos pueden ser abordados, sin descartar otras alternativas de análisis, como adjetivos atributivos relacionales.

El trabajo inicia con una exposición de los rasgos generales de los adjetivos relacionales tomando como ejemplo el caso de la lengua española, continúa explicando la manera en cómo este tipo de adjetivos puede manifestarse en la lengua tseltal, y finaliza ensayando lo correspondiente para la lengua de las inscripciones jeroglíficas mayas clásicas. El análisis es realizado a partir de los datos contenidos principalmente en los nombres de los naguales reunidos por Nikolai Grube y Werner Nahm (1993), una fuente poco socorrida al respecto. Los nombres de los naguales son bastante útiles debido a que son insistentes y sistemáticos en el uso de adjetivos atributivos (Sheseña 2010). Aunque este *corpus* no es muy extenso, sí es lo suficientemente ilustrativo para los fines del presente trabajo. También se usarán algunos adjetivos atributivos procedentes de otros contextos. Este ensayo forma parte de una discusión más amplia que sobre la gramática atributiva en la lengua de las inscripciones jeroglíficas mayas clásicas me encuentro desarrollando.

## **Los adjetivos relacionales**

En el caso del español, los adjetivos en general son una clase gramatical de palabras que presentan funciones predicativas o funciones atributivas. En su función atributiva los adjetivos son palabras que se aplican a aquellas que nombran objetos físicos o mentales (los sustantivos) con el objeto de conferirles una propiedad o un conjunto de propiedades (Demonte 1999: 134). Dentro de estos adjetivos atributivos se distinguen dos tipos semánticamente distintos definidos a partir de cómo confieren las propiedades: los adjetivos calificativos y los adjetivos relacionales (Bosque 1993).

En general, los adjetivos relacionales son aquellos que, a diferencia de los calificativos, no denotan cualidades o propiedades físicas inherentes (color, tamaño, forma, etc.) a los objetos nombrados por los sustantivos, sino que manifiestan propiedades que esos objetos han adquirido debido a determinada relación semántica establecida con dominios o ámbitos externos. Así, en la frase *viaje presidencial*, el

adjetivo relacional *presidencial* no expresa una cualidad física intrínseca del viaje sino el agente del viaje: el presidente (Bosque 1993; Demonte 1999). En este sentido, la relación semántica entre adjetivos relacionales y sustantivos es muy variable y compleja e incluye tipos basados en valores tales como causa-agente (*presidencial*), locación (*campestre*), tiempo (*primaveral*), instrumento (*ocular*), finalidad (*comercial*) y posesión (*ministerial*) (Demonte 1999: 162–167). Los dominios externos de donde se toman las propiedades que modifican al sustantivo se expresan invariablemente justo a través de otros sustantivos que morfológicamente adquieran sufijación al momento de funcionar como adjetivos relacionales (*presidente – presidencial*).

Los adjetivos relacionales se reconocen además porque, sintácticamente, no pueden en su mayoría usarse como predicados, no admiten intensificación ni graduación, no poseen antónimos, no se intercalan con adjetivos calificativos o, si éstos últimos están presentes en la misma frase nominal, los adjetivos relacionales mantienen la estricta adyacencia con el sustantivo, entre otros rasgos (Demonte 1999: 150–154).

### **Adjetivos relacionales en tseltal**

Los adjetivos mayas, cuya función general es dar información adicional sobre los sustantivos, sintácticamente también funcionan como predicados no verbales o como modificadores del sustantivo. Estos últimos, atributivos, que denotan propiedad, en las lenguas mayas siempre preceden al nombre que modifican, a diferencia de los predicativos. De acuerdo con estudios especializados, los adjetivos atributivos pueden ser, en términos generales, según su morfología, radicales o derivados. Determinados adjetivos atributivos derivados pueden a su vez producirse a partir de sustantivos marcados con sufijos -VC, entre los que destacan los sufijos del grupo -Vl (véase los estudios detallados al respecto de England 2001 y 2004; Martínez Cruz 2007; Gómez Cruz 2010; Hofling 2011 y 2017; Coon 2017; y principalmente Polian y Gómez Cruz 2010 y Polian 2013, 2017a, 2017b). Dentro de este último grupo se encontrarían los adjetivos relacionales.

Como se señaló al inicio del artículo, ha sido ya propuesta la presencia de adjetivos atributivos relacionales en la lengua tseltal. Los adjetivos relacionales en esta lengua son, de acuerdo con Polian, sustantivos que, de manera semejante a los de la lengua española,

adquieren un sufijo para funcionar como modificador atributivo relacional de otro sustantivo. Para tal fin se usan en esta lengua sufijos del grupo -*Vl* de vocal impredecible. Además de estas características morfológicas, hay dos rasgos más que los adjetivos relacionales tseltales comparten con los españoles, concretamente en la sintaxis: no pueden usarse como predicados y se localizan más cerca del sustantivo que los adjetivos calificativos (Polian 2013: 545–546).

Semánticamente, al igual que en otras lenguas, en tseltal la función de estos adjetivos consiste en denotar rasgos externos adquiridos a través de relaciones semánticas y no la calificación o adscripción de propiedades físicas intrínsecas al objeto nombrado por el sustantivo. De acuerdo con Polian, la gama de tipos semánticos relacionales en tseltal es más limitada que en español y por lo regular denota valores tales como: 1) constitución material del objeto modificado, 2) en las toponimias, principalmente en las relacionadas con ríos o manantiales, donde son comunes los adjetivos relacionales, rasgo típico del lugar referido con el sustantivo, 3) en algunas zoonimias y fitonimias, rasgo característico de las plantas y animales referidos por el sustantivo modificado, y 4) género de personas, animales y plantas (Polian 2013: 547–549). Véase a continuación algunos ejemplos, de los publicados por el autor citado, que ilustran la presencia y funcionamiento de este tipo de adjetivos en lengua tseltal:

*ich-il mats'*  
 chile-<sub>ADJ</sub> masa  
 ‘masa con chile’

*ch'ujte'-al na*  
 tabla-<sub>ADJ</sub> casa  
 ‘casa (hecha) de tablas gruesas’

*bat-ul ja'al*  
 granizo-<sub>ADJ</sub> lluvia  
 ‘lluvia con granizo’

*on-il ja'*  
 aguacate-<sub>ADJ</sub> río  
 ‘río (en cuyos alrededores hay) aguacate’

*chij-il chan*  
 venado-<sub>ADJ</sub> serpiente  
 ‘serpiente (con rasgos de) venado’

pukuj-il mut  
diablo-<sub>ADJ</sub> ave  
'ave diabólica'

## Los adjetivos relativos mayas clásicos

En el caso de la lengua de los jeroglíficos mayas, los adjetivos atributivos hallados en las inscripciones también preceden al sustantivo al que modifican. Con respecto a su morfología, éstos han sido clasificados por los especialistas como primarios (o formados de una raíz adjetival) y derivados. Algunos de estos últimos se forman a partir de sustantivos que son marcados con un sufijo -Vl mayoritariamente armónico (Houston et al. 2001: 6, 12, 32–36; Kettunen y Helmke 2008: 17; Lacadena 2010: 43; 2013: 33; Law y Stuart 2017: 160–161) aunque en algunos casos podían ser los sufijos disarmónicos -il y -al (Sheseña 2010: 11, 22, 23). De acuerdo con Lacadena (2010: 43; 2013: 33), también se usaba el sufijo -Vch agregado a sustantivos y el sufijo -Vm adicionado a sustantivos y a verbos. De la misma manera sustantivos sin derivación podían ser usados en calidad de adjetivos atributivos en las inscripciones al anteceder a otro sustantivo (Houston et al. 2001: 6, 12, 32–36; Sheseña 2010: 11, 22, 23).

El análisis de los materiales jeroglíficos apunta a que determinados sustantivos sufijados de los mencionados en el párrafo anterior pueden, de manera semejante a como ocurre en la lengua tseltal, conformar adjetivos relativos relaciones toda vez que denotan, como sus equivalentes en otras lenguas, propiedades que los sustantivos a los que modifican han adquirido por su relación semántica con ámbitos externos, como veremos más adelante. Además, cuentan como rasgo característico con un sufijo, concretamente del grupo -Vl, ya sea un armónico, mayoritariamente, o los disarmónicos -il y -al. Se presentan a continuación los casos que cubren estas características en el *corpus* de nombres de naguales y en otros monumentos. Sólo se muestran aquellos casos que no requieren de mayor discusión, dejando pendientes otros que se muestran como potenciales. Para cada ejemplo se especifica su procedencia.

ka-ka-wa-la 'u-lu  
kakaw-al 'ul  
cacao-<sub>ADJ</sub> atole

‘atole con cacao’  
 (K2772)

**HA’-la wi-WINIK-ki**  
*ha'-al winik*  
 agua-<sub>ADJ</sub> hombre  
 ‘hombre acuático’  
 (K1256)

**CH’AK-TE’-le HIX**  
*ch'akte'-el hix*  
 tapesco-<sub>ADJ</sub> jaguar  
 ‘jaguar (localizado en un) tapesco’  
 (K791)

**ti-la-la HIX**  
*tihl-al hix*  
 tapir-<sub>ADJ</sub> jaguar  
 ‘jaguar (con rasgos de) tapir’  
 (K1442)

**chi-hi-li CHAN-na**  
*chih-il chan*  
 venado-<sub>ADJ</sub> serpiente  
 ‘serpiente (con rasgos de venado)’  
 (K9254)

**po-po-lo cha-ya**  
*pop-ol chay*  
 petate-<sub>ADJ</sub> pez  
 ‘pez (con rasgos de) petate’  
 (Escalón I de la Escalera Jeroglífica 3 de Yaxchilan)

**ta-ja-la MO’-’o**  
*taj-al mo'*  
 antorcha-<sub>ADJ</sub> guacamaya  
 ‘guacamaya (con rasgos de) antorcha’  
 (Estructura 4 de Machaquila)

**K’UH-lu ’AJAW**  
*k'uh-ul 'ajaw*  
 dios-<sub>ADJ</sub> señor  
 ‘señor (con rasgos de) dios’, ‘señor divino’  
 (Estela 4 de Ixtutz)

**k’u-ti-li HIX**  
*k'ut-il hix*  
 torcedura-<sub>ADJ</sub> jaguar

'jaguar bailador'  
(K791)

**JATZ-la TOK' 'EK' HIX**  
*jatz-al tok' 'ek' hix*  
 golpe<sub>-ADJ</sub> pedernal estrella jaguar  
 'jaguar estrella pedernal golpeador'  
 (K2284)

**KAB-la K'UH**  
*kab-al k'uh*  
 tierra<sub>-ADJ</sub> dios  
 'dios terrenal'  
 (Estela 10 de Copán)

**CHAN-NAL K'UH**  
*chan-al k'uh*  
 cielo<sub>-ADJ</sub> dios  
 'dios celestial'  
 (Estela 10 de Copán)

A partir de los casos arriba enumerados se pueden identificar tipos semánticos definidos que respaldarían la naturaleza relacional de estos adjetivos. Los valores semánticos encontrados son los siguientes (con sus correspondientes ejemplos):

- Constitución: *kakaw-al* 'con cacao'.
- Semejanza: *tihl-al* 'con rasgos de tapir', *pop-ol* 'con rasgos de petate', *k'uh-ul* 'con rasgos de dios' o 'divino', *chih-il* 'con rasgos de venado', *taj-al* 'con rasgos de antorcha'.
- Locación: *ha'-al* 'acuático', *ch'akte'-el* 'localizado en un tapesco'.
- Acciones asociadas: *k'ut-il* 'bailador', *jatz-al* 'golpeador'.
- Esfera de desenvolvimiento: *kab-al* 'terrenal', *chan-al* 'celestial'.

Estos valores a su vez evidenciarían que, en la lengua de las inscripciones mayas clásicas, al igual que en otras lenguas del mundo, la relación semántica entre adjetivos atributivos relacionales y sustantivos modificados también era variable y compleja.

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# Morphological Devices in Ancient Mayan Poetics

KERRY HULL

Brigham Young University

(kerry\_hull@byu.edu)

**Abstract:** The sophisticated Maya hieroglyphic script was able to record most nuances of the language. Scribes among the ancient Maya fully exploited phonetic, syntactic, semantic, and graphic (i.e., visual) aspects of the writing system in order to elevate the level of discourse to the literary. In this article, I examine the use of another means of creating poetic effect, that of morphological devices. Based on research by Alfonso Lacadena and myself, which we intended to incorporate into a book on ancient Maya poetics, I here describe five morphological rhetorical features used in Maya hieroglyphic writing: anaphora, epiphora, redditio, homeoptoton, and polyptoton. Each of these serve to elevate the discourse from normal language to literary language, showing the prowess of ancient Maya authors in their ability to add emotive content, apply specific focus, or infuse a text with aesthetic beauty. Alfonso Lacadena had a profound appreciation and respect for the poetic skills of those in ancient Mesoamerica.

**Resumen:** La sofisticada escritura jeroglífica maya fue capaz de registrar la mayoría de las matices del idioma. Entre los antiguos mayas, los escribas explotaron por completo los aspectos fonéticos, sintácticos, semánticos y gráficos, es decir, visuales, del sistema de escritura para elevar el nivel del discurso a lo literario. En este artículo, examino el uso de otro medio para crear un efecto poético, el de los recursos morfológicos. Con base en la investigación de Alfonso Lacadena y de mí mismo que intentamos incorporar a un libro sobre la poética maya antigua, aquí describo cinco características retóricas morfológicas usadas en la escritura jeroglífica maya: anáfora, epífora, redditio, homeóptoton y políptoton. Cada uno de estos sirve para elevar el discurso del lenguaje normal al lenguaje literario y mostrar la habilidad de los antiguos autores mayas en su capacidad para agregar contenido emotivo, aplicar un enfoque específico o infundir un texto con belleza estética. Alfonso Lacadena tenía un profundo aprecio y respeto por las habilidades poéticas de estos autores en la antigua Mesoamérica.

My interest in poetics in Maya hieroglyphs began in 1992 while working on my Master's degree at Georgetown University. For my Master's thesis ("Poetic Discourse in Maya Oral Tradition and in the Hieroglyphic Script"), completed in 1993, I carried out one of the early studies on a selection of poetic devices Maya scribes used in their craft. My thesis built on crucial literary discoveries by Sir J. Eric Thompson (1971[1950]: 61–62), Floyd Lounsbury (1980: 107–115), key narrative insights by Kathryn Josserand and Nicholas Hopkins (Josserand and Hopkins 1988; Josserand 1991, 1995, 1997) and others. For my PhD dissertation at the University of Texas at Austin in 2003 ("Verbal Art and Performance in Ch'orti' and Maya Hieroglyphic

Writing”), I significantly enlarged my earlier work on glyphic poetics and included comparative poetic data from ritual Ch’ortí’ Mayan. Several years after I completed my dissertation, Alfonso and I began our delightful journey of collaboration on poetics and the ancient Maya. I was immediately struck at the depth and breadth of Alfonso’s linguistic analysis of texts, his sensitivity to subtle shifts in narrative style, and his ability to draw upon post-Conquest colonial material for insights into poetic forms in glyphic texts. Most importantly, Alfonso prized the aesthetic beauty of poetic discourse in all languages. For example, he reveled in giving examples in Spanish poetry in our discussions.

In December of 2012, Alfonso and I presented a three-day advanced workshop at the 17<sup>th</sup> European Maya Conference entitled “Ancient Maya Poetics” in Helsinki, Finland, organized by Harri Kettunen. It was one of the first workshop of its kind focused on describing the poetic devices found in Mayan inscriptions from the Early Classic to the Postclassic. It was a thrill to see the passion and enthusiasm Alfonso brought to the topic over the three days. The notebook for the workshop was made available on Academia.edu. After the conference we became more engaged in an idea we had several years earlier: to co-author a book on Maya hieroglyphic poetics. In the last few years before his untimely passing, we had worked out the basic structure of the book and chose twenty poetic devices that we would focus on (Figure 1).

In this chapter, in honor of Alfonso Lacadena, I can think of no other theme more appropriate for me to write on than poetics in Maya hieroglyphic texts, a topic for which we shared such a passion. I will here summarize one section of the book Alfonso and I intended to write, that of morphological devices used to create poeticity in Maya hieroglyphic writing.

## **Defining poetic discourse**

To distinguish one’s communication from ordinary discourse, an interlocutor or author has a wide variety of options. Barbarism—a deviation in standard morphology at the level of lexis—can be considered a simple mistake. Solecism—a misuse of syntax—is also common in ordinary language. Whether conscious or unconscious, non-standard usage at the word or syntactic level is not necessarily

## Categories of Poetic Devices

PHONOLOGY	alliteration
MORPHOLOGY	anaphora, epiphora, circole, enallage, homeoptoton, polyptoton
SYNTAX	parallelism, antimetabole, chiasmus, coupling, ellipsis, zeugma, anastrophe, hyperbaton (proper)
SEMANTICS	metaphor, metonymy, diphrasic kenning, hyperbole, personification, synonymy
EXPRESSIVITY	optatio
TEXTUAL LEVEL	isotopia

Figure 1. Types of poetic devices found in Maya hieroglyphic writing.

an effort to elevate one's speech into poetry (Figure 2). However, the purposeful use and relative frequency (Coleman 1999: 22) of what we could call "discourse aberrations," i.e., unexpected deviations in lexis, grammar, or syntax, can remove that unit of discourse from the ordinary and imbue it with poetic effect. The structural realization of each poetic form will depend on the genre of the discourse (Sherzer 1982: 372). Through the conscious use of playful variations, such as suppression, addition, inversion, and substitution, the presentation of language becomes a focal activity, a cognitive engagement beyond the straightforward meaning of the text. In this realm, a purposeful orthographic deviation (metaplasm) is no longer barbarism, rather a mechanism to draw attention to a word or its immediate environment.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the use of figurative discourse (tropes) further distances a text from literal, normal language, into literary language (Figure 2).

<sup>1</sup> As Donatus (1961[1864]: 392) observed, a misspelling by an individual is a "mistake," but when done by a poet, it is metaplasm ("Barbarismus est una par orationis vitiosa in communis sermone, in poemate metaplasmus").

## NORMAL LANGUAGE AND LITERARY LANGUAGE

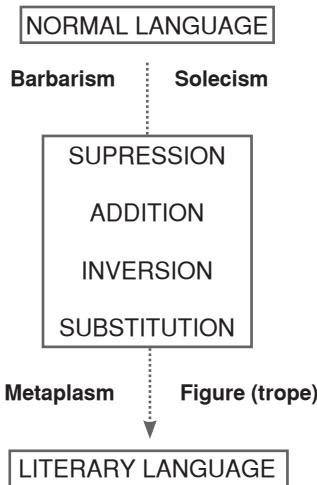


Figure 2. Process of change from normal to literary language.

### Five poetic morphological devices of the ancient Maya

The scribes of ancient Maya hieroglyphic writing were fully aware of the differing poles of normal and literary language. In most cases, events such as diplomatic encounters, warfare, marriage, or ritual observance were presented in normal language. For example, the text of the East section of Step 2 of the Hieroglyphic Stairway at Dos Pilas simply reports an attack by Ruler 1 of Dos Pilas, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, against a site called Koban in AD 661 (Figure 3).

**9-KAWAK 17-YAX-K'IN u-na-ka-wa ta-ba JOL-mi ko-ba-na-AJAW  
BAJ-CHAN-K'AWIIL K'UH-MUT-AJAW**

9 Kawak 17 Yaxk'in unakaw Tab Jol[oo]m, Koban Ajaw, Baj[laj] Chan K'awiil,  
K'uh[ul] Mut[ul] Ajaw

'(On) 9 Kawak 17 Yaxk'in, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, Holy Lord of Mutul, battled  
Tab Joloom, Lord of Koban.'

Nothing in the recounting of the event deviates from standard Mayan lexis or syntax, i.e., normal language. Contrast this, however, with a short text on Bench 1 of the South Subterranean Building



**Figure 3.** East section of Step 2 of the Hieroglyphic Stairway at Dos Pilas (drawing by Federico Fahsen).

of the Palace at Palenque in which crafted, exceptional language is used (Figure 4a).

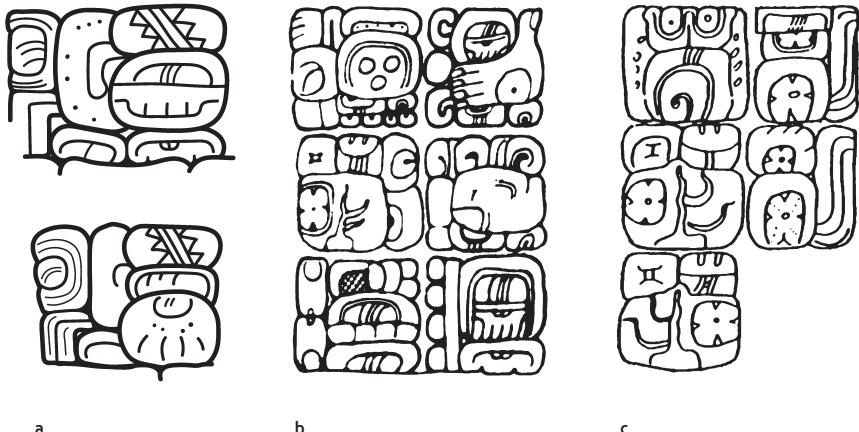
nu-mu-li ta-CHAN-na  
nu-mu-li ta-ka-ba

*numil ta chan*  
*numil ta kab*

‘Passing in the sky,  
Passing on the earth.’

This passage describes what Stuart has interpreted as the “Starry Deer Alligator as the animate Milky Way” as it “visibly progresses during the night across the sky and into the earth” (Stuart 1984, 2003: 2; cf. Hull 1993; 2003: 442–443). The movement of this celestial phenomenon is couched into a structural framework known as *parallelism*, i.e., A-B<sub>1</sub> / A-B<sub>2</sub>, wherein “both parts A are identical in each sentence, and parts B<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>2</sub> are semantically related” (Lacadena and Hull 2012: 19). The result is a poetic effect that elevates the aesthetics of this portion of the text.

In our proposed book, Lacadena and I divided Maya glyptic poetics into six categories: phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, expressive, and the textual level (see Figure 1). We also identified six specific poetic devices that operate at the level of morphology, or what Rossi terms “formulaic refrains” (Rossi 2014: 254), five of which I will describe here: anaphora, epiphora, redditio, homeoptoton, and polyptoton (Figure 1).



**Figure 4.** a) Text from Bench 1 of the South Subterranean Building of the Palace at Palenque (drawing by Felix Kupprat), b) East Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque, c) example of epiphora on the Middle Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque (G7-G9) (drawings by Linda Schele, courtesy of the Foundation for the Advancement of Meso-American Studies, Inc.).

## Anaphora

Anaphora is the repetition of the same word, words, or expression at the beginning of two or more lines, clauses, or sentences: ( $X_1\dots/X_1\dots/X_1\dots$ ). The East Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque contains an example of anaphora with the repetition of the morpheme *ma* ‘not’, at the beginning of successive phrases (cf. Lacadena 2009: 39) (Figure 4b).

ma-u-na-wa-ji juun-“Venus”-wa AJAW-wa-TAAK  
ma-ya-k'a-wa u-tu-ta-li 9-CHAN-na

*ma unawaaj 1-“Venus”-wa ajawtaak  
ma yak'aw ututaal 9-chan*

The lords did not display it to the Venus god.  
They did not give their *tutaal* to Bolon Chan.

Also notable in this passage is the high degree of alliteration with the vowel sound “a”.

## Epiphora (or epistrophe)

Epiphora, from the Greek *epiphora*, *epi* ‘upon + *pherein* ‘to carry’, is a form of parallelism resulting in the repetition of a word, words, or phrase at the end of consecutive verses, clauses, or sentences: (... X<sub>1</sub>/...X<sub>1</sub>/...X<sub>1</sub>). Epiphora, one of the earliest attested poetic features, has been recognized as far back as the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh* in the third millennium BCE in Sumer. An example of epiphora from English would be “Waste *not*, want *not*.” A more poetic realization of this device can be seen in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*:

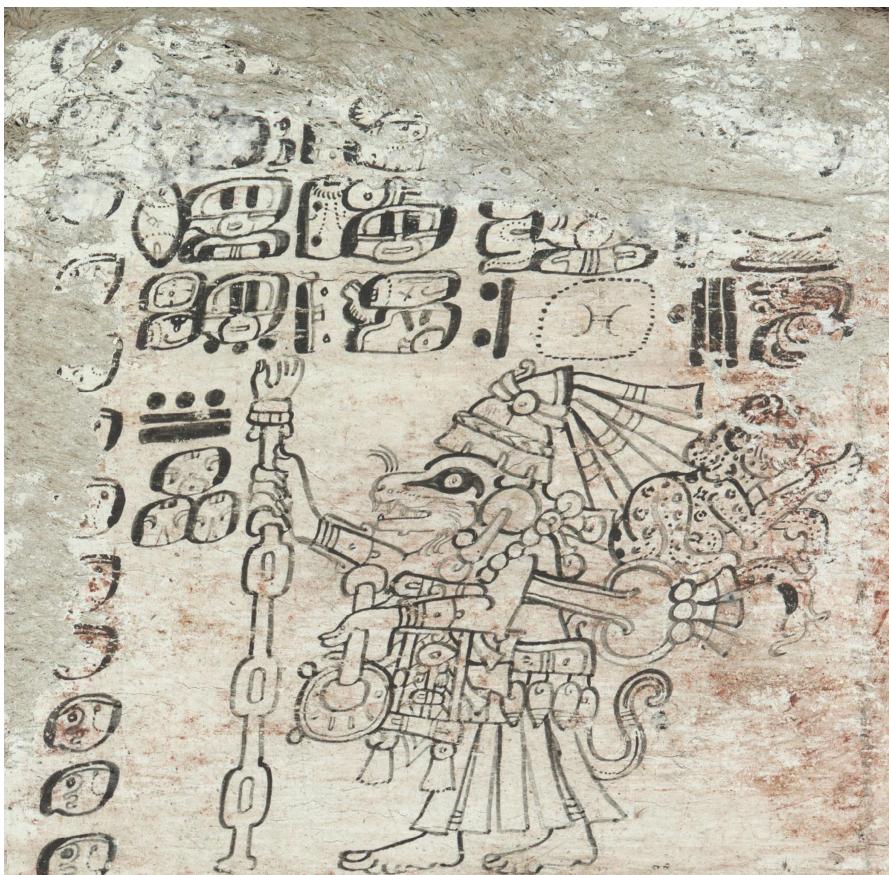
“Fie, fie, thou shamest thy shape, **thy love, thy wit,**  
 Which, like a userer, abound’st in all,  
 And uses none in that true sense indeed  
 Which should bedeck thy shape, **thy love, thy wit.**”

(Friar Laurence in William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Scene III)

A wonderful occurrence of epiphora comes again from Palenque, a site whose scribes were doubtlessly “dedicated to literary experimentation” (Lacadena 2012: 62) (Figure 4c).

“star war”-yi EL-K’IN-ni AJAW-TAAK OCH-K’IN-ni AJAW-TAAK  
 “star war” elk’in ajawtaak ochk’in ajawtaak  
 A “star war” against the eastern lords, the western lords.

Here on the Middle Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque, a war event is poetically recorded as taking place “against the eastern lords, the western lords” (Hull 2003: 489–90; Lacadena 2009: 39–40). In contrast to the prose that preceded this passage, this section of the text couches the event in a parallelistic construction of A-B<sub>1</sub> / A-B<sub>2</sub>. An additional level of poeticity is attained through the use of epiphora in the final repetition of the plural morpheme -taak in *ajawtaak* and *ajawtaak*. Note that the fortunate appearance of “-k’in” in both terms “east” and “west” in epigraphic Mayan (*elk’in* and *ochk’in*, respectively), further enhancing the subsequent epiphora created with -taak.



**Figure 5.** Folio 26a of the Dresden Codex (photograph by Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden).

A much later example of epiphora appears in the Dresden Codex 26a, which displays one of the New Year rites (Figure 5). On folios 25 to 28 of the Dresden Codex, anthropomorphic opossums with gods on their backs are shown walking during the Uayeb days, likely representing the four Maya year bearers (Thompson 1972; Klein 2001: 196). On page 26a, an opossum is shown carrying a staff capped with a human hand. The opossum's name is given in the accompanying hieroglyphic text as *Chak Bolay Umam*, a name attested in the Chilam Balam of Chumayel (Roys 1933: 57).<sup>2</sup> The rest of the text containing the name *Chak Bolay Umam* reads:

<sup>2</sup> The term *chak* refers to either “great” or “red”, and *bolay* in Yukatek signifies “jaguar, gato montés, bestia, fiera” (jaguar, mountain lion, beast, wild beast) (Barrera Vázquez 1980: 62).

**TOOK'-HAAB-li**  
**HIX-SAK-HAAB**  
**K'IN-TUUN-HAAB**  
**u-ku-chu**

*took' haabil*  
*hix-sak haab[il]*  
*k'in-tuun haab[il]*  
*ukuch*

Flint season,  
jaguar white season,  
drought season,  
is its burden.

The term *haabil*, ‘season’, is repeated three times at the end of successive lines, with the *-il* suffix underspelled in the latter two (cf. Zender 1999). Alone, *haab* means ‘year’, but with abstractivizing suffix *-il* it refers to ‘season’ (Lacadena and Wichmann 2004: 15). The seasons are labeled as “Flint season,” an augury for war, “jaguar white season,”<sup>3</sup> and “drought season.” The final negative augury uses the expression *k'in-tuun*, which is attested in early Yukatekan sources referring to ‘dry season’ or ‘drought’, as first suggested by Thompson (1959: 359; 1972: 100).<sup>4</sup> The “burden” (*kuch*) referred to in the text is depicted as a jaguar<sup>5</sup> being carried on the back of the opossum. This augury passage poetically draws particular attention to the negative prognostication of a coming drought through modified syntax, lexical choice, and epiphora.

<sup>3</sup> Both “bahlam” and “hix” are epigraphic terms for “jaguar,” and in Yukatek Mayan, one of the two principle languages represented in the Dresden Codex (Wald 1994; Bricker 2000) and the Madrid Codex (Lacadena 1997), *balam*, *bolay*, and *chak bolay* are all attested terms for “jaguar” (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 32, 62, 78). The terms *sak* and both *hix* and *bolay* do appear together in the K'iche' *sacbolay hix*, “tigre, jaguar” ('tiger, jaguar') (Haeserijn 1979; cf. Braakhuis 2010: 28).

<sup>4</sup> In the Cordemex (1980: 404), the same expression *k'intunyá'ab'il* is given as “verano, tiempo de gran seca” ('summer [i.e., drought], time of great drought') or “esterilidad por muchos años” ('sterility for many years'). Grube (2012) notes that the *k'in-tuun* compound appears in negative auguries in the New Year pages of the Dresden Codex referring to crop failure and drought.

<sup>5</sup> According to Vail and Hernández (2013: 112), this jaguar makes reference to the “night-time aspect of the sun.”

## Redditio or enveloping parallelism

Redditio, also known as enveloping parallelism, is the formulaic repetition of a word at the beginning and at the end of the same sentence (X...X). The term *redditio* in Latin refers to ‘a going’, ‘a coming back’, or ‘a return’. An example of its usage comes from the poem *Romance Sonámbulo*, by the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca: “**Verde** que te quiero **verde**,” “**Green**, how I want you **green**,” placing “*verde*” at both the beginning and the end of the line (bold added). Enveloping parallelism, according to Christenson, “has the effect of tying together the introduction and conclusion of a passage to set it apart from that which precedes and follows it” (Christenson 2000: 17). It serves to create a kind of “bookends effect” on that particular section, thereby inviting the reader/listener to focus on that content (Hull 2003: 152).

The following example from Ch’orti’ Mayan shows this process (Hull 2003: 153):

*A’si tamar enyax rueda,  
tamar enyax rueda,  
tamar uruedir a’syob’.*

They play in the green ring,  
in the green ring,  
in their ring they play.

The verb *a’si* ‘play’ is fronted in the first line, followed by three similar prepositional phrases, terminating in a repeat of the verb *a’si* in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-person plural form *a’syob’*, ‘they play’.

Stela 15 of Nim Li Punit contains another case of enveloping parallelism (Figure 6):

*utz’apaw utuun chak unan,  
u-6-tz’aka’?-tuun utz’ap*

He planted the stone of Chak Unan,  
The sixth ordering of the ?-stone of his  
planting.

The first glyphic compound is the transitive verb *utz’apaw*, ‘he planted it’, at the beginning of the redditio, whose root is *tz’ap*. The same verbal root is repeated in its nominal form *utz’ap*, ‘his planting’ at the end of the phrase. As I have noted elsewhere, in some cases redditio takes the shape of a chiasm AB—B’A’, which on Nim Li Punit Stela 15 structures out as: (A) *plant* (B) *stone* (B’) — *stone* (A’) *plant*

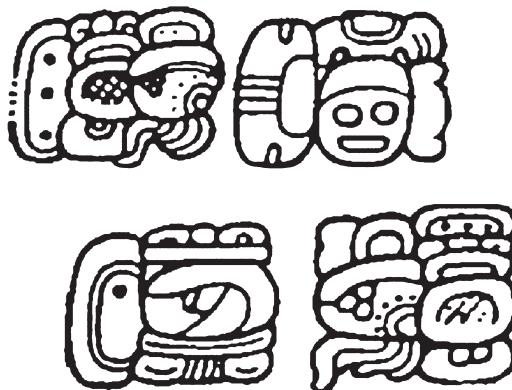


Figure 6. Nim Li Punit, Stela 15, H3-H6 (drawing by Nikolai Grube).

(Hull 2003: 171, 176, 459). Furthermore, the repetition of the term *tz'ap* with different forms of morphology also creates a polyptoton (see below).

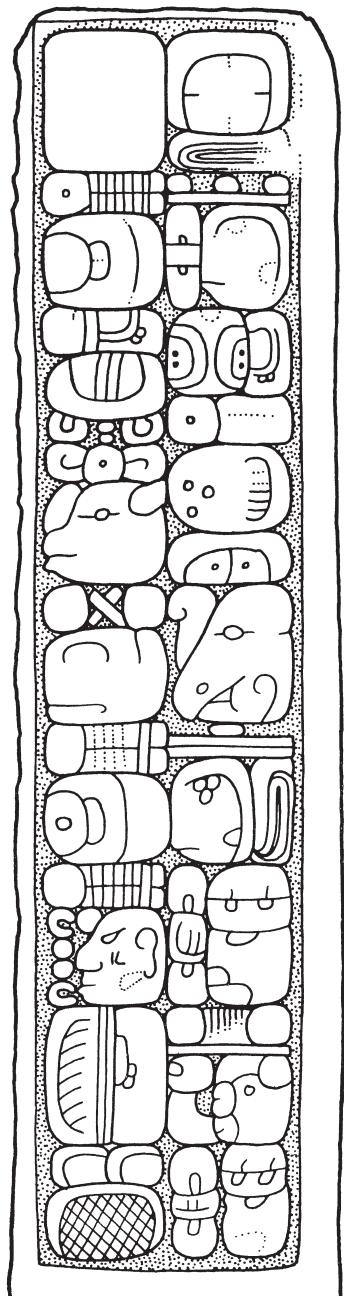
Another example of redditio is found on an unprovenanced monument from the Yucatan containing a Primary Standard Sequence-type dedicatory inscription discussing the carving (*yuxuluul*) of a wall inscription on a doorjamb or enclosure (*k'aal*) (Figure 7). The text reads:

## K'IN-ni ta-u 8-CHAK-SIJOM a-AL-ya b'o-o?-ja yu-xu-lu-li u-k'a-li ta-u  
11-TUUN-ni ta-2-AJAW ha-i sa-ja a-K'UH pi-pa ha-i

[10 Chikchan] k'in ta u 8 Chak Sijom al[al]y b'o'[a]j yuxuluul uk'aal ta u 11 tuun ta 2  
Ajaw haa'saja[l] ajk'uh Piip[a']haa'

'(On) the day 10 Chikchan on the eighth of Chak Sijom, here it is, the wall (inscription) of his enclosure, on the 11<sup>th</sup> *tuun* (on) 2 *Ajaw*, he, the *Sajal*, *Piipa'* (Pomona) priest, this one'.

According to Lacadena (2012: 54–55), this text exemplifies the poetic device known as hyperbaton, that is, a break in natural syntactic order for poetic effect. The Short Count notation, 'on the 11<sup>th</sup> *tuun* (on) 2 *Ajaw*', appears outside of its normal syntactic position directly after the Calendar Round. The break in expectation is punctuated by the use of *alay*, "here, this one," drawing further attention to the phrase *b'o'[a]j yuxuluul uk'aal*, "the wall (inscription) of his enclosure."

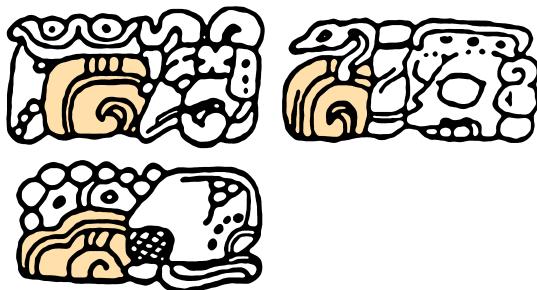


**Figure 7.** Example of redditio on an unprovenanced monument from the Yucatan (drawing by Christian Prager).

In addition to hyperbaton, the scribe also artfully incorporated redditio in the phrase to emphasize the possessor of the inscription of the enclosure by enveloping the possessor with two demonstrative pronouns, *haa'*, an emphatic ‘he’ or ‘this one’. Thus, this short inscription contains three deictic elements (*alay*, *haa'*, *haa'*), all of which play a role in the poetic reorganization of the syntax and the highlighting of certain information. What is more, a chiastic structure AB—B’A is created with the *haa'* as A and A’ and the title “Sajal” and “the Piipa’ priest” appearing as appositives at the axis of the chiasm, bidding special notice to the possessor.

### Homeoptoton

Homeoptoton is a poetic device in which the last words of single parts of the speech end with the same cases. The term derives from the Greek *homoióptoton*, ‘similar cases’. In effect, homeoptoton refers to a type of ‘end-rhyme’. Elsewhere I have referred to this poetic device as “grammatical parallelism” in the Maya hieroglyphic script, where identical verbal morphemes appear in sequence (Hull 2003: 453–7). For example, on Stair 2 of the Hieroglyphic Stairs on Structure L5-49 at Dos Pilas three consecutive verbs



**Figure 8.** Verbal repetition with similar morphology (shaded) on Stair 2, Hieroglyphic Stairway 2, Structure L5-49 at Dos Pilas (drawing by Federico Fahsen).

appear in a triplet construction with mediopassive morphology (Figure 8):

'star war'-yi PUL-li LOK'-yi NUUN-U-JOL-CHAHK T'AB-yi [?]TUUN-ni

'Star war'-yi pul[uu]l lok'[o]yi Nuun Ujol Chahk t'ab[alyi] [?]tuun

'A "star war" happened against Puluul. Nuun Ujol Chahk escaped. He went up to [?]Tuun.'

Middle passive morphology realized with the suffix *-yi* appears on all three verbs. The repetition results in a harmonic cadence to the recounting of this historical narrative of Dos Pilas' defeat of the Tikal ruler Nuun Ujol Chahk and his escape after the battle.

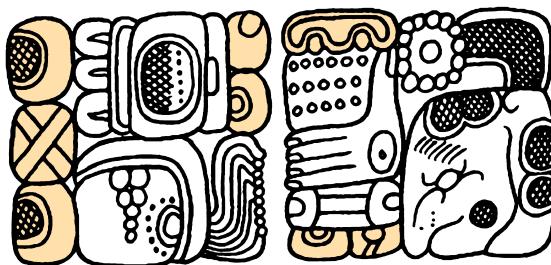
Longer reiterations of the mediopassive *-yi* also appear on Steps 5 and 6, West Section, at Dos Pilas, where no less than eight successive verbs detailing war events in the life of Nuun Ujol Chahk appear with the same mediopassive morphology (see Guenter 2003: 23), elevating the normal, reportative language to poeticized recitation.

Similar repetition of verbal morphology can be seen on Ixtzutz Stela 4 (Figure 9).

u-tz'a-pa-wa-TUUN-ni u-CHOK-ko-wa-ch'a-ji

utz'apaw tuun uchokow chaaj

'He planted the stone; he threw drops.'



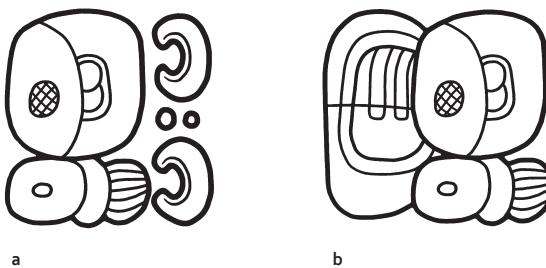
**Figure 9.** Ixtzutz Stela 4, A2-B-2, showing verbal morphology repetition (shaded) (drawing by Harri Kettunen).

In this text, two events that comprise the *k'atun* (20-year period) ending ceremonies, the throwing of drops (of blood or some other substance) (Love 1987) and the binding (Stuart 1996) or raising of a stone stela are described. They are both presented with transitive morphology, *u-...-w(V)*, syntactically and morphologically forming a poetic parallelism.

### Polyptoton

The final morphological device I will briefly discuss is polyptoton, which is the repetition of related words in different cases or inflections in the same sentence. In other words, terms or expressions deriving from the same root are repeated in different grammatical forms. For example, Tennyson wrote: “My ownheart’s heart, and ownest own, farewell.” The poetic effect is notable due to the presence of identical root forms in close succession, but which are expressed with distinct grammatical realizations.

One commonly encountered example of polyptoton is the repetition of the verbal root *uht*, ‘to happen’. Thompson (1943) first referred to two forms of the compound as the Posterior Date Indicator (PDI) (Figure 10a) and the Anterior Date Indicator (ADI) (Figure 10b). David Stuart deciphered each of these as *u[h]tiy* ‘it had happened’ and *i-u[h]ti* ‘then it happened/happens’ (Stuart 1990). In standard Maya hieroglyphic syntax, two events are linked through the use of a Distance Number, enumerating the amount of time that has elapsed from the previous event to the next. The ADI appears as a discourse marker between the events to impel the narrative



**Figure 10.** a) Posterior Date Indicator (PDI) *u[h]tiyy* ‘it had happened’, b) Anterior Date Indicator (ADI) *i-u[h]ti* ‘then it happened’ (drawings by Harri Kettunen).

forward. In some cases, however, a PDI construction explicitly states that a period of time ‘had happened’ (*u[h]tiyy*) since the last event.

Sometimes both the PDI and the ADI can occur consecutively, such as on Stela 4 of Machaquila (Figure 11a, b):

(A1) 8-AJAW 8-CHIK[?] -ni (A2) TAHN-LAM u-TZ’AK-a (A3) mi-he 12-WINIK-ji-ya (A4) u-ti-ya i-u-ti (B1) 1-AJAW 8-HUL-OHL (B2) u-K’AL-wa TUUN-ni (B3) SIJ-K’IN-ni CHAHK-ki (B4) K’UH-?-su-AJAW-wa

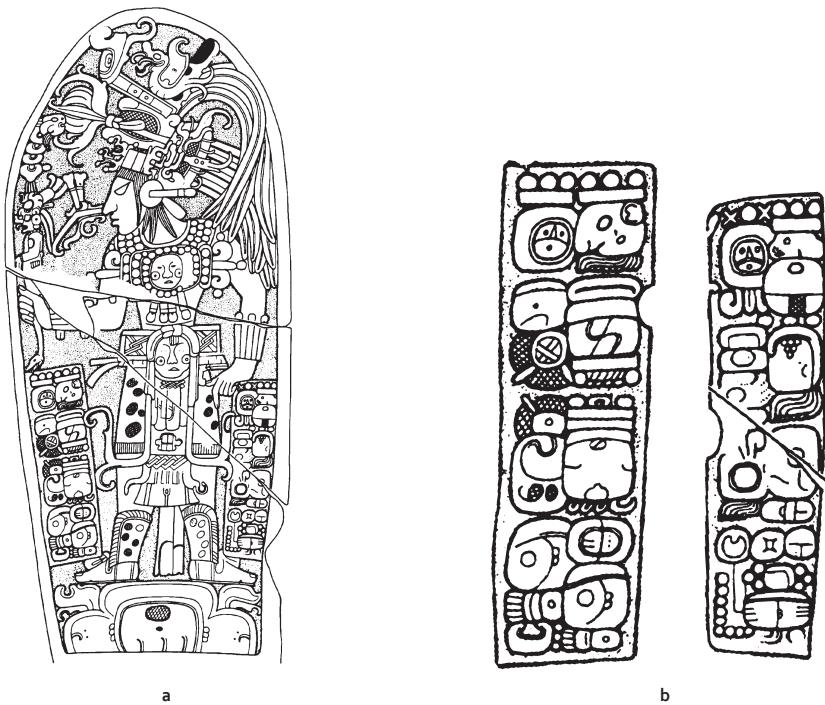
*Waxak Ajaw waxak Chikin tahnlam u-tz’aka mi-he[w] lajcha winikjiyy uhtiiy i-uhti ju’n Ajaw waxak Hulohl u-k’alaw tuun Sij[yaj] k’in Chahk k’uhul ?-su[hi] ajaw*

‘On 8 Ajaw 8 Xul was the completion of the middle of the *k’atun*. 0 days, 12 months had already happened, and then it happened that on 1 Ajaw 8 Kumk’u Sijyaj K’in Chahk, the Holy Lord of Machaquila, raised the stone.’

The text recounts the completion of ten years of the 20-year *k’atun* on 9.19.10.0.0, 8 Ajaw 8 Xul, or May 6, AD 820. The next phrase with the PDI expression states that 240 days ‘had happened’ until the next event on 9.19.10.12.0, 1 Ajaw 8 Kumk’u, corresponding to January 1, AD 821, that of Sijyaj K’in Chahk II’s stone-raising rite. The placement of the *u[h]tiyy* and *i-u[h]ti* in immediate proximity infuses this historical narrative with a touch of poeticity through the use of polyptoton.

## Conclusion

Alfonso relished in the poetic expressions of the ancient and modern Maya. He often spoke in admiration of the “deep poetic tradition”



**Figure 11.** a) Machaquila Stela 4, b) close up of text of Machaquila Stela 4 (drawings by Ian Graham, courtesy of Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University).

that pervaded various cultures of ancient Mesoamerica. He was able to look beyond the intellectual puzzles of issues facing Mayanists such as vowel harmony and disharmony (a topic to which he was a great contributor), passive and antipassive constructions (where his insights were foundational), and the development of the Maya script (a theme he pioneered). All of them fascinated him and occupied his mighty intellect. Yet Alfonso was equally as keen on deciphering the literary features of ancient Maya writing, to know not just what the writing system entailed, but how it was manipulated in the hands of competent Maya scribes for aesthetic purposes.

Death for the ancient Maya was a solemn event, one which they expressed using a high number of poetic expressions: *hamliiy usakhu'n*, 'his/her white headband closed'; *k'a'yi book? sak ik'*, 'his/her fragrance, white wind, withered'; *och-bih* 'he/she entered the road'; *och-ha'*, 'he/she entered he mountain'; *och-ch'een*, 'he/she entered the cave'; and *och-witz*, 'he/she entered the mountain'. Alfonso's

passing was a great personal loss to everyone who knew him, but the memories of stimulating conversations, riveting presentations, and innovative scholarly works will always remain. The contributions of Alfonso Lacadena to field of poetic studies in Mesoamerica have been nothing short of monumental. He was a friend, colleague, and teacher, and I celebrate his memory.

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# **Los nombres sagrados del rey: El análisis semántico de los atributos de una deidad a través de la onomástica**

ROGELIO VALENCIA RIVERA

Investigador independiente

(rogelio.valencia.rivera@gmail.com)

**Resumen:** Los antiguos gobernantes mayas se nombraban empleando combinaciones nominales complejas, las cuales abarcaban elementos culturales obtenidos del mundo natural o sobrenatural. Estos complejos nominales eran de gran trascendencia para ellos, pues poseían un significado social, religioso o hasta mitológico. Solían incluir nombres de animales, fechas calendáricas, pero sobre todo nombres de deidades, los cuales hacían especial hincapié en la exaltación de sus atributos sobrenaturales. El grupo de deidades involucradas varía significativamente, yendo desde seres celestiales a númenes terrestres, pero estos nombres de dioses muy rara vez se adaptaban de la manera más directa. Las designaciones utilizadas por los gobernantes no empleaban el nombre propio básico de la deidad, sino alguna de las características o atributos de la deidad seleccionada. A través del análisis de los atributos plasmados en la onomástica de los gobernantes resulta posible caracterizar los dominios en los que operan dichas deidades, conocer sus poderes específicos, con qué otros dioses se asocian o se mezclan y qué fenómenos naturales están bajo su control. El principal objetivo del presente trabajo es presentar un análisis de la onomástica asociada a K'awiil, con el fin de obtener un mayor conocimiento acerca de su naturaleza divina.

**Abstract:** Ancient Maya rulers used complex personal names, composed of elements pertaining to the natural or supernatural world. The components of these names were important to the rulers as they were of social, religious, and mythical significance. These included animal names, calendar names, and, in an overwhelming number of cases, deity names, which specifically denoted their otherworldly attributes. These deity names are diverse, ranging from heavenly inhabitants to earthly numina. However, the names of deities were almost never used in their plain standard form. Instead, the names of kings included certain aspects of particular gods. Through the analysis of the attributes of gods used in onomastics, we might characterize the domains where a specific god operates, its powers, which other gods it was associated with, or what natural phenomena were under its control. The main goal of this article is to present the results of the analysis of the information related to names featuring the theonym K'awiil in order to achieve a better understanding of the divine nature of this numen.

**E**l presente artículo pretende ser un homenaje y un medio a través del cual expresar mi admiración y gratitud por una de las personas que más impacto han tenido en mi vida. El Dr. Alfonso Lacadena no sólo fue mi mentor y profesor en todo lo relativo al conocimiento de las culturas de Mesoamérica en general y de la cultura maya en particular, sino que además y sobre todo fue un gran



Figura 1. De izquierda a derecha: Rogelio Valencia Rivera, Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo y Gustavo Gutiérrez León (fotografía de Rogelio Valencia Rivera).

amigo. Su actitud siempre afable y cercana, sus deseos de ayudar a que sus estudiantes y compañeros acrecentaran sus conocimientos y explotaran sus capacidades y su curiosidad sin límites por conocer los misterios que rodean a las complejas culturas mesoamericanas serán una continua fuente de inspiración para sus colegas de hoy y los que vengan en el futuro. Su prematura partida deja un gran hueco en la ciencia y en nuestros corazones. Le dedico el presente trabajo al ser una de las partes de mi tesis de doctorado que más trabajamos en conjunto.

## Introducción

Uno de los principales recursos a nuestra disposición para intentar desentrañar aspectos específicos de la naturaleza de un dios se encuentra en los nombres que los gobernantes mayas empleaban para sí mismos y que hacían referencia a sus divinidades, así como en los propios nombres asignados a cada dios, ya que estos contaban con varios apelativos. Dichos nombres hacen hincapié en alguna característica específica del dios que se menciona en la frase nominal, lo cual nos permite indagar en diversos aspectos de

su naturaleza, ya sea física o divina (Houston y Stuart 1996: 295). Esto se debe a que varios de los nombres usados por los gobernantes hacen referencia a los atributos de las deidades (Grube 2002: 328) o a sus actos, lo que nos permite delimitar sus características y sus esferas de acción (Colas 2004: xviii). Stephen Houston y David Stuart (1996: 295) indican que los gobernantes mayas emplean apelativos que hacen mención a nombres de dioses o a diferentes aspectos de las deidades, con el fin de indicar o de connotar su propia naturaleza divina. Sin embargo, lo más interesante, desde mi punto de vista, es identificar aquellos elementos que los nombres usados para designar a las deidades buscaban resaltar de cada una de éstas, pues el análisis de los nombres de una deidad resulta ser un elemento importante en la determinación de su naturaleza, ya que los nombres son el medio empleado por el creyente para segmentar y señalar la especialización de lo sagrado (Belayche et al. 2005: 7). Los creyentes emplean el nombre específico de la deidad a la que desean invocar, o cuyos favores desean recibir, ya que no es lo mismo llamar a una que a otra. De hecho, esto ocurre aún en las religiones consideradas monoteístas, como la cristiana, ya que dentro de ella pululan una gran cantidad de santos, ángeles y demás seres a los que se acude en tiempos de necesidad, teniendo cada una de éstas a su vez varios nombres o advocaciones. Tal es el caso de las designaciones que recibe la madre de Jesús, como por ejemplo “Virgen del Pilar” o “Virgen de la soledad”, aunque designen al mismo personaje. Estos nombres son la clave para definir la identidad de cada uno de los seres que habitan el panteón maya y de ahí que resulten una herramienta fundamental para conocerlos.

Además, los dioses, en ciertas ocasiones y bajo ciertas circunstancias, aparecen mezclados, con sus límites de acción difuminados, dando lugar a la creación de seres complejos que intervienen en nuevos espacios mitológicos o rituales, pero sin perder las características que los hacen únicos entre sí. Esto también se manifiesta en la cultura egipcia a través de la onomástica, donde dentro de un nombre compuesto por los nombres de varias deidades, una de éstas actúa como receptora de las características del resto. Y esto mismo parece ser lo que ocurre en la onomástica maya, la cual se convierte en nuestra principal fuente de información acerca de la naturaleza de las mezclas de un dios con otros. En este principio de acumula-

ción, al nombrar deidades, la que aparece al final del nombre es la que se complementa con las características de las que se indican antes. Esto permite la “habitación” del primer dios por el segundo. Esta forma de unión entre ambos es más bien transitoria y se puede disolver en cualquier momento (Hornung 1982: 91). La fórmula de unión de ambas deidades no suele significar que una se funda o desaparezca en la otra. No establece tampoco que ambas deidades sean idénticas; simplemente indica que una de ellas está en la otra, pero sigue siendo ella misma, de forma que ambos dioses puedan manifestarse de forma independiente de nuevo o en otras combinaciones (Bonnet 1999: 189).

Siendo ya más específicos y dentro de la onomástica maya, los nombres de los gobernantes mayas siguen un formato convencionalizado en el que se emplean sustantivos dentro de frases nominales (Grube 2002: 326) que pueden ser nombres de dioses, de animales, nombres de cosas o también roles sociales, como es el caso del uso de la palabra *ajaw* (Colas 2004: xv). Nunca aparece un solo sustantivo formando un nombre, sino un mínimo de dos de estos se combinan o aparecen cualificados por adjetivos, ya que de otra forma, el nombre del gobernante le equipararía con la deidad y los gobernantes mayas, aunque se denominan a sí mismos como *k'uhul ajaw*, ‘sagrado gobernante’, nunca se llaman a sí mismos *k'uh*, ‘dios’, ni estando vivos, ni ya muertos. En otras palabras, en el caso del uso de nombres de animales y de nombres de dioses, siempre se emplea un aspecto de éstos, nunca se hace referencia al animal o al dios como un todo (Colas 2004: xiv), es decir, el gobernante nunca se llama como el propio dios, sino que sólo emplea para nombrarse a sí mismo un aspecto de éste.

En la formación de nombres se emplean formas adjetivales, las cuales se componen mediante frases verbales o mediante cláusulas posesivas, siendo regularmente el último sustantivo del nombre el poseedor de la frase nominal. Al tratarse de frases estáticas en tercera persona, utilizan los pronombres absolutivos, los cuales no se marcaban en el ch'olano clásico para la tercera persona singular, y en caso de que la estructura posesiva use un pronombre ergativo, éste a veces se omite (Grube 2002: 328). En ocasiones, los nombres de los gobernantes emplean frases verbales que utilizan el sustantivo principal de la frase, es decir el nombre del dios, como sujeto

(Grube 2002: 329). De acuerdo con Pierre Colas (2004: xvi), las frases verbales pueden ser pasivas, antipasivas de objeto incorporado y afectivas (ver Zender 2010). Así mismo, se puede dar el caso de que los nombres de dos o más deidades se empleen en la misma frase nominal. Las cláusulas nominales que combinan el nombre de un dios determinado con los de otros dioses indican que uno de ambos actúa como el sustantivo principal de la frase, aunando a sus propias características las de la otra deidad, como ya habíamos indicado que hacia la cultura egipcia también.

Como ejemplo de la forma en la que las características y atributos de una deidad pueden obtenerse a través de los nombres que bien los gobernantes empleaban y que incluían el nombre de dicha deidad, o que se utilizaban para denominar a ésta misma, a continuación se detallan todos los nombres que refieren al dios maya K'awiil. Así, se determina a qué ámbitos y demás elementos culturales esta deidad se encuentra asociada.

A continuación se presentan todos los nombres de K'awiil empleados durante los períodos Clásico, Posclásico y Colonial, con el fin de explicarlos e intentar de traducirlos. Para las traducciones se hace uso de los diccionarios de maya epigráfico del periodo Clásico incluidos en Lacadena et al. (2010) y Kettunen y Lacadena (2014). Para aquellos términos que no aparezcan en dichos diccionarios se indicarán los diccionarios en lenguas mayas a los que se acude para realizar la traducción.

## **Los nombres de K'awiil durante el periodo Clásico**

K'awiil fue una deidad cuyo nombre aparece escrito desde el periodo Clásico temprano y hasta el periodo Colonial. Los nombres relacionados con K'awiil o lo nombran directamente o son empleados por gobernantes y cortesanos como parte de sus propios nombres. A continuación, se presenta una lista de dichos apelativos, con sus posibles traducciones e interpretaciones, así como la realización epigráfica de algunos de ellos<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Debido a la imposibilidad de conseguir permisos de publicación para algunas de las inscripciones que nombran a K'awiil, en los casos en las que no ha sido posible localizar ejemplos de libre utilización, se ha incluido una referencia bibliográfica, con la localización exacta de los jeroglíficos que nombran a K'awiil, para que el lector pueda ver dichos ejemplos. Para designar vasijas se emplea el código empleado por Justin Kerr y se recomienda al lector visite el sitio de internet donde se pueden ver dichas vasijas: <http://www.mayavase.com>.



**Figura 2.** Nombres asociados a K'awiil en las inscripciones mayas: a) Ajan K'awiil, Panel de Lacanha: AJAN-na K'AWIL, Ajan K'awi[...]l (fotografías de Rogelio Valencia Rivera; ver también Coe y Benson 1966: 30), b) Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, Escalinata Jeroglífica 2, Sector Este, Dos Pilas: BAJ CHAN K'AWIL-la, Baj[laj] Chan K'awi[...]l (dibujo de Linda Schele), c) Bolon K'awiil, Estela 13, Copán, lado sur: A2. 9-K'AWIL-la, Bolon K'awi[...]l (dibujo de Linda Schele), d) GI K'awiil, Panel 19, Dos Pilas, IX-GI-K'AWIL, Ix[ik] GI K'awiil (fotografía de Rogelio Valencia Rivera), e) Jasaw Chan K'awiil, Estela 16, Tikal, ja-sa-wa CHAN-na K'AWIL-la, Jasaw Chan K'awi[...]l (dibujo de Linda Schele), f) Kokaj? K'awiil, Estela 25, Dos Pilas, Kokaj?-K'AWIL, Kokaj? K'awi[...]l (dibujo de Linda Schele), g) K'ahk' [...] Chan K'awiil, Texto Misceláneo 4, Ek' Balam, K'AK' [...] [CHAN]-na K'AWIL-la, K'a[h]k' [...] Chan K'awi[...]l (dibujo de Alfonso Lacadena 2003: 73), h) K'ahk' Joplaj Chan K'awiil, Estela N, Copán, K'AK' jo-po-la-ja CHAN-na K'AWIL, K'a[h]k' Joplaj Chan K'awi[...]l (dibujo de Linda Schele), i) Chak Sip [...] K'awiil [...], Dintel 30, Yaxchilán, CHAK-SIP T209 K'AWIL ?, Chak Sip [...] K'awi[...]l [...] (dibujo de Linda Schele), j) K'ahk' [U]t'i' [Juun] Witz' K'awiil, Estela 10, Copán, K'AK'-[u]-TI'-[HUN]-WITZ'-K'AWIL, K'ahk' Ut'i' Hu'n Witz' K'awi[...]l (dibujo de Linda Schele), k) K'ahk' Upakal K'awiil, Dintel del edificio Caracol, Chichen Itza, K'AK'-K'u-PAKAL-la K'AWIL-la, K'ahk' Upakal K'awi[...]l (dibujo de Alexander Voss), l) K'ahk' Yihpyaj Chan K'awiil, Base de la Estela N, Copán, K'AK'-yi-pi [ya-ja-CHAN-na] K'AWIL-la, K'a[h]k' Yi[h]pyaj Chan K'awi[...]l (dibujo de Linda Schele), m) K'awiil Chan K'inich, Estela D, Pusilhá, K'AWIL[CHAN]-na-K'IN-ni-chi, K'awi[...]l Chan K'inich (dibujo de Christian Prager), n) K'awiil Tok', Escalón 3, Escalinata Jeroglífica 1, El Palmar, K'AWIL-la TOK'-k'a, K'awi[...]l Tok' (dibujo de Octavio Esparza), o) K'awiil Yopaat, Altar L, Quiriguá, K'AWIL-la yo-YOPAT-ti, K'awi[...]l Yopaat (fotografía de Rogelio Valencia).



**Figura 2 (continuación).** p) Muyal Chan K'awiil, Vasija K5452, **MUYAL CHAN K'AWIL**, *Muyal Chan K'awi[il]* (fotografía de Justin Kerr), q) Siyaj Buk' K'awiil, vasija K8176, **SIH-ya bu-k'u K'AWIL**, *Siyal[j] Buk' K'awi[il]* (fotografía Justin Kerr), r) Siyaj Chan K'awiil, Tikal, Estela 26, **SIH-CHAN-K'AWIL**, *Siyal[j] Chan K'awi[il]* (dibujo de Linda Schele), s) Tzahkaj K'awiil, Vasija K1383, Río Azul, **TZAK-ja K'AWIL**, *Tzahkaj K'awi[il]* (fotografía de Justin Kerr), t) 'Uxlajuun K'awiil, Vasija K8007, 13-?- **K'AWIL**, *'Uxlajuun [...] K'awi[il]* (fotografía de Justin Kerr), u) Unen K'awiil, Panel del Templo XXI, Palenque, **K'AWIL-la**, *Unen K'awi[il]* (fotografía de Rogelio Valencia), v) Wak Chan K'awiil, Vasija K8763, **WAK-CHAN-na K'AWIL**, *Wak Chan K'awi[il]* (fotografía de Justin Kerr), w) Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil, Estela 4, Copán, 18-u-**BAH[K'AWIL]**, *Waxaklajuun Uba[a]h K'awi[il]* (dibujo de Linda Schele), x) Yab K'awiil, Panel de Bruselas, Sak Tz'i, **ya-ba-K'AWIL-la AJ-K'AN-na-TE'-la**, *Yab K'awi[il] Aj K'ante'l* (dibujo Alexander Safronov), y) Yax Uk'uk'um K'awiil, Panel de la Casa Colorada, Chichen Itza, **ya-YAX u-k'u-K'UK'UM k'a-wi-la**, *Yax Uk'uk'um K'awi[il]* (dibujo Alexander Voss), z) Yihk'in Chan K'awiil, Dintel 2 del Templo IV de Tikal, **y[i]K'[IN]-CHAN-K'AWIL-la**, *Yi[h]k'in Chan K'awi[il]* (dibujo de Linda Schele), a') Yuhlak Chan K'awiil, Vasija K3636 procedente de Hix Witz (dibujo de Erik Van Hausen), **yu-ku-la CHAN-na K'AWIL-la**, *Yu[h]kla[j] Chan K'awi[il]*, b') Yuhno'm K'awiil, Escalón 5, Escalinata Jerglífica, Grupo Guzmán de El Palmar (Tsukamoto y Esparza Olguín 2014: 42), **yu-ku-? K'AWIL K'UH-ka-KAN-AJAW-wa**, *Yuhk[no'm] K'awi[il] k'uh[ul] Kaan[u'l] Ajaw.*

**Ajan K'awiil, 'K'awiil con atributos del Dios del Maíz':** Este nombre aparece en el Dintel 3 del Templo I de Tikal y en un Panel procedente de Lacanhá (Figura 2a) presente en la colección de Dumbarton Oaks. Podemos encontrar la posible imagen de esta mezcla de ambas deidades en la vasija K3367. En ella aparece el Dios del Maíz con una pierna en forma de serpiente y una antorcha saliendo de su frente, características propias del dios K'awiil.

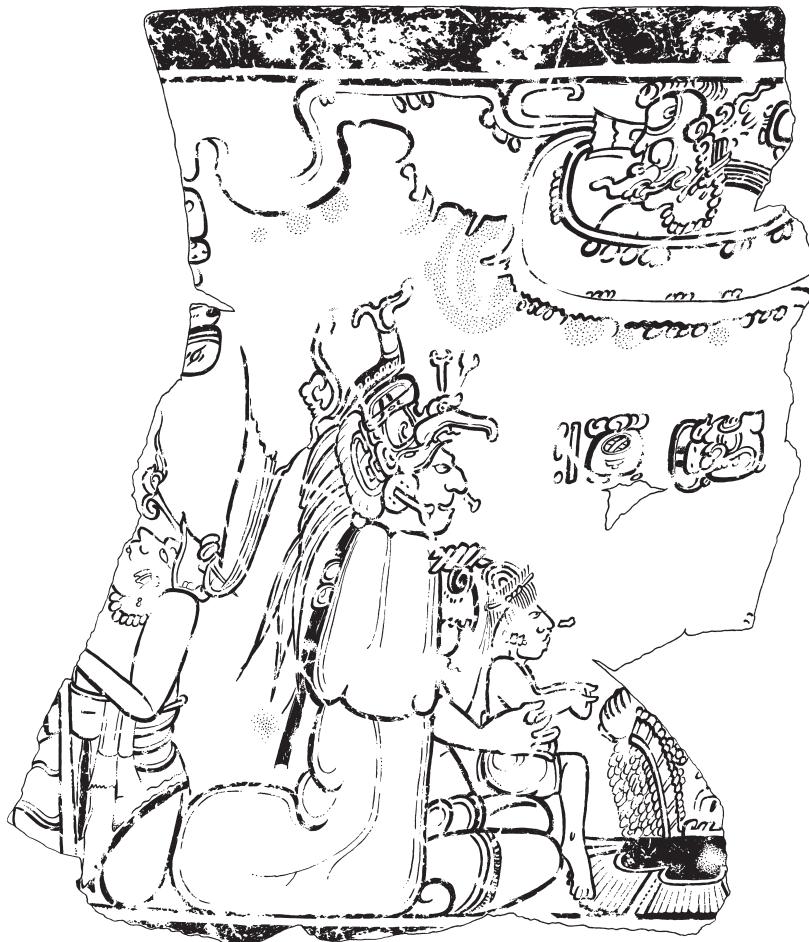
**Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, 'K'awiil martillea en el cielo':** Aparece en la Estela 5 de Aguateca; en la Estela 17, en el Panel 7 y en las escalinatas jeroglíficas 2 (Figura 2b) y 4 de Dos Pilas y en las estelas 18, 24 y 29 de Naranjo. Este nombre, que emplea el término *bajlaj*, 'martilllear' (Zender 2010: 9), hace referencia a K'awiil como el hacha de Chaahk que golpea el cielo para producir la lluvia, ya que de acuerdo con Wisdom (1961: 447) las hachas también son usadas para batir (remover) las nubes y traer la lluvia. La imagen que mejor ilustra este apelativo del dios K'awiil es la que aparece en la vasija K1285 (Taube 1992: 74), donde se muestra a K'awiil convertido en hacha en las manos del dios Chaahk.

**Bolon K'awiil, 'Nueve K'awiil':** Este nombre aparece en las estelas 7, 2, 13 (Figura 2c), D, I, J y P, en el Altar R y en los templos 10L-21 y 10L-22 de Copán; en las estelas 57 y 58 y en los bloques 504-2 y 504-4 de Calakmul; en la Estela del Caracol y el Fragmento 10 de Chichén Itzá y en el Escalón 1 de la Escalinata Jeroglífica 1 de El Palmar. Una de las características más intrigantes de los apelativos de K'awiil es su relación con los números, aunque no es la única deidad que utiliza numerales en su nombre, pues también existen casos como el de Juun Ajaw, Chante' Ajaw, Wak Chan Ajaw, etc. El número nueve usado en este apelativo (el cual resulta similar a otro nombre que emplea el número trece, 'Uxlajuun K'awiil, 'Trece K'awiil') puede operar como un adjetivo que denota alguna característica de K'awiil, como en el caso del título de K'awiil en el calendario de 819 días, Juun Ch'ok, siendo en este último caso una posible indicación de la temprana edad de la deidad (Valencia 2019). El número nueve también podría funcionar como el adjetivo con el valor de 'mucho, muchos' (Lacadena 1998: 64), como pudiera estar ocurriendo en la Estela D de Copán (Maudslay 1974: Plates 45–46, 48) donde se representa una imagen de la deidad Bolon K'awiil, compuesta por varias imágenes pequeñas de K'awill pululando por la estela y cuyo número

podría bien ser nueve. Esto nos puede indicar que en realidad K'awiil es una deidad con un carácter múltiple que se divide y actúa de formas diferentes, pero muy parecidas entre sí, como se muestra en dicha estela. Sin embargo, en muchos otros casos opera como un único ser, como ocurre en el Templo 10L-11 de Copán, indicando tal vez que actúa como uno y como muchos a la vez, de manera similar a como ocurre con las deidades de Egipto (Hornung 1982). Otros números que también se asocian con K'awiil, pero en este caso haciendo una clara indicación de que se trata de un cierto número de imágenes de la deidad, son el siete, como en el nombre de Huk Ubaah K'awiil, ‘Siete son las imágenes de K'awiil’, y el dieciocho, como en el nombre Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil, ‘Dieciocho son las imágenes de K'awiil’. Una posibilidad sería que hubiera específicamente siete o dieciocho diferentes imágenes de K'awiil en la tradición iconográfica maya, idea que yo descarto debido a que en realidad hay muchísimas variantes dentro de las representaciones de K'awiil que no se ajustan a ninguno de dichos números. La posibilidad que considero más probable es la de que estos otros números funcionen como el número nueve o el tres, como sinónimos de ‘mucho’ o ‘innumerables’ (Lacadena 1998: 64), y quizás también denoten algún tipo de carácter esotérico para el nombre (Craveri y Valencia 2009).

**Bolon Tzak K'ahk' Xook K'awiil, ‘K'awiil tiburón de fuego de las nueve/innumerables invocaciones’:** Aparece en el Escalón 3 de la Escalinata Jeroglífica 3 de Yaxchilán (Graham 1982: 169 C12-C13). Tenemos varios ejemplos de K'awiil con diente de tiburón, especialmente durante el Clásico Temprano (Valencia 2016: 64), los cuales pueden relacionarlo con los mitos de resurgimiento del Dios del Maíz (Quenon y Le Fort 1997; Sachse y Christenson 2005) en los que este animal juega un papel muy importante y de los cuales K'awiil también es una figura preeminente.

**GI K'awiil, ‘K'awiil con atributos del Dios GI’:** Aparece en la Estela 1 de Aguateca; en el Panel 19 (Figura 2d) y en la Banqueta Jeroglífica 1 de Dos Pilas y en las estelas 6 y 14 de Ceibal. Cabría la posibilidad de que en realidad sean dos deidades las que se mencionan en ambos textos en lugar de una, como se suele hacer con las deidades patronas de los sitios mayas, aunque en el caso del Panel 19 de Dos Pilas el nombre va precedido por el logograma *Ix*, que suele intro-



**Figura 3.** Vasija hallada en la Estructura XXI de Calakmul (Salinas y Valencia 2012) la cual muestra una imagen de K'awiil suspendido en el aire y rodeado de su propio fuego (dibujo de Christophe Helmke).

ducir nombres de mujer, por lo que claramente es una combinación de los nombres de ambas deidades.

**Jasaw Chan K'awiil, ‘K'awiil rebosa el cielo’:** Aparece en las estelas 5, 11, 16 (Figura 2e) y 30, en los dinteles 1 y 3 del Templo I, en el Dintel 3 del Templo IV y en un Hueso de la Tumba del Templo I de Tikal; en la Estela 18 de Naranjo; en el Panel 3 de Piedras Negras y en la Estela 12 de Uaxactún. Colas (2004: xvi) traduce *jasaw* como la forma antipasiva del verbo *jas*, ‘limpiar’. En los diccionarios se pueden encontrar las siguientes entradas para la palabra: *chuj, jas-* (raíz de



**Figura 4.** Esquinero de Bóveda en la Bodega del INAH en Campeche procedente de Dzibilnocac. Lectura: a-AL-ya 1-OK-CHAN-na K'AWIL K'UH u-tz'a-TZ'AM-ma PIK-TE' WAJ. Al[a]y Juun O[o]k Chan K'awiil[l] K'uh utz'am pik te'wa[a]j. 'Aquí está el dios K'awiil de un pie de serpiente, su trono son 8000 tamales' (fotografía de Rogelio Valencia).

verbo posicional) ‘estar erguido y estrecho, largo y delgado, salir como flecha’ (Hopkins 2012: 97), q’anjobal jas, ‘rápido’ (Sosa López 2003: 71), tzotzil jas, ‘llenar, rebosar, llenar hasta el borde’ (Laughlin 2007: 139), yucateco has mugal, ‘aclarar el tiempo quitándose las nubes’ (Barrera 1980: 181) y haatsal mugal, ‘aclararse el tiempo, descubrirse el sol cuando está el cielo nublado’ (Barrera 1980: 181). De todas las acepciones, la de tzotzil parece más plausible, ya que la yucateca parece derivar de *hatz* y no de *has*. Además, existe otro nombre muy parecido y con casi el mismo significado procedente de Copán, K’ahk’ Yihpyaj Chan K’awiil, ‘K’awiil es el fuego que llena el cielo’, así que la traducción de esta entrada parece ser ‘K’awiil rebosa el cielo’ (ver Figura 3).

**Juun Ook Chan K’awiil, ‘K’awiil de un pie de serpiente’:** Aparece en la Tapa de bóveda de Dzibilnocac en la bodega del INAH de Campeche (Mayer 2014: 100); en el Esquinero de Bóveda 1 de Dzibilnocac (Figura 4) y en el Dintel 1 de H’wasil (Pallán y Benavides 2012: 149), donde parece no presentar el número uno al principio de la frase nominal. En principio, *ook* parece nombrar no sólo al pie, sino también a la pierna, por ejemplo, en tzotzil *ok* significa ‘pie, pierna’ (Weathers y Weathers 1949: 21). No obstante, en ciertos

diccionarios, parece aludir sólo al pie: *tzotzil ta yolon yok*, ‘debajo de los pies’, *ta lajuneb kok*, ‘con los diez dedos de mis pies’ (Laughlin 2007: 227), *tzotzil colonial ok*, ‘pie, cabo’ (García de León 1971: 63). Este significado es más coherente con las imágenes de la deidad, donde lo que aparece transformado en serpiente es solamente el pie de K’awiil, no la pierna<sup>2</sup>. Este apelativo parece ser una clara alusión a la imagen canónica de K’awiil, en la que aparece siempre con un pie de serpiente (Valencia 2018). Como ya lo indicaron Stephen Houston y David Stuart (1989: 8), el pie de serpiente de K’awiil es en realidad uno de sus *wahyis*.

### **Kokaaj? K’awiil, ‘K’awiil con características de Kokaaj’:**

Aparece en la Escalinata Jeroglífica 1, Escalón 3 y en las estelas 8, 11, 14, 15 y 25 (Figura 2f) de Dos Pilas; en las estelas 7, 8, 10, 12, 14 y 35 de Naranjo y en la Estela 2 de Arroyo de Piedra. Una de las más importantes advocaciones de K’awiil es un ave (Valencia 2018). Dicha ave establece una relación trascendente con otra deidad del cosmos maya, Itzamnaaj, la cual perdurará hasta el Posclásico siendo reflejada en el nombre Itzamnaaj K’awiil. Una imagen de este aspecto aviario de la deidad es apreciable en la Tapa de Bóveda 6 de Dzibilnocac, donde se aprecia a K’awiil con pico y alas (Figura 5).

**K’ahk’ Chan K’awiil, ‘K’awiil celeste de fuego’:** Aparece en Texto Misceláneo 4 de Ek’ Balam (Figura 2g). Como ya hemos mencionado, algunas vasijas representan a K’awiil rodeado de su propio fuego, es muy probable que estas sean representaciones de K’awiil como el fuego en el cielo (ver Figura 3).

**K’ahk’ Joplaj Chan K’awiil, ‘El fuego es K’awiil brillando en el cielo’:** Aparece en la Base de la Estela N (Figura 2h) y en el Escalón 41 de la Escalinata Jeroglífica de Copán. Es otra advocación de K’awiil relacionada con el fuego (ver Figura 3). La expresión *joplaj* ha sido interpretada como un verbo afectivo, con el sentido de ‘brillar, iluminar’ (Martin y Grube 2000: 206; Zender 2010: 10).

<sup>2</sup> Aunque gramaticalmente en lenguas mayas la palabra *ook*, ‘pie’, debería aparecer siendo poseída, como *yook*, ‘su pie’ o empleando un sufijo absolutivo (-el, -is), cuando no es poseída (Zender 2004: 197), en los ejemplos citados donde aparece este nombre, *ook* no presenta ni una cosa ni la otra. No son estos los únicos casos en los que esto ocurre, también aparece así en el Altar Q de Copán y en el Monumento 8 de Tortuguero. Es probable que estos usos se deban a que la *y-* inicial en *yook* haya sido elidida como una abreviatura, lo cual ocurre también en otros nombres, como el de Bolon Yookte’ K’uh que regularmente se escribe **9-OK-TE’-K’UH**. Agradezco a Felix Kupprat la discusión respecto a estos ejemplos del nombre de K’awiil.



Figura 5. Tapa de Bóveda 6 de Dzibilnocac. Se muestra a K'awiil con pico, alas y plumas sentado sobre un trono formado por el jeroglífico de tamal (fotografía de Rogelio Valencia).

**K'ahk'/Color Sip T209 K'awiil, ‘K'awiil con características del ser representado por el logograma T209 y del Señor de los animales’:** Este nombre aparece precedido de la palabra *k'ahk'* en la Estela B de Copán y seguido del nombre de un color en las inscripciones del calendario de 819 días, las cuales son: el Panel Stendhal; la Estela 12 de Chak Tun; la Vasija Komkom de Baking Pot; el Panel Sur, Acceso Este del Templo 10L-11 y la Estela J de Copán; la Banqueta del Templo XIX, el Panel del Templo de la Cruz Foliada, la Jamba del Santuario del Templo de la Cruz, el Panel del Templo de la Cruz, el Panel del Templo del Sol, el Panel del Palacio, la Jamba norte del Templo XVIII, el Incensario con retrato de noble del Museo Amparo, el Vaso del Grupo III Murciélagos y el Tablero Este, Edificio 1, Grupo XVI de Palenque; el Elemento 41, Edificio 7 de Pomona; la Estela K de Quiriguá; la Estela Randel de Sak Tz'i; los dinteles 29 y 30 (Figura

2i) y las estelas 1 y 11 de Yaxchilán y un texto misceláneo de San Salvador. Como ya he dicho, este nombre está asociado a la deidad que aparece como personaje principal de las acciones llevadas a cabo durante las estaciones del Calendario de 819 días (Valencia 2019).

**K'ahk' Uti' Juun Witz' K'awiil, 'De fuego es la boca de K'awiil con características de Juun Witz'**: Aparece en la Estela U de Pusilha; en las estelas 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 12, 13, 19, E, I y J, en el Altar de la Estela I, en el Altar Oeste de la Estela 5, en el Altar K (Figura 2j), en la Escalinata Jeroglífica, Escalón 38 y en la inscripción del Templo 10L-26 de Copán y en el Altar L de Quiriguá. Según María Auxiliadora Zamora Moya (2008: 77) la lectura de Juun Witz' sería 'único Witz'. David Stuart (2007), quien descifró el logograma con el que se escribe el nombre de esta deidad, lo traduce como 'cascada'. Evidentemente, aquí se trata de una mezcla de ambas deidades en la que se hace hincapié sobre el hecho de que su boca es de fuego.

**K'ahk' Upakal K'awiil, 'Fuego [es] el escudo de K'awiil'**: Aparece en el Dintel del Templo de la Serie Inicial, en el Dintel del Caracol (Figura 2k), en el Dintel de la Casa Colorada, en los dinteles 2, 4, 5 y 7 de Las Monjas y en los dinteles 1 y 4 del Templo de los Cuatro Dinteles, todos ellos de Chichén Itzá, y en el Dintel 2 de Yulá. En ocasiones, este nombre se escribe como K'ahk' Upakal K'iñich K'awiil, así que la traducción quedaría como 'De fuego es el escudo del ardiente/colérico K'awiil'. Al presentarse en primer lugar o formando parte de la frase nominal inicial, el nombre *k'iñich* opera como adjetivo, con el significado de 'caliente, ardiente' (Colas 2003: 271; Wichmann 2004). Alejandro Sheseña (2012: 124) indica que *k'iñich* posiblemente se pueda traducir como 'colérico, enojado'. Este nombre de K'awiil posee un marcado carácter bélico y es de los poquísimos ejemplos que reflejan este mismo carácter en esta deidad, la cual regularmente es benévolas. Además, su presencia se restringe solamente al área de Chichén Itzá.

**K'ahk' Yihpyaj Chan K'awiil, 'El fuego es K'awiil que llena el cielo'**: Aparece en el texto del Templo 10L-26, en las estelas M y N (Figura 2l), en la base de la Estela N y en la Estructura 9N-146 de Copán. En yucateco *yip* significa 'llenar hasta que rebose y se derrame' (Swadesh et al. 1991: 93). Este apelativo de K'awiil se parece mucho al de Jasaw Chan K'awiil, ya que ambos denominan a un K'awiil que parece hacer rebosar el cielo, ya sea mediante él mismo,

o con uno de sus atributos, el fuego. Otra posibilidad es que *yip* sea cognada de *jib'*, que en *ch'ort'* significa 'relámpago' (Pérez Martínez et al. 1996: 86), por lo que la traducción quedaría como 'K'awiil es el fuego que relampaguea en el cielo' (Alfonso Lacadena, comunicación personal, 2015). En la banqueta del Templo 9M-146 de Copán, este nombre aparece sufijado por la palabra **MUT**, 'ave', lo cual refuerza el carácter aviario de K'awiil (ver Figura 5).

**K'awiil:** Este es el nombre regular de la deidad, descifrado por Stuart (1987: 15) gracias a que aparece sustituido completamente por elementos fonéticos en Chichén Itzá (ver Figura 2y).

**K'awiil T1036a/T1030a[T521]:** Mención aparte merece el nombre de una señora de Tikal llamada *Ixik [T521]-nal K'awiil*, que aparece en la Estela 5 (Jones y Satterthwaite 1982: fig. 8 D7-D8) y en el Dintel 3 del Templo IV de Tikal. El signo T521 muestra a un murciélagos con un signo de *winik*, 'hombre', en la boca. Este tipo de glifos, con el signo *winik* en la boca, denotan animales que se alimentan de humanos, como por ejemplo el signo *kooj*, 'puma'. El signo T1036a muestra a K'awiil con el T521 en la boca, así que la traducción del nombre sería 'Señora K'awiil del lugar de los vampiros'. Este mismo nombre lo utilizó un gobernante de Naranjo, que al parecer era hermano de Kookaj? K'awiil, el cual aparece en un plato encontrado en el sitio de Holmul (Martin y Grube 2000: 80).

**K'awiil Chaahk, 'Chaahk con características de K'awiil':** Aparece en el Dintel 26 de Yaxchilán (Graham y von Euw 1977: 52 Q1) como el nombre del escultor del mismo. En la vasija K2772 se muestra lo que posiblemente haya sido K'awiil Chaahk, pues vemos la imagen de Chaahk pero con el pie de serpiente característico de K'awiil.

**K'awiil Chan K'inich, 'K'inich es K'awiil en el cielo':** Aparece en las estelas 1 y 5 de Aguateca; en la Escalinata Jeroglífica 1, Escalón 6 de Cancún; en la Escalinata Jeroglífica 1 y en los paneles 3, 5, 6 y 9 de Ceibal; en las estelas P y D de Pusilhá (Figura 2m); en la Escalinata Jeroglífica 2, Escalón 3 de Tamarindito y en el Anillo de hueso de Cahal Pech. Como ya lo indicó Colas (2003: 271), al emplear el nombre de K'inich en última posición, la frase nominal está haciendo referencia al Dios del Sol. En este caso, K'inich es nombrado como el K'awiil en el cielo, con lo cual probablemente se hace referencia a una de sus características, quizás el fuego que relaciona a ambos.

**K'awiil Kaan, ‘Serpiente con características de K'awiil’:** Aparece en el Monumento 144 de Toniná (Graham et al. 2006: 75 pE-PF). El nombre presenta una versión arcaica del nombre usualmente asignado a la serpiente, que en lugar de ser *kaan*, sería *chan*. Posible sea una referencia a la transformación de K'awiil en serpiente, como la que se muestra en la página 31b del Códice de Madrid y en muchas vasijas en las que se realizan invocaciones al dios K'awiil (Valencia y García Barrios 2010).

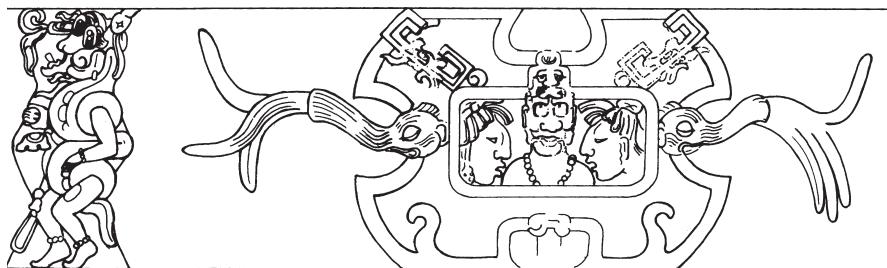
**K'awiil Mo’, ‘Guacamaya con características de K'awiil’:** Este nombre asociado a K'awiil aparece en la Estela 21 de Nim Li Punit y en el Monumento 27, en un Fragmento de estuco (Miller y Martin 2004: 185) y en el Panel K'awiil Mo’ de Toniná. Esta es seguramente otra de las advocaciones de K'awiil como ave (ver Figura 5).

**K'awiil Tok’, ‘Pedernal k'awiiloide’:** Aparece en el Escalón 3 de la Escalinata Jeroglífica 1 de El Palmar (Figura 2n) (Tsukamoto y Esparza Olguín 2014: 42). Otra variante de este nombre sería Tok’ K'awiil, ‘K'awiil de pedernal’. Es muy probable que este apelativo esté relacionado con los excéntricos de pedernal que aparecen con la forma de K'awiil y que además esté relacionado con el fuego. Así mismo, existen excéntricos de pedernal y obsidiana con representaciones del Dios del Maíz con atributos de K'awiil, lo cual refuerza la relación entre ambas deidades (Agurcia et al. 2016)

**K'awiil Yopaat, ‘Yopaat con características de K'awiil’:** Aparece en el Altar L de Quiriguá (Figura 2o). La relación de K'awiil con Yopaat seguiría apoyando la relación especial de K'awiil con las deidades de la lluvia.

**K’ihnich Joy K’awiil, ‘K’awiil envuelto ardiente/colérico’:** Aparece en los marcadores de Juego de Pelota 3 y 4, en el Altar 23 y en la Estela 11 de Caracol (Beetz y Satterthwaite 1981: fig. 12 A5). Este nombre de K'awiil se podría traducir como ‘K'awiil envuelto ardiente/colérico’, la complementación que presenta el nombre de K'awiil con la sílaba -li en los ejemplos procedentes de Caracol indica el inicio del acortamiento vocálico sufrido por el ch'olano clásico hacia el año 750 d.C.

**K’uk’ K’awiil, ‘K’awiil con características de quetzal’:** Aparece en la Banqueta de la Estructura 9N-82 de Copán (Baudez 1994: 233). Otra de las advocaciones de K'awiil como ave (ver Figura 5).



**Figura 6.** Panel del Patio Oeste del Palacio de Palenque. Imagen de K'awiil con cuerpo de Venus, acompañando al dios del Sol (dibujo Linda Schele).

**Lamanaah K'awiil, ‘K’awiil menguante’:** Aparece en la Escalinata Jeroglífica 4, Escalón 4 de Dos Pilas (Houston 1993: 109 G1-G2). En el análisis que hace Søren Wichmann de la gramática del verbo *lam*, lo traduce como ‘disminuir/hundirse’ (Wichmann 2004: 329). Si tomamos en cuenta el aspecto de estrella, *ek'*, que K'awiil tiene en algunos textos del Códice de Dresde y en el Panel del Patio Oeste del Palacio de Palenque (Figura 6), la traducción correcta sería ‘menguar’, que es el término aplicado a la Luna y a otros astros cuando comienzan a desaparecer del cielo. El verbo estaría sufijado por un incoativo, para convertirlo en un verbo de cambio de estado y posteriormente habría sido nominalizado para poder ser empleado como adjetivo.

**Muyal Chan K'awiil, ‘K’awiil [es] la nube en el cielo’:** Aparece en el Panel 2 de Piedras Negras (Figura 2p); en la Escultura Mísceleña 7 de Toniná y en la vasija K5452. Entradas léxicas para *muyal* se encuentran en yucateco *muyal*, ‘nubes’ (Swadesh et al. 1991: 66) e itzá *muyal*, ‘nube’ (Schumann 1971: 83). En este caso, K'awiil aparece relacionado con otro de los elementos generadores de la tormenta, las nubes.

**Ochk'in K'awiil, ‘K’awiil del oeste’:** Aparece en la Estela 31 de Tikal (Jones y Satterthwaite 1982: fig. 52 D21-D22) y en las Estelas 4 y 22 de Uaxactún. Es un título que porta Siyaj K'ahk', en posible asociación con la procedencia teotihuacana de su parafernalia iconográfica representada en la Estela 31 de Tikal. Este título podría indicar una posible procedencia teotihuacana del dios K'awiil, pero no se ha encontrado ninguna referencia a este dios en Teotihuacán. Además, después de la llegada de teotihuacanos al área maya, K'awiil es equiparado con ciertos aspectos de Tlaloc relacionados con la abundancia

de alimentos (Valencia 2017), por lo que no aparecería precedente alguno de K'awiil en Teotihuacán.

**Siyaj Buk' K'awiil, 'K'awiil nace del alimento':** Aparece en la vasija K8176 procedente de Motul de San José (Figura 2q). La palabra *buk'* aparece en *chol* como *buc'*, 'tragar', *buc'bal*, 'alimento para animales' (Aulie y Aulie 1978: 33), *chontal buk'a*, 'pozol para beber', *buk'sen*, 'alimentar' (Keller y Plácido Luciano 1997: 47), *ch'orti' b'uk'*, 'comer, alimento' (Pérez Martínez et al. 1996: 27). Muy posiblemente, este nombre tiene que ver con la relación entre K'awiil y la abundancia de alimento (Valencia 2016, 2018).

**Siyaj Chan K'awiil, 'K'awiil nace en el cielo':** Aparece en la Estela 5 de El Zapote; en la Estela 18 y la Escalinata Jeroglífica 1, Escalón 2, de Edzná; en la Estela 22 de Naranjo; en la Estela 1 de El Encanto; en las estelas 1, 13, 26 (Figura 2r), 31 y 40 y en las vasijas K4679 y K1670 de Tikal; en la Escalinata Jeroglífica 5, Escalón 33, de Yaxchilán y en las vasijas K4096 y CR-V32 de La Corona. K'awiil es eminentemente una deidad celeste, y su lugar de nacimiento es el cielo, tal y como lo indica este apelativo, aunque posea otros campos de acción, como veremos más adelante.

**Siyaj Witzil? Chan K'awiil, 'K'awiil nace en el cielo montañoso':** Aparece en el vaso K1453 y en otro de la Colección "La Ruta Maya" procedente de Motul de San José (Luin et al. 2015: 659). Para traducir este nombre, yo prefiero el uso de la expresión 'cielo montañoso', en lugar de 'K'awiil nació en la montaña del cielo', propuesto por Camilo Luin et al. (2015: 659), ya que el sufijo *-il* crea un adjetivo de la palabra a la que se sufija, en este caso, la montaña, indicando la palabra 'montañoso'. Probablemente, este nombre esté asociado con el mito de la Montaña del Sustento (Valencia 2018), la cual estaría situada en el cielo.

**Tzahkaj K'awiil, 'K'awiil es invocado':** Aparece en la vasija K1383 de Río Azul (Figura 2s). Los rituales de invocación estaban íntimamente asociados a K'awiil (Valencia y García Barrios 2010), y estos muestran, a su vez, la relación de K'awiil con los poderes de transformación del rayo, pues entre los popolucas se cree que el rayo es el patrón de los brujos, quienes se transforman en él para protegerlos contra el huracán que arrasa las siembras. Además, ahuyenta a los aires destructores, que también son brujos poderosos (Munch 1983: 373). Pero no sólo esto; el rayo transfiere su capacidad de meta-

morfosis al género humano (Munch 1983: 370). Wisdom (1961: 482) ya indicaba que entre los ch'orti'es, los brujos sienten al rayo en su pierna y lo emplean para diagnosticar y realizar sus actividades mágicas.

**Huk Ubaah K'awiil, 'Siete son las imágenes de K'awiil':** Aparece en el Disco Cuadrado de Toniná. Es otro nombre de K'awiil asociado a un número, el cual en este caso hace referencia a un número de imágenes de la deidad (ver la entrada "Bolon K'awiil").

**'Uxlajuun K'awiil, 'Trece K'awiil':** Aparece en la vasija K8007 (Figura 2t). Otra opción de traducción sería 'Innumerables K'awiil' (ver la entrada "Bolon K'awiil").

**Unen K'awiil, 'Bebé K'awiil':** Este importante nombre asociado a K'awiil aparece en la Estela 23 de Edzná; en la Estela 1 de Tikal; en los Pendientes 8A y 8B y en la Espina 2 de Comalcalco; en la Estela 1 de Motul de San José; en el Panel de Estuco del Templo XIX, en el Panel Sur de la Banqueta del Templo XIX, en el Panel Oeste del Templo XIX (Figura 2u), en el Templo XXI, en el Panel del Templo de la Cruz Foliada, en las Alfardas del Templo de la Cruz Foliada, en la Jamba Oeste del Santuario del Templo de la Cruz Foliada, en el Panel del Palacio, en la Escalinata Jeroglífica de la Casa C del Palacio, en los paneles este, central y oeste del Templo de las Inscripciones de Palenque. *Unen* significa 'bebé, infante' en tzotzil (Martin 2002). Esta es una de las advocaciones más importantes de este dios que está asociada a uno de los mitos más relevantes en los que participa K'awiil, el "Mito del Bebé Jaguar", el cual lo relaciona con la semilla del maíz (Valencia y García Capistrán 2013; García Capistrán y Valencia 2017).

**Wamaaw K'awiil. 'K'awiil galápago':** Aparece en la Estela I de Quiriguá y en una pieza en Colección Privada procedente de Calakmul (Tunesi 2007). Es probable que *wamaaw* sea equivalente a *waw* (Alfonso Lacadena, comunicación personal, 2016), 'galápago, tipo de tortuga' (Lacadena et al. 2010) y que esté asociado con las imágenes en las que se ve a K'awiil saliendo del caparazón de una tortuga en el mito del nacimiento del Dios del Maíz. En Ek' Balam fue hallada una columna inscrita denominada Sak Ahk Baal Tuun (Figura 7), 'columna de piedra del galápago' y en ella se puede apreciar a la tortuga de cuyos extremos salen el Dios N y K'awiil (Lacadena 2003).



**Figura 7.** Imagen de K'awiil saliendo de la tortuga, Ek' Balam, Columna 1 (dibujo de Alfonso Lacadena).

**Wak Chan K'awiil, 'K'awiil de seis cielo':** Aparece en la Estela 17 y en la vasija K8763 (Figura 2v) de Tikal. Los cielos numerados son parte de la cosmovisión maya y este apelativo parece indicarnos que K'awiil procede de este cielo en particular (Schaefer 2012; Nielsen y Sellner-Reunert 2015).

**Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil, 'Dieciocho son las imágenes de K'awiil':** Aparece en las estelas 4 (Figura 2w), A, B, D, F, H y J, en los templos 10L-11, 10L-12 y 10L-26, en la Escalinata Jeroglífica, en el Escalón aa y en el Marcador del Juego de Pelota AIIb de Copán; en la Escalinata Jeroglífica 1, escalones 1 y 5 de El Palmar; en la Estela 32 de Naranjo; en las estelas A, E, F y J, y en los zoomorfos P y G de Quiriguá. De nuevo tenemos una enumeración de imágenes de la deidad.

**Yab K'awiil, 'K'awiil de abundancia':** Aparece en el Panel Bruselas procedente de Sak Tz'i' (Figura 2x). En yucateco, *ya'b* es 'mucho, muchas veces, bastante, suficiente' y *ya'bal*, 'abundancia, muchedumbre' (Swadesh et al. 1991: 93), 'mucho' (Andrews Heath 1978: 283); en itzá *yab'o'o* es 'muchos' y *yan yab'* 'abundancia' (*yan*, 'tener') (Schumann 1971: 93). Este nombre se asocia a K'awiil de la abundancia, particularmente de alimento (Valencia 2011, 2016).

**Yax Uk'uk'um K'awiil, 'K'awiil de Verde plumaje':** Aparece en el Panel de la Casa Colorada (Figura 2y), en el Dintel del Templo de la Serie Inicial y en el Dintel 6 de Las Monjas en Chichén Itzá. La traducción se basa en la lectura de *k'uk'um* como 'plumas, plumaje' (Lacadena citado por Boot 2005: 352). Resulta interesante notar que el logograma usado para nombrar a K'awiil en Chichén Itzá se representa con plumas (Valencia 2016). Esta es otra de las advocaciones de K'awiil como ave (ver Figura 5).

**Yihk'in Chan K'awiil, 'K'awiil que oscurece el cielo':** Aparece en las estelas 5, 19 y 22, en los dinteles 2 y 3 del Templo IV (Figura 2z) y en el Altar de Columna 3 de Tikal. La lectura fue propuesta por Simon Martin y Nikolai Grube (2000: 42). Posiblemente se relaciona con la palabra *ik'an*, que en chol significa 'oscurecer' (Schumann 1973: 63) y que puede vincular a K'awiil con la tormenta que oscurece los cielos antes de dejar su lluvia.

**Yuhklaj Chan K'awiil, 'K'awiil que sacude en el cielo':** Aparece en la vasija K3636 procedente de Hix Witz (Figura 2a'). *Yuhk* significa 'mover, sacudir, hacer temblar' (Lacadena et al. 2010; Esparza

y Velásquez 2013). Este apelativo parece aludir a la fuerza con la que el rayo sacude al cielo y la tierra con su estruendo durante las tormentas.

**Yuhkno'm ... K'awiil, 'K'awiil ... el sacudidor':** Aparece en la vasija K2914 procedente de Río Azul y en la Escalinata Jeroglífica 1, Escalón 5 de El Palmar (Figura 2b'). Yuhk significa 'mover, sacudir, hacer temblar' (Lacadena et al. 2010; Esparza y Velásquez 2013), apelativo que puede tener que ver con el poder del rayo para hacer retumbar la tierra.

Existe otro conjunto de nombres que incluyen a K'awiil, pero que no se han incluido en el presente estudio debido a las dudas que la lectura de estos onomásticos conlleva. Tal es el caso de la Estela 10 de Ceibal, donde aparece un gobernante tardío de Tikal denominado "Joya K'awiil" (Martin y Grube 2000: 53). También se cuenta con los nombres Winik Timak K'awiil, que aparece en el Monumento 138 de Toniná; Huk Ookaj K'awiil, que aparece en el Monumento 8 de Tortuguero; T'otil Uk'awiil Chanal Chaahk, que aparece en la Banqueta de la Estructura 4 de Machaquilá y que mezcla a K'awiil con una advocación poco usual del dios de la lluvia, Chaahk; [...]n Ti' K'awiil, nombre que aparece en las estelas 8 y 16, en la Banqueta Jeroglífica 1 y en el Panel 19 de Dos Pilas; en las estelas 2 y 3 de Aguateca y en el Elemento 55 de La Corona, y que resulta importante en relación a K'awiil, pues es uno de los nombres alternativos del gobernante Yuhkno'm [...] K'awiil de Calakmul, así como Titomaj K'awiil, que aparece en las vasijas K2226, K8498, K1892, K1650, Robicsek y Hales 212c y 222f (Robicsek y Hales 1981), nombre de un señor de chatahn.

### **La onomástica de K'awiil durante el periodo Posclásico**

Con el fin de poder determinar si la onomástica de K'awiil utilizada durante el periodo Clásico se mantiene o, por el contrario, cambia, resulta necesario conocer cuáles son los nombres que se le asignan a esta deidad durante el periodo Posclásico. Con tal fin se analizan a continuación aquellos nombres de la deidad que aparecen en documentos escritos, tanto en la escritura maya jeroglífica, como en documentos que emplea la escritura alfabética latina.

K'awiil sigue siendo nombrado de diversas maneras, durante el Posclásico, en los códices mayas que aún sobreviven (Thompson 1988: 41; Love 1994: 9; Chuchiak 2004, 2006). La presencia de K'awiil es especialmente importante en el Códice de Dresde, en el que las apariciones de K'awiil tienen lugar en pasajes de especial importancia, como en el de las ceremonias de Año Nuevo o en las páginas relacionadas con el planeta Venus. En el Códice de Madrid la presencia de K'awiil es menor y no existen secciones sólo dedicadas a él, pero aun así aparecen varias menciones a su figura en este documento. En el Códice de París, su imagen aparece sobre todo relacionada con las ceremonias del cambio de k'atun (Love 1994). Los nombres de K'awiil que aparecen en los códices, son los siguientes:

**K'awiil Ajan, ‘K'awiil con las características del Dios del Maíz’:** Aparece en el Códice de Dresde, páginas 12a y 55c. El nombre ya fue usado durante el periodo Clásico en la variante Ajan K'awiil. La inversión del orden de los teónimos podría deberse a influencias yucatecanas.

**K'awiil, ‘El dios K'awiil’:** Códice de Madrid, página 21.

**K'awiil Kelem, ‘K'awiil joven’:** Aparece en el Códice de Dresde, página 7a. *Keleem* fue leído como ‘joven’ por Stephen Houston, David Stuart y John Roberston (1998).

**K'awiil Chak Ek’, ‘Venus en su aspecto de K'awiil’:** Aparece en el Códice de Dresde, páginas 28b y 28c. El nombre de Venus durante el periodo Posclásico es Chak Ek’. Este nombre avalaría la suposición realizada anteriormente en relación con el nombre Lamanaaj K'awiil al relacionarlo con Venus.

**K'uh K'awiil, ‘El Dios C con características de K'awiil’:** Aparece en el Códice de Madrid, páginas 50c y 94b. ‘Dios C con las características de K'awiil’. Al tratarse de documentos con ciertas características de lenguas yucatecanas, es probable que se invierta el orden de complementación de las cláusulas nominales escritas en ch'olano Clásico. La imagen que acompaña a este texto facilita la interpretación del último, ya que se muestra la figura antropomorfa del Dios C con la nariz de K'awiil y aunque al Dios C se le denomina como tal y no sea en realidad una deidad, aquí aparece como el sujeto que recibe a K'awiil. De esto resulta una de las mezclas más interesantes de deidades que aparecen en este códice.

**Muut K'awiil, ‘K’awiil en forma de ave’:** Aparece en el Códice de París, página 8b. En este caso, tanto el nombre del Dios del Maíz, como el de K'awiil, son precedidos por la imagen de una pequeña ave con un complemento fonético -ti, lo que nos aporta la lectura *muut*, ‘ave’. Parece ser otra de las advocaciones de ave de K'awiil.

En las fuentes alfabéticas creadas durante la época colonial, aún se pueden encontrar algunas referencias a K'awiil. Dichos apelativos son los siguientes:

**Ah Kauil, ‘El de K’awiil’:** Este nombre aparece en el Chilam Balam de Chumayel, en el de Kaua, en el de Tizimin y en el Códice Pérez y parece ser una contracción del nombre Ah K'awiil Ch'el o, en todo caso, el nombre de una persona procedente de un lugar llamado K'awiil.

**Ah Kauil Ch'el, ‘El de pájaro K’awiil’:** También se encuentra en el Chilam Balam de Chumayel, en el de Tizimin y en el Códice Pérez. La palabra *ch'el* significa ‘pájaro, urraca’ en yucateco (Swadesh et al. 1991: 46). Es el nombre de un famoso sacerdote de la ciudad de Mérida (Edmonson 1982: 276) evocando otra posible advocación de K'awiil como ave.

**Amayte Kauil, ‘El K’awiil de la esquina’:** Este apelativo aparece en el Chilam Balam de Kaua, en el de Tizimin y en el Códice Pérez y pertenecía a un *ajaw* de la Ciudad de Chab Le y a otro de la Ciudad de Mérida (Edmonson 1982: 21). En ninguna de sus menciones se le relaciona con una deidad. El término *amayte* parece estar relacionado con elementos que poseen cuatro esquinas: *amayte*, ‘cuadrado, cuadro’, *amayte' k'u*, ‘cuadrado deidad’ (Barrera 1980: 15). En otros diccionarios, *amay* sólo significa ‘esquina o cantero’ (Arzápalo 1995: 58); *amay*, ‘esquina’, *amay tun*, ‘era de huerta; piedra cuadrada en que colocaban los indios los veinte años del *ahau katun*’ (Swadesh et al. 1991: 34); *amay*, ‘ángulo, esquina’, *amay-amay*, ‘cosa angular’ (Andrews Heath 1978: 61). En relación a la palabra *te'*, ‘clasificador de años, meses, días, leguas; cuenta para cacaos, huevos y calabazas’ (Swadesh et al. 1991: 80), quizás podría haber operado con piedras también o funcionar como un partitivo en este caso. Según Knowlton (2004: 124–126), en su estudio acerca del término *ox amay tun* que aparece en el Chilam Balam de Chumayel, no se puede considerar que *amay* implícitamente contenga un numeral, por lo que la traduc-

ción más correcta para este nombre sería el ‘K’awiil de la esquina’. Algunos autores han considerado el nombre Amayte’ K’awiil como una prueba de que K’awiil posee un carácter cuatripartito (Stuart 1987: 17). Esto se vería soportado por la evidencia procedente del calendario de 819 días que sí apunta a la existencia de un carácter cuatripartito de K’awiil (Bernal 2009a, 2009b, 2015; Valencia 2019).

**Bolon Kauil, ‘Nueve K’awiil’:** Aparece solamente como un topónimo durante el Posclásico (de la Garza 1986: 158). El número nueve es un prefijo habitual de K’awiil durante el Clásico (Thompson 1970: 227) y existen referencias de su uso toponímico durante el Clásico en el norte de Yucatán, específicamente en la estela de El Caracol, en el sitio de Chichén Itzá, se menciona a *aj Bolon K’awiil*, ‘el de Bolon K’awiil’ (García Campillo 1995: 187).

**Bon Kauil, ‘K’awiil pintado, teñido’:** Este nombre aparece en el Chilam Balam de Chumayel (Edmonson 1986: 88) y su interpretación como pintado procede de analizar la palabra *bon* como ‘tintura, tinte, teñir con color, curtir cueros’ (Barrera 1980: 64), ‘teñir, la tinta con que se tiñe, pintar’ (Swadesh et al. 1991: 37). Una traducción interesante es la que aparece en *ch’orti*: *bonem*, ‘coloreado, manchado’ (Wisdom 1950: 569), ya que algunos de los ejemplos de K’awiil en vasijas aparecen con manchas parecidas a las del jaguar. Puede tener relación con la inscripción de la Estela 2 de Aguateca, la cual se repite en la Estela 16 de Dos Pilas, en la que se menciona la frase *ch’ahk[aj] utz’ibaal paat K’awiil*, ‘se hacheó el K’awiil de la espalda pintada’.

**Chan Kauil, ‘K’awiil del cielo’:** Mencionado en el Ritual de los Bacabes (Arzápalo 1987: 284). Nombre que aparece en el Clásico y ya se ha analizado. Nótese que la palabra *chan* es *ch’olana*, lo cual muestra todavía la influencia de la escritura maya en la época colonial.

**Kabul, ‘K’awiil’:** Mencionado en *La historia de Yucatán* de Lizana. Posiblemente, Lizana (1988: 75–76) haga referencia a K’awiil al hacer mención de la deidad *Kabul* (en ocasiones la llama *Kalul*) asociada a uno de los templos de la ciudad de Izamal. La referencia que realiza Lizana es problemática, ya que lo menciona como “Itzamna Kabul”. En este caso estoy totalmente de acuerdo con Barrera (1980: 272) quien indica que *Kabul* es una deformación de K’awiil. Una posible prueba de esto es el relieve de la pirámide *Kabul* mostrado en una fotografía realizada por Désiré Charnay cuando visitó Izamal (Figura



Figura 8. Pirámide de Kabul en Izamal (fotografía Desiré Charnay).

8), en la cual se puede ver a un personaje humano con una máscara del dios K'awiil.

**Uaxac Yol Kauil, ‘Ocho son los corazones de K’awiil’:** Nombre de una deidad, posiblemente relacionada con el Dios del Maíz (Roys 1965; Thompson 1970: 89; Velásquez 2005: 37). Aparece mencionada en el Ritual de los Bacabes (Arzápalo 1987: 284), en el Códice Pérez (Miram y Miram 1988) y en el Chilam Balam de Tizimin (Edmonson 1982: 108).

**Ytzamna Kauil, ‘K’awiil con características de Itzamnaaj’:** Aparece mencionado en la *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* (Landa 1985). Es mencionado por el autor en la descripción de las ceremonias del Año Nuevo, siendo ésta la deidad del Año Nuevo *k'an* (Landa 1985: 64). Una referencia interesante acerca de K’awiil proviene de Lizana (1988), ya que este autor traduce los nombres de Kauil y de Ytzamna Kauil como “dioses” en la referencia que realiza de las profecías de los Chilames (Lizana 1988: 119, 121), indicando una derivación tardía

del término y equiparándola con el término ‘dios’. Como ya he indicado con anterioridad, este nombre está estrechamente relacionado con la advocación aviaria de K’awiil, pues una de las formas en las que también aparece Itzamnaaj es un ave.

### **Los ámbitos de acción de K’awiil según su onomástica**

Como ya se había mencionado con anterioridad, el análisis de los nombres asignados a una deidad nos permite descubrir diversos aspectos acerca de ésta, pues denotan aquellas características que para el pensamiento religioso maya son importantes o están revestidas de cierto interés para el devoto de la deidad en cuestión. Cada nombre posee un interés en sí mismo, pues nos indica alguna característica en particular de K’awiil, pero al analizar lo que estos pueden tener en común, podemos identificar lo que denominaré ámbitos de acción (Valencia 2013: 228–229), o lo que Kremer denomina *Handlungsprofil* (Kremer 2013: 346). El ámbito de acción está definido como el conjunto de acciones e interacciones de un dios dentro de un contexto religioso determinado, las cuales lo caracterizan y le confieren un conjunto de poderes que lo diferencian de otras deidades desde el punto de vista del creyente. Este concepto permite comprender mejor los actos de las diversas divinidades mesoamericanas, pues las dota de una mayor flexibilidad y capacidad de acción. Es decir, si sólo comprendemos a una deidad como celeste cuando aparece en contextos ajenos al cielo, nuestra comprensión de la situación se puede ver empañada por la preconcepción que tenemos del dios en cuestión. De esto se deduce que para comprender cómo operan las diferentes deidades dentro del cosmos mesoamericano, lo importante es analizar los ámbitos o perfiles de acción en los que se desarrollan las acciones de las divinidades para tratar de caracterizarlas mejor.

En el caso de K’awiil, sus nombres se pueden agrupar en relación a ciertos aspectos que se repiten en las diversas instancias de los mismos y con esta distribución podemos crear un mapa semántico (Valencia 2015) que nos permita identificar los diversos ámbitos de acción de K’awiil sobre los que opera este dios (Figura 9).

De este mapa podemos diferenciar claramente los dos ámbitos de acción más importantes en los que K’awiil participa: su papel como el fuego celeste, es decir el rayo, y la relación de K’awiil con el

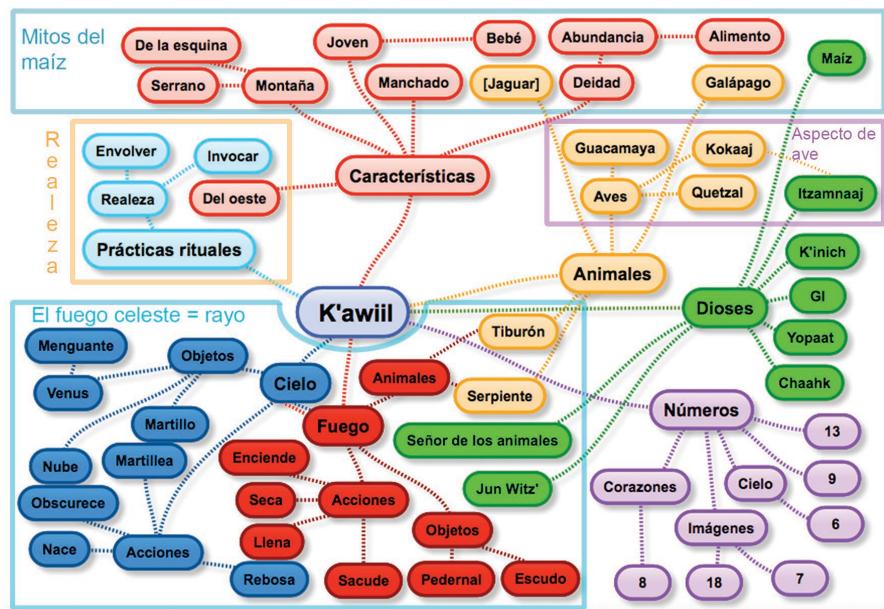


Figura 9. Mapa semántico de la onomástica de K'awiil.

alimento, especialmente el maíz. El primero de estos ámbitos, el que se conjuga en el fuego celeste, es quizás el más importante y definitorio de la deidad. K'awiil es definitivamente el fuego que habita en el cielo, él enciende ese fuego, llena el cielo con su presencia, lo hace rebosar con él. Y al producirse ese fuego, K'awiil martillea las nubes y hace sacudir el cielo, por lo que hace que llueva, siendo así mismo la nube que en ocasiones obscurece el cielo con su presencia. Su papel como fuego celeste y como hacha de Chaahk se conjugan en los apelativos relacionados con el pedernal, piedra que permite producir fuego y con la que se fabricaban herramientas, entre las cuales se pueden encontrar las hachas. Un nombre interesante de K'awiil es aquel en el que se menciona que su escudo es de fuego, pues estos dos elementos juntos, *tok'-pakal*, ‘pedernal-escudo’, forman un difrasismo de amplia utilización en la cultura maya para designar a la guerra o a los ejércitos (Hull 2012: 95–98). La presencia de estos dos elementos en los apelativos de K'awiil resulta de sumo interés, pues podría apuntar a un posible aspecto bélico de la deidad. De hecho, en alguno de los actos de invocación en los que se ve involucrado K'awiil en Yaxchilán, se le solicita haga aparecer el pedernal y el escudo de Aj K'ahk' O' Chaahk, una advocación del Dios de la

Lluvia. Quizás este es un simple aspecto colateral de K'awiil, dada su estrecha relación con el dios Chaahk, el cual sí que posee un claro aspecto bélico, especialmente tras la entrada de la influencia cultural teotihuacana en el área maya (García Barrios 2008: 96); pero que desde luego no le caracteriza.

El hecho de que dentro de la cultura maya K'awiil sea el fuego del cielo, es decir el rayo, nos permite comprender la función de este dios dentro de la concepción de la abundancia en relación a los fenómenos meteorológicos que la producen, los aspectos de transformación que posee el rayo entre las culturas de Mesoamérica y su relación con otras deidades coadyuvadoras en la consecución de las cosechas. Esto nos permite vincular a K'awiil con el otro ámbito de acción en el que opera, el cual es el de la generación de alimento, en particular del maíz. Es a través de mitos como el del Bebé Jaguar (Valencia y García Capistrán 2013; García Capistrán y Valencia 2017) donde podemos ver el papel que juegan dentro de este ámbito el propio K'awiil y algunas de sus advocaciones presentes en sus apelativos, tales como el infante, la montaña, a la que será arrojado este bebé, al galápagos del que posteriormente surgirá el Dios del Maíz y al propio dios Ajan renaciendo. Posteriormente, los elementos de la montaña, el ave, el alimento y su abundancia, así como la forma en cómo ésta es distribuida entre los hombres se detallan en el mito de la Montaña del Sustento (Valencia 2018).

Baste decir que K'awiil es el reflejo de la abundancia que la naturaleza produce en el pensamiento religioso maya, entre la que se encuentra el maíz, el cacao y los animales que sirven de alimento a los humanos y que tienen connotaciones que van más allá de la pura alimentación, pues dentro de este ámbito de acción está involucrada otra deidad maya muy importante, el Dios L, relacionada con el comercio (Taube 1992: 81; Miller y Martin 2004: 59–60; Valencia 2016). El mito de la Montaña del Sustento es un mito complejo que involucra a K'awiil como mecanismo a través del cual la semilla del maíz se manifiesta en el mundo. Dentro de este ámbito de acción destaca el K'awiil que posee características aviarias, ave relacionada con el origen, surgimiento y distribución del maíz y que relaciona a K'awiil muy íntimamente con el dios Itzamnaaj. Cómo hemos visto antes, esta relación entre ambos dioses llega hasta la época colonial, pues aún en fuentes alfabéticas hallamos sus nombres unidos.

Mención aparte merecen los apelativos que relacionan a K'awiil con Venus, la gran estrella. Aunque colocados dentro del ámbito relacionado con el cielo, poseen una trascendencia que podemos apreciar en las distintas fuentes mayas, tanto clásicas como posclásicas. En relación a los apelativos que mezclan las características de K'awiil con otros dioses, podemos apreciar que las mezclas son estables, es decir, el dios que actúa como receptor del otro dentro de una dupla de dioses, siempre es el mismo. Esta estabilidad nos habla de una cierta jerarquía dentro del conjunto de dioses mayas. Por último, como se ha podido apreciar, existen imágenes que relacionan los apelativos de K'awiil con alguna de las formas específicas del dios. Esto marca la presencia de un complejo religioso muy estable, en el cual K'awiil es venerado y su conjunto de imágenes es reconocible y se conserva a lo largo de los siglos durante los cuales se le rinde culto.

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# A Study of the Classic Maya *k'uh* Concept

CHRISTIAN M. PRAGER

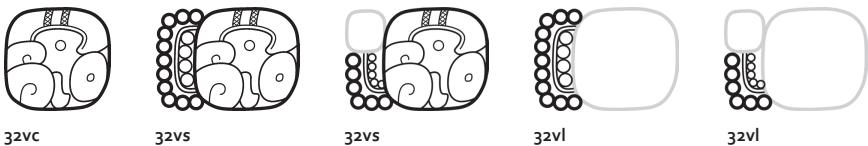
University of Bonn

(cprager@uni-bonn.de)

**Abstract:** This article concerns the concept of *k'uh* ‘gods’ in the religious conceptions and beliefs of the Classic Maya (AD 250–900). It explores the intracultural variation and stability of the concept, based on all textual attestations that were compiled, epigraphically evaluated, and interpreted in the context of religious history. At the forefront of this tempo-spatial research is the question of which cultural influences and dynamics promoted the stability of this deity concept or contributed to its variation, and how these phenomena were expressed in Classic Maya texts. To this end, the semantic domain of each attestation needed to be determined based on an analysis of distribution and equivalence class. Using so-called paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations, the linguistic usage of the term *k'uh* is tested to determine its lexical field and semantic domain, and thus to draw conclusions about the foundational concept with respect to its spatial and temporal dimensions.

**Resumen:** El artículo se refiere al concepto de *k'uh* ‘dioses’ en las creencias religiosas de los mayas clásicos (250–900 d.C.). Se explora la variación y la estabilidad intracultural del concepto basándose en todas las evidencias textuales que fueron compiladas, epigráficamente evaluadas e interpretadas en el contexto de la historia de las religiones. El enfoque de esta investigación temporal-espacial ha sido la cuestión sobre las influencias y dinámicas culturales que promovían la estabilidad de este concepto de deidad; cuáles contribuían a su variación y cómo se expresaban estos fenómenos en los textos mayas clásicos. Para ello era necesario determinar el campo semántico de cada registro basándose en el análisis de la distribución y la clase de equivalencia. Utilizando las llamadas relaciones paradigmáticas y sintagmáticas, se probó el uso lingüístico del término *k'uh* para determinar su campo léxico y su campo semántico, y así llegar a conclusiones sobre el concepto fundacional con respecto a sus dimensiones espaciales y temporales.

The Maya region does not in any way manifest itself as a culturally homogenous or sharply delineated cultural sphere; on the contrary, there is clear evidence of intracultural and regional diversity (cf. Pelto and Pelto 1975; Lomnitz-Adler 1991), i.e. diversification, styles, and characteristic traits in settlement patterns, architecture, ceramic production, painting, and iconography, as well as in personal names and cosmological beliefs (Leventhal 1990; Bishop 1994; Reents-Budet et al. 1994; Lamb 1995; Webster 1998; Colas 2004; Carrasco 2010). Local developments and varieties are also attested in hieroglyphic inscriptions and methods of calendrical calculation (Graña-Behrens 2002). In addition, influences from other cultural areas such as Central Mexico or Honduras are only evident in art and



**Figure 1.** Cluster types of the re-classified hieroglyph T32 or K'UH god, idol' in Maya hieroglyphic writing. The letter codes refer to the new classification system of graph variants introduced by the project Text Database and Dictionary of Classic Mayan (drawings by Christian M. Prager, excerpted from Maya Hieroglyphic Font, Text Database and Dictionary of Classic Mayan).

architecture from certain areas and time periods, rather than being a generalized cultural phenomenon (Braswell 2003). Pre-Hispanic Maya culture, which is fundamentally defined by congruent and temporally persistent cultural traits, is thus above all an analytical construct that reflects the sum of regional and temporally limited structures and processes of very different cultural characteristics in scientific and quotidian discourse.

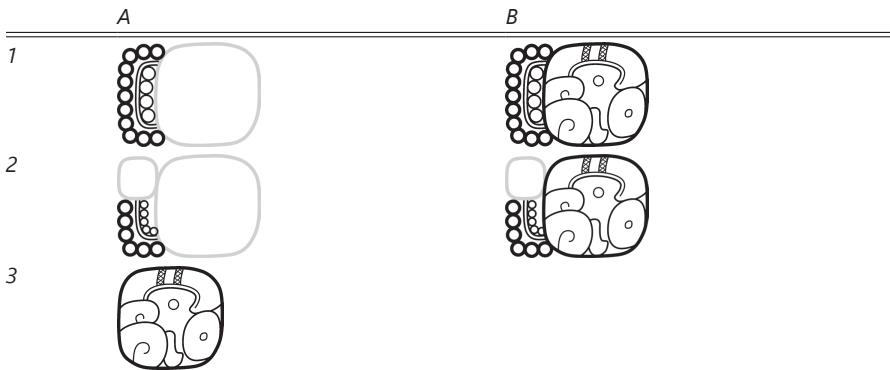
The basis of the present study is an epigraphic analysis of the entire corpus of Maya hieroglyphic texts with the goal of identifying, crystalizing, analyzing, and interpreting instances of the hieroglyph K'UH in its respective contexts of use (Figure 1). The goal is to establish conclusions regarding the cultural stability and diversity of the *k'uh*-‘god’ concept in Classic Maya religion. The Classic Maya term *k'uh* referring to the significant semantic field of ‘god, divinity, image, soul’ has first been identified by Thomas Barthel as *k'u* ‘god’ and was later independently deciphered by David Stuart, John Carlson and William Ringle (Barthel 1952: 94; Carlson 1988, 1989; Ringle 1988; Stuart 1988a). While the linguistic decipherment has been firmly established since, the discussion of the Classic Maya god concept(s) and its representation in text and image is ongoing (Taube 1992; Stuart and Houston 1996; Houston and Inomata 2009: 196–198; Baron 2013; Prager 2013: 21–30; Martin 2015). The complexity of this central term in Maya religion(s) becomes evident when referring to its use attested in sixteen (colonial and modern) Mayan languages (Yucatec, Lacandon, Itza, Ch'ol, Ch'orti', Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Motozintleco, Jacalteco, Akateco, Tuzanteco, Kanjobal, Tojolabal, Chuj, Awakateko and Q'eqchi'): in those languages the roots *k'uh*- and its cognate *ch'uh*- are attested in more than 30

different clusters comprising concepts like ‘heaven and heavenly objects, cedar, (Christian and indigenous) god(s), ghost, holy, cult, images of saints, images of supernaturals, temple, shrine, obligation towards religious objects, sanctification, white, bright, shiny, droplets’ and more (Prager 2013: 21–22, 667–711).

In this study I focus on Classic Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions (Prager 2013). Conclusions will be drawn regarding the function and meaning of objects and agents referenced in the inscriptions with the term *k'uh* to reconstruct the belief system(s) of the Classic Maya Lowlands. The principal analytical layout is divided into two sections, one graphemic and the other epigraphic–historical. The latter section focuses on co-text and context analyses of the sign variants or allographs of **K'UH** that were isolated from the textual corpus and that are attested as so-called abbreviated and full variants, respectively. These were iconographically identified, examined in the light of the history of the field, and epigraphically interpreted in their respective sections. Identification of these spelling variants for the lexeme *k'uh* constitutes the basis for further analyzing the contexts of use in which the meaning of this term is imbedded, with the goal of thereby determining its basic meanings in each context of use. However, in my study, occurrences of **K'UH** in emblem glyphs are not taken into account, because a semantic analysis of each of the 50 occurrences that have been documented to date (Mathews 1991; Grube 2005; Graña-Behrens 2006; Tokovinine 2008) is beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, due to the emblem glyph's socio-political significance, such analysis would have contributed little to our understanding of the function and meaning of the supernatural agents who are designated as *k'uh* in Classic Maya religion. Similarly, this study does not engage in the intensive analysis or discussion of the so-called “God C” *ajk'uhun* title (Lacadena García-Gallo 1996: 199; Stuart and Jackson 2001) or of the hieroglyph for **K'UH** as it appears in calendrical–astronomical passages, for example in the proper names of the 18-month lunar calendar (Grube 2018).

### **Graphematic study of K'UH hieroglyphs**

The basis of the graphemic analysis and epigraphic–historical interpretation consists of 1415 identified instances of the graphemes for **K'UH** and their respective co-texts and contexts. The 26 typologi-



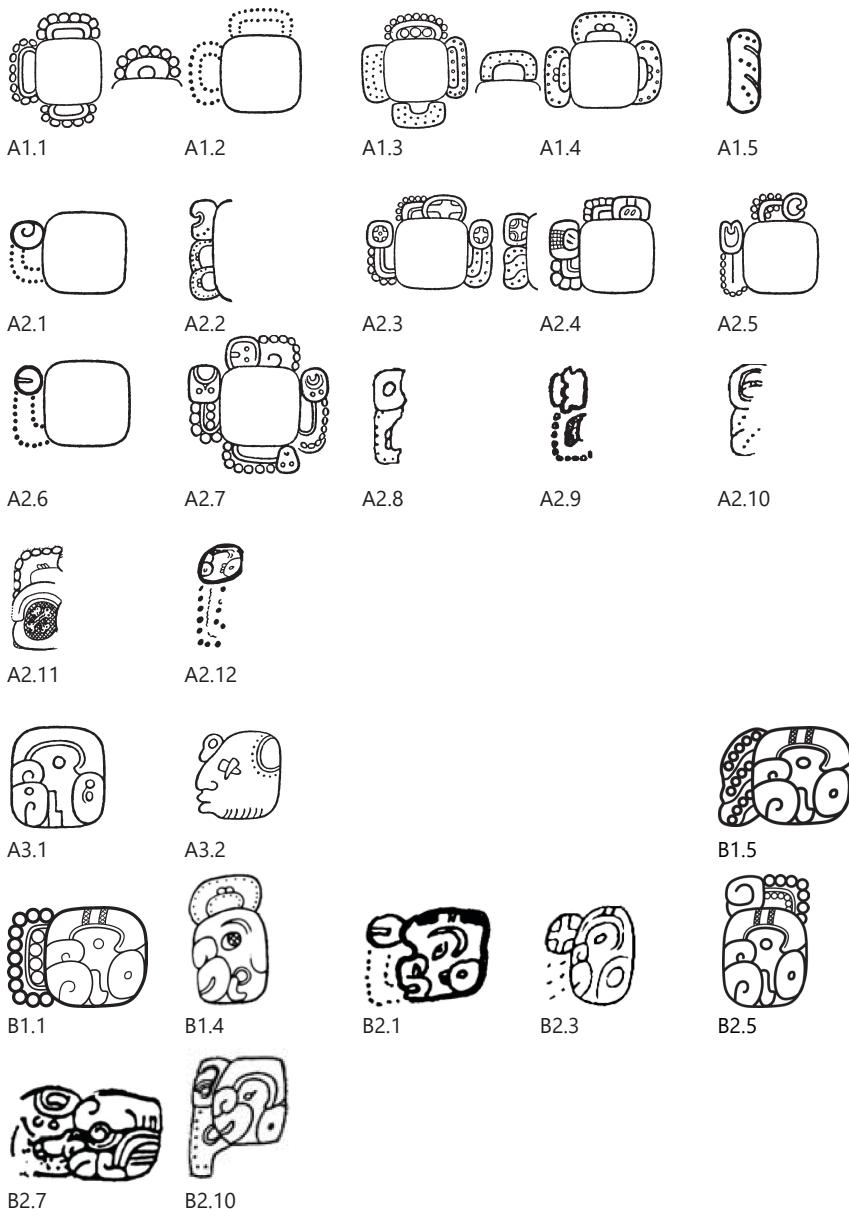
**Table 1.** Five basic variants of sign 32 that represent complete or *pars pro toto* spellings of the two standard forms T<sub>32+1016</sub> and T<sub>32</sub>.

cally identified spelling variants of the grapheme K'UH can generally be reduced to five basic iconic variants that represent complete or *pars pro toto* spellings of the two standard forms T<sub>33+1016</sub> and T<sub>33</sub> (Table 1 and Table 2). Instances of K'UH are summarized in Table 3 according to site and frequency. The two standard forms, with 587 attestations, constitute the most frequently used *k'uh* variants in the text corpus. Maya scribes were calligraphically versatile in fashioning sculptures and texts, for which they drew on graphemic principles by using abbreviated and full variants of a grapheme. They also introduced sub-variants within these categories that, in turn, may be distinguished from each other by subgraphemic elements. In this manner, the pearl necklace- and droplet-like standard form (A1), the standard form with variable subgraphemes (A2), as well as the affix-less portrait variant (A3) can be differentiated within the category “Abbreviated Variants” (A) of the logogram K'UH. In the case of the first variant of the full form (B) of K'UH, the portrait sign T<sub>1016</sub> of the standard form is pre- or superfixed (B1), and the second variant of the full version consists of the standard form with variable subgraphemes abutting against T<sub>1016</sub> (B2).

The earliest occurrence of the abbreviated version from category A1 that can be dated and sourced is found on Stela 31 from Tikal (9.0.10.0.0), whereas the latest datable example is written on Uxmal Capstone 1 (10.3.17.12.1). Examples in the three codices, which are only vaguely datable, are not taken into account here. With over a thousand attestations, the standard forms of category

A are statistically the most frequent variants of **K'UH**. Inspection of all occurrences reveals that the earliest example is that on the so-called Hauberg Stela. The latest context of use for *k'uh* was Diego de Landa's colonial-period report on the Yucatan region (Landa 1566), whereas the latest Postclassic monument with an example of *k'uh* is Capstone 2 from Santa Rosa Xtampak, which bears the date 10.6.0.0.0 (Graña-Behrens 2002). Distribution analysis of all occurrences of *k'uh* indicates that the quantitatively most frequent form of the grapheme **K'UH** are those variants that are defined in this study as standard forms and summarized in the sign category A1. An additional 318 instances of this variant are found in the three extant Postclassic Maya codices, which were still in use at the time of the Spanish Conquest. The icon of this group depicts flowing blood, which is commonly represented in two parallel, pearl-, droplet-, and dot-like strands and which, due to its minimal iconic embellishment, functions as the standard variant of **K'UH**. The iconically more complex variant occurs much less frequently and features a variable subgrapheme in the shape of a hieroglyph (a so-called iconic marker) that partially overlies the droplet-shaped icon of the standard variant. In Thompson's catalogue, this variant is registered as T14, T36–40, and T43, and it is included in the present study under the designations A2.1 to A2.12. Iconological analysis of this sign class demonstrates that the subgraphemic elements, such as bone, jade, gemstone, and floral icons, function as semantic markers for precious objects to emphasize the outstanding value of the kingly blood portrayed in this icon.

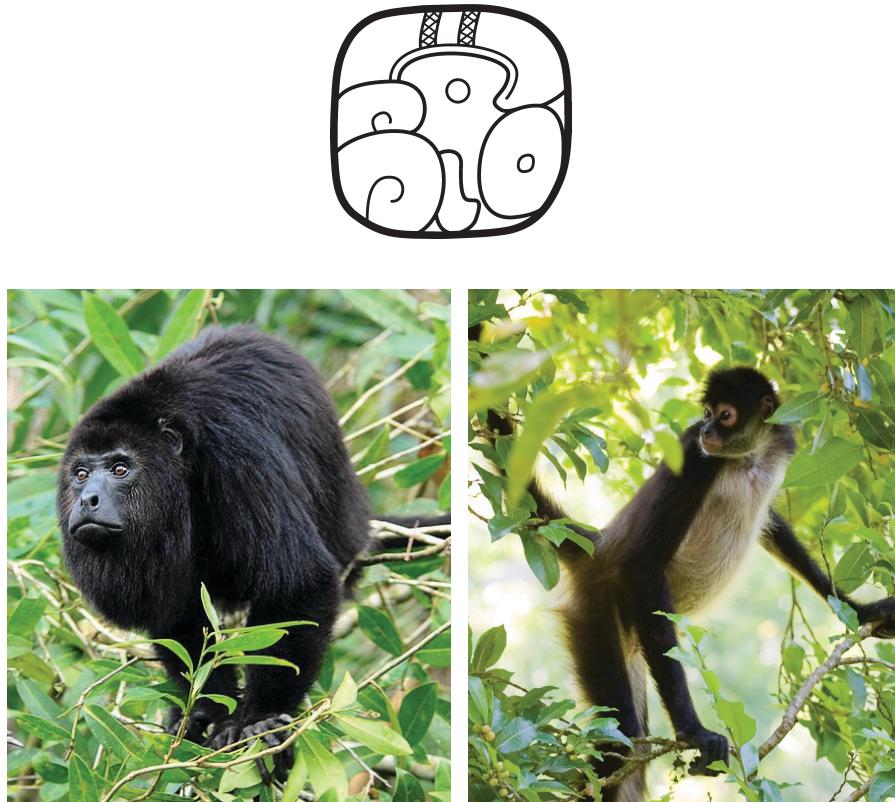
The geographic distribution indicates, for instance, that, unlike the standard variant, the variant A2.3, or T36, is attested at only 27 sites, whereby an increase in occurrences of this variant can be observed in Palenque, Yaxchilan, Tonina, and Naranjo between 9.11.1.12.8 (PAL: Subterráneo, Tableritos) and 10.0.0.0.0 (ANL: Pan. 1). Variant A2.4, or T37, appears less frequently than A2.3 and is first attested on 9.11.0.0.0 (PAL: Palace, North Façade). The last occurrence is found on Stela 2 from Machaquilá and dates to 9.19.0.0.0. Distribution analysis of variant A2.5 indicates that it first appears in 9.9.1.13.11 at Tonina and is last attested on Stela 10 from Seibal. With 64 instances, this variant is most frequently attested in texts from Palenque, and it also occurs repeatedly at Copan, Yaxchilan, Tikal,



**Table 2.** Two dozen main variants of the hieroglyph K'UH, excerpted from Thompson (1962) and Ringle and Smith-Stark (1990) (drawings by Christian Prager, Merle Greene Robertson, Linda Schele, Avis Tulloch, and Günter Zimmermann).

	A1	A2.5	A2.3	A2.1	B1.1	B2.1	A2.6	A2.7	B2.3	A3.1	A2.4	B2.7	A2.10	B2.5	A2.12	A3.2	B1.4	B1.5	A2.8	A2.11	A2.2	A2.9	B2.10	total	var		
PAL	19	64	21		1			9	12	7	3	1	5		4	2	3	2		1	1	155	16				
YAX	27	17	48		1				2		9													104	6		
CPN	19	21	9	16				1	8	3	2	9		4										92	10		
TIK	18	13	7	13				9		2															62	6	
NAR	9	12	21		4					1															48	6	
PNG	31	8	2	3					1	1															46	6	
DPL	10	10	9	6					1			1	3												40	7	
TNA	9	7	13							1	1														31	5	
QRG	5	8		8				1		2									1						25	6	
CRC	17		4	2									1												24	4	
SBL	4	10	3					1						1											19	5	
CHN	9			6						1															16	3	
NTN	3		2	10																					15	3	
BPK	1	4	5	2				1																	13	5	
AGT	4	4		2																					10	3	
PMT	2	8																								10	2
PUS	7		3																							10	2
CNC	7						2																			9	2
CLK	7	1																								8	2
MQL	2	1	2							1																8	5
ALS	5		1																							6	2
TZB	6																									6	1
CRN			4				1																			5	2
TRT	2	1		1																						7	4
EKB	1																		3							4	2
PRU	3		1																							4	2
ALR		3																								3	1
AML	3																									3	1
LXT		3																								3	1
NMP	2		1																							3	2
PSD		2							1																	3	2
XUL	3																									3	1
YUL	2								1																	3	3
ARP	1	1																								2	2
CAY	2																									2	1
CML	2			2																						4	2
HLK	2																									2	1
IXL	1						1																			2	2
IXZ	1								1																	2	2
MLP	1								1																	2	2
MRL		2																								2	1
RSB	1	1		1																						2	2
SCL		1							1																	2	2
UAX	2																									2	1
YXH	2																									2	1
ALC	1																									1	1
ALH	1																									1	1
ANL			1																							1	1
CHL	1																									1	1
CKL		1																								1	1
CHP									1																	1	1
FLD	1																									1	1
KEN	1																									1	1
LAC	1																									1	1
LMN	1																									1	1
MAR			1																							1	1
NKM	1																									1	1
OXP	1																									1	11
PBX	1																									1	1
PNH		1																								1	1
PST	1																									1	1
RAZ	1																									1	1
SNT			1																							1	1
STR			1													1										1	1
TAM																										1	1
TRS	1																									1	1
UCN	1																									1	1
UXM	1																									1	1
UXL																1									1	1	
XCL																	1								1	1	
ZAP	1			1																						2	2
COD	318	197	158	134	86	83	31	27	27	21	17	11	9	6	4	4	4	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	566	4	
	587	197	158	134	86	83	31	27	27	21	17	11	9	6	4	4	4	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1415		

**Table 3.** Distribution and frequency analysis of the allographs of K'UH. The last two columns indicate the total number of occurrences and number of intra-site variations.



**Figure 2.** Models for the hieroglyph K'UH? Images of *Alouatta pigra* (howler monkey) and *Ateles geoffroyi* (spider monkey) (photographs by Dave Johnson [left; CC-BY-2.0] and Harri Kettenen [right]).

and Naranjo. According to the results of a distribution analysis of sign category A2, the scribes at these sites were particularly adept at creating calligraphically varied texts.

The scribes were much less frequent in their use of the variant of K'UH that is listed in Thompson's catalogue under T40 (A2.7 in the present study), which is first attested in 9.9.10.0.0 (CPN: St. P) and was last used around 10.2.10.0.0, on Altar 1 from Ixlu. An increase in occurrences at the sites of Palenque and Tikal is apparent in the case of this form as well. The variants A2.8, A2.9, and A2.10 of the hieroglyph K'UH were used only during a brief period of a few years and mainly in Palenque, Dos Pilas, and Caracol, so that they can be characterized as short-lived local variants. Similarly, A2.11 and A2.12 are

variants that were only briefly employed in Machaquila, Ek' Balam, and Quirigua.

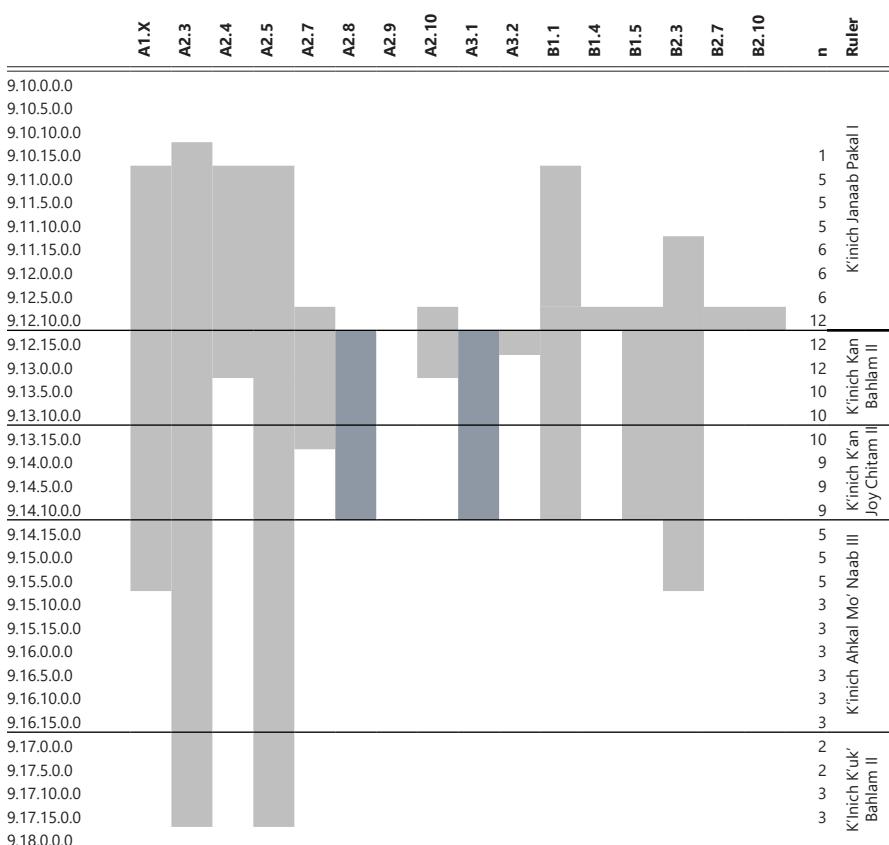
The affixless portrait variants of **K'UH**, i.e. the portrait sign T1016 (variant A3.1), features the icon of a counterintuitive or supernatural agent, because it combines human and primate-like characteristics (Figure 2). The anthropomorphic nature of the sign is manifested by the subgraphemic “striped band” marker above the brow ridge. The monkey-like physiognomy of the muzzle and nose emphasizes its primate aspect. Its supernatural quality is indicated not only by the synthesis of human and animal traits, but is also expressed by so-called “god markers”, like the form of the mirror sign T617 that appears on the forehead of the full-figure variant of T38.1016. The earliest occurrence of this variant of the grapheme **K'UH** is found on the ballcourt marker of Tikal, which dates to 8.17.1.4.12. The latest attestation is carved on Lintel 1 from Yula, which bears the date 10.2.4.8.4, and even later appearances may be found in the three Maya codices. During this period, at least 21 occurrences of the variant A3.1 are attested, of which most stem from a closed, and securely datable text corpus in Palenque.

### **Regional and local graphemic variation**

The significance of Palenque in the calligraphic tradition of the Maya Lowlands is also expressed in a variant of **K'UH** that was only used at Palenque, where it was part of the sign repertoire of local scribal schools for roughly one hundred years, from 9.12.18.5.19 until 9.17.13.0.7. It is registered in Thompson's catalogue as T1007 and, instead of the primate-like portrait, displays a male face with an eye in the form of an axe, which presumably underscores the bloody aspect of this instrument (listed here under the designation A3.2, Table 2). It represents a local spelling of this lexeme, but the frequent addition of the affix T36 unequivocally integrates this form into the series of known blood-related subgraphemes that scribes used to graphically represent *k'uh*.

The first representative of the full variant (B) is registered as B1.1 and comprises the combination of subgraphemic element T33 and T1016 that is listed in Thompson's catalogue under the designation T41 (see Table 2 and Table 3). Over 86 occurrences are attested in texts from 21 sites from the period between 9.0.10.0.0 (TIK: St. 31)

and 10.3.0.0.0 (SNT: Cst. 2). Appearances of this variant on undated Early Classic texts on minor objects from Costa Rica, Kendal, Río Azul, El Encanto, and Dzibanche suggest that its period of use can actually be extended farther back into the past. If this is indeed the case, the complex grapheme T33.1016 or B1.1 could constitute the oldest variant of the lexeme *k'uh* and thus could have been a model for later forms that could be reproduced either as abbreviated or full variants. Variant B1.4 is a later innovation that represents a combination of variant A1.4 with the full variant B1.1 and was first used in the inscriptions of Tortuguero, Palenque, and Naranjo between 9.11.15.0.0 (TRT: Mon. 6) and 9.14.0.0.0 (NAR: St. 23). Variant B1.5 was similarly in use only for a short period of time. Results of a distributional analysis reveal that the Palenque scribes who were inclined towards calligraphic variation introduced this variant between 9.12.18.5.9 and 9.14.11.2.7. The distinct variant B2.1 was identified as a Late Postclassic codex variant of B2.5 and is attested with a total of 83 occurrences in the three codices, whereby the Codex Madrid demonstrates the greatest number of examples (73) and thus occupies a considerable segment of the epigraphic discussion in this study. The Classic variant B2.5 is only attested on monuments from Copan and Seibal that date to between 9.8.0.0.0 (CPN: Alt. Y) and 9.17.10.11.0 (CPN: Str. 9N-82). The tendency in the Maya writing system to use full variants less frequently than so-called abbreviated forms due to scribal economy, which was quantitatively proven in this study, also manifests itself in the frequency analysis of the variants B2.5 and B2.7, which are attested with a total of 6 and 11 examples in the entire corpus, respectively. The corresponding abbreviated forms of these graphemes are listed as A2.5 and A2.7 and register 197 and 27 occurrences, respectively. The scribes of Palenque, Copan, and Piedras Negras prove to be innovative in creating new spelling forms in the case of variant B2.3 as well. B2.3 is composed of T36 combined with T1016 and is even attested in full-figure form at Copan. The latest occurrence is from La Milpa and dates to 9.17.0.0.0 (Stela 1). With 12 occurrences, it is one of the four most frequent **K'UH** variants in the texts of Palenque, the site with a leading 155 occurrences and a total of 16 spelling variants of the grapheme (Table 2). The calligraphic playfulness of the Palenque scribes is also illustrated in



**Table 4.** Temporal distribution analysis of the allographs of **K'UH** in the texts of Palenque. Horizontal dividing lines indicate the reigns of K'inich Janaab Pakal I, K'inich Kan Bahlam II, K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II, K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab III, and K'inich K'uk' Bahlam II.

their introduction of variant B2.10, which is exclusively attested in Palenque and in association with the date 9.12.11.12.10.

Internal distribution analysis of the documented occurrences of **K'UH** in Palenque (Table 4) indicates that this site not only had the greatest number of attestations, but also simultaneously demonstrated the widest variety of signs in the local scribal tradition, with 16 allographs that have been identified at present. At the end of the reign of *K'inich Janaab Pakal I* and at the beginning of the rule of his son, *K'inich Kan Bahlam II*, during the period between 9.12.10.0.0 and 9.13.0.0.0, Palenque scribes used twelve allographs of **K'UH**. The analysis indicates that the breadth of this variation decreased with the accession of *K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II* to the throne. A notable

decline in the variety of allographs in use appears with the accession of *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab III* to the throne, whose scribes used only between three and five allographs. The particularly revealing aspect of this observation is that both variants A2.8 and A3.1 were used only during the reign of *K'inich Kan Bahlam II* and his brother *K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II*. Variant A3.2 first appeared in 9.11.12.1.10 and thereafter was not used for a long period until 9.17.13.0.7, during the rule of *K'inich K'uk' Bahlam II*. Whereas the variants from group A1, A2.3, and A2.5 are attested during the period between 9.10.15.0.0 and 9.17.15.0.0, the period during which variants A2.7, A2.8, A3.1, B1.1, B1.5, and B2.3 were used concludes with the end of *K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II*'s reign. This correspondence is probably related to this ruler's capture in Tonina and his resultant loss of political influence (Stuart 2003). The political end of the ruler also spelled the end of a scribal tradition. During the regency of the new ruler *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab III*, variability was re-introduced into the script and only the standard variants of **K'UH** A1, A2.3, and A2.5 were used, as in the rest of the Maya area.

A second example that demonstrates a somewhat more complex relationship between rulership and scribal tradition is the variation in the use of a total of ten attested variants of the grapheme **K'UH** in Copan (Table 5). Distribution analysis indicates that the number of contemporary variants during the reigns of Rulers 12 and 13 was greatest, with up to seven allographs. Upon the accession of Ruler 12, or *K'ahk' Utí' Witz' K'awiil*, the number of variants of the grapheme **K'UH** in simultaneous use was increased from three to seven. The date 9.11.0.0.0, which is associated with the introduction of new signs and variants, constitutes a notable turning point in scribal practice as the Maya script developed from a strongly logographic to a mixed, logo-syllabic system (Grube 1994: 11). At the same time, on the micro level, this date represents an important break in the biography of Ruler 12. After 24 years in office, the ruler had a series of stelae erected according to a cosmological plan in the center and periphery of Copan in the context of the period-ending 9.11.0.0.0, making his authority and power explicit with this stone cosmogram (Martin and Grube 2008: 201). At this point, Copan's Ruler 12 was an influential agent in the southern Lowlands whose political authority was not just restricted to Copan; inscriptions from Quirigua and

	A1	A2.5	A2.3	B1.1	A2.7	B2.3	A3.1	A2.4	B2.7	B2.5	n	Ruler
9.6.0.0.0											2	10
9.6.5.0.0											2	
9.6.10.0.0											2	
9.6.15.0.0											3	
9.7.0.0.0											3	
9.7.5.0.0											2	
9.7.10.0.0											2	
9.7.15.0.0											2	
9.8.0.0.0											3	
9.8.5.0.0											3	
9.8.10.0.0											3	
9.8.15.0.0											3	
9.9.0.0.0											3	
9.9.5.0.0											3	
9.9.10.0.0											3	
9.9.15.0.0											5	
9.10.0.0.0											4	
9.10.5.0.0											4	
9.10.10.0.0											4	
9.10.15.0.0											5	
9.11.0.0.0											7	
9.11.5.0.0											6	
9.11.10.0.0											6	
9.11.15.0.0											6	
9.12.0.0.0											6	
9.12.5.0.0											6	
9.12.10.0.0											6	
9.12.15.0.0											6	
9.13.0.0.0											6	
9.13.5.0.0											6	
9.13.10.0.0											6	
9.13.15.0.0											6	
9.14.0.0.0											6	
9.14.5.0.0											6	13
9.14.10.0.0											6	
9.14.15.0.0											6	
9.15.0.0.0											6	
9.15.5.0.0											6	
9.15.10.0.0											6	14
9.15.15.0.0											6	
9.16.0.0.0											5	
9.16.5.0.0											5	
9.16.10.0.0											5	
9.16.15.0.0											5	
9.17.0.0.0											5	
9.17.5.0.0											4	
9.17.10.0.0											4	
9.17.15.0.0											3	
9.18.0.0.0											3	
9.18.5.0.0											3	16
9.18.10.0.0											3	
9.18.15.0.0											2	
9.19.0.0.0											2	
9.19.5.0.0											2	
9.19.10.0.0											2	
9.19.15.0.0											1	

**Table 5.** Distribution analysis of the allographs of **K'UH** in the texts of Copan. Horizontal dividing lines indicate the reigns of Rulers 10 through 16 (Martin and Grube 2008: 191–213). The absolute number of contemporary variants of **K'UH** is given in the adjacent column.

Pusilha indicate that it also extended into the south-eastern area of the Maya Lowlands. This ruler's accession and comprehensive stelae program resulted in the number of **K'UH** allographs spiking from four to seven variants. Upon his succession, variant A3.1 was first introduced into Copan as a variant of **K'UH**. Furthermore, the variants A2.5, B23, and A2.4 were added to the sign inventory as a consequence of the 9.11.0.0.0 stelae program. This trend correlates with the expansion of the Maya hieroglyphic sign inventory with numerous new signs and variants, a phenomenon that Nikolai Grube (1990a) previously identified for this period. Distribution analysis indicates that the successors of Ruler 12 took up this inventory and incorporated it into their own textual production. Whereas six variants were still in use during the reigns of Rulers 13 and 14, the number declined under Rulers 15 and 16, whereby the latter only used a maximum of four **K'UH** allographs, although he left behind an extensive stock of texts.

Comparison of the distribution analyses of the **K'UH** grapheme in Palenque and Copan clearly demonstrates that, in the case of Palenque, dynastic change could serve as an innovative impetus for sign development. In contrast, continuity or stability characterize cultural transmission in Copan, where, at least in the case of **K'UH**, particular variants were used over multiple generations. The introduction of new allographs is not only linked to change of leader in the divine kingship. This phenomenon furthermore occurred in the context of important events, such as the ritual celebration of period-endings, which were accompanied in Copan with a program of construction and stelae erection. The vertical transmission of cultural representations functioned as a stabilizing mechanism, at least in the case of Copan, whereby this study established that new rulers integrated the patron gods (*koknoom*) of politically successful rulers into their own personal pantheon. This pattern of transmissions that is specific to Copan also manifests itself in the case of the grapheme **K'UH**, whereby the innovation or abandonment of sign variants did not necessarily accompany a change in the head of the ruling house.

## Iconography of K'UH signs

This graphemic discussion concludes by summarizing the results of the iconographic investigation of K'UH. Analysis of its allographs, which number more than 20, suggests that the icon in question represents flowing blood in the form of droplets ordered like a string of pearls (abbreviated form A). In the full variant, this blood icon was pre- or superfixed to the icon of a primate with human features (sign T1016) (sign category B), or it could also be combined with other head variants (T1007). The combination of human and primate features illustrated in sign T1016 has been characterized in cognitive science-oriented religious studies as a manifestation of so-called counterintuitive beliefs that constitute the cognitive basis for mental representations of supernatural agents (Boyer and Ramble 2001). From this perspective, it seems plausible to interpret the primate-like sign T1016 as the representation of such a supernatural agent. Over the course of the 9.11.0.0.0 expansion of the sign inventory observed by Grube, the simplest forms of the grapheme K'UH (sign variant A1, etc.) and its full variant T33.1016 (B1) were supplemented with subgraphemic, non-linguistic elements that marked the preciousness of blood as a vital substance through their meta-representative meaning. These subgraphemic elements are iconic representations of jade beads, bones, shells, obsidian, flowers, blossoms, and other floral objects. As luxury and prestige goods, all of these objects were part of the basic accoutrements of an elite grave and given to the deceased king for his journey into the underworld. Additional objects in this class included jewelry from various materials, utensils for ritual bloodletting, hematite, minerals for producing pigments, books, enema equipment, animals, incised bones, musical instruments, copal, tools and utilitarian objects, obsidian in various forms, and ceramic vessels with foodstuffs (Coe 1988; Fitzsimmons 2009: 83ff.). Many of these objects and materials were incorporated into iconography or served as the iconic model for a series of hieroglyphic signs. In iconography, these objects represented vital powers that were contained not only in the environment, but also in the blood of the king (cf. Stuart 1988b). Through ritual bloodletting, the king dispensed and spread this vitality, thus guaranteeing the fertility and continuity of the cosmos. The semantic meaning of *k'uh* should be classified in this thematic

context, and the plausibility of its linguistic interpretation should be oriented accordingly. Lexical entries in dictionaries of colonial-period and modern lowland languages suggest that the blood droplet-related iconography of the grapheme K'UH is maybe also linguistically represented. In Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Ch'orti' and Chontal, for example, one of the many meanings of the root *ch'ul-* is 'drip' or 'drops' [CHN: *ch'ul*, *ch'ulel* (Knowles-Berry 1984); CHR: *ch'ur* (Wisdom 1950), probably related to Common Mayan \**t'ur*, and proto-Ch'olan \**t'uj* for 'drip' (Kaufman 2003: 538–539)]; 'bloodstream' or 'bleed' [TZO: <*ghul* / *ghulogel*> (Charencey 1885); TZE *ch'ul* (Berlin 1968)].

## A cognitive theory of supernaturals

The theoretical foundation of this work relies on cognitive approaches in the study of culture and religion (Prager 2010). Accordingly, the term culture refers to mental representations of relative similarity, which are attention-grabbing, easily memorable and, consequently, readily transmitted between the members of a community. According to this view (cultural) representations present an *origo*, or spatial and temporal coordinates, by means of which one can investigate the spatio-temporal positioning of representations, as well as processes and relationships, such as intracultural diversification, distribution, change, or stability (Sperber and Hirschfeld 2004). According to this understanding of culture, cultural representations are never copies; instead, they are interpretations, i.e. a chain of actions and results of understanding other public representations. As part of this cognitive process, variants of cultural representations arise that persist over the short, intermediate, or long periods in the network of public and mental representations. Cultural representations, including terms, ideas, and concepts, are incorporated into different realms of use within this network and are continuously re-interpreted in the cognitive, causal chain (Sperber 1993). This cognitive-scientific cultural understanding influences the traditional approach to reconstructing historical societies, especially the frequent question of change and continuity. Determining continuity and change in cultural traits and the transferability of representations of a particular *origo* to other time periods and spaces constitutes a foundational method in researching pre-Hispanic Meso-

american societies. Countless studies of cultural representations in Maya religion build upon the assumption that religious traits and their meanings and contents were passed down unchanged from the Classic to the Postclassic and into the colonial period, including the so-called major gods of the Postclassic, which were integrated into local religious systems in the lowlands as early as the Classic Period (Taube 1992). Other studies argue that the Maya realm is culturally homogenous and that the degree of cultural change over its 3000-year history was insubstantial and fluid, if anything (Freidel et al. 1993).

The strategy of articulating heterogeneous information and insights from spatio-temporally distinct sources has to be rejected in the context of the cognitive scientific approach towards defining culture and cultural sources. The relationship of the consulted sources to each other is often unclear and existing sources themselves are fragmentary and neither contemporary nor homogeneous nor balanced. Investigating the religious belief system of Maya society, which was strongly influenced by local traditions, always requires gleaning local insights from detailed case studies, on the basis of which one can determine the relative degree of intracultural differences and commonalities, as well as of continuity and change (Riese 2004). In spite of shared characteristics, such as the writing system, the calendar, or divine kingship, the region in which the Classic Maya reached their height between AD 250 and 900 was in no way a culturally homogeneous or clearly delineated cultural area. As such, the present study is construed as a detailed study that builds on these premises. On the basis of hieroglyphic texts and imagery, this study examines thematized beliefs concerning supernatural agents, with particular attention to the concept of *k'uh*, since this concept is the most frequent in the texts. In the analysis, attention was paid to spatial and temporal distribution in order to reconstruct forms, structures, processes, and contexts of the religious system of thought and beliefs.

Experts in religious studies generally agree that religious representations are characterized by reference to agents who are not physically present (Jensen 1993; Fitzgerald 1997). Humans demonstrate the tendency to imagine non-physical agents and/or to search for signs of their existence, ascribe meaning to them, and socially

interact with them (Barrett 2000; Boyer 2003). Religious beliefs arise from the idea of the supernatural and are a byproduct of cognitive mechanisms—basically, they manifest a biogenetic inclination to interact with agents who are not present (Penner 1975). According to this perspective, religious ideas are beliefs in culturally-positing supernatural figures who acquire meaning through their everyday use (Whitehouse and Laidlaw 2007: 8). Continually recurring patterns in the diversity of religious beliefs in agents who are not physically present are explained from a cognitive scientific perspective on religion as the result of the human imagination being limited and produced from a small number of models from different ontological categories: animal, person, artifact, natural object, and plant (Barrett 2000). Each human acquires a prototypical image of these individual categories and accumulates knowledge of them over the course of his or her life. These cognitive models help to recognize, categorize, assess, and thus ascribe meaning to entities in the environment. This intuitive accumulation of experiences guides practical dealings with entities in the environment and thus serves not least as the motor of religious behavior. From this point of view, religious ideas thus differ from other ideas in that they contain information which is counterintuitively related to the activated category (e.g. a talking cross, an invisible agent, or an omniscient person) (Boyer 1994). Imagining agents that are not physically present as anthropomorphic and zoomorphic and interacting with them are some of the basic tendencies of humans. This behavior is engaged independently of cultural dimensions when the necessity arises to facilitate the portrayal or explanation of a contingent situation. Anthropomorphism in religious belief is determined by the notion of human and animal activity in general, according to Boyer (1994). In this context, activity is a quality of persons and animals that arises when pursuing personal goals of one's own initiative as relates to energy use, self-reproduction, information use, and relationships between organisms (Rudolph and Tschohl 1977). Commonalities in religious beliefs are found not in the beliefs themselves, but rather in the cognitive models that they recall (Boyer 1994). Thus, supernatural concepts worldwide share five characteristics: 1) a lexical designation, 2) implicit classification in an intuitive, ontological category, 3) explicit representation of a violation of the intuitive expectation

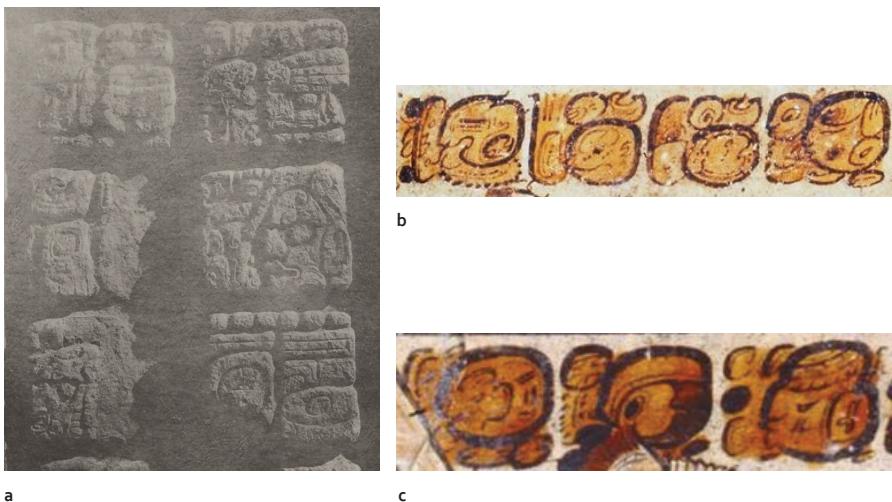
of a category, 4) implicit basic expectations of the category, and 5) additional encyclopedic information (Barrett 2000). In the context of this study, it was established, for instance, that 1) *Choch Yok Puy* represents the personal name of a supernatural agent, who 2) was assigned to the category *chanal k'uh*, 3) constitutes a synthesis of bird and animal, 4) was a central agent who resided in the sky, and 5) was declared to be the highest deity in the cult of Chichen Itza (Boot 2005: 354; Prager 2013: 516ff.). This descriptive schema can also be applied to all other supernatural agents and categories in Classic Maya religion.

A glance through the literature concerning Maya religion demonstrates that the concepts of the ‘divine’ or the ‘holy’ and their variations constitute central and pivotal points in the discussion and study of pre-Hispanic Maya religion. The existence of these two categories was presupposed *sui generis* in studies of Maya religion in order to identify and interpret agents or forces with the aid of these models (Schellhas 1892, 1897, 1904; Taube 1992: 8–9). A point in Maya research that has been long contested is the question of whether the Classic Maya had gods or deities and, if so, whether they comprised a pantheon that was theologically authoritative across the whole Maya region. Spanish clerics writing in the sixteenth century reported on the theistic belief and cult of idolatry in the Yucatan, so that there is essentially no doubt that the Classic Maya worshiped gods. Scientific discussion is often reduced to disputes over terminology for naming and categorizing supernatural agents based on European/occidental standards. These questions have arisen not because the source material on the history of religion among the Maya was and is deficient or fragmentary. Instead, they have arisen because the phenomenological approach to the study of religion and the Christian-theological orientation that has been advocated up through the present has projected a European/occidental image of religion onto a cultural area that corresponds only in certain areas to the contents of autochthonous religions systems. This interpretive problem opened the door wide for multiple readings of cultural representations. The result was a scientific dispute over whether the Classic Maya even had a theistic concept or, following the animistic approach in ethnology, worshiped embodied or personified natural forces or conceptual variations of them.

## **K'uh in Classic Maya religion: object or agent?**

This study focuses on the supernatural Classic Maya religious agents that are designated as *k'uh* in hieroglyphic texts. From a cognitive scientific point of view, humans, animals, and supernatural agents share the property of being initiators or agents, whereby supernatural causation differs from other objects by virtue of minimal counterintuitive properties (Pyysiäinen 2001). Accordingly, humans possess the tendency to assume causation also in those cases where the evidence for its existence appears ambiguous and blurry. In this context, agents who are not physically present and are non-human are contrived as probable initiators of an activity. From a cognitive scientific perspective, agents always possess causal creatorship or agency as an enduring characteristic—rather than being the main criterion for agency, animacy merely represents biological information about the corresponding objects. Insights from cognitive psychology prove that recognition of and reasoning about agency and causality represent evolved faculties that allow humans to distinguish agents from other physical objects in the environment. In contrast to familiar physical objects, agents possess mechanic traits and intentionality. They act of their own accord and possess an energy source or power that drives them (Leslie 1995: 122ff.). Leslie formulates that agents are equipped with the active ability to realize action. Initiators act actively and interactively. Goals are pursued of one's own accord and in reaction to the environment. Intentionality and goal-oriented action requires agents to possess cognitive abilities. Thus, one may only speak of agents or initiators if they demonstrate “mechanical”, “teleological”, and “psychological” causalities. What is essential in this agent model is not the anthropomorphic or animated form, but rather the singularity that objects or agents that are not physically present resemble humans in being intentional agents. The special functionality of this cognitive thought process results in humans seeing causation, meaning, and intention in all possible activities and circumstances, in the environment, or even in the existence of the world itself. They search for evidence of causation and thereby infer causality and construct explanatory models.

- I. According to this cognitive scientific conception of agents, mechanical, teleological, and psychological characteristics should also be demonstrable for objects that are designated as *k'uh* in the hieroglyphic texts. For this purpose, spatiotemporal co- and context analysis was conducted for those occurrences of *k'uh* in which the lexeme appears as the grammatical object or subject of a verbal hieroglyph and thus is named as the *patient* or *agent* of an action, respectively.
- II. The second investigative category is relevant for those occurrences in which the lexeme *k'uh* functions grammatically as the possessor of objects. Such constructions express a relationship between a possessor and an object, in which context alienable and inalienable possession are distinguished from each other. In Classic Mayan “otherworldly” is marked with -*Vl*. In the latter case, the possessor is an agent from the otherworld, such as a god, an ancestor, or the human personification of these agents. These possessor-possessed constructions can be cited as clues for determining a word’s semantic field. On the basis of these traits, human possessors can be differentiated from others and relevant semantic fields can be defined. In this manner, it can be determined whether objects designated as *k'uh* are conceptualized in the function of the possessor of an object as a person, as an object, or as part of another ontological category.
- III. The third investigative category addresses occurrences of the lexeme *k'uh* in conjunction with prepositions. In this manner, relationships between *k'uh* with persons, objects, and situations could be identified and their semantic meaning further illuminated.
- IV. The fourth and final analytical unit discussed those occurrences of the lexeme *k'uh* that are integrated into nominal constructions and have been straightforwardly described as god categories. Many of these cases are nominal compositions that serve as components of the nominal phrase for supernatural agents, as has previously been noted by some authors (Stuart and Houston 1996; Stuart et al. 1999: 40–44; Houston et al. 2006: 188).



**Figure 3.** *ubaah a'n k'uh* 'his person as *k'uh* manifestation' from a) Seibal, Stela 6 (photograph by Teobert Maler), b) Unknown Provenance, Kerr 791, c) Unknown Provenance, Kerr 1728 (photographs by Justin Kerr).

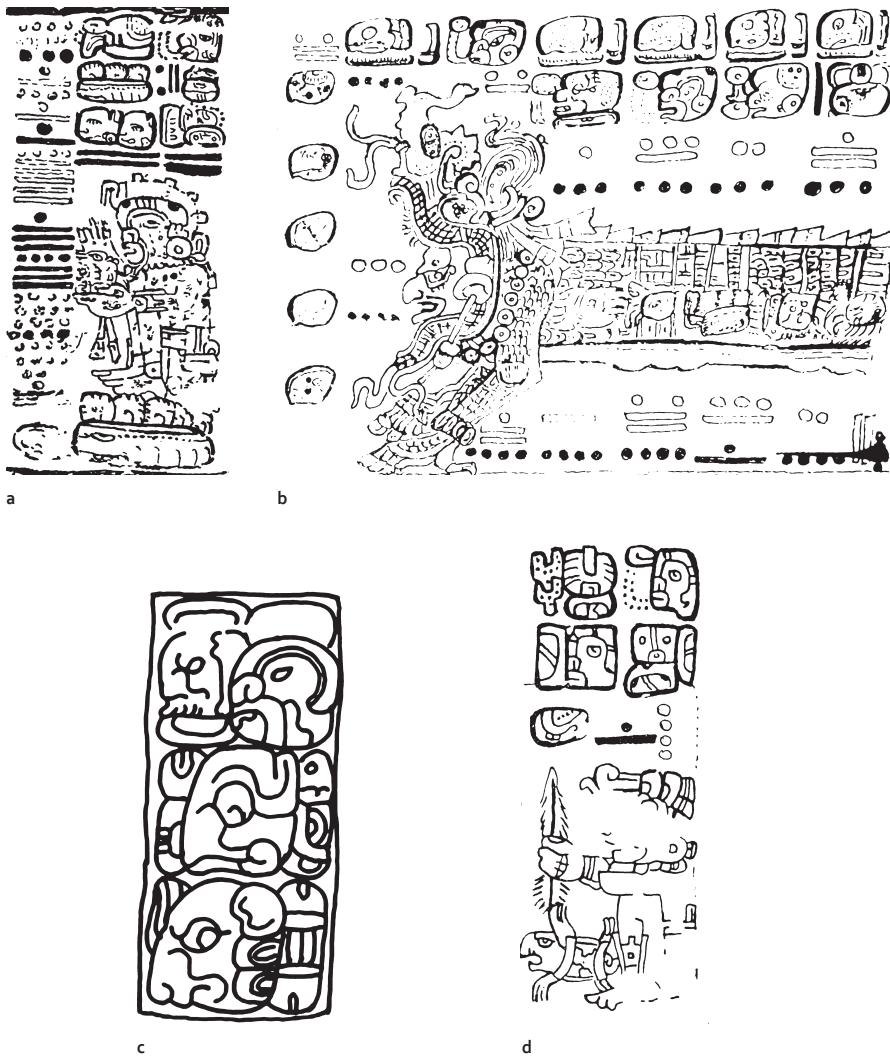
This investigative program helped to reveal a series of semantic fields in their spatial and temporal dimension and to determine the factors that influenced the stability or variation in the function and meaning of *k'uh*.

### ***K'uh* as patient or agent of an action**

A total of 21 occurrences were identified in the examined corpus in which the lexeme *k'uh* or derivations of the same functioned as the agent or patient of an action. The greatest number of these attestations is found in several *t'ol* in the Madrid Codex, which thematize temple construction and the production and cultic worship of wood effigies, in addition to agricultural topics (Ciaramella 2004b; Prager 2010b). In the 21 verbal contexts that were examined, *k'uh* functioned as the agent in six cases and in the remaining 15 as the patient of actions. The earliest attestation of *k'uh* as the agent of an action occurs in conjunction with the so-called "deity impersonation expression" *baah a'n k'uh* '*k'uh* manifestation' on Stela 6 from Seibal (Figure 3a). According to this monument, the costumed local ruler Ajaw Bot marked the 9.17.0.0.0 period-ending acting as a living image of "Heron-K'awiil", who was a local tutelary god of Seibal rulers and

was categorized in Seibal as *k'uh* (see Stuart et al. 1999). Detailed analysis of the hieroglyph for “deity impersonation” indicates that this concept had an extensive temporal and spatial distribution, whereby the human protagonists were mostly acting in conjunction with calendrical rites, building dedications, and accession. As living images of supernatural beings, these agents possessed the essential ability to act intentionally and of their own accord (Pyysiäinen 2001: 14). Upon donning their costumes, the rulers were transformed into living images of the supernatural agents that they represented, who, by virtue of this act, were not only anthropomorphized, but also conveyed charisma and potency to the wearer and thus granted him status, agency, and identity. This belief in living images of deities appears centuries later as a central idea in fifteenth-century Aztec religion, as the concept of a living image of a god referred to as *teotl ixiptla* ‘god image’ (Hvidtfeldt 1958; Stuart and Houston 1996). Analysis of additional occurrences of the so-called “deity impersonation” expression underscores that living images of supernatural “beings” were in fact considered as agents with human traits that competed in the ball game, consumed alcohol, or were experts in the script. Two occurrences of the “deity impersonation” expression (*baah a'n k'uh*) on Late Classic ceramics from the so-called *Ik'* ceramic complex (Kerr 791, Kerr 1728 ; see Nehammer Knub et al. 2009: 185–186) (Figure 3b and c) emphasize that, in this particular context of use, the term *k'uh* definitely functioned to designate categories, since *k'uh* was associated not only with *Ichiw K'awiil*, but also with *Juun Ajaw* and *Mixnal Ihk' Waynal*, who have been identified as the players in a mythical ballgame (Tokovinine 2002). Analysis of all occurrences of *k'uh* shows that, beginning in the Early Classic, this category was expanded by at least two dozen sub-categories and contextually differentiated during the Classic over the course of sociopolitical developments and the resultant political complexity in the Maya Lowlands. An increase in the complexity of the religious belief system accompanied this intracultural differentiation and identity configuration of individual kingdoms and their rulers.

Beliefs concerning bodily existence and the active ability to act are expressed in a series of scenes in the Dresden and Paris Codices, in which *k'uh* is described as the subject of root intransitive verbs and thus appears as the agent of the relevant action. Pages 13 to

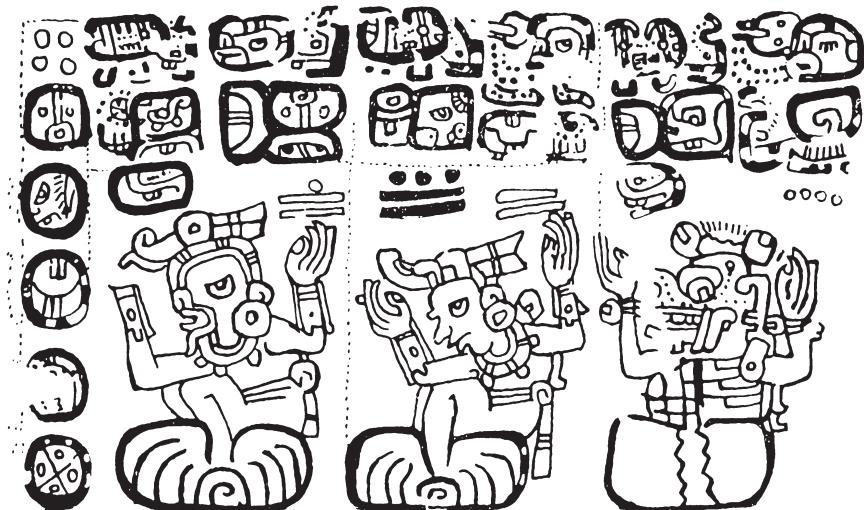


**Figure 4.** *K'uh* as agent with bodily existence: a) Paris Codex (18b), b) Dresden Codex (4b), c) *k'uh* described as agent with cognitive abilities to hear (Palenque, House C, West Foundation, Panels) (drawing by Linda Schele [Linda Schele Drawing Archive, #168, <http://www.famsi.org>]), d) *k'uh* as consumer of food; Madrid Codex (81c) (Villacorta and Villacorta 1930).

18 of the Paris Codex (Figure 4a) approximately map a sequence of places in the natural and cultural environment in which *k'uh* occurs as an agent: temples and residences, as well as caves, *sakbe*, wells, *ceibas*, and the sky were considered places of residence and activity for *k'uh*, which is illustrated in bodily form in these sections of the

Paris Codex. A map of places of residence and activity for supernatural agents that is similar in content and structure is also found in the so-called *Chahk*-pages of the Dresden Codex (Barthel 1953; Lacadena 2004; Grube 2012). This almanac reports on foods, in addition to various tasks, that *k'uh*, in the case of the Paris Codex, or *Chahk*, as per the Dresden Codex, had to offer up. Clearly apparent here is the conception of God C or *k'uh* as an agent who felt hungry and thus wished to consume food. This conclusion is supported by a similar situation in pages 81 and 86 of the Madrid Codex, in which maize, water, and possibly also blood are part of the bill of fare for *k'uh* (Figure 4d).

Unlike the Paris and Dresden Codices, in which *k'uh* is represented as an acting individual figure, i.e. that of God C, in the Madrid Codex, Gods A, D, and E are represented as agents consuming food and are declared to be *k'uh* in the text. One can observe here a nuance or intracultural variation in this thematic complex: whereas *k'uh* serves as a reference to an individual agent in the Paris Codex, in the Madrid Codex, it functions as a categorical term that refers to multiple agents that are described as gods in the literature. The meaning of *k'uh* as a “feeding” agent is important for the present discussion. Food and gifts were considered the currency of religious practice that valued interactions between the world of humans and that of supernatural agents, and thus regulated the dynamics of religious activities. Service and compensation, and presenting a victim as an offering, thus comprise a mode of religious practice which constitutes and motivates interaction and which is based upon a culturally negotiated value system. Attributing value to entities and negotiating this value are cognitive processes that participating parties must acquire and understand. In interactions between humans and agents that are not physically present, humans ascribe cognitive faculties to the latter, such as perception, memory, reason, and thus also the ability to value entities, or to plan and act purposefully (Guthrie 1993; Boyer 2008). For our study, thus, it is significant to have determined that the supernatural agent *k'uh* was ascribed reasons and motivation, on the basis of which those making sacrifices could assume that their gifts could elicit a service. The scribes and users of the Paris Codex thus considered God C or *k'uh* to be an individual agent who not only acted of his own accord, but also possessed cognitive capacities. The notion



**Figure 5.** Page 83b of Codex Madrid: Illustration and description of the birth of three divine beings referred to in this almanac with the term *k'uh* (Villacorta and Villacorta 1930).

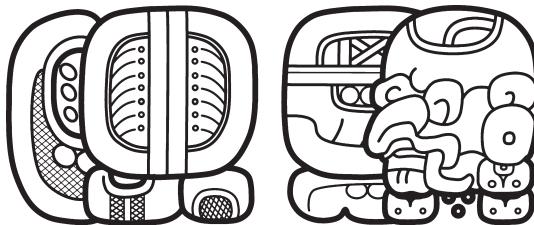
of *k'uh* as an agent with cognitive abilities and biological properties also manifests itself in the passages in the Dresden Codex (Figure 4b) with the transitive verb *pek* ‘summon, invoke, call’ (cf. Schele and Grube 1997: 96–100; Houston 2014), where *k'uh* and other agents are called upon as communication partners, and are thus portrayed as hearing and comprehending agents. Analysis of these three occurrences indicates that *k'uh* and other agents were ascribed the ability to acoustically discern and react to human language. In order for a speaker to call *k'uh*, he must implicitly have the conception of the addressee possessing the cognitive and communicative-social abilities necessary to be able to re- and interact. *K'uh* therefore must not only acoustically perceive that which is said, but also understand its contents, and convert the expected intention into action. Contextual analysis proves that, in Palenque around 9.12.0.0.0 and in the Dresden Codex, *k'uh* were considered to be agents capable of acoustically discerning and cognitively processing language (Figure 4c). For instance, when scribes used the word *pek* ‘summon, invoke, call’—a word that was actually intended for human ears—the gods were summoned. Consequently, *k'uh* thus became an agent with a believed active capability for action and the psychological capacity

for acting of their own accord according to the cognitive understanding of agency (Leslie 1995: 123).

Anthropomorphic conceptions of *k'uh* are expressed in the Madrid Codex with the intransitive verb *sihyaj* ‘be born’ (Prager 2018a) (Figure 5). According to the Madrid Codex, various supernatural agents, designated here with the categorical term *k'uh*, were born out of a shell, an event described through the verb *sihyaj* which was usually used in monumental inscriptions for the birth of historic figures. According to a conception widespread in Mesoamerica, shells were portals into the watery underworld, where, for instance, rain clouds were born and entered into the world through cave openings. Hence, snail shells and sea shells represented the water region of the world and its inhabitants, who were often associated with the Earth, birth, and rebirth in these worldviews (Thompson 1950: 133). In this context, it is important to recognize that, in this system of religious beliefs, *k'uh* agents were not only thought to possess the anthropomorphic inclination towards consuming food, but were also believed to be born like their human counterparts.

### **Material gods: Tracking Classic Maya concepts of agency**

Students of religion advocate the notion that the Classic Maya believed in monism and animism. According to this belief there is no separation between a spiritual and physical domain, rather a “single principle suffuses the universe” (Houston 1999: 52), meaning that there is one divine being who has many manifestations. According to this view man finds the presence of spirit and agency in every object surrounding him. The best and most cited example from Classic Maya religion are living hills, animated altars, and hungry buildings that needed to be fed (Stuart 1997; Houston 1999: 22). However, according to the cognitive science of religion, animacy alone cannot be the criterion for agency; instead, it simply represents biological information about objects (Leslie 1995: 121). From the cognitive perspective, agents constitute a class of objects that possess *causal agency* as a permanent property. If visual or textual indications of mechanical, teleological, and cognitive causality are lacking, for instance, it cannot fundamentally be assumed that an object with human or animal physiognomy was in fact considered to be an agent. The decisive point is not anthropomorphic form, but rather



**Figure 6.** Proper name of Tikal ruler *Jasaw Chan K'awiil*, attested on Tikal, Stela 5 (drawing by Christian M. Prager, excerpted from Maya Hieroglyphic Font, Text Database and Dictionary of Classic Mayan).

the fact that humans recognize the objects as *intentional agents*. The analysis of this cognitive phenomenon indicates that the representation of a personified object in Maya art cannot be equated with animacy and agency without taking the context into account. Only by examining text and image together can one shed light on which objects the Classic Maya considered to be agents. In this context, it helps to analyze the personal names of kings.

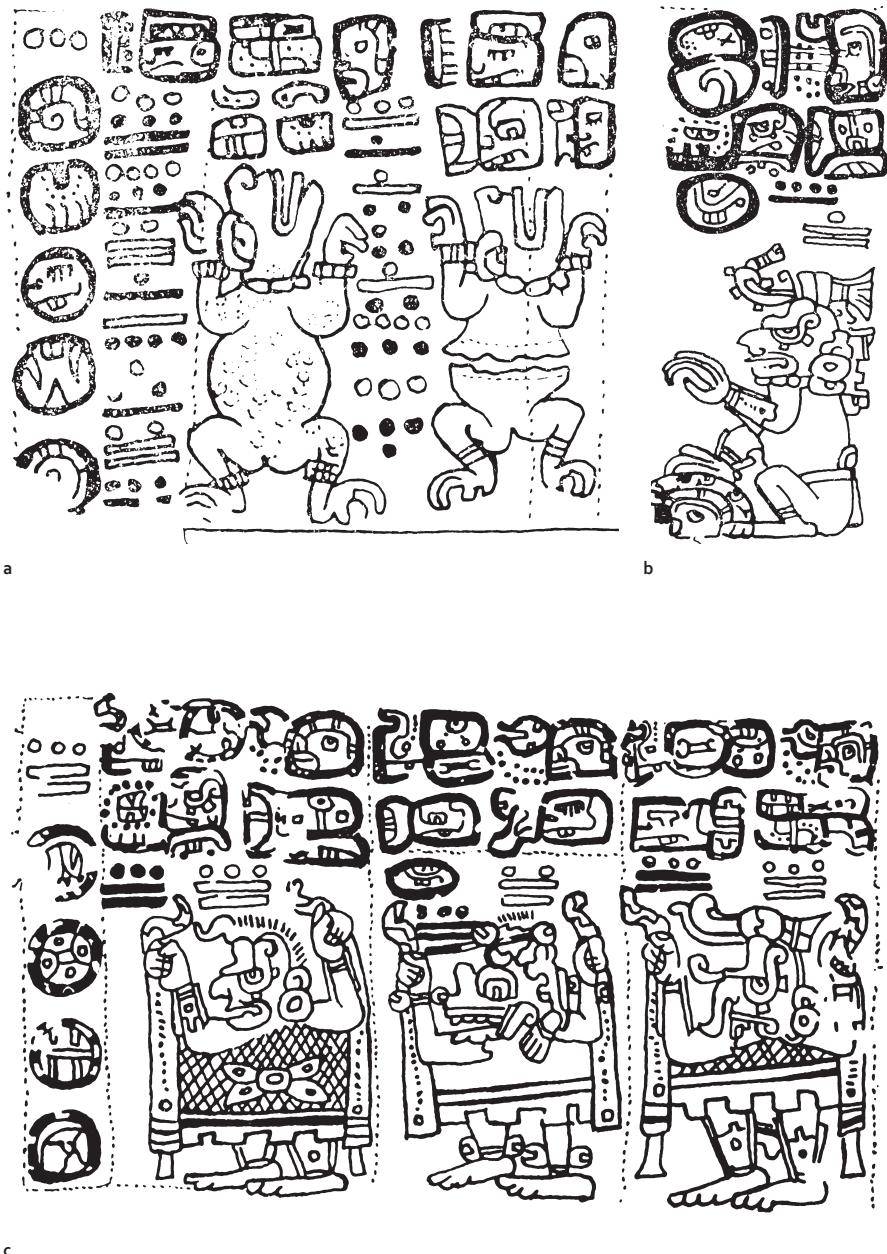
All kingly names are comprised of nouns that denote objects, animals, or the names of supernatural agents, and are combined either with other nouns, adjectival nouns, or verbs to create a static or verbal noun phrase (Grube 2002: 326ff.; see Colas 2004). Examination of all occurrences of names composed of verbal sentences in Pierre Colas' dissertation (2004: 96–141) indicates that only the personal names of supernatural agents are used in the position of the subject, including *yopaat*, *k'awiil*, *chahk*, and *k'inich* (Grube 2002: 334–340). In contrast, lexemes referring to animals, such as jaguars, wild boars, saurians, or snakes, and references to objects, including obsidian, fire, stone, bone, cloud, etc., appear exclusively in so-called word names composed of nouns and adjectival nouns. Examination of personal names offers a point of departure for reconstructing conceptions of agents and agency and, in view of his information, to research emic perspectives on cause and effect. The personal name *jasaw chan k'awiil* 'K'awiil, who clears or opens the sky / K'awiil clears in the sky' (Figure 6), for instance, proves the existence of the belief that *K'awiil* was the agent responsible for a cloudless sky, instead of cloud covering arising on its own. In the personal name of the fourteenth ruler of Copan, *K'awiil* is he who fills the sky with fire (*k'ahk' joplaj chan k'awiil*); hence, he is considered the creator of dusk

and dawn or maybe thunderstorm and lightning. According to this reading, a red sky or a cloudy sky were not themselves interpreted as agents; rather, their existence can be traced back to the effect of *K'awiil* and other supernatural agents. In view of this information, the thesis that the Classic Maya believed that entities in the underworld possessed a soul and were animated is incomplete and must be supplemented with causal cognitive theories about agency. Consequently, animacy is not a necessary, but instead just an adequate condition for defining agency. Personification of objects may indicate anthropomorphization, but only contextualization, as well as analysis of text and image, can shed light on whether an object was viewed as an agent or actor by the Classic Maya, or whether it was only considered to be the patient of an action.

### **Touching and holding: materiality of *k'uh***

Whereas *k'uh* functions as the agent of an action in the occurrences under discussion and thus denotes an individual agent (Paris and Dresden Codices) or a group of agents (Madrid Codex), the term *k'uh* refers much more frequently to a material object from reality, in which case it represents the patient of an activity. A multitude of such occurrences are attested in the Madrid Codex and can be found, among other contexts, in sections that address the production and worship of wooden idols (Ciaramella 2004). Additional contexts are attested in Late Classic monumental texts that highlight the conjuration of supernatural agents (*tzak k'uh*) or are linked to the installation of kings (*ch'am k'uh*). The materiality of *k'uh* is further expressed in the Madrid Codex (Figure 7a), for instance, in the hieroglyphic sequence *pak' k'uh*, which translates to ‘fabrication of *k'uh* from clay’.

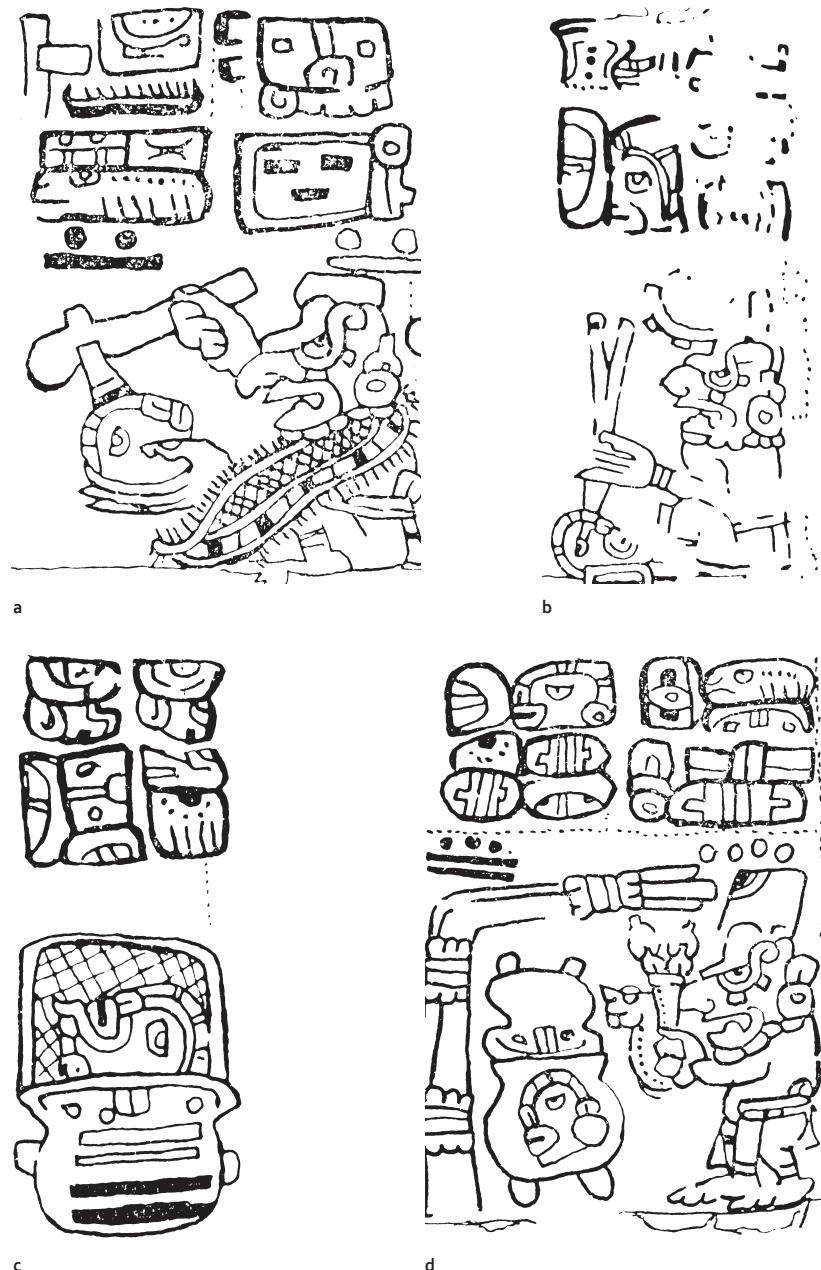
The corresponding scene illustrates frogs that are designated in the hieroglyphic text as *k'uh* and are being shaped by God A and another agent whose name is unknown. The lexeme *k'uh* denotes an object in reality that is being modeled from clay—and thus a physical object that can be picked up with the hands. The materiality and physical presence of *k'uh* is also expressed in other text passages from the Madrid Codex that mention the decoration and interment of *k'uh* (*muk + k'uh*) (Figure 7b). The text and image on page 84b of the Madrid Codex (Figure 7c), for instance, portray standing deities



**Figure 7.** Scenes from the Madrid Codex exhibiting the materiality of *k'uh*: *a)* modelling *k'uh* from clay (101d), *b)* burying of *k'uh* (109b), *c)* accoutering them (84b) (Villacorta and Villacorta 1930).

(Gods D, A, and B), each of whom is stretching a piece of clothing in front of himself and is about to put it on (Prager 2018b). In this case, *k'uh* probably refers to statues or images of supernatural agents. Even in present times, clothing, outfitting, and tending to statues of saints, crosses, and other religious cult objects is a central component of the religious service that the members of a congregation realize in honor of their saints (Guiteras Holmes 1961: 96; Thompson 1970: 371). Garnishing images is also thematized in the first almanac of the Dresden Codex, which addresses weaving robes and clothing representations of deities. Only after the robes had been woven and their representations had been clothed in them did the gods become ritually active and began to line up and to speak—it is not until they have donned their clothes that the gods become potent (Ciaramella 1999).

Additional evidence for the materiality of *k'uh* is expressed in scenes in the Madrid Codex that concerns the interment of *k'uh* (Figure 7b). The relevant scene on pages 109 and 110 shows figures of gods from the Schellhas list that use their hands to cover the icon of *k'uh* with earth. According to the caption, the image mirrors the ‘interment of *k'uh*’, and semantic analysis of this hieroglyph shows that it concerns objects from reality that are being buried in the ground. Previous contextual analysis of *k'uh* in the Madrid Codex indicates that, at least in this codex, *k'uh* probably refers to statues or idols that generally represent supernatural agents in their material form. The aforementioned case concerns instructions for ritually interring idols that are described as *k'uh* in the text. An additional scene on page 61 of the Madrid Codex furthermore presents evidence that *k'uh* designates an object that was not only a material, but also portable. The illustrations in this almanac depict the figures of three gods that hold ropes in which the hieroglyph **K'UH** is strung. The caption records that *k'uh* is being wrapped in cords or in a bundle. This scene probably depicts the transfer of completed idols to their owner, for which reason they are being wrapped in cloth, like the ritual practice that Diego de Landa, for instance, documents among contact-period Maya in eastern Yucatan. The manipulability and mobility of *k'uh* are also revealed in an almanac on page 105 of the Madrid Codex, in which the figures of various gods escort or transfer an object described as *k'uh*. In this case, too, *k'uh* denotes an

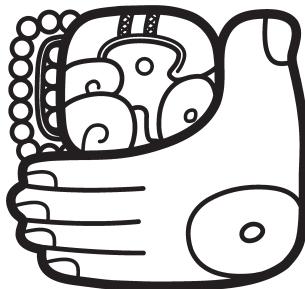


**Figure 8.** Images from the Madrid Codex exhibiting the process of producing and handling *k'uh*: a) carving the wooden *k'uh* (97b), b) drilling holes or opening the eyes of the *k'uh* (98c), c) and d) storing the *k'uh* in vessels to stay moist (*ja-wa* or *jaw* 'to become soft') (96c and 100d) (Villacorta and Villacorta 1930).

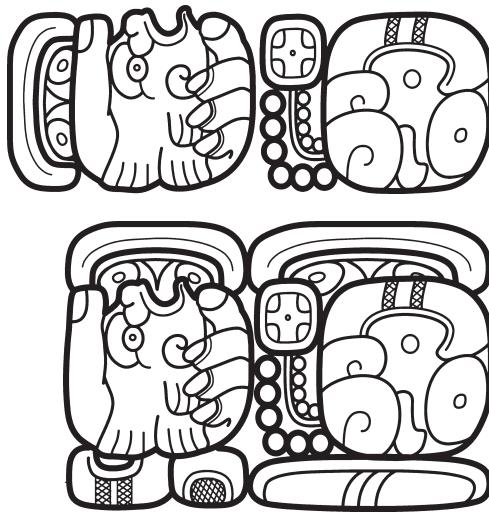
object from reality that is being carried or transferred to a place.

Various almanacs in the Madrid Codex thematize the process of producing wooden idols, in which context they utilize the hieroglyph T1016 as the icon for an idol (Förstemann 1902; Ciaramella 2004) (Figure 8). The steps for producing these idols involved chopping wood (Madrid 89a-c), storing and preparing it in a hut (Madrid 97a), carving idols from it (Madrid 97b-98b), and endowing them with life by boring or opening the eyes (Madrid 98c-99c). In order for the wood to stay moist for as long as possible, idols currently under production were stored in vessels that were covered with cloths. This measure is illustrated and described on page 96. Page 100d addresses exclusively the dedication of the completed idol. The scene shows how the idols stored in clay vessels, which are marked by the icon T1016 painted on the outer wall, are stored in a wooden hut and ritually treated with rattlesnake-shaped objects. Employing the hieroglyph T1016 as the iconic representation of an idol reinforces the idea that *k'uh* in the Madrid Codex is the linguistic representation of a portable object that could be sculpted from wood or formed from clay and the conclusion that it generally represents the image of a supernatural agent.

The analysis of the occurrences of *k'uh* in the Classic inscriptions underscores the fact that the term *k'uh* denotes an object from physical reality, an object that humans can hold in their hands or transport (*ch'am*) (Figure 9). In Oxpemul and Seibal, *k'uh* described a portable object, probably made from stone, wood, or cloth, which could be grabbed and which was utilized in the context of period-endings and calendrical rituals. In this case, *k'uh* refers to an object that constitutes a semantic field together with the term *k'awiil* and that, in this context, refers to portable objects that functioned as images of supernatural agents. Contextual analysis of all occurrences of the transitive verb *ch'am ~ k'am* in the Classic inscriptions evinces that the objects associated with this verb 'to grab' are



**Figure 9.** The hieroglyph CH'AM-K'UH 'to grasp *k'uh*' (drawing by Christian M. Prager, excerpted from Maya Hieroglyphic Font, Text Database and Dictionary of Classic Mayan).



**Figure 10.** Contrasting the terms *k'uh* and *k'uhuul* in monumental inscriptions (drawings by Christian M. Prager, excerpted from Maya Hieroglyphic Font, Text Database and Dictionary of Classic Mayan).

mobile objects, such as palanquins, figurines, headdresses, headbands, cloth, clothing, staffs, and flowers, which could be picked up with the hands at enthronements and period-ending celebrations.

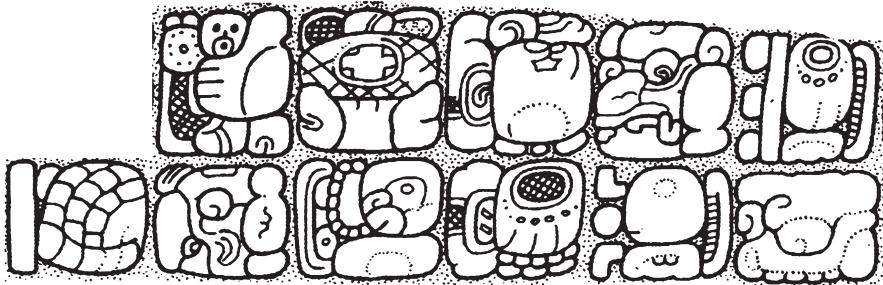
### Contrasting *k'uh* and *k'uhuul*

Moreover, the materiality of *k'uh* that is attested in the Postclassic and Classic is expressed in contexts that thematize the conjuration and invocation of a supernatural agent in the context of ritual blood-letting (Figure 10). The idea of touching and grasping is expressed in the transitive verb *tzak*. Accordingly, the ‘conjuring of *k'uh*’ mentioned in the hieroglyphic texts means that *k'uh* could be touched—these cases, at least, articulate the idea that *k'uh* and *k'uhuul* represent an object from physical reality that represents on one hand the concept and on the other hand the image of a supernatural agent. An analysis of *tzak* expressions in the inscriptions shows that touching the image of a supernatural underlies the act of conjuring. Representation of this action in the Dresden Codex emphasizes that the invocation and conjuring of a supernatural agent was not merely a speech act, but that it also included the grasping of an image that is described in the inscriptions as *k'uh*.

and *k'uhuul* (Wichmann 2006: 287). In the inscriptions of Palenque, conjuring the image of supernatural agents is tantamount to ritually activating them after they have been molded from clay, fired in the oven, and transported to their place of installation, where they were dedicated by ritual specialist. In the aforementioned context, both *k'uh* und *k'uhuul* functioned as generic descriptions for these images. Contextual analysis of all instances of the hieroglyph for ‘*k'uh*-conjuring’ shows that the expression appears in the context of ritual activation of images of gods and temple dedications (Palenque), as part of ancestor cults (Piedras Negras), and at political-religious celebrations (Tikal), for which the presence of supernatural agents was necessary or their action was required. Conjuring or touching *k'uh* appears thus to represent a ritual action for which the physical presence of a supernatural agent was essential. However, texts from Tikal indicate that the act of conjuring was also effected by ritual blood-letting itself.

The form *k'uhuul*, which is attested only for the Classic period, arises from the phonemic spelling <K'UH-li> and was interpreted by Wichmann as cognate to the Ch'olti' word <chuul>, which Morán translated as ‘idol’ in the seventeenth century (Wichmann 2006: 287). Accordingly, *k'uhuul* describes statues, images, or symbols that were possessed by supernatural agents and whose public figurations they represented. Linguistic analysis indicates that the lemma *k'uhuul* is derived from *k'uh*, whereby the morpheme *k'uhuul* ‘deity’ in the codices describes a supernatural agent, as well as its figurative representation, and the derived form expresses only the term ‘image of a god’. Substitutions on the Tablets of the Temple of the Cross and the Temple of the Sun in Palenque document its inclusion in a common semantic class, according to which *k'uh* and *k'uhuul* described the supernatural agent or his figurative representation as cognates of the Ch'olti' term <chuul> ‘idol’.

Epigraphic analysis of the *tzak* hieroglyph (T714) in the Classic inscriptions additionally indicates that objects from reality, and not just the personal names of supernatural agents, could be associated with this transitive verb. This situation reveals that supernatural agents and physical objects constitute a common semantic field that provides insight into beliefs concerning the materiality and physical presence of supernatural agents. The relevant evidence includes



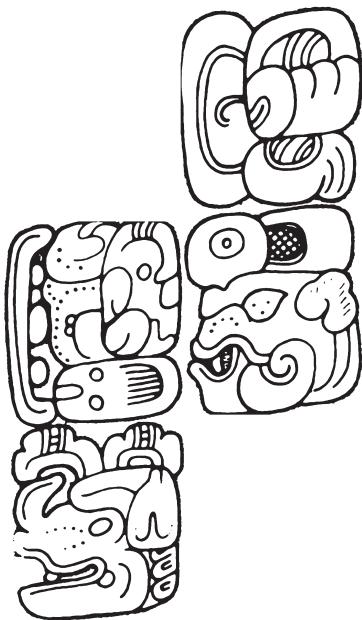
**Figure 11.** Grasping of the *ko'haw* or war helmet by Ruler 2 in the presence of the *k'uhuul* of the Piedras Negras tutelary deities (drawing by David Stuart).

occurrences of the hieroglyph **TZAK** that are associated with the lexeme *k'awiil*. *K'awiil* is the personal name of a supernatural agent also known as “God K”, which nonetheless refers in the case at hand to a material object that can be picked up with the hands or touched. The expression *ch'am k'awiil* commonly used in the inscriptions manifests in some occurrences an object-incorporating structure in which no nominal phrase can be embedded. In this case, *k'awiil* cannot be the personal name of a deity; instead, it must refer to an object—presumably to the material manifestation of *K'awiil* in the form of a statue (Wichmann 2004: 332–333). *K'awiil*, along with *Chahk* and *Yopaat*, was considered a “weather god” who was associated with thunder and lightning. *K'awiil* was held for the embodiment of the heavenly forces of nature with which he was closely associated. This agent not only personified agricultural fertility; furthermore, he was also associated with the life cycle and the rebirth of gods and ancestors (Taube 1992: 69ff.). Rulers sought ties to *K'awiil* as the personification of fertility and the power of nature, which was particularly palpable in weather phenomena. Kingly power was thus related to the concept of ‘grasping *K'awiil*’. The authority of divine kings was particularly expressed in the personification of the natural force *K'awiil*, whose proximity and bond were constructed and sought in rituals. After summarizing the insights into *K'awiil*, it becomes clear that the expression *tzak k'awiil* expresses the concept of ‘summoning’, ‘grasping’, and ‘controlling’ a natural force that is causally associated with fertility and abundance, a force that is manifested in weather phenomena and is conceived of as an agent who is described as *K'awiil*. A comparable, meta-representative meaning

can also be expected for the term *k'uh*, since it also denotes an object that was picked up or touched in the context of a conjuring ritual in order to elicit a particular effect.

The thoroughly anthropomorphic traits, forces, and meta-representative fields of meaning ascribed to objects with the name *k'uh* and *k'uuhul* are expressed in text passages in which human activities were explicitly realized in the bodily presence (-*ichnal*) and with the attendance and authority (-*ita*) of *k'uh* and *k'uuhul*. A useful example comes from Piedras Negras Lintel 3 (Figure 11). The text explains that Ruler 2 of Piedras Negras grasped the war helmet in front of the *k'uuhul* of Yaxha' Chahk, Hun Banak, Waxak Banak und Ik' Chuwaaj, the four tutelary deities. From a sociopolitical perspective, the term -*ichnal* describes the field of activity and interaction of people and supernatural agents (Houston and Cummins 2004: 371). Numerous accounts of ritual activity from the Classic period between 9.11.15.0.0 (PNG Lnt. 3) and 9.17.15.0.0 (MAR St. 1) reveal that kings conducted ritual activities before (-*ichnal*) supernatural agents, as well as in the presence of the *k'uuhul* of these agents, such as enthronements, period-ending celebrations, the transfer of stately insignia, sacrifices, and ritual blood-letting. The systematization of all occurrences of -*ichnal* indicates that the presence of supernatural agents was sought as part of these acts—functionally speaking, the latter case concerned the tutelary or patron gods of a king or a royal dynasty. -*ichnal* is an inalienable noun for describing a human body part that means ‘front side’, and which meta-representatively expresses the concept ‘presence, field of vision, front view, bodily presence’ or visible authority (Stone and Zender 2011: 58–69). Only individuals from the highest social ranks and supernatural agents could exhibit visible, bodily authority, according to the belief system of the time. Syntactic analysis of all known textual passages with the term -*ichnal* clearly indicate that only a) historical personalities, b) supernatural agents or their personal names, or c) *k'uuhul* could be connected with the bodily metaphor -*ichnal* ‘front side, front side of the body’.

According to the text passages examined, supernatural agents possessed a *k'uuhul* in whose field of vision and interaction the king acted. The epigraphic evidence indicates that the term *k'uuhul* refers to the material presence or figurative representation of a



**Figure 12.** Acting with (*yitaj*) the *k'uhuul* of the Tortuguero tutelary deities *Ihk' K'ahk' Ti' Hix* and *Yax Suutz'* as recorded on Tortuguero, Monument 6 (drawing by Ian Graham).

supernatural agent in whose presence the king was acting with the goal of achieving supernatural legitimization. In this context, it becomes clear that *k'uhuul* must be a generic term for an idol or the image of a supernatural agent—a meaning that has survived in Colonial Ch'olti' (Wichmann 2004: 332–333)—because distributional analysis of all occurrence shows that the relevant local deities from various city states were generally described in such ritual accounts as *k'uhuul*. Textual statements that kings realized actions in the presence of supernatural agents or their *k'uhuul* imply that these agents not only represented concepts of individuals; rather, they also belonged to a shared ontological category by virtue of their use. From this

perspective, a *k'uhuul* did not merely refer to a material object that was meaningful in cultic contexts or to the figuration of a supernatural agent—it was that supernatural agent. Only this understanding of the relationship between object and meta-representation is able to explain why kings ascribed authority and power to images of supernatural agents and their figurations. This phenomenon is primarily expressed in Late Classic text passages from the Maya Lowlands in which the acts of human agents are accompanied and authorized by supernatural power.

A series of texts reports, for instance, that kings did not just act in the presence of supernatural agents or their *k'uhuul*; they also acted together with them in order to achieve something collectively. This is expressed in inscriptions in which ritual attendance by supernatural agents is represented by the root *-itaaj*. In contrast to the rather passively applied *-ichnal* ‘in the presence of’, *-itaaj* connotes cooperation between multiple agents for the purpose of achieving a partic-

ular status through collective action. Robert Wald writes on this topic: "Having the gods marked as companions during a particular event helps to establish its importance and validity. Having another person marked as a companion could enhance the status of either or both of those joining in the important event" (Wald 2007: 412–413). Texts in Copan and Piedras Negras record that the respective rulers celebrated period-endings with the participation of the *k'uhuul* of the so-called Paddler Gods (CPN Altar to Stela I; PNG St. 12, St. 15). When examining these occurrences, it becomes clear that *k'uhuul* was not simply considered to be a material-artificial object. It was incorporated into the ritual actions of the king as acting figurations of supernatural agents. This potency ascribed to the *k'uhuul* is also expressed in a longer passage on Monument 6 from Tortuguero. The monument records that the local king *Ihk' Muy Muwaan* installed rulers in office and conferred ritual potency to three objects. These actions were executed with the participation of the *k'uhuul* of supernatural agents named *Ihk' K'ahk' Ti' Hix* and *Yax Suutz'* (Gronemeyer and MacLeod 2010: 55). The text makes explicit that the installations and ritual actions were sanctioned by these two agents, who themselves are categorized in the text as *k'uhuul* and are illustrated in the subsequent passage as agents who established time and the first world in the mythical past. According to Gronemeyer and MacLeod's interpretation, the king of Tortuguero authorized his religious and sociopolitical actions through the presence and cooperation of the *k'uhuul* of these two supernatural agents. They were the supernatural authorities through whom the king legitimized his action and thus declared his status as divine king. Through the power of language, the object with the designation *k'uhuul* was ascribed an identity and was charged with history, meaning, and potency, by means of which the king was able to legitimize his political and religious actions.

The resemblance of the terms *k'uh* and *k'uhuul* also manifests itself in the context of the so-called Paddler Gods, who often appear in the context of period-endings as supernatural escorts of kingly rituals, which themselves are usually described as *-atij*. Examination of the syntax of these ritual narrations indicates that the term can be replaced by the term *-itaaj* 'accompaniment, authority' (Table 6). Whereas *-itaaj* is associated exclusively with *k'uhuul*, only *k'uh* or the personal names of the Paddler Gods appear with *-atij*. If only

Monument	Dedication date	Event date	Cotext		Cotext	
PNG St. 15	9.17.15.0.0	9.17.15.0.0	<i>u k'at tuun k'inich [Ruler 7] kaloome' k'uh yokib ajaw</i>	<b>yi-ta-ji u K'UH-li</b>	ST7, SNC, PT3	
PNG St. 12	9.18.5.0.0	9.18.5.0.0	<i>u k'at tuun k'inich [Ruler 7] 'aj? baak k'uh way ajaw</i>	<b>yi-ta-ji u K'UH-li</b>	ZZ7, ZZ6, PT3-na	
TRT Mon. 6	9.11.15.0.0	9.11.15.0.0	<i>alay i ekwan wak naah T1084 wak mulubaj 1M2 u k'uhul k'aba ... k'uhul bakal ajaw u baah u chit ch'ab ix wan... ix bakal ajaw u nich u kopem ... k'uhul bakal ajaw i pikul ajawniy bolon hiniy k'annalaw XGF-yi ACB sak AM1 ik'</i>	<b>yi-ta-ji u K'UH-li</b>	<i>ik' bahlam yax sotz' haa xa-a-he-cha yohl waxak? bak?-bi emach u ma-YM4-wa yax tzutz pik yax ?-kab-nal ma-a- ... k'an tuun u mam u yon</i>	
CPN Altar of St. 1	9.12.0.0.0	9.12.0.0.0	<i>tzutzeem u 12 winikhaab</i>	<b>ya-ti-ji</b>	<b>K'UH</b>	ZZ7, ZZ6
IXL Alt. 1	10.2.10.0.0	10.2.10.0.0	<i>u k'alam tuun u chokow ch'aaj aj winik baak k'ak'il jasaw chan k'awiil? ka?- k'uhul mutul ajaw waxak ...</i>	<b>ya-ti-ji</b>	<b>K'UH</b>	ZZ7, ZZ6, <i>k'an tuunil Chahk SBB ajaw naah jo' chan ajaw</i>
TNA Mon. 139	9.13.10.0.0	9.13.10.0.0	<i>k'a[h]laj ...</i>	<b>ya-ti-ji</b>		<i>ZZ7, naah jo' chan ajaw u K'UH-li K'inich Baknal Chahk Yajawte' pitziil k'uh popo' ajaw</i>

Table 6. Substitution patterns between *yitaj* and *yatij* in Classic Maya inscriptions.

the personal name occurs, the scribes in Tonina, for instance, specified that the named Paddler Gods were the local ruler's *k'uhuul*. In Tonina, at least, the semantic boundaries blur between *k'uh* as a generic term for describing supernatural agents, on one hand, and *k'uhuul* on the other hand, which refers here to the material figuration of the general term agent.

The examination of all occurrences of *k'uh* proves that no terminological difference was made in the northern Yucatan peninsula during the Postclassic between the supernatural agent and its public representation in the form of an idol. Scribes used the term *k'uh* for both semantic fields. During this period, intracultural variation of this concept can be observed in that most occurrences of the term *k'uh* in the Paris and Dresden Codices describe a specific, individual deity (God C), whereas further semantic fields that had already been conveyed in the Late Classic are attested in the Madrid Codex. In the latter, *k'uh* not only refers to an individual manifestation of a deity (God C); in addition, it functions as a categorical term for supernatural agents that can refer to various, singular divine figures (Schellhas 1892, 1897, 1904; Zimmermann 1956; Taube

1992). Furthermore, the texts and images of the Madrid Codex show that *k'uh* undoubtedly described images.

Although relevant textual references in the Dresden Codex are scarce, the conception of *k'uh* as a denotation for ‘idol’ can also be proven, even though, from a statistical perspective, *k'uh* as it appears in this codex more often indicates the personal name of a specific and individually presented supernatural agent. In cases in which the iconography was intended to illustrate an idol of the image of an unnamed supernatural agent, the scribes used the hieroglyph T1016 as an icon K'UH (Figure 13). The conclusion that the term *k'uh* described the supernatural agent as well as its image at the end of the Late Classic and the beginning of the Post-classic is supported by so-called possessor-possessum relations in which the lemma *k'uh* or *k'uhuul* functions grammatically as the possessor of another object. These contexts express a relationship between a possessor and an object in which alienable and inalienable possession are differentiated (Houston et al. 2001: 26). One distinguishes here between a part-of relation (partitive) and “otherworldly” expressions of possession, in which case the possessum is marked with the suffix -*vl*. When a human possesses an object, this suffix is absent. On the basis of this trait, one may distinguish humans from other possessors and identify evidence for conceptions of *k'uh* and *k'uhuul*.

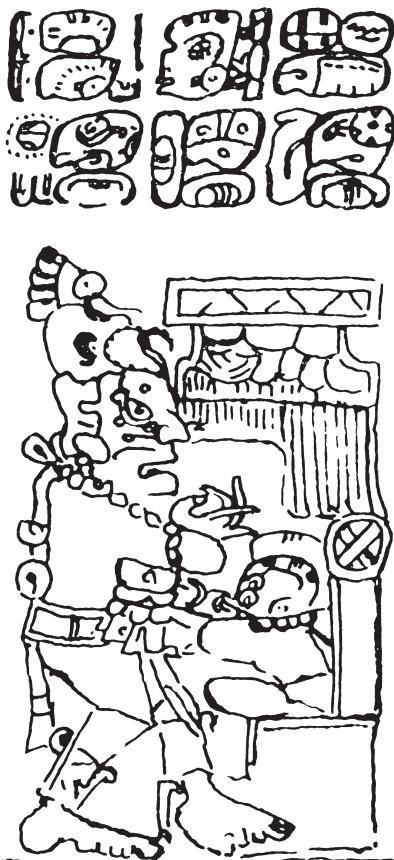


Figure 13. The full-figure variant of the hieroglyph K'UH fulfilling an iconographic function by illustrating temple statues in two scenes from the Dresden Codex (26c) (Villacorta and Villacorta 1930).

Analysis indicates that objects from religious cults in particular were grammatically possessed by the lexeme *k'uh* or *k'uhuul*. In addition to buildings used for the cult and for safeguarding images, such as an *otoot* ‘domicile’, *pibnaah* ‘underground room’, or *wayVb* ‘resting place’, portable objects especially are associated *k'uh* or *k'uhuul*. Clothing and paraphernalia that were presented to the *k'uhuul* as part of a *k'atun* celebration were called *pik*; *sab* denotes the coal or black color probably used for painting *k'uh*, according to the Madrid Codex; *sas* ‘stucco’ was also presumably used for painting *k'uh*; and *tutaal* ‘gift’ and *utzil* ‘goods, presents’ both refer to objects that were given or presented to *k'uh*. It can be generally observed that *k'uhuul* seldom functions as the grammatical possessor of an object, and that only in Late Classic inscriptions from the western Lowlands (Palenque and Comalcalco). In the Terminal Classic and Postclassic, scribes used only the lemma *k'uh* in possessor-possessum relations. On the basis of the co- and context analyses, it can be argued that the lexeme *k'uh* in the Postclassic and contact period could refer to supernatural agents, as well as to their figurative representations in cultic contexts. In Late Classic texts, scribes more often used *k'uhuul* to indicate public representations of supernatural agents. Analysis of the possessor-possessum relations substantiates in this context of use as well the religious belief that supernatural agents possessed a *k'uhuul*, i.e. a material representation that humans could produce and manipulate, primarily in cultic contexts. The lemma *k'uhuul* as used in the Late Classic described not only the bodily manifestation or figuration of supernatural agents—the material representations were agents *per se*.

### **Power to the *k'uh***

It has previously been argued that, from a cognitive scientific perspective, agents are characterized by mechanical properties, self-propulsion, and intentionality (Leslie 1995). Objects are identified as agents if they act purposefully of their own accord and possess a propelling source, energy or power. These characteristics are attested for *k'uh* in those cases in which *k'uh* supervises or guides the action of other agents. This situation is represented by the agentive expression *kab-*, which is usually denoted in the texts with the hieroglyph

T526. This expression is located between two noun phrases and functions as an agentive expression in passive constructions. The hieroglyph is semantically interpreted as meaning ‘by the action of’ (Schele and Grube 1994: 17–18). Substitutions on Chocholá ceramic vessels provide evidence that the only logographic value of T526 is **KAB** (Grube 1990b: 326), and according to Stephen Houston, this expression from the hieroglyphic inscriptions is preserved in the transitive verb *chabi* in Tzotzil (Schele et al. 1998: 44). This verb means ‘govern, guard, watch over’ (Laughlin 1988: 184–185) and is paraphrased in Classic Mayan as ‘survey, supervise’ (Martin and Grube 2008: 19). According to the attested monumental texts, *k'uh* was believed to be an agent who influenced the actions of other agents. According to the present analysis, this property is principally ascribed to the *k'uh* agents *Balun Okte' K'uh*, *Chanal K'uh*, and *Kabal K'uh*. *Balun Okte' K'uh* is intimately associated with the theme of war and is twice given as a sobriquet of the king *K'inich Janaab Pakal* (Eberl and Prager 2005). This king's reign is characterized by military activity that resulted in the king extending Palenque's political influence eastward in the direction of the San Pedro Martir river. According to the inscription on the Hieroglyphic Stairway of the palace at Palenque, the capture of a dignitary of this region is described as a ‘deed’ of *Balun Okte' K'uh*, who functioned as the tutelary deity of and was likely embodied by the king *K'inich Janaab Pakal*. Interestingly, the king does not appear as a living image of this agent, as was usually expressed by the hieroglyphic expression *u baah a'n*. Instead, in several cases, the name of this agent is a component of the nominal phrase of *K'inich Janaab*



Figure 14. *Balun Okte' K'uh* as agent as recorded on Palenque, Temple XIV, Panel (photograph by Jorge Pérez de Lara, published in <http://www.mesoweb.com/palenque/monuments/TXIV/TXIV.html>).

Pakal. Hence, K'inich Janaab Pakal possessed the properties of *Balun Okte' K'uh*, who was part of his royal identity. The king thereby exhibited not just human traits: *Balun Okte' K'uh* comprised a symbiotic part of this identity and, when the king acted, so did *Balun Okte' K'uh*. This symbiosis of human-supernatural agent is attested in inscriptions from Altar de Sacrificios as well, not just from Palenque. According to these inscriptions, human and supernatural agents co-acted as one person—the king gave the god mechanical abilities, and *Balun Okte' K'uh*, on the other hand, transferred potency, strength, and authority to his ‘companion’, allowing him to successfully act as a king equal to the gods. Examination of the texts from Palenque indicates that *Balun Okte' K'uh* was a significant agent in the local religious belief system who was not only capable of potently acting in “symbiosis” with *K'inich Janaab Pakal*. Moreover, according to mythical narratives, he was conceived of as a creative agent in the primordial past. According to an inscription from Temple 14, for instance, *Balun Okte' K'uh* gave his power to the co-essence of *K'awiil*, who was named *Sak Baak Naah Chapaht* ‘white bone house centipede’. This agent, in turn, was identified as the co-essence of the ruler of Palenque (Grube and Nahm 1994; Stone and Zender 2011: 178–179). The centipede *Sak Bak Naah Chapat* was considered a military symbol and, because of its habitat in underground and in caves, meta-represented the concept of transformation and rebirth. According to a reading of the present text, *Sak Bak Naah Chapat*, as the co-essence of *K'awiil*, transferred his military and fierce traits to *K'awiil*, who was considered the “deity” of royal and dynastic power. The inscription on the main panel of Temple XIV at Palenque records that the strengthening or charging of *K'awiil's* way was realized by means of the action of *Balun Okte' K'uh* in the north. *Balun Okte' K'uh* grasped *K'awiil*. These actions were described as primordial acts of creation that had occurred far back in the past and thus were charged with great cultural meaning for the rulers of Palenque. As the symbol of the ruling dynasty of Palenque, *K'awiil* had in the ‘white bone house centipede’ a way being whose power was derived from the original action of *Balun Okte' K'uh*, who strengthened the being with many more times the usual amount of power.

The potency expressed by the lexeme *-kab-* is ascribed in the texts of Copan to *k'uh* agents who bear the attribute *chanal* ‘heavenly’ and

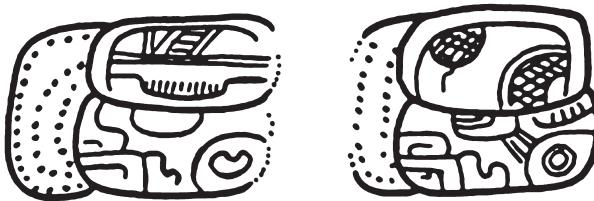
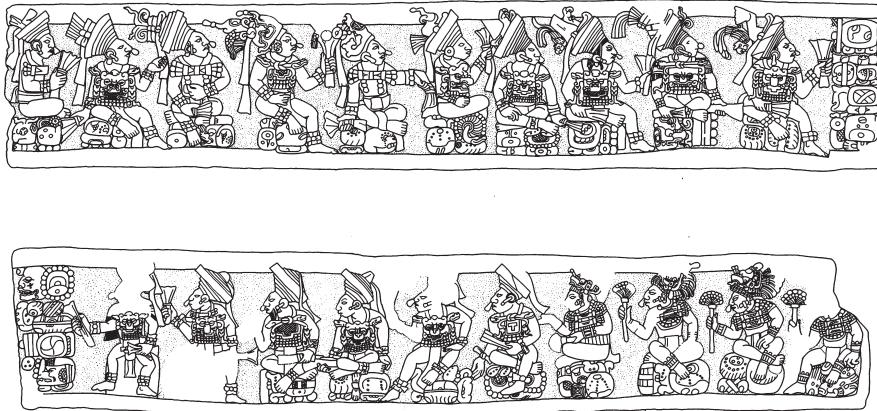


Figure 15. Glyphs for *chanal k'uh kabal k'uh* 'heavenly *k'uh*, earthly *k'uh*' (drawings by David Stuart).

*kabal* 'earthly', and hence were associated with those realms of the cosmos (Figure 15). The inscriptions from Rulers 11, 12, and 13, from Copan display the highest concentration of occurrences of the hieroglyphic sequence *chanal k'uh kabal k'uh*. Records of this expression are tied to round calendar dates or period-endings and are found in contexts of ritual-public actions, such as stela erections, stone-bindings, or ritual blood-scattering, that were conducted in the context of calendrical ceremonies (Stuart 1996). Copan, Stela 7, erected by Ruler 11, mentions that the Paddler Gods and the wind god together bound a stone and completed the period of time. According to the inscription, they acted by virtue of the power of *chanal k'uh kabal k'uh* as well as *chante' ajaw* and *balun k'awiil*, who served as patron deities of Ruler 11. The authority to act that is ascribed to these agents is also expressed on Copan Stela 12, which was erected to commemorate the 9.11.0.0.0 k'atun ending during the reign of Ruler 12. The inscription records that the 11<sup>th</sup> k'atun was ended by the authority of *chanal k'uh*, *kabal k'uh*, and other agents, making clear that the ruler was continuing the religious traditions of his predecessors and thus continued the cult of veneration of *chanal k'uh* and *kabal k'uh* as central agents of the cosmos. The third ruler to legitimate the period-ending with the presence of *chanal k'uh kabal k'uh* was *Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil*, who acceded to the throne shortly after the death of his predecessor in office around 9.13.3.6.8 and reigned until his death in 9.15.6.14.6. A detailed analysis of the texts from Copan shows that the three successive Rulers 11, 12, and 13 realized period-endings with aid from the potency of *chanal k'uh* and *kabal k'uh*—the heavenly and earthly *k'uh*. Epigraphic evidence suggests that the construction *chanal k'uh kabal k'uh* as used in ritual discourse refers to a collective of supernatural agents who were associated



**Figure 16.** The hieroglyphic bench of Copán, Temple 10L-11 exhibiting the *koknoom* of Copán (drawing by Linda Schele [Linda Schele Drawing Collection, SD-1049, <http://ancientamericas.org/collection/aa010047#>]).

with the sky and the earth (Houston et al. 2006: 188). If the complex expression was serving as a title for specific supernatural agents, it followed that agents' personal names, in keeping with the nominal syntax of Classic Mayan, as is attested on Copan Stela 1 or in the texts of Chichen Itza, for instance.

### The *koknoom* of Copán

The various modes of the cultural transmission of religious concepts and the mechanisms and processes that contribute to the stability and variation of cultural representations can be reconstructed for the Classic Period using the example of the so-called *koknoom* or 'guardians', who served as patron gods for the kings of Copán and were used over several generations of rulers. The sixteenth ruler of Copán, Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat, mentions 14 different *koknoom* in his texts, of whom *Chante' Ajaw*, *Balun K'awiil*, *K'uy T533*, *Mo' Witz Ajaw* and *Tukun Witz Ajaw* were most frequently named. These agents had already functioned as dynastic *koknoom* for his predecessors. *Bolon K'awiil* was known as early as the era of Ruler 7. Rulers 11 and 12 integrated this tutelary deity into their individual pantheons and added *Chante' Ajaw* as an additional *koknoom* agent. Texts from the reign of both kings record evince that *Chante' Ajaw* and *Bolon K'awiil* were the most frequently mentioned tutelary deities of this period.

Monument	Ruler #	Chante' Ajaw	K'uy T533	Mo' Witz Ajaw	Tukun Witz Ajaw	?-xa K'awiil	Bolon K'awiil	Sa-?-ma	Xib'an	Chaywal	Ki-T756-ti	Yu-ku-?-ma	Ch'ajoom T588	Ma'ul	T217d-la-ka	Koknoom
Temple 11 Galery	16	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Altar R		+	+	+	+	+	+									+
Temple 11 Panel			+	+	+	+										+
Temple 21 Bench		+	+	+	+	+	+									+
Altar U		+														
Stela 29		+	+													
Altar J''																+
Temple 26, Step 56	15	+	+	+												
Altar of Stela E	13	+														
Stela B						+										
Stela 4				+												
Stela C								+								
QRG Stela I		+	+													
Stela D											+					
Stela I										+						
Stela J				+						+						
Temple 22, CV36			+							+						
Stela 12	12	+									+					
Stela 13		+									+					
Stela 2		+									+					
Altar X	11?	+									+					
Stela 7	11	+									+					
Stela P											+					
Ante Step	7										+					

**Table 7.** Intra- and interdynastic comparison of the *koknoom* or tutelary deities of rulers 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 16 from Copan.

Ruler 13, *Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil*, adopted Bolon K'awiil and Chante' Ajaw into his repertoire of personal tutelary gods and expanded the group of *koknoom* by adding the two agents K'uy T533 and Mo' Witz Ajaw. The fifteenth ruler, *K'ahk' Yipyaj Chan K'awiil*, listed Chante' Ajaw, K'uy T533, Mo' Witz Ajaw, and another agent as protective patrons of his rulership on the great Hieroglyphic Stairway of Temple 26. The number of tutelary deities increased to at least 14 during the reign of Ruler 16, who integrated the *koknoom* of Rulers 15, 13, 12, 11, and 7 into his own repertoire of agents and added further ones. From the perspective of *Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat*, Rulers 7, 11, 12, and 13 must have been important personalities whose lives and deeds were

exemplary. Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat saw himself as the successor to these historically significant figures and, in addition to summoning the aforementioned royal ancestors at his enthronement celebration, also conjured their tutelary deities and made them his own, so that they would be just as well-disposed towards him and would protect his reign. Analysis of these occurrences indicates that the guardians or *koknoom* of politically successful rulers were incorporated into the pantheons of new rulers (Table 7). In summary, this cumulative-selective strategy—adopting the patron deities of successful predecessors into the pantheon of a new king, together with the addition of new *koknoom*—served as an essential factor in stabilizing local, cultural transmission.

### **Personal, local and regional *k'uh***

Epigraphic analysis reveals that the term *k'uh* as it appears in monumental contexts primarily refers to supernatural agents who were believed to have mechanical, cognitive, and teleological attributes. Later during the Postclassic, the images of supernatural agents were also described with this term. The occurrences in stone inscriptions clearly indicate that *k'uh* was fundamentally used as a categorical term for supernatural agents and was in many instances supplemented by nominal constructions of an epithetic or attributive character, for instance to indicate the *k'uh* agent's function or area of influence. A total of 30 different occurrences were identified. Systematization of these cases shows that they are primarily nouns referring to places, natural phenomena, humans, the body, the social world, or agents from mythical narratives, or making quantitative statements about the number of *k'uh* agents. Distributional analysis indicates that *k'uh* agents can be differentiated according to whether the temporal and spatial extent of their distribution was wide or whether they were only used locally.

The *k'uh* agents with a wide temporal and spatial distribution who were specified with attributes include *ux T597 k'uh* (21 instances: 8.17.0.0.0–9.15.0.0.0), *chanal k'uh* and *kabal k'uh* (21 instances: 9.0.0.0.0–10.3.0.0.0), *ixik k'uh* (over 50 instances: 9.2.0.0.0–10.3.0.0.0), *ohlis k'uh* (13 instances: 9.5.0.0.0–10.2.0.0.0), *chit k'uh* (23 instances: 9.9.10.0.0–10.0.0.0.0), *balun okte' k'uh* (26 instances: 9.10.0.0.0 until



**Figure 17.** A selection of *k'uh* agents (drawings by Barbara Fash, Merle Greene Robertson, Ian Graham, Christopher Jones, Linda Schele, Paul Schoenmakers, David Stuart; photographs by Justin Kerr).

the colonial period), *ik' k'uh* and *polaw k'uh* (8 instances: 9.10.0.0.0–9.16.0.0.0), and *k'ahk' k'uh* (3 instances: 9.11.0.0.0–9.15.0.0.0). The earliest evidence for a sub-categorization or thematic specification of *k'uh* agents occurs in Early Classic texts. In addition to *chanal k'uh* and *kabal k'uh* ('heavenly and earthly *k'uh* agents') (Figure 15), references were also made during this early phase to *k'uh* agents who were designated with the hieroglyph T597, which referred to a trinity of supernatural agents, but whose reading remains insecure. Analysis of all occurrences of the expression *chanal k'uh kabal k'uh* emphasizes that it described a category of supernatural agents, rather than individual ones, whose members shared the properties *chanal* 'heavenly' and *kabal* 'earthly'. In early texts from Tikal and Copan, this expression occurs in conjunction with *juun pik* (*k'uh*) '8000 (*k'uh*)' in place of lists of supernatural agents. These expressions are typically followed by additional hieroglyphs that indicate categories of *k'uh* agents, and the list was eventually concluded with the personal names of individual supernatural agents. Thus, it is likely that these "god lists" express hierarchies within the "pantheon" and emphasize the nearly endless number of supernatural agents to which a king could refer. The spatially and temporally widespread tradition of locating supernatural agents in earthly and heavenly space highlights the significant meaning of this space as a "theological" frame of reference for divine kings, who were considered to be rulers over time and space (Grube 2010).

Numbers played an outstanding role in the sacral geography of divine kingship (Grube 2010: 22–23), so it is not surprising that supernatural agents were associated with them as well. Dualities (*juun ajaw k'uh* / *yax baluun k'uh*), trinities (*ux T597 k'uh*, *ux ahaal k'uh*), pluralities (*uxte'*, *bulukte'*, *uxlajuunte'* *k'uh*, *balun tz'apal k'uh*), and even infinities (*juun pik k'uh*) of supernatural *k'uh* agents are attested in Classic Maya religion. The earliest occurrences of *k'uh* variants with numeral attributes are in the hieroglyphic sequence *ux T597 k'uh*. In the context of this study, it could be proved that the hieroglyphs **3-T597-ti K'UH** were embedded in a cosmogonic context and always described a group of agents who were associated with creative events. In Palenque, the three supernatural agents dubbed GI, GII, and GIII were described as *ux T597-ti k'uh* during the reign of *K'inich Kan Bahlam II* and *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III*. Other rulers of the

same site applied this epithet to other agents as well. Assuming that insights acquired from the Dresden Codex or two ceramic vessels of unknown provenience about the vague meaning and function of <3-T597-ti K'UH> can also be applied to other occurrences of these glyphs, one may postulate that these supernatural agents are closely associated in their respective religious belief systems with the beginning of time and the creating and ordering of space. The phonetic spelling 3-lu-ti K'UH in the Dresden Codex may be a phonetic version of the hieroglyphic sequence 3-T597-ti K'UH, which can be provisionally read as *ux luut k'uh* and interpreted as 'three/many united *k'uh* agents' (Schele 1992: 127–128; Villela 1993; Mathews and Bíró 2006). The early contexts of *k'uh* occurrences emphasize that the ideology of divine kingship was intended from an early stage to govern time and space and that knowledge about the beginning and the structure of the world constituted foundational, "theological" instruments of Classic-period divine kingship which were disseminated supra-regionally, not just locally. This situation is expressed, for instance, by the numerous variants of cosmogonic narratives that have been preserved in texts from Palenque, Quirigua, Coba, and other sites (Looper 1995; Carrasco 2010). Whereas early attestations of *k'uh* were often associated with space and time, beginning in 9.5.0.0.0, one encounters attestations of *k'uh* agents as *ohlis k'uh*, *chit k'uh*, or *nuk jol k'uh* that were connected with the human body. By far the most frequent attestations were agents from the category *ohlis k'uh*. *Ohlis* was a body part in the human chest that is most accurately translated using the Western concept 'heart, reason, spirit, life essence'. Hence, an *ohlis k'uh* was a 'life essence-*k'uh*' and related thus to supernatural *k'uh* agents who were associated with the *ohl-*, or the heart, reason, or inside (of a human and his or her life essence) (Stone and Zender 2011: 100). Analysis of all occurrences produces a rather diffuse picture of the function and meaning of this group of agents. In Palenque, *ohlis k'uh* functioned as a categorical term that encompassed a series of supernatural agents in whose presence the young successor *K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II* realized his first blood-letting. According to the so-called *Pasadena Tracing*, an inscription of unknown origin with references to Palenque, *K'inich Janaab Pakal I* was born in the presence of an *ohlis k'uh*. In Palenque, at least, a more or less clear association between young people and

*ohlis k'uh* is attested, which may describe the supernatural agents who acted as the personal tutelary deities of kings and who accompanied the ruler throughout his entire life, although they were not *way* or *koknoom*. This interpretation could also explain the cases in Yaxchilan in which the local ruler named “Knot-Eye Jaguar” waged war against and captured a vassal of the king in the process. This action is declared to be the ‘work’ of *ohlis k'uh*. It is possible that this context expresses the belief that *ohlis k'uh* represent the supernatural agents that served as an internal source of power for the king and were transferred to him at birth. While *ohlis k'uh* may have given the king power, the ruler had to offer blood to his *ohlis k'uh* as an offering in return. This situation is expressed in the texts of Palenque and Comalcalco in which the king, or in the case of Comalcalco, the highest priest, sacrificed blood in the presence of the images (*k'uh*) of the *ohlis k'uh*. The existence of such images becomes plain upon examining the inscription on an earring that was dropped into the cenote of Chichen Itzá as a sacrifice and is declared to be jewelry for *ohlis k'uh*. Finally, an example on the so-called Dumbarton Oaks Panel shows that female gods could also belong to this category of supernatural agents. However, this is a singular attestation from which no general pattern can be inferred until additional cases have been identified.

Supernatural agents also functioned as the social partners of kings. Analysis of the temporally and spatially widespread hieroglyphic phrase *chit k'uh* ‘partner *k'uh*’ evinces that the personal names of these agents were primarily enumerated as components of kingly anthroponymic phrases in the context of birth and calendar rituals (CRN Panel 3, MRL St. 4; CRN Msc. 2). Theonyms that were associated with the categorical term *chit k'uh* are individual and were always associated with a specific historical figure, whereby kings maintained not only one, but rather multiple agents as supernatural companions. This pattern indicates that *chit k'uh* refers to a category of supernatural agents whom they believed demonstrated a close and personal relationship to historical agents. These agents were thus intimately associated with the concept of *way* agents and of *koknoom* ‘guardians’, which, in turn, is attested only in Copan. In addition to appearing as an attribute of *k'uh*, *chit* also functions as a facultative component of the personal name of the

so-called Water Lily Monster or Water Serpent *juun witz' naah kan* (Colas 2004: 194). It is a theonym that typically appears as a component of male and female names and represents the personal name of a supernatural agent who, according to the corresponding images, acts independently, but whom the hieroglyphic sources record only as a component of anthroponyms. This snake-like agent was considered by the Classic Maya to be a representation of running water and often constitutes part of the regalia that kings wore at period-ending rituals and through which they personified this agent (Stuart and Houston 1996: 299; Stuart 2007; Houston 2010). Snakes were guardians of water who rested during the dry period and provided water and sustenance during the rainy season (Houston 2010: 72). The Water Serpent guaranteed water for the yearly rains and was simultaneously the figuration of the seasonal rains, landslides, and floods. Rulers described these snakes as partner gods or partner *k'uh* and identified themselves with this creative force of nature, as is clearly expressed in the texts of Copan and Yaxchilan. To ensure that the yearly rains, and thus bounty and sustenance, returned, the ruler and his 'partner god' conducted period-ending rituals either as the personification (*u baahil a'n*) or the partner (*chit*) of this supernatural agent and thus acting as the mythical Water Serpent. The *k'uh* agents who were associated with war and conflict had supra-regional significance: *balun okte' k'uh* and the pair *ik' k'uh* and *polaw k'uh*, which were considered personifications of wind and hydraulic powers. Analysis of all instances of *ik' k'uh* and *polaw k'uh* indicates that they, like *balun okte' k'uh*, also constitute the personal names of individual supernatural agents, and not, as was proven for *chanal k'uh* and *kabal k'uh* or other agents, a categorical term or classes of supernatural agents. This pairing most frequently occurs in texts from archaeological sites on the Usumacinta. These supernatural agents' primary sphere of action and occupation is the mythical ballgame, in which they functioned as aides to the great Water Serpent, which likewise participated in the ballgame and, in the case of Yaxchilan, was personified by the ruler himself. The inscriptions from Yaxchilan emphasize that *ik' k'uh* and *polaw k'uh* were lower-ranking supernatural agents that were personified only by subordinates to the king with the rank of *sajal* or by young princes (*ch'ok ajaw*).

The ritual ballgame can be understood as a metaphor for the death and rebirth of maize. All natural forces involved in these phenomena participated in this game concerning the life and death of the maize god: *ik' k'uh* and *polaw? k'uh* as figurations of the rain-bringing land and sea breezes, and the great Water Serpent as a personification of the essential rain showers. In this context, one may also refer to the hieroglyphs for *ux ahaal k'uh* ‘three conquest *k'uh*’, attested only at Palenque. This problematic term is associated with war, the ball-game, and death, and, according to linguistic analysis, can be interpreted as meaning ‘three conquests’. Ball courts named *ux ahaal* refer to three mythical ballgames that ended in the death of the maize god and other supernatural agents. According to the inscription on the central panel of the Temple of the Foliated Cross in Palenque, the supernatural agent *ch'ok unen k'awiil* or GII bore the designation T121 *yax muut k'awiil winik* ‘shining green bird-K’awiil-person’ and the epithet *ux ahaal k'uh*. This may indicate that, according to local beliefs, *ch'ok unen k'awiil* was one of the supernatural agents who met his death during the “divine” game, descended into the underworld, and was born again at the beginning of the current era.

The belief in generations of gods or age groups is particularly embodied in the hieroglyphic texts of Rulers 11, 12, and 13 from Copan. According to these sources, the so-called Paddler Gods are identified as *mam k'uh* ‘grandfather/ancestor *k'uh*’ and *sakun k'uh* ‘older brother *k'uh*’, and thus as the grandfathers and older brothers of the *koknoom* ‘guardians’. The results of epigraphic analysis emphasize that these are categorical descriptions, not theonyms. According to the inscription on Stela P, *mam ajaw* ‘ancestor father ruler’ shaped an object from clay in an act of creation. The text recounts a blood sacrifice by Ruler 11 for the benefit of the Paddler Gods, who symbolized the opposition between day and night and who transported the deceased into the underworld with their canoe. The inscription records that they are *mam k'uh* ‘ancestor gods’ who are described as the older brother gods of *chante' ajaw*, *bolon k'awiil*, *yax k'ab kuy*, and *yemal itzam*. These latter figures were *koknoom* ‘guardians’ who served as the patron deities of the ruler “Butz’ Chan”, or Ruler 11. Much evidence indicates that supernatural agents were interpreted as older, divine brothers of the ruler whose duty was to protect the king as their younger brother. Consequently, the text on Stela P

provides insight into a local “theology”, which facilitates drawing conclusions concerning supra-regional beliefs concerning profiles of action and “social structures” among supernatural agents. The Paddler Gods represented the opposition of day and night and were included among the venerable and aged agents in Classic Maya religion who functioned as creator deities at the beginning of the current era and who paddled the dead into the underworld in their canoe or moved clouds in the sky (Schele and Miller 1986: 269–271; Looper 1992; Freidel et al. 1993; Stuart et al. 1999: 169–171; Mathews 2001; Bassie-Sweet 2002; Stone and Zender 2011: 51, 129). Iconographic evidence makes clear that this pair of gods was connected with collecting water and with procuring rain-filled clouds in the sky (Stephen Houston, in: Wright 2011: 69). Their personal names have yet to be deciphered, but their epithet, which often follows the Paddler Gods’ personal names, is read *chan itz'at* ‘artists/wise men in the sky’ (Barbara MacLeod, in: Schele 1992: 257–259) The relationship to the sky that is made explicit in these agents’ epithet (*chan itz'at* ‘artists/wise men in the sky’) is iconically expressed in Terminal Classic images on stelae from the central Peten, in which this pair of supernatural agents observe from their place in clouds or plumes of smoke scenes that often show the ruler executing cultic activities in conjunction with period-endings. By burning his blood or other ritually significant liquids, the ruler induced smoke plumes and thus gave birth to the Paddler Gods, who in return rowed over the rains necessary for the growth of vegetation (Stone and Zender 2011: 51). The rulers periodically reenacted this creation event in an established sequence of cultic actions. Epigraphic analysis of all occurrences confirms that *mam k'uh* ‘ancestor *k'uh*’ and ‘older brother *k'uh*’ were closely associated with the cycle of life and death. The great authority of this creator pair is expressed in numerous passages, according to which the Paddler Gods were present at period-ending rituals or themselves conducted the ceremonies via a ruler’s personification. The presence or authority of the Paddler Gods at these period-ending rituals is expressed with the relational phrases *yitaj* ‘with the authority’ and *yichnal* ‘in the presence of’. The latter emphasizes that period-ending rituals were realized in the presence of images of these agents.

Female *k'uh* agents were also identified over the course of this study. They are primarily found in the context of the so-called vase title whose central component is the still-undeciphered hieroglyph T182. Analysis of this “vase title” produces a complex picture of the relationship between women and divine kingship. The bearers of this epithet, which was intimately connected to the female moon goddess, were high-ranking, female nobles who bore the male progeny of a dynastic line or could assume rule during a dynastic crisis until a male successor reached an appropriate age and could assume his place on the throne. As personifications of the moon goddess, women conveyed dynastic power and could transmit it to male heirs. Mythical narratives from Palenque document the local belief that in mythical, primeval times the moon goddess in the guise of *K'awiil* transferred kingly power to the divine ancestors of the kings of Palenque. An additional point of importance is the correspondence between the moon goddess and war. All illustrations of so-called warrior queens show women as personifications of the moon goddess, who appears in Postclassic images in particular as the destroyer of the world by spilling water. The best-known example is preserved on page 74 of the Dresden Codex. According to this image, all Maya queens were personifications of this destructive goddess, who on the other hand was associated with birth and thus with the beginning of life. The opposition of birth and death is clearly expressed in this supernatural *k'uh* agent, according to which the bearers of the vase title were considered to be female *k'uh* (*ixik k'uh* or *ix k'uh*) who, in addition to bearing male heirs for the dynastic lineage, as personifications of the old and young moon goddess represented her militant and also simultaneously live-giving aspect. The earliest of the occurrences that can be dated and localized is on Yaxchilan Lintel 22 (9.4.11.8.16), which has been insecurely dated to 9.2.0.0.0, and the latest is on Jimbal Stela 2 (10.3.0.0.0). Analysis indicates that the vase title is the personal name of an individual supernatural agent who was categorized as a female *k'uh* agent.

## Summary

Examination of attestations of *k'uh* in the Classic-period inscriptions reveals a multifaceted and complex picture of this religious phenomenon, which has been summarized in this article. This study used co- and context analysis to study the form, function, significance, and usage contexts of supernatural agents who are addressed in the inscriptions with the term *k'uh*. It aimed to examine them in their temporal and spatial depth and distribution and, on the basis of this information, to draw conclusions about the stability and variation of this cultural representation, in order to identify the mechanisms and dynamics that influenced cultural variation or contributed to their stabilization. Changes at the head of politically successful dynasties and kingdoms were not visible in local “theology” until two generations later—in Copan, for instance, successors adopted the tutelary deities of politically successful predecessors and also added to this pantheon of reputable gods their own agents, whom they venerated in a cult on various occasions. Stability in composing dynastic pantheons also manifests itself in the case of Palenque in the western area of the Maya realm. The pantheon remained constant and represented the center of the local cult from about 9.9.2.4.8 until 9.15.5.0.0, from the accession of *K'inich Janaab Pakal I* to the throne until the reign of *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III*. Whereas kings often included their own tutelary gods in their name phrases—*K'inich Janaab Pakal I*, for instance, saw himself as a manifestation of the war god *Balun Okte' K'uh*—the combination of the so-called triad of gods never changed. The concept of a trinity of gods at the center of the local “state cult” was probably adopted from the central and eastern Peten, where at Tikal and Caracol a multiplicity of dynastic deities were venerated in war beginning in 8.17.0.0.0. The case of Caracol at least demonstrates that it did not always exclusively consist of a trinity; instead, it was also possible for a multiplicity of supernatural agents to occupy the focus of the religious cult. The great numbers of *k'uh* agents who have only been attested once to date and who were more important on a local level and only for a brief period time provide evidence for the existence of local, intracultural beliefs. Furthermore, due to their contexts of use, they imply the existence of a supra-regionally significant, theological framework which gave structure to the Classic-period religious system while also permitting a range of variation.

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# **Scattered Remnants of a Short-lived Glory: A Re-evaluation of Machaquila Structure 4, the ‘Huunal-House’ of Ix Mahk Ajaw and ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk**

GUIDO MICHAEL KREMPPEL

Independent scholar

(hunal@posteo.de)

**Abstract:** This article summarizes the research history and results from archaeological as well as epigraphic investigations of the carved stones pertaining to Structure 4 of Machaquila, Guatemala. Initially, the author broaches the issue of the implications from the discovery of the site, subsequent looting activities and early expeditions with a focus on Ian Graham’s documentation. The second part concerns the archaeological excavations of Structure 4 and adjacent buildings in Plaza F and presents the results of the author’s own documentation of the extended inventory. A synthesis of data culminates in a new hypothetical reconstruction model for the hieroglyphic program of Structure 4. Based on previous epigraphic analysis, to which foremost Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo contributed significantly in the course of his work as the epigrapher for the Guatemalan-Spanish project “The Political Entity of Machaquila during the Late and Terminal Classic Period”, the author presents a re-evaluation of the function and meaning of Structure 4 and proposes a new reading for the proper name and interpretation of this building. A comparative look at other Late Classic attestations of hieroglyphic benches as prominent features of such ‘coronation-houses’ at other sites and Late Classic imagery complements the study in order to shed more light on the supposed spatial arrangement and textual contents of Machaquila’s exceptional hieroglyphic bench. Thereby, it partially reveals the story about the last ruler of Machaquila named ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk, a woman entitled Ix Mahk Ajaw, and her daughter.

**Resumen:** Este artículo resume la historia de la investigación y los resultados obtenidos, a través de investigaciones arqueológicas y epigráficas, de las piedras talladas pertenecientes a la Estructura 4 en Machaquilá, Guatemala. El autor comienza examinando las implicaciones planteadas por el descubrimiento y las primeras expediciones al sitio, enfocándose en los hallazgos de Ian Graham y las actividades de saqueo que le siguieron antes de comenzar una nueva fase de exploración. Seguidamente, el ensayo se centra en la exploración arqueológica de la Estructura 4 y los edificios adyacentes en la Plaza F, presentando los resultados de la propia documentación del autor sobre el amplio inventario de piedras jeroglíficas talladas que una vez decoraron la banca jeroglífica de la Estructura 4, un rasgo destacado del edificio. Siguiendo un detallado análisis y síntesis de los datos, el estudio culmina con un nuevo modelo hipotético de reconstrucción del programa jeroglífico de la Estructura 4. Basado en análisis epigráficos anteriores, en los que Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo contribuyó significativamente en el curso de su trabajo como arqueólogo y epigrafista para el proyecto guatemalteco-español titulado “La entidad política de Machaquilá durante el periodo Clásico Tardío y Terminal”, el autor presenta una reevaluación de la función y el significado de la Estructura 4. Con el fin de aportar más información sobre el arreglo espacial y el contenido textual de la banqueta jeroglífica de Machaquilá, el estudio se complementa

con una revisión comparativa de otros sitios, donde las banquetas jeroglíficas del Clásico tardío son elementos centrales en las “casas de entronización” o en las representaciones gráficas. El texto jeroglífico revela parcialmente la historia del último gobernante de Machaquilá, ‘Escorpión’ Ti ‘Chaahk, de una mujer llamada Ix Mahk Ajaw, así como de su hija.

They showed me a carved block of stone they had found among those ruins and had brought back by helicopter (the stone was serving that day as a doorstop). The stone was fine-grained and hard, and the beautifully carved hieroglyphs had survived in mint condition. [...] The ruins were more exciting than anything—short of Bonampak—that I could have hoped to find.

Ian Graham, *The Road to Ruins* (2010: 250, 252)

Ian Graham’s retrospective thoughts about his explorations of the ruins of Machaquila, and specifically his first glimpse at the fine quality of the carved stones originating from a building designated Structure 4 (Str. 4) do reflect this outstanding scholars’ enthusiasm and dedication for the documentation of Classic Maya heritage. Yet, even more so, they illustrate his continuous passion for the monuments of Machaquila in particular. As the story goes, it was the beauty of one sole fragment with elaborately carved glyphs in a photograph shown to him by Alfonso Escalante of the Union Oil Company that grabbed Graham’s attention at once. Combined with the hint that there were “also several fallen stelae among these ruins and a partially preserved building of excellent masonry” (Graham 2010: 250), this immediately led to his decision to head an exploration in order to map and document the said origin of these elaborately carved stones (Graham 1963, 1967).

The present study seeks to continue relating the research history of those stones pertaining to Structure 4; a story which had already started with the discovery of the ruins, and which continued throughout half a century by means of amateur explorations, intense looting and illicit trade on an international level, mixed with a long period of abundance of the site, and a series of noteworthy professional archaeological excavations as well as epigraphic contributions. As will be described in this article, among the pioneer scholars studying the site was Alfonso Lacadena who masterminded significant contributions to the epigraphy of Machaquila and in particular to unravelling the riddle of Str. 4. Therefore, I seek to underscore the

significance of Alfonso's work, as he was not only one of few people who did contribute to the epigraphy of Machaquila as a trained linguist and epigrapher, but someone who actively participated in the archaeological excavations *in situ* producing revealing insights (see, e.g., Iglesias and Lacadena 2003, 2005; Ciudad et al. 2004, 2010, 2011; Lacadena 2005, 2006, 2011; Lacadena and Iglesias 2005, 2006).

In 2004, upon seeing photos of the carved stones with inscriptions found at Machaquila, and on Str. 4 in particular, and reading Graham's (1963: 9; 1967: 58) published descriptions of his exploration of the site, I was captivated. In the course of participating in a Maya epigraphy seminar directed by Nikolai Grube at the University of Bonn, I compiled the available literature about Machaquila, thereby learning that there were more carved stone fragments with inscriptions belonging to an epigraphic program of Str. 4 (e.g., Lacadena 2005; Lacadena and Iglesias 2005). More inscribed stones were subsequently found in recent years that could contribute significantly to an eventual reconstruction and reading of this structure's inscriptions. However, it was obvious that there were a number of missing carved stones with inscriptions, so many questions remained to be answered. Furthermore, no one had yet attempted to propose a complete reconstruction of this hieroglyphic bench, reason why I welcomed the challenge to propose a potential reconstruction drawing, even though, I cognizant of the difficult enterprise I was embarking on; a road that would certainly be full of potholes, and that in all likelihood, might never take me to garnering a complete inventory with which to attain a complete reconstruction of the epigraphic program, and help in understanding the function of Str. 4.

After completing two months of fieldwork for the Uxul Archaeological Project in Southern Campeche in 2009, I decided to extend my field season, seizing the opportunity to present a paper at a symposium at the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología (MUNAE) in Guatemala and seeing the fragments of Str. 4 in the museum's exhibition first hand (Figure 1). In the meantime, I arranged a meeting with Jorge Chocón of the Atlas Arqueológico de Guatemala (AAG) in order to enable a hands-on study and documentation of the other fragments stored in the AAG's warehouses and at the nearby Museo Regional del Sureste del Petén (now Museo Juan Pedro Laporte; MJPL) in Dolores, Guatemala (Figure 2). During



**Figure 1.** Carved Stones pertaining to Structure 4 exhibited in Museo de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala. Blocks from top to bottom: V, C, D, and F) (photographs by Yuriy Polyukhovych).



**Figure 2.** Smaller fragments pertaining to Structure 4 (not to scale): *a-b*) Fragment m with extended upper right corner, *c*) Fragments found in Str. 7, *d*) hitherto not classified fragments found in Str. 4, *e*) supposedly part of Graham's Fragment J, *f*) hitherto unpublished fragment of uncertain format, *g*) hitherto unpublished small fragment pertaining to Type II, *h*) hitherto unpublished fragment forming part of the Machaquila emblem glyph, *i*) fragment of uncertain format, *j*) fragment similar to Type III stones, *k*) fragments of the plain border pertaining to Type I stones, *l*) Type IV block found by the author on top of Str. 2, *m*) Fragment found in 1988 (all photographs by Guido Krempel, except *m* by Christian Christensen, used with kind permission).

my stay in Dolores, Jorge kindly arranged a meeting with Petronilo Carrera, a local resident of San Antonio La Machaca III, who guided me to the nearby ruins for a one-day visit. In search of Str. 4, we coincidentally stumbled upon three fragments of a carved stone inscription showing exactly the size and format that I was so eagerly hoping to find (Figure 2*l*). What was especially surprising and encouraging is that those stone fragments provided a date, which contributed

significantly and gave ímpetus to my interest in studying the structure more fully.

Almost immediately, this find cemented my motivation to attempt a new reconstruction drawing and analysis of Str. 4. However, it took another three years of more intense research until I attempted a first rendering that incorporated all documented carved stone fragments of Str. 4 and proposed a plausible reconstruction of their original arrangement as architectonic features. I based my reconstructive approach on the results of recent excavations, on possible explanations for the distinct types and dimensions of its carved stones, and, last but not least, attempting to reach the best possible understanding of the narrative content recorded in these inscriptions. This approach culminated in a preliminary reconstruction drawing and interpretation of the inscriptions of Str. 4 as part of my MA thesis (Krempel 2012) which remains unpublished.

The first part of the present essay summarizes the history of exploration of Machaquila and refers to previous contributions regarding the inventory of carved stones attributed to Str. 4. It discusses the implications from reported find circumstances, and then continues by presenting the author's own epigraphic analysis of the inscriptions, including a discussion of recorded dates, [place] names and titles. In the final section, the emerging complex narrative discourse is exemplified by means of selected text sequences that are compared to attestations of hieroglyphic benches and corresponding contents from external sources and Late Classic imagery with the aim of determining the form, function and meaning of Str. 4.

## **Discovery and Ian Graham's early expeditions**

The ruins of Machaquila were first discovered by Alfonso Escalante during an expedition conducted for the Union Oil Company in 1958. Already during this initial exploration, a minimum of four of the best-preserved carved stones were sacked from Str. 4 and transported by helicopter to the field camps near Poptun where they were gifted to the bosses and geologists of Union Oil (Graham 1963; 1967: 51; 2010: 252; letter by Edwin Shook to Karl Herbert Mayer, dated 1978). Later in 1958, the archaeologist Linton Satterthwaite arrived by helicopter in Plaza A (the main ceremonial centre of the

site), but according to Graham (1967: 51), he stayed only 15 minutes and wasn't able to conduct any work during this occasion.

Graham visited the ruins for the first time in 1961 staying at the site for four days, during which he created a preliminary map of the site's core and photographed two monuments.<sup>1</sup> In his initial publication, he illustrated only one of the blocks that were handed over to the museum in Guatemala City (namely Stone C; see Graham 1963: 9) (Figure 1). His return the following year resulted in a stay of 18 days. Graham's objectives were "to examine the rest of the monuments and take latex molds of them" (Graham 1963; 1967: 51). Thereby, he achieved his goal of documenting a total amount of 17 stelae and 2 carved altars. He managed to make molds of some of the inscriptions, including a notable selection of the stones belonging to Str. 4.<sup>2</sup>

Graham's descriptions of the context in which he made his discoveries, and of the inscribed stones, which he had already photographed during his first expedition, are invaluable for the present and future studies of Str. 4. As an anecdote to his later descriptions, he mentions the miserable loss of four broken stones of which two were left at the heliport because the helicopter was overloaded during his first attempts to retrieve them in 1961 (the other two, Stones B and C, later made it into the museum). In 1962, he sent out his men to pick the two stones up, however, "the load proved too heavy for their mule", further adding that "two stones were dumped by the trail farther on, where they escaped our attention, probably because the trail was by then under water" (Graham 1967: 56). He reburied the rest of the fragments near Str. 4, of which some small pieces were excavated four decades later and are today stored in the MJPL in Dolores, together with the more recently surfaced fragments. The current whereabouts of several smaller fragments remains unknown.

In his description Graham distinguished the form of the carved stones in three classes, which according to the author's re-evaluation have been reclassified while former upper- and lowercase

<sup>1</sup> Stela 3 and 11, respectively (see Graham 1963: 8).

<sup>2</sup> He describes to have based drawings of three fragments based on plaster casts and field drawings rather than basing them on his photographs. Yet, in his publications he did not mention how many plaster casts were made of the stones pertaining to Str. 4 nor how many attempts resulted in positive results; several tries seem to have failed due to the tropical humidity and wet surfaces impeding dehydration of the latex moulds (Graham 1967: 58).

letter-designations applied by Graham (1967: 58) and Lacadena and Iglesias (2005: 3, fig. 2) were maintained:<sup>3</sup>

- I. Large flat stones with an average height of 18.8 cm (Type II in the forthcoming); except Stone V which he noted with 21.8 cm in height as differing from the norm (Type I according to my current classification).
- II. Small flat stones of which he found only one fragment (Stone M); however, noting that his men “recollected (sic: remembered?) that a similar-sized stone depicting “two men” had been found by the geologists. As a noteworthy detail, Graham states that “the size of the stone and the apparently small number of them suggest that they formed a step into a doorway. Height of M is 10 cm” (Graham 1967: 58) (Type IV according to my classification).
- III. Curved stones of which he found a total amount of five showing “a cylindrical surface of vertical axis, and many plain stones of the same form” (Graham 1967: 58) (Type III in my present classification).

He informs the reader further that “[g]eologists and their men left evidence of a more than superficial search for these stones (of Types I and II), so that their relative positions as found is unknown. Without excavations there is no certainty whether the stones formed a stairway or were set into the façade of a building as panels or medial molding or into a retaining wall. The fact that many are broken may suggest they fell from a height. A puzzling feature is that stones B, C, and F have borders at both ends, as if they had been set in some degree of isolation” (Graham 1967: 56).

As will be clarified below, Graham was already ahead of his time and thought in the right direction by assuming that the stones may have been set into a façade, into a retaining wall, whilst one fragment could eventually have formed part of a carved step leading to the entrance of the building. Yet, he wasn’t able to finally conclude upon the possibility of a mosaic bench format with circular reliefs decorating its supports, simply because he had at this point in time

<sup>3</sup> In order to avoid confusion by adding other letter- and number-designations applied by the AAG neither these nor the author’s own previous designations have been included in the present study.

only encountered five of the distinctly shaped blocks<sup>4</sup> that can today more securely be reconstructed as three circular relief panels forming the legs of a bench. Especially noteworthy for the present study is that he further describes the stones were “concentrated in two heaps 6 m apart at either end of the zone where the stones of classes 1 and 2 originated. The radii of eight stones, both carved and plain, were measured: they ranged between 28 and 40 cm, with an average of 35 cm. Average height about 22 cm.” This vague and yet revealing description of the stones pertaining to Type III, enables to reconstruct two complete supports of the bench that were positioned about 6 m away from each other. I take these circumstances as confirmation that Graham and his workers did indeed only conduct a superficial search for the carved stones and that they concentrated their survey area mostly on one side of the central area of Str. 4. In turn, it seems that they missed to inspect one of the sides, probably because it was covered by debris, by vegetation covering this area, or because Str. 4 had at this point already been surveyed at the surface and the workers did just not expect to find more stones beneath or in between the rubble (see Figures 3a–c).

The first publication of the carved stones pertaining to Str. 4 is a brief MUNAE acquisition report. Of anonymous authorship (1958: 67), the note dates to the year 1958 and illustrates two of the carved blocks (Graham’s Stones D and V, respectively) with elaborate drawings. Also significant about this note is the corresponding figure caption stating that the two pieces were sent by Lloyd Miller of the Signal Oil Company (possibly gifted in 1958, in the course of Graham’s mediation).

Graham initiated his investigations in 1958 and started his task by contacting the museum staff as well as the geologists and people in charge, who extracted those stones of which some were then transferred to the museum, whereas others remained in private hands (the mentioned gifts to superiors working for, e.g., the Union Oil Company). It is uncertain how many stones were removed by the workers and geologists during the discovery of the ruins in the 1950’s. As Graham reports and the mentioned acquisition note

<sup>4</sup> Of Type III; Stones Q, R, S, T, U, two of which he photographed, while three blocks seemingly got lost during his first expedition as these eventually more eroded pieces appear only as drawings based on plaster casts in his 1967 publication and can neither be detected among the Harvard files.



**Figure 3.** Views on Machaquila Structure 4 and carved stones pertaining to it *in situ*: *a*) Structure 4 during excavations in 2003 (after Ciudad et al. 2003: 289, fig. 41b, *b*) decontextualized stones of Str. 4 (after Ciudad et al. 2003: 290, fig. 42, *c*) one of the four excavated pillars of the posterior wall of Str. 4 (after Iglesias and Lacadena 2005: 153, fig. 6), *d*) fragments encountered on the surface of Str. 2 in 2009 (photograph by Guido Krempel).

confirms, at least three stones were given to the museum already at that time. One well-preserved example (Stone A) which Graham documented while it served as a doorstop in a private collection did not re-surface. Four of the well-preserved stones (C, D, F and V) are today exhibited in the permanent collection of MUNAE, whereas Stone B is kept apart in the storeroom and is not exhibited in public. Graham further notes that, in 1965, Edwin Shook noticed Stone V in a private collection in Costa Rica and was able to mediate it to be given to MUNAE (Graham 1967: 56).

Once more returning to the beginning, Graham's initial report published in 1963 already implies that the tale about the ruins of Machaquila starts with an episode of uncontrolled looting:

I made a tour of the oil companies' offices in Guatemala City in order to question anyone who had been in the field. In this way I heard that Alfonso Escalante, of the Union Oil Co., had come across ruins midway between Poptún and the Río Pasión, finding some beautifully carved stones there. Three of these stones had been brought out by helicopter, and I was shown one of them; one glance at it, and I was resolved to visit the site. For this was clearly part of a hieroglyphic stair; and who could tell how many other monuments and inscriptions might not be lying there, in that most inaccessible and least explored part of Petén? (Graham 1963: 2)

As the results of his first expedition demonstrated, and later retrospective accounts reflect, Graham's (1963, 2010) early stated expectations about the site were surpassed upon reconnoitring the ruins and noticing the elaborate number of well-preserved monuments and architecture that still remained standing (note that this did not apply to Str. 4, which was at that time already collapsed and barely recognizable at the surface). Yet, it took some time until he was able to organize the financial support, and equipment to conduct his second expedition to Machaquila in 1962 and subsequent seasons during the late 1960's and 1970's.

Before continuing Graham's research history of Machaquila it is necessary to briefly touch on the account of another individual associated with the site.

### **Getting side-tracked: Albert Lisi's 'mementos'**

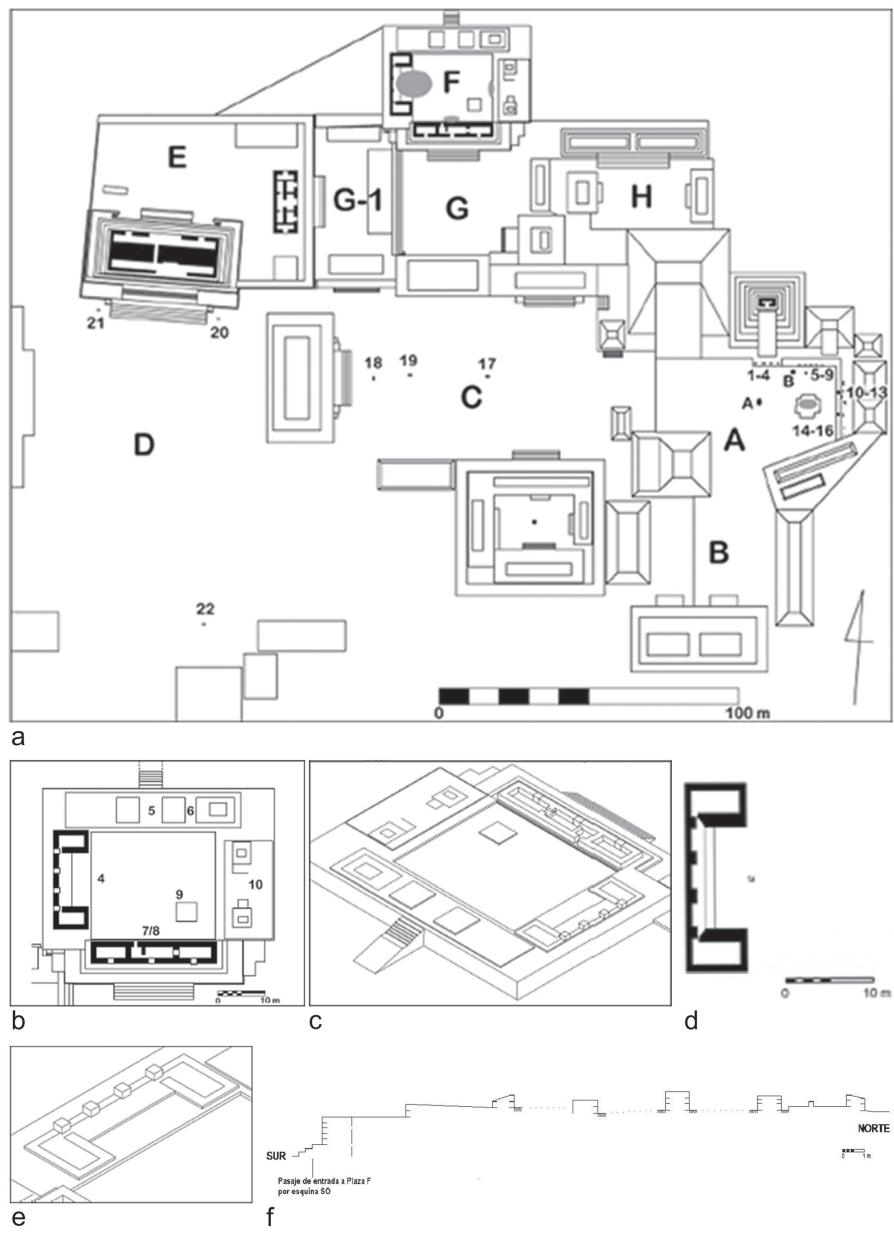
Shortly after Graham (1963) had published his first report with illustrations of the site and some of its monuments, the amateur explorer Albert Lisi (1968, 1969) independently entered the stage and started an adventurous trip with the aim of exploring exactly this barely investigated part of the Southeastern Peten.

As fate would have it, Lisi met and hired a local guide named Pablo Paredes, who previously had also accompanied Graham on his expeditions in 1961 and 1962, and it was only after his later seasons that Graham found out about some implications of Lisi's trip to Machaquila. On a professional level, Lisi's expedition report does not contribute anything archaeological or historical that is noteworthy. He presents an entertaining personal account of an amateur explorer and, for fans of Machaquila art, illustrates his story with at least one photo of the then still standing Altar A located at the very centre of the ruins. However, reading in between the lines and comparing his descriptions with Graham's (1963, 1967, 2010) accounts, Lisi's book contains two brief paragraphs that proved to be relevant for the story of Str. 4 and reveal some hints about the fate of several stone fragments that possibly belonged to this building (see also Krempel 2011):

[...] I asked Pablo if he knew of any small carved stones anywhere that I could take back as mementos. He said maybe he could find some he remembered along the arroyo. We followed it for almost 200 metres until finally we came

to a small clearing. There Pablo searched and found some pieces of a broken stele on the ground. There were eight pieces in all, some weighing more than twenty-five pounds each, and all carved with glyphs. I picked out three of the smallest, weighing four, two, and two pounds respectively, wanting to save weight, but it happened they were also the best carved. Returning to camp I washed them in the arroyo, wrapped them carefully in a towel and placed them in my frame pack. I put the fifteen-pound stone I had found at the ruins the day before at the base of a large tree, between two of its spreading roots. It was really too heavy to take, and now I had better and lighter stones, but left it reluctantly. It was rare and had been my own find. (Lisi 1969: 149)

This short paragraph becomes noteworthy when considering a very vague mind map with brief descriptions which Lisi included in both editions of his expedition report (see Lisi 1968: 173, 1969: 147). Now considering the positions of the natural hill and the course of the Machaquila river as indicated in this map, together with Lisi's above cited description, I suppose that the place which Lisi marked as the place where his "pieces of a broken stela" had been found, was in fact where one of the hoards had been dumped together, shortly after the discovery of the carved stones pertaining to Str. 4. These weren't fragments of a stela. The spot marked in Lisi's map leads me to assume that the mentioned 'clearing' located next to the riverbed designates the open area that is known today as Plaza F, which has a direct access to the river. It had been cleared by workers in search of precisely this class of carved stones. Intermediary camps were set up near the riverbed (Figure 4a). As Graham's later documentation further clarifies, all known stelae must have been in good condition during Lisi's stay in 1964. That is the reason why it is unlikely that the eight fragments (of which Lisi took three back to New York) would have formed part of a broken stela. A more likely scenario would be that Pablo guided Lisi exactly to those fragments that had been previously collected by either the oil company's workers, or during Graham's first expedition because he had originally planned to transport them away with mules during the next field season. Speculating on these loose descriptions further, the weights of 4, 2, and 2 pounds for the sacked fragments also makes it difficult to believe that Lisi was able to take complete blocks of carved stones or even stelae fragments back to New York as it would have been impossible for him to carry three of them on his own back (he had gone to Machaquila via the river with a rubber boat and made his



**Figure 4.** a) Map of Machaquila's urban centre (in Lacadena 2011: 206, fig. 1, after drawing by Jesús Adánez), b) Plan of Plaza F (drawing by Jesús Adánez, in Ciudad et al. 2011: 162, fig. 16), c) isometric model of Plaza F (drawing by Jesús Adánez, in Ciudad et al. 2011: 162, fig. 16), d) Plan of Structure 4 (drawing by Jesús Adánez, in Ciudad and Adánez 2011: 185, fig. 8), e) isometric model of Structure 4 (drawing by Jesús Adánez, in Ciudad et al. 2011: 162, fig. 17), f) profile of Structure 4 (drawing by Jesús Adánez).

way back to Poptun on foot). Larger blocks would have weighed conspicuously more. In lieu thereof, I suspect that the three pieces taken by Lisi originated from the numerous chipped off pieces of Str. 4 of which several must have been lying dispersed in and around Plaza F during Lisi' stay. Some of the smaller fragments that were reburied by Graham (1967: 58, fig. 39) could well correspond to his vague description regarding weight and their fine condition of the carvings (most of the fragments remain in mint condition; however, Lisi did not illustrate his account with a single photo of his sacked fragments).

As if the looting alone was not bitter enough, in his account Lisi further describes that he attempted to reduce the weight of one of the taken stones (probably the one weighting 4 pounds) by chipping its rear side off with a Swiss pocket knife, which resulted in him breaking off one corner of the carved relief at its front side, which he then left behind on his trail back through the jungle to Poptun (Lisi 1968).

Placing Graham's and Lisi's expeditions in chronological sequence, one is inclined to assume that Pablo Paredes showed Lisi the carved stone deposit which he and the other men who had assisted Graham during the first field seasons reburied "near Structure 4" because they had not been able to transport them (Graham 1967: 56). This assumption gains further support by the fact that some of the reburied fragments were rediscovered in recent years, although other small pieces still remain to be located. Thus, being optimistic one can tentatively speculate whether Lisi's (1969: 149) three 'mementos' formed part of the selection that Graham had already photographed in 1961–1992 (Graham 1967: 57), or, in a more pessimistic but likewise possible scenario, Lisi may have taken three unknown fragments that have not yet re-surfaced.

Given that Graham does not mention the possibility of Lisi eventually having taken exactly those stones which he had reburied, I assume that neither Graham took such a scenario into consideration, nor that during his expedition Lisi was aware of the scale of Graham's earlier, and much more professional efforts.

When Graham returned to Machaquila for another expedition with the aim of a more detailed mapping and further documentation of the monuments, he was understandably not amused to hear from

Pablo Paredes about Lisi's adventure, as he later revealed in parts in his biography:

Imagine, then, my surprise on seeing in a New York bookstore, some three years later, a volume entitled *Machaquilá: Through the Maya Jungle to the Lost City*, by Albert Lisi (New York, 1968). There it all was, Nu-V bars and a great deal more! Parts of the book are hilarious.

[...] I find it interesting that Pablo remembered his name as "Bixler". That was hardly a name he could have imagined; yet it sounds like a possible north Italian surname (a well-known one is Traxler). Did Lisi, then, with his hopes of helping himself to a piece of Maya sculpture, think it prudent to travel under assumed name?" These adventures, foolhardy and unproductive as they were, I should not have troubled to mention were it not for the vile imputations that the wretch made against Pablo. A man whose character I had ample occasion to judge, and, whose calm good sense under difficult conditions I greatly admired—a man, in fact, whom I regarded as the salt of the earth—is painted by this idiotic jackanapes as disloyal and treacherous. And in his description, Lisi had promised to reward Pablo with a rifle—but, of course, did not keep his word. Well, I did draw the attention of his publishers to the absurdity of that book (perhaps I should have written a scathing review of this book, instead). But in any case, I was rewarded by a wonderful explosion of abuse from the author—one I wouldn't have missed for worlds. (Graham 2010: 264–265)

For the complete account I recommend the reading of both, Graham's as well as Lisi's accounts, which together form, on the one hand tragic and, at the same time, amusing anecdotes about the early exploration history of Machaquila. Yet, in sum, worth filtering out for the present study is that Lisi did indeed take three fragments, which most likely originated from Str. 4, back to New York. He died in 2010 (Amateu 2010), leaving no children and to this day the whereabouts of his 'mementos' remain elusive.

## **Machaquila abandoned by archaeology**

Even though Graham's efforts resulted in a thorough documentation and publication of most of the monuments that he found *in situ*, culminating in his ground breaking monograph *Archaeological Explorations in El Petén, Guatemala* (Graham 1967), the premature publicity of the ruins quickly led to a rapid decay due to the fact that the site was not properly safeguarded for a long period of time, and archaeological surveys conducted by the AAG did not start before the late

1990's. Meanwhile, a phase of systematic looting and plundering of the Maya area reached its greatest peak, in the course of which the monuments of Machaquila became some of the most affected victims of then much better organized and well-financed criminal actors operating for the international art market in order to feed the increasing demand for Precolumbian artifacts to offer to rich customers worldwide.<sup>5</sup>

Due to the almost complete abundance of Machaquila only few of the well-preserved stelae were removed from the site core already during the late 1960's and early 1970's. The isolation and difficult access to these remote ruins by outsiders created conditions for looters to easily plunder and destroy the site. The despoiling of Machaquila took place from the 1970's until the late 1980's. As the destruction of the site peaked during these two decades, all the best-preserved monuments which Graham had documented were fatally sawn or smashed into pieces, many of which remain distributed throughout the site until today.<sup>6</sup>

Graham managed to safeguard three of the 19 stelae that he had previously documented just in time, for only one severely eroded monument remains today at site (namely Stela 19, re-erected by the AAG under direction of Juan Pedro Laporte in 2001 in Plaza C). Five carved stones from Str. 4 are safeguarded, and four of the best preserved stelae 2, 5, 8, and 11, were transported to MUNAE (see Beliaev et al. 2016: 48–60) (Figure 1). Today, most of the carcasses and many sawn fragments of the stelae as well as mutilated altars still remain distributed or reburied in Plaza A and other spots, whereas some of the better-preserved pieces were probably lumped together by looters in different intermediate deposits around the site or transported to more distant places at different moments in time.

One of the intermediary looters' hoards was found by coincidence during the first in a series of expeditions headed by the Danish explorer Christian Christensen, who, accompanied by Nikolai Grube and Henrik Hviid, conducted an expedition through the Poptun area

<sup>5</sup> In the case of Machaquila, with mostly American and European collectors as final buyers and external sources; as far as the meanwhile re-surfaced monuments lead to assume (see, e.g., Grube 1989; Riese 1989; Yates 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Yet others, among them Stela 11, have been effected by earthquakes.

in 1988. During this occasion, they explored the ruins of Machaquila and its periphery, and in San Miguel cave—located 12 km south-east of the ruins—they came upon the upper part of Stela 6. The find was subsequently reported to the archaeologists and later transferred to the museum in Dolores where it is exhibited until nowadays (Grube 1989; Christensen 1990: 129–151). During the same trip, they inspected the looted monuments and found a great amount of them heavily mutilated and widely distributed in the very centre. Notably, they also photographed fragments of the scattered Stela 17 still lying on the ground, and furthermore photographed two sawn stelae showing remains of hieroglyphs at their bottom (Christensen 1990: 92; Christian Christensen, personal communication, 2011) that had not been reported by Graham, and therefore cannot be assigned to any of the previously published monuments reported from Machaquila.

One year later, Nikolai Grube published the results of their 1988 expedition in a news report by means of which he also presented a drawing of one fragment of a carved stone about which he informs that “[o]ne of the guards now protecting the site, found a small glyphic fragment between Str. 4 and the Arroyo Machaquilá”. Grube (1989: 45) assessed the state of knowledge about the site in the following manner: “[a]lmost nothing is known about the fate of the site and its monuments between Graham’s research and 1988”.

Judging from its size and form with open lateral border, “this carved stone fragment apparently once belonged to the sculpted stones from Str. 4” (Grube 1989: 45) and can be identified as the upper left corner of one of the rectangular Type I stones (Figure 2m). It is a significant addition to the previously known corpus of inventoried stones associated with Str. 4, even though no complementary fragments to it were found among the documented in the collection of existing fragments.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century ended, Machaquila was fittingly dubbed “a site abandoned by archaeology” (Chocón 2003). There had been an effort to inspect the looted monuments and conduct archaeological surveys at the site and its periphery in the late 1990’s with the inclusion of the ruins as part of the area surveyed by the *Atlas Arqueológico de Guatemala*, directed by Juan Pedro Laporte (Laporte and Mejía 2000; Chocón and Laporte 2002; Chocón 2003; Laporte 2011). Thanks to

their efforts, the actual scale of the plundering at the site that had taken place during previous decades became evident (Chocón and Laporte 2002; Chocón 2003). The assessment prompted emergency excavations conducted to safeguard some of the monumental pieces that were still lying dispersed *in situ*. Subsequently, the periphery of Machaquila and other ruins located in the Poptún district were slowly surveyed, mapped and investigated by members of the AAG, widening our understanding of the settlement pattern in this still remote and barely investigated area (Laporte et al. 2005; Chocón et al. 2007; see also Christensen 2016).

### **The Guatemalan-Spanish project “The political entity of Machaquila during the Late and Terminal Classic” (2001–2005)**

Following the surveying and mapping efforts of the site’s urban core by the AAG, and now that most of the remaining carved fragments were safely stored, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Guatemalan-Spanish project *The political entity of Machaquila during the Late and Terminal Classic*, directed by Andrés Ciudad Ruiz, was begun (Ciudad et al. 2003, 2004, 2005; Laporte et al. 2005; Chocón et al. 2007). In the course of implementing the project in 2001, archaeological excavations, as well as mapping of the site and its periphery continued until 2005. The emphasis of the excavations was to explore the various plazas and buildings that defined the ceremonial centre of Machaquila from Late until Terminal Classic times (Ciudad et al. 2003, 2005, 2011, 2013; Lacadena 2011), with a special emphasis on intra-site relationships between the complex habitational groups (UHC, see Ciudad and Iglesias 1995) and elite domestic groups with the central urban core (Ciudad, Iglesias and Adámez 2004: 229; Ciudad et al. 2005). Their results revealed a wealth of significant data and additional archaeological evidence with important implications for the understanding of Str. 4. In this regard, their focus on Plaza F, comprising Str. 4 and adjacent buildings (Strs. 7, 8, and 10) (see Figure 4a, b) as well as the plaza floor, provided a more detailed view of Str. 4’s profile and spatial setting and a better idea concerning the original arrangement of the many carved fragments pertaining to it (see, e.g., Lacadena 2005; Lacadena and Iglesias 2005, 2006; Lacadena et al. 2011) (Figures 4c–e). The recent excavations revealed a total of

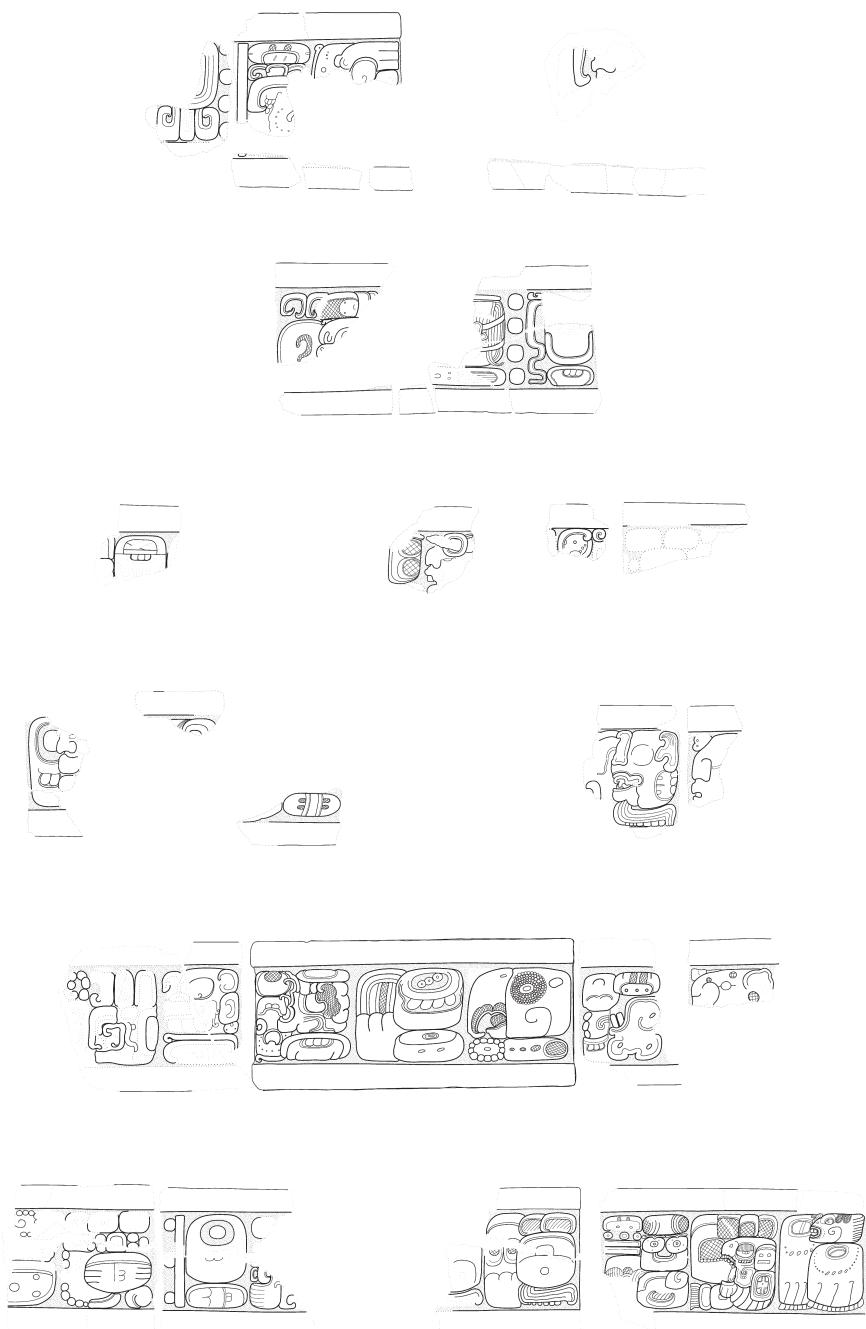


Figure 5. Machaquila Structure 4, Type I fragments (drawings by Guido Krempel).

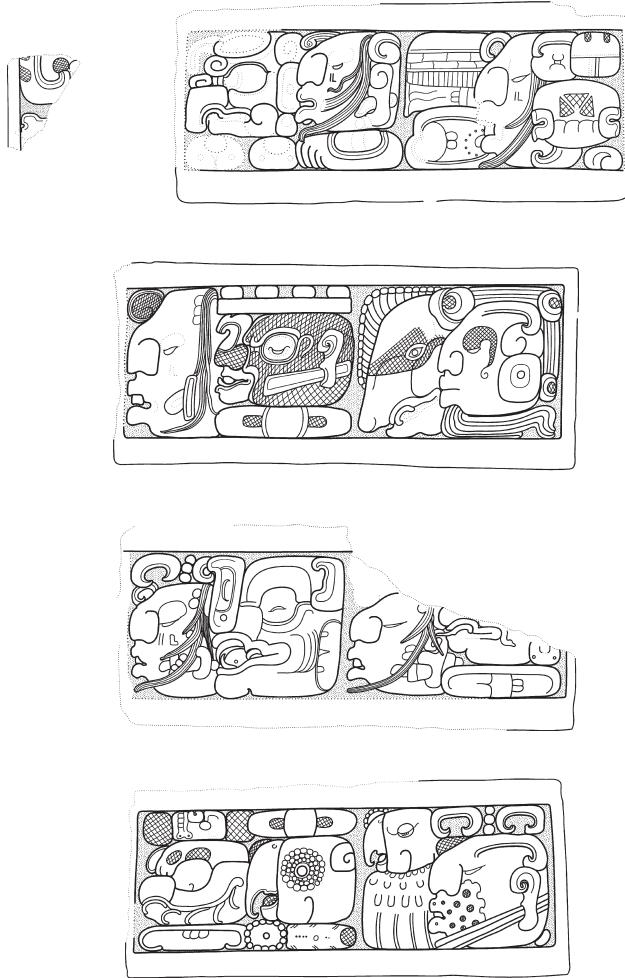


Figure 6. Machaquila Structure 4, Type II fragments (drawings by Guido Krempel).

27 new fragments to the hitherto known inventory (see, e.g., Ciudad et al. 2003, 2004; Iglesias and Lacadena 2003, 2005; Lacadena 2005). These finds included some matching pieces to the previously known fragments documented by Graham (1967) and facilitated confirming the long-assumed place of origin for a majority of the carved stone as being the central area on the east side of the C-shaped Str. 4. During the 2004 season, Alfonso Lacadena made drawings of 16 major fragments that were found in Str. 4 in 2003. Two additional fragments, which he did not draw were illustrated in the AAG-reports and

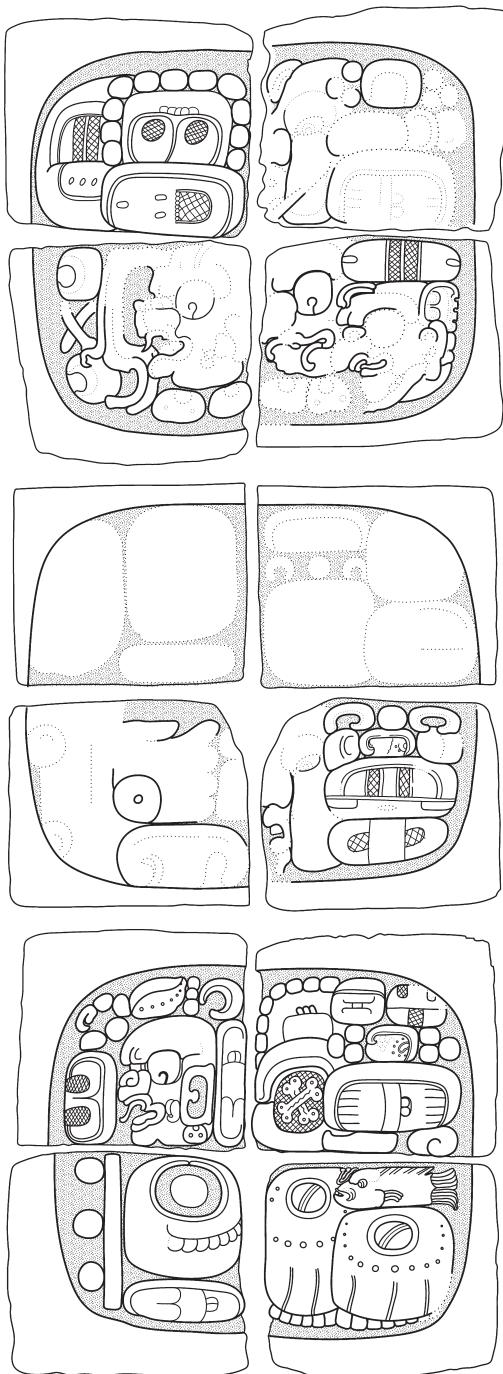


Figure 7. Machaquila Structure 4, Type III fragments (drawings by Guido Krempel, 2018).

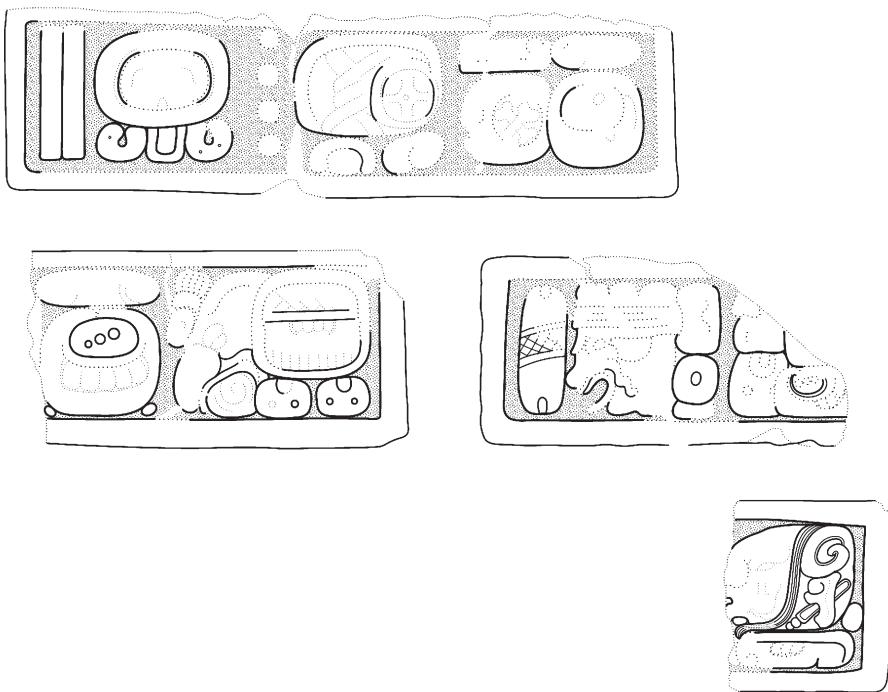
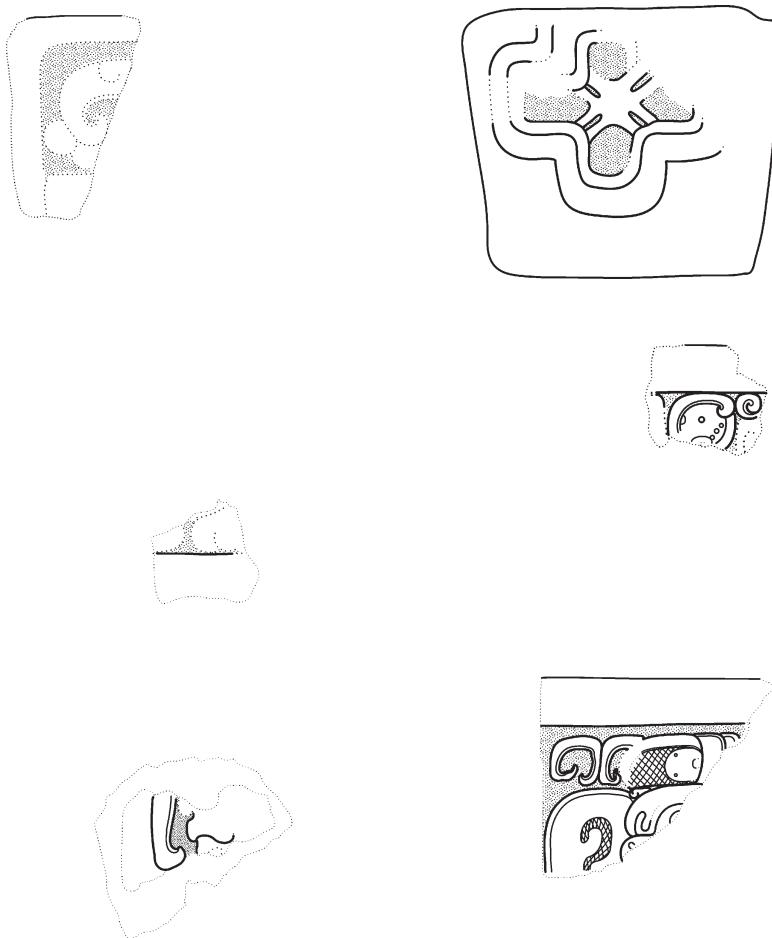


Figure 8. Machaquila Structure 4, Type IV fragments (drawings by Guido Krempel, 2018).

subsequent publications (Lacadena 2005; Lacadena and Iglesias 2005: 3) (Figure 2c, d).

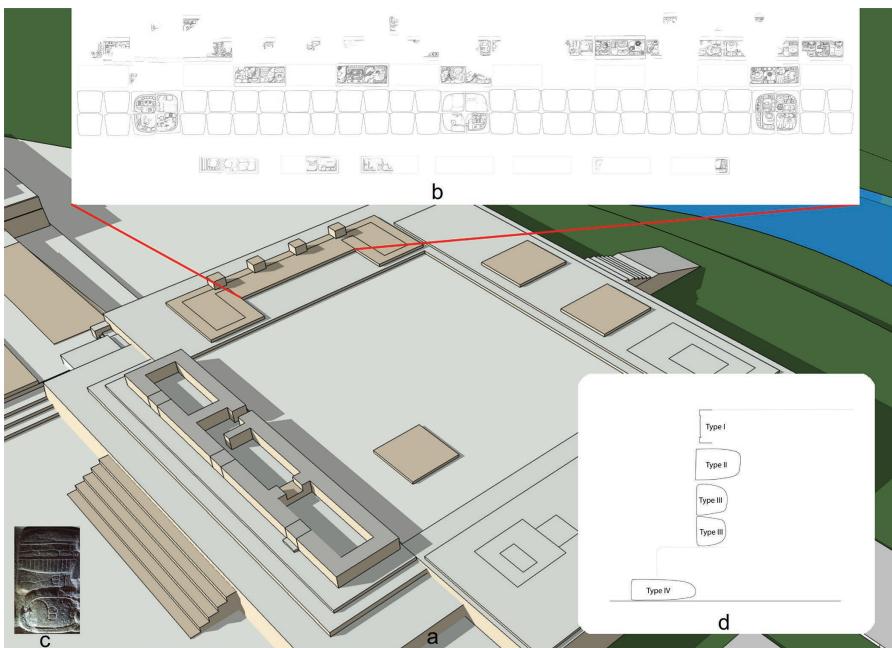
The 27 carved stone fragments recovered during this first phase of the Guatemalan-Spanish Project enabled the investigators to fit the pieces together and assemble a total of 14 larger fragments (Iglesias and Lacadena 2005; Lacadena 2005) (Figures 5–6). Seven of those fragments are especially significant as they were excavated *in situ* on the east side of Str. 4 just above the plaster floor in front of the central area, thus, precisely the very location where one would have expected them to be if one followed the premise of the collapse of a veneer-masonry construction along the centre of the building. Given the collapse of this section of the bench one can conclude that the majority of fragments had already been dispersed and lay out of context on the ground. In addition to the dispersal of stones produced as a consequence of the building's collapse, it is necessary to also consider the despoiling of the site by looters that had previous plundered the structure's central area, and, given its magnificently carved stones, Str. 4 in particular, against the back-



**Figure 9.** Machaquila Structure 4, Miscellaneous fragments and hitherto unpublished pieces in Atlas Arqueológico de Guatemala, Dolores (drawings by Guido Krempel, 2018).

drop of general weathering and bioturbation. Last but not least, an alternate scenario should be kept in mind: it is plausible that the bench could have been already intentionally destroyed in ancient times (Graham 1967; Iglesias and Lacadena 2003, 2005: 155; Ciudad et al. 2004).

The efforts by the Guatemalan-Spanish project increased the amount of carved stones pertaining to Str. 4 significantly, and, in the course, some smaller fragments documented by Graham could be assigned to the recently excavated pieces (Figures 7–9). With a resulting amount of 12 majorly preserved blocks with curved



**Figure 10.** 3D-model of Plaza F: a) 3D-model of Plaza F by Jesús Adánez Pavón (after Ciudad et al. 2013: 84, fig. 10, modified by the author, with author's reconstruction model of the carved bench of Structure 4 and hypothetical profile view), b) Preliminary reconstruction drawing of the bench by Guido Krempel, c) the logogram OTOOT on Machaquila Structure 4, Block D (photograph by Guido Krempel), d) Sketch showing a hypothetical spatial setting of the four distinct stone classes pertaining to Structure 4 in profile view.

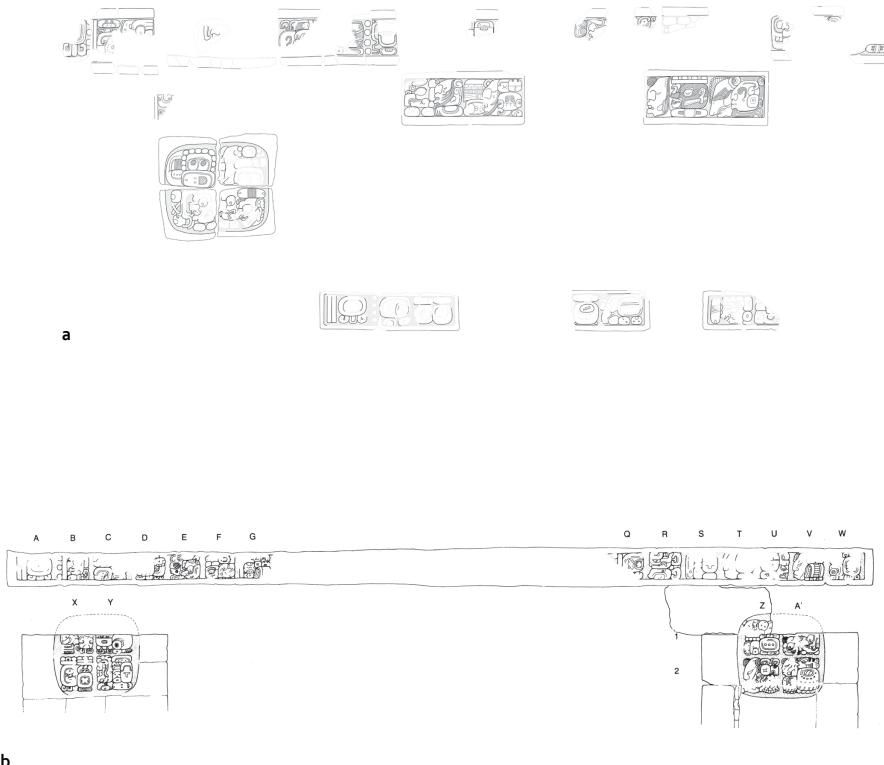
borders the investigators were enabled to reconstruct the three complete circular panels (Type III stones), each consisting of four square-faced tenoned blocks (Chocón 2003; Ciudad et al. 2003, 2004, 2011, 2013; Lacadena 2005, 2011; Lacadena and Iglesias 2005) (Figures 10a, 11a). In comparison with Hieroglyphic Bench 1 from Dos Pilas (Figure 11b), which shows a similar composition (even though of different construction technique), being composed of two supports with circular relief panels topped by a horizontal slab forming the main text, the plausible conclusion was drawn that the bench of Str. 4 may have exhibited a somewhat similar design. Yet, with its three circular panels and at least two differing classes of carved stones supposedly arranged as a tri-levelled bench and judging from the quantity of blocks showing a conspicuously wider span, the bench of Str. 4 contains features that seem to differ from the case of Dos Pilas (Houston 1993: 108, fig. 4–9) and other attested Late Classic

designs of hieroglyphic benches (Figure 11a). With the aim of determining the size and general limitations for the original setting of the four distinct classes of carved stones, it is helpful to recall Graham's description of the circumstances in which he found Str. 4 during his initial exploration of the site. According to his description, five Type III stones were found approximately 6 m distant from each other and seemed to have been limited to the area defining the very centre of the building along its lower level or register below the building's platform.

Now that the flanking room annexes at the northern and southern corner of the building leave conspicuously more space for the horizontal span of the central nucleus than "just" 6 meters (Figures 4a, 10), I wonder if the uppermost level composed of Type I stones may have been decorated alongside most of its full width, which could have spanned up to 10 m in total, so that a distance of c. 6 m between the three oval panels becomes very plausible (Figure 10). It is unclear why the recently, well preserved pieces were not encountered by Graham previously. Yet, considering the complex prehistory of the find circumstances and knowing that Graham and his team did only survey this area superficially during early explorations, one is inclined to think that the advanced collapse with a confusing amount of loosened debris and ashlar stones, several phases of plundering, together with a thick jungle vegetation did not enable the workers to recognize them until their discovery by the recent excavations (Figure 3).

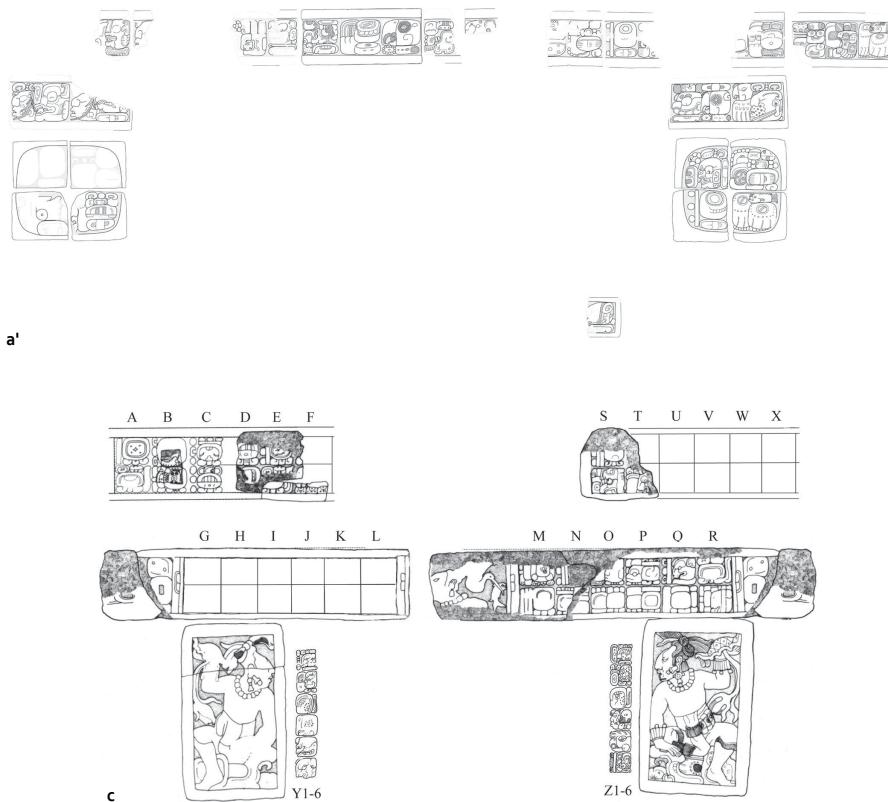
Taking the new evidence resulting from the recent excavations conducted at Str. 4 (Lacadena and Iglesias 2005), which determined that it had been constructed as C-shaped building with an open façade (lacking a stone roof) along its east side, can now be taken as firm ground for the reconstruction of the original spatial design of the central bench (Figures 4, 10, 11a).

I have translated María Josefa Iglesias and Alfonso Lacadena's summary of their results concerning the find circumferences of the carved stones and suggested reconstruction of the original position of the carved stones of Str. 4 to which I will refer when I offer my own hypothesis regarding the placement of the stone carvings and interpretations below:



**Figure 11.** Hieroglyphic stone benches in comparison: a) Machaquila Structure 4 (drawing by Guido Krempel), b) Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Bench 1 (drawing by Stephen Houston), c) Palenque's 'Del Río Throne' (after Polyukhovych 2012: 456, fig. B68; compiled from own drawings and renderings by Linda Schele, Christophe Helmke, David Stuart and Yuriy Polyukhovych) (not to scale).

[...] the previously stated scales of natural and cultural destruction makes it uncertain, but in view of the localization of the carved ashlar stones (in the central zone), and the impossibility—due to the low height of the mentioned levels (30 cm)—that in both of the elevations those assumed three panels were placed, we believe that these were situated in the mural which covered the pillars, which offers a bigger height, and which hypothesizes the form of a bench that went alongside a portion of the posterior part of the building. This bench could well have been constructed by means of masonry and its exterior front composed of façade stones coating a nucleus composed of ancient construction elements of the building—part of the already mentioned pillars—mortar and pebble stones. In front of the bench, corresponding to the level below the open entrance, distinct carved stones with glyphs were disposed as decorative elements.



**Figure 11 (continued). c)** Palenque's 'Del Río Throne' (after Polyukhovych 2012: 456, fig. B68; compiled from own drawings and renderings by Linda Schele, Christophe Helmke, David Stuart and Yuriy Polyukhovych) (not to scale).

The rationale for this interpretation is supported by facts on the ground since some fragments of carved stones with glyphs were found in controlled excavation context above the floor ground at the bottom of the limitation line of the central nucleus of the bench; secondly, the form of some of the fragments with triangular posterior shaft indicates that they were conceived for being integrated into a nucleus as part of a wall, in this case, the one which would correspond to the bench's front wall; thirdly, the bench presents an advanced degree of destruction primarily in the central sector, which suggests that the fragments could have originated precisely from this place. This does not imply that the context in which they were found would have necessarily been a primary context, given that a lot of the typical deterioration under natural tropical conditions together with the removal of sculpted artefacts in the 50s would have modified the context.

Therefore, in this epigraphic programme entered both the ashlar stones with face composed of glyphs, which were situated in the lower part, as well as the

medium sized stones, which occupied the upper zone of the bench. Solely one of Graham's fragments of small format, and a new fragment recovered last year which pertains in dimensions to the same class and could have had this function, maybe were originally reclined to the grade of the first or the second level. (Iglesias and Lacadena 2005: 154–155)

"On the other hand, Graham outlined as a disconcerting fact, that three of the flat stones with horizontal inscriptions showed vertical frames also on their left and right parts—fragments B, C, F—pointing to the fact that originally, they were somehow separated from the rest of the flat fragments (1967: 56). The other flat stones with upper horizontal band may have been placed on top of these medallions with capitals, to form the upper edge of the front of the bench. The resulting format, although for the time being lacking any possible comparison, most of all in that which has to do with its construction technique, is not fully alien, however, to the format of other known decorated benches, such as Hieroglyphic Bench 1 from Dos Pilas (Houston 1993), where one horizontal band with hieroglyphs rests on top of two pillars with two sculpted hieroglyphic medallions integrated by four hieroglyphic blocks each. (Iglesias and Lacadena 2003: 6)

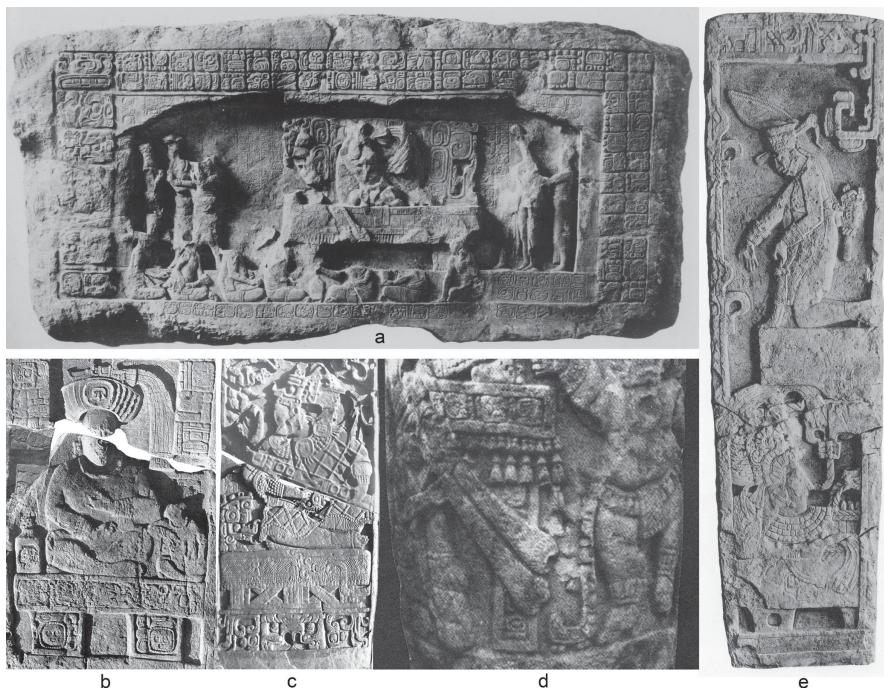
As the excavations of Str. 4 in 2004 lead to assume, the mentioned stones of smaller format (Type IV) could have been integrated into a small staircase/step (c. 30 cm) positioned beneath the level of the bench, while the actual bench got constructed on top of this elevation.

As already mentioned, a rough classification of the carved stones could already be theorized during previous reconstruction attempts (e.g., Chocón 2003; Lacadena 2005, 2011) by using comparable stone benches from other Late Classic sites (foremost Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Bench 1) as prototypic templates. Furthermore, there are numerous additional iconographic attestations found on painted ceramics (see, e.g., Justin Kerr's database K2573, K2695, K2794, K2800, KK2914, K4012, K5720, K6059, K7838, and K8386, to name just a few) (Figure 12). The recent Spanish-Guatemalan excavations and subsequent adds to the inventory of carved stones finally enabled a more detailed reconstruction of the spatial delimitations of Str. 4 (see Figure 10). As becomes evident thereby, the hieroglyphic bench must have been a later add to a C-shaped building that underwent a previous remodeling by using materials from former construction phases. It is therefore very likely that the numerous blocks with plain fronts were sacked from the posterior walls of the exterior



**Figure 12.** Late Classic painted depictions of benches and thrones: *a*) Vessel in private collection (detail of rollout-stitching by Guido Krempel), *b*) Vessel in Museo Santa Bárbara, Flores (detail of rollout-stitching by Guido Krempel), *c*) K5388 (detail of rollout-photograph by Justin Kerr), *d*) K1524 (rollout by Justin Kerr), *e*) K7461 (detail of rollout-photograph by Justin Kerr), *f*) K2695 (detail of rollout-photograph by Justin Kerr), *g*) K1377 (detail of rollout-photograph by Justin Kerr), *h*) K4549 (detail of rollout-photograph by Justin Kerr).

façade of the former building to be reused in order to decorate the frontal wall of the newly added central bench in the typical veneer masonry technique. In sum, the distinct shapes of carved stones pertaining to Types I, II, and III can be explained and their spatial arrangement can be tentatively hypothesized (Figures 10a, 11a). The recent excavations and appearances of new stones pertaining to Type IV further revealed that this class probably did not form part of the central bench but more likely was integrated into one of the two grades of a stepped platform beneath the actual bench and forming part of the central access opening to Str. 4. The careful placement of the carved stones in Terminal Classic times within the space below the platform bench can be gleaned from the existing data, and by stylistic comparisons with other Late Classic carved benches of



**Figure 13.** Late Classic carved depictions of benches: *a*) Piedras Negras Panel 1 (after Morley 1937: Plate 146), *b*) Detail of Piedras Negras Stela 3 (after Stuart and Graham 2003: 26), *c*) Cancuen Stela 1 (after Maler 1908), *d*) Carved column of unknown provenance (photograph by Karl Herbert Mayer, 1980, in Mayer 1981: Plate 13), *e*) Piedras Negras Stela 40 (after Morley 1937: 135).

which at least some examples show a row of carved glyphs as a step or basement/platform at a level beneath the stone benches (Figures 12, 13). Yet, as the Guatemalan-Spanish project also largely revealed (Iglesias and Lacadena 2005, 2006; Lacadena 2005, 2011; Ciudad et al. 2011), an epigraphic analysis of the inscriptions, as well as some of its distinct paleographic features, sheds additional light on the chronology, the possible spatial arrangement of the bench and its inscriptions, the recorded narrative, semantics, and, subsequently, the proper meaning and function of Str. 4.

### Tracing remains and synthesis

In 2009, I took on the task of inspecting as many fragments of Str. 4 as possible, beginning with the blocks exhibited in MUNAE, then in the storage rooms of AAG, and finally those exhibited in the MJPL,

Dolores (Figures 1, 2). To my surprise, I noticed some smaller fragments of different formats and several broken pieces with plain border (pertaining to Type I) among the hitherto unpublished fragments, presumably leftovers of the recent excavations (in 2003 and 2004) that were not included in the reports but were registered properly and therefore could be identified securely by their distinct carving style, dimensions and texture of the stone, as certainly belonging to the inscriptions of Str. 4 (Figure 2). In total, 3 new small fragments with remains of carved glyphs were found. There were 10 fragments of the plain framing border of Type I stones, of which at least three could be joined by their corresponding glyptic representations. Two loose glyptic fragments could not be designated with certainty to any distinct class (Figure 2g, i), including one severely eroded piece showing the dimensions of Type IV but seemingly of a different (or severely weathered) stone material (Figure 2i). One decontextualized stone pertains to a special class as it is of similar dimensions as Type III stones but covered with a sculpted stucco coat showing a quadrifoil-motif with crossed bands in its centre (Figure 2j).<sup>7</sup>

Within the corpus of the recently excavated fragments, there are two stones that, due to their similarities in carving style and dimensions, deserve to be singled out for discussion. They have been tentatively included in the present study, even though they were in fact not found in direct context of Str. 4. One of these fragments has the same dimensions as Type IV stones (Figure 8d). It was found just above the plaster floor within the debris of the entrance opening to Str. 10, at the opposite side of Plaza F (Ciudad et al. 2003: 298, 304). The other carved stone fragment was found at the entrance area associated with Str. 7, the neighboring building on the southern side of the plaza (Figure 2c). Due to their matching dimensions, identical carving style and paleography, I have determined that these

<sup>7</sup> Note that the quadrifoil motif was a very common cosmological symbol which is prominently featured in the monuments of Machaquila in particular where it was certainly meant to designate the very ceremonial centre of the site, Plaza A, which in Terminal Classic times was equipped with a row of masonry stones in order to create the quatrefoil motif as an area in which burning-rituals were conducted; for the archeological evidence for this feature see also Lacadena 2006. Yet, the quadrifoil was also conspicuously often represented in the art of many other sites as a well-established cosmological symbol, be it as decorative element on thrones and benches, on decorated columns, façades and other architectonical features (see, e.g., Figure 13).

fragments once formed part of Str. 4., assuming that one of these carved stones formed the right corner of a Type IV stone (Figure 8d), while the other fragments most likely formed part of a Type I stone (Figure 2c, d, f, h).

In my reconstruction, stones of Type I (in total 42 assigned fragments associated with a minimum of 15 blocks arranged horizontally) have been hypothesized as chipped off fragments of flat stones showing a rectangular front side that is framed by an upper and a lower plain border. These must have decorated the uppermost level (horizontal slab) of the central bench (see Figure 10). The average height of Type I stones is about 22cm, and, as a significant add that has not been mentioned in previous studies, each relief consists of precisely three glyph compounds in horizontal reading order (Figure 5). The total span in widths of the upper level may exceed the spatial limitation of approximately 6m for the stones of Types II and III. The flanking pillars of Str. 4 at the left and righthand side would only have allowed a total height of approximately 60 cm for the central nucleus of the bench. If, however, Type I stones were set on top of this nucleus, the bench could theoretically have had a total height of 80+ cm; a height which I do consider appropriate for a monumental bench of 6–10 m in width (Figure 11a).

Stones of Type II are defined by a full surrounding border and are slightly smaller in height compared to Type I. However, the stones of near identical width can further be distinguished from Type I by exhibiting only two carved glyph compounds that are separated by a narrow vertical free space in the very middle of a rectangular shaped block (Figure 6). In other words, stones showing only two glyph compounds in horizontal order can be identified as pertaining to Type II, and a closer inspection of some of the broken borders of all available examples led to a confirmation of this assumption. If the author's designation of one smaller fragment (Figures 2g, 6) to this class proves to be correct, then the bench was decorated with at least five stones of Type II (instead of only three that were designated to this class in previous publications and hypothesized to have topped the three circular medallions of the bench; Iglesias and Lacadena 2003, 2005). I second Iglesias and Lacadena's (2005: 154) assumption that these stones were probably set into the facing wall of the central bench, thus, above and (maybe) flanked by the

curved stones of Type III. Nonetheless, a new count with at least five of these blocks of Type II forces to re-evaluate this model and arises the question how at least two more blocks of same format and with surrounding border would have been integrated into the frontal wall in combination with the circular medallions (Figure 10). It is necessary to recall that the latter stones were probably set in a mosaic stone veneer layout at the lowest level of the bench, which would have had approximately the same height as were levelled the pillars at the posterior wall of the building (it can be assumed that the bench was levelled plain at approximately the same height as these pillars because it seemed to have partially covered these features that pertain to an earlier construction phase of Str. 4; see Iglesias and Lacadena 2005) (Figures 3c, 4d–f). In conclusion, I tentatively theorize that Type II stones indeed would have decorated the medium level of the bench in horizontal reading order and concur with previous models assuming that three of them would have been integrated on top of Type III stones. However, I consider a minimum of two more blocks which would have been placed at the same level/height with some distance at both sides to their flanking counterparts, so that they could form a continuous text read from left to right, separated for aesthetic reasons and for the sake of symmetry but probably read in a row notwithstanding their vertical borders (Figure 10). This enables an alternate reading order in which Type II stones would not necessarily be connected directly with stones of Type III but maybe semantically read apart.

Type III defines the quadrangular stones with curved front of which a group of four results in reliefs with circular medallions (Figure 7). The average height of Type III stones is 22 cm, and all have tapering trapezoid tenons at their rear sides. In the course of the hands-on inspection of seven stones of Type III stored in Dolores it could be confirmed that the previously hypothesized combination of stones e+b+c+f, as well as d+h+g could be potential matches when judging from their size and the curving of the framing borders. Nonetheless, as three of the stones documented by Graham are not available for study, the reconstruction of the three circular medallions remains tentative and can only be solved by taking epigraphic arguments into consideration (as can be anticipated here, these combinations can indeed be underlined by semantic clues).

While Graham reported finding only one example of the smaller stones (Type IV), the excavations conducted in 2003 revealed a second piece of similar dimensions from Str. 4 (Iglesias and Lacadena 2005: 155), and as a noteworthy add, the corner piece excavated in the debris of Str. 10, at the opposite side of Plaza F, belongs to this class as well (Figure 8d). Later in 2011, the author found three fragments pertaining to the same class and dimensions (Figures 2l, 8a), most likely in a secondary context, on the surface on top of Str. 2, which together form the first complete block of Type IV (see also Krempel 2011). Due to the very similar dimensions, carving style and paleography (as far as the state of erosion allows to judge), I assume that all these pieces can be associated with Str. 4, or at least belonged to one and the same construction phase (of Plaza F). However, since they were found in secondary context, I have treated them with caution in my hypothetical reconstruction. Other Type IV stones may eventually surface, and they will either support my working hypothesis, or not.

During my documentation of the fragments stored in Dolores I noticed some of the smaller fragments that were excavated in previous seasons but not drawn or illustrated in the corresponding reports. Among these were some matching fragments of the framing borders pertaining to stones of Type I, a small piece seemingly pertaining to a missing stone of Type II, and one noteworthy block of similar shape like stones of Type III, but with a stucco-relief front showing a quadrifoil-motif with crossed bands (Figures 2j, 9). The hands-on inspection further enabled me to find a new fragment (Figure 2a), which extends from the upper left corner of the more recently surfaced Fragment k (Lacadena 2005), and in turn belongs to the lower portions designated as Fragment J by Graham (1967: 58) (Figure 5). Despite these, I found two hitherto unpublished, unfortunately severely abraded fragments which together could have provided an additional attestation of the Machaquila emblem glyph (Figure 2h). One more undesignated fragment was found (Figure 2f) but since it lacked borders it was not possible to conclude to which of the four format classes (Types I–IV) associated with Str. 4 it belonged.

My proposed hypothetical reconstruction model for the inscriptions of Str. 4, based on my review of the literature and first-hand

assessment of the stones includes the following assumptions (see Figure 10):

- There is a minimum of four stones of Type IV which should be separated due to their lower height (10 cm) and glyphs of smaller scale; these are hypothetically reconstructed as features of a step at the entrance opening of the building's centre. They may have formed parts of the lowermost or second register of the epigraphic program (each of c. 30 cm max. height) on top of which the actual nucleus for the bench got constructed.
- The inventory of Type III stones seems complete. It consists of twelve blocks with tapering tenons on their back sides. Arranged as sets of four blocks, these form a total of three quadrangular mosaics showing circular relief medallions which would have decorated the supports at the bottom of the central bench, resulting in slightly protruding curved (pseudo-) supports that were integrated in the frontal wall of the bench.
- The remains of at least five stones of Type II have been identified, reason why former reconstruction models counting with only three of these blocks on top of the circular panels need to be discarded. Instead, my reconstruction of the placement of minimum five (up to eight) Type II stones as having been positioned into the second (medium) level of the horizontal slab. This leaves open the possibility that each circular medallion was indeed topped by such a block of Type II.
- Given that Type II is defined by full surrounding frames, each would have been set apart from the other but probably placed horizontally at the same medium level between Type I and Type III stones. Assuming rather optimistically, that there are rests of a majority of Type II stones available, I imagine a strictly symmetric spatial arrangement for the face of the bench, reason why two of these stones were hypothesized to be positioned with a regular distance between the other Type II stones that topped the supports (made of Type III).
- Type I stones do form a continuous horizontal row, each framed by upper and lower plain borders but without lateral frames.

These were set in a row horizontally just on top of the central nucleus and formed the main body of this inscription. The known inventory allows to conclude that the upper level consisted of a minimum of 15 blocks (rather more), each carved with three glyph compounds arranged in horizontal reading order. In theory, this upper level could have expanded up to 10 m in width. A perhaps pessimistic assessment taking the remaining gaps into consideration could plausibly lead to an assumption that as much as 40% of this main text may still be missing. Obviously, this part of the inscription shows the highest degree of mutilation. Incidentally, the majority of chipped off or broken fragments seem to belong to this class.

In my reconstruction, I have included only currently available data, and avoided stretching the hypothetical model by including references to missing carved stones that would complete the meaning of the extant epigraphic program, yet for which we have no factual evidence. Nevertheless, my reconstruction is flexible, and does allow space for incorporating missing stones that might eventually appear and that could potentially be added to complement the model in the future. In some cases, resulting from the epigraphic analysis, it appears clear that the model would allow to include those missing glyph compounds that belong to it beyond any doubt. It shall be noted, however, that I find it hard to imagine that the inventory of the carved stones will ever be complete given the obvious many missing small fragments, and the fact that the best-preserved stones had already been sacked before Graham had even started his investigations. Lisi's 'mementos', as well as perhaps a few reportedly lost stones were stolen in early times. Some of them may have landed in private collection and have simply not re-surfaced yet, whilst others may still be buried *in situ* waiting to be discovered.

In the following epigraphic approach, at first the dating of the inscriptions will be discussed, thereafter, the recorded names and titles will be presented, and in a final paragraph the complex narrative discourse will be exemplified by tracing remains of verbal phrases and place names involved, before comparing the results with other attestations of buildings including hieroglyphic benches as their central features.

## Chronological setting of Structure 4

Only two text sequences with calendrical records have been identified in the documented inventory (on stones of Types I and III, respectively). In 2003, fragments of one calendar round surfaced in controlled archaeological context within Str. 4 (Figure 5). However, these fragments allowed only a rough estimation of its spatial setting and chronology, and the tracing for additional fragments pertaining to this calendar round in 2004 proved negative (Iglesias and Lacadena 2005: 155). The dating of Str. 4 was therefore mainly estimated based on carving style, the Late Classic veneer masonry construction as a rather late innovation (as evidenced at other sites since approximately AD 800, e.g., Ucanal, Calzada Mopan, El Chal, Ixkun, and Pueblito, to name just a few; see Laporte 2001; Laporte and Mejía 2000), and the fact that most of the preceding dynastic sequence of Machaquila can already be retraced securely up to the date AD 840 (Graham 1967; Fahsen 1984; Riese 1984, 1988, 1989; Lacadena 2005; Just 2006). Therefore, it remains only a brief plausible period in time for a dating of the reign of ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk, whose name—as detailed in the following paragraph—is recorded at least three times on the carved fragments of Str. 4. One can thus confidently favor a scenario in which this king would have followed after the reign of Jun Tz’ak Tok’, arguing that the last known of the preceding rulers’ stelae bears a date falling in the year AD 840. Yet, a missing coefficient for the Tzolk’in recorded on Fragment k makes a reconstruction of the initial calendar round recorded on the bench of Str. 4 impossible since the cyclical nature of the Maya Long Count allows to calculate possible matches to this day record (which terminates in ...? 9 Keh) for every solar year (see also Iglesias and Lacadena 2005: 155). However, since the inventory does not contain a second potential calendar round (recorded on stones of Type I), Fragment k is still the best candidate for the beginning of the text and is therefore here considered as the initial date of the main text sequence for the bench.

In 2009, the author’s (Krempel 2011) discovery of a severely weathered but hitherto unknown stone finally revealed a complete date that can be reconstructed as 10 Kib\* 4 K’anjala (Pop) (Figure 2k), which likely corresponds to 16 January 848, and thereby confirms the previously proposed mid-9<sup>th</sup> century setting for the reign of

'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk (Iglesias and Lacadena 2003, 2005; Lacadena 2011; Lacadena et al. 2011). At the moment, this remains the only firm chronological anchor for the seemingly latest construction phase at Machaquila, and the only possible date related to 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk or contemporaries (Krempel 2011: 94–95). Nonetheless, it should be repeated that this fragment was not found in primary context within Str. 4, and thus needs to be treated with caution.

Another hint for the narrative content and chronological setting of Str. 4 is recorded on one of the circular panels (Fragments Q+R), as already noted by Graham (1967: 58), and later detailed by Lacadena and Iglesias (2005: 6) (Figure 7). The corresponding section records the sequence ...?-TZUTZ-yi u?-1-WINIKHAB-ta ...? tzutzuy u jun winikhaabta(l) '(and then got) terminated the first twenty-year-count of ...'. However, due to the uncertainty regarding the before mentioned initial calendar round, it remains elusive for the time being whether this one-katun anniversary date connects to the initial calendar round, and if it records the starting or ending of a 20-year count (e.g., the celebration of a birth, death, or other historical event). To sum it up, momentarily two sequences with calendrical records can be identified, one of these being a partially preserved Tzolk'in calendar day (...? 9 Keh) which almost certainly initiated the main text sequence composed of Type I stones, while the other is a 20-year anniversary count recorded on one of the supports (Type III) whose semantic context still remains to be clarified. And, last but not least, a third reference records the day 10 Kib 4 Pop (12 Jan, AD 848) which can be parenthesized as eventually having initiated a text sequence that was composed of Type IV stones and thus read apart from the actual hieroglyphic bench (Figure 10).

Following the above discussion of the calendrical records, the attention will now focus on elucidating the names and titles involved in order to identify the protagonists of the narrative of Str. 4.

## **'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk**

A well-preserved glyph compound shows the complete name of a ruler named 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk.<sup>8</sup> Thanks to the fact that his name

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<sup>8</sup> As already noted by Lacadena (2005), there is a good possibility that the logogram depicting the tail of a scorpion with infixes AK'AB 'darkness'-sign (likely indicating its black glis-

is complete in this instance, it can be associated with three other blocks, including a record of the local ‘Machaquila’ emblem glyph, and the title *waxak winik baah kab*. Taken together, those inscriptions substantiate considering this personage as having been one of the protagonists (if not the main protagonist) of the narrative displayed on Str. 4 (Iglesias and Lacadena 2005; Lacadena 2005). Building on this complete nominal phrase, two additional records of the same name can be reconstructed from fragments pertaining to the stones of Type I (Fragments o, and E+l, respectively). The same king is thus mentioned at least three times in this inscription, probably as agent in three distinct sentences (which provides us also with significant semantic clues regarding a possible order and lengths of these phrases). Despite the title sequence **8-20-ki ba-ka-ba** *waxakwinik baah kab* (see also Tokovinine 2013: 114, fig. 61), that is frequently attested in the corpus of Machaquila, two more titles can be assigned to ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk.

One of these consists of the sequence **u-CHAN-na-ta-ja MO'-o u cha'n tajal mo'** and identifies him as ritual guardian or captor of a man named Tajal Mo’ ‘Torch Macaw’ (fragments F and V). The tradition of recording the name of noteworthy captives can be understood as political propaganda and a way to underline or legitimize the inheritance of a certain socio-political rank of a dignitary. Note that the tradition of naming captive titles was common in Machaquila and that all local attestations of *u cha'n* followed by the captives’ names are assigned to male rulers or their paternal predecessors, whereas women are usually referenced to by means of their personal names and other titles preceded by the female agentive prefix **IX**, such as *ix sajal* and *ix k'uhuun*. From this can be concluded that ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk was the legitimate and contemporary ruler of Machaquila and that he during his early career took a captive whose place of

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tering chitin armor; see Stone and Zender 2011: 145) could designate the term *sinaan/sina'n*, which is a frequently attested term for ‘scorpion’ in Yucatec and other Maya languages until nowadays. However, this distinct logogram is not yet known from other sources despite the three here attested examples. All of these seem to be similar renderings of the scorpion’s tail, whilst in at least two instances another clue appears to be the mouth-section of Chaahk depicting an unusual mask-like element. This can be interpreted as intention of the ancient artist to render the full name of the king as Scorpion-tail-mouth(ed)-Chaahk. However, since there is no phonetic complement involved in these three cases, the reading of the logogram is better left open for debate until a possible reading proposal as *sinaan* can be either discarded or verified by full syllabic substitutions.

origin remains elusive as there is no clear evidence of a foreign emblem glyph or toponym that can be securely related to this individual. Furthermore, Taj(al) Mo' seems to have been a rather frequent name from Late until Terminal Classic times, as is attested from other sources where this epithet certainly relates to other namesakes.<sup>9</sup> For the time being, I therefore interpret this sequence as proper title associated with 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk and do not see clear evidence for Tajal Mo' having been an active participant in this narrative.

Given that it follows the *u chan tajal mo'* sequence in at least one instance, yet another title can be associated with 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk: **a-YAX-cho** *a(j) yax cho* 'He of the Yax Cho'. This title seems to be attested two times in the inscriptions of Str. 4, presupposed that Fragment F ends with an uncommon syllabogram with phonetic value **cho(-la?)** or logographic **CHO(L?)**, which shows the head of one of the "hero-twins", Yax Bahlam (Ti') (and patron of the number nine, *balun*), likely as substitute for the **cho**-sign depicting a human mandible (Figure 6). Based on attestations of the title **a-YAX-cho pa-ta** *aj yax chopat* in Yaxchilan and Dos Caobas, where a similar term forms part of the titular phrase of Yaxuun Bahlam IV (notably put in sequence with his captor title *u chan aj uk* and *ux winikhaab ajaw*), Christian Prager (2012: 143) argues convincingly that "aj yax chopat most likely represents [a] dignitary title for a local high office", and he relates the two examples from Machaquila with this title. We may thus speculate if the glyph compound recorded on Fragment n may have ended in a now missing **pa-ta** designating *aj yax chopat*, or, as an alternate and here preferred reading, *aj yax cho* may have been an abbreviated (or substitute) form of *aj yax chopat* (as it is attested in this shorter form in other contexts; e.g., Acte Stela 5 states **a[xa]-ya-cho** *aj yax cho*, see Krempel and Davletshin 2014: 37; Bonampak, Room 2, Caption 19; Site R Lintel 3, and others). As further emphasized by Prager (2012: 143), who bases his arguments on Colonial Yucatec entries for the term *Yax Chopat* "translated by the Franciscan friars as 'coroça'" (Ciudad Real and Acuña 2001: 202),

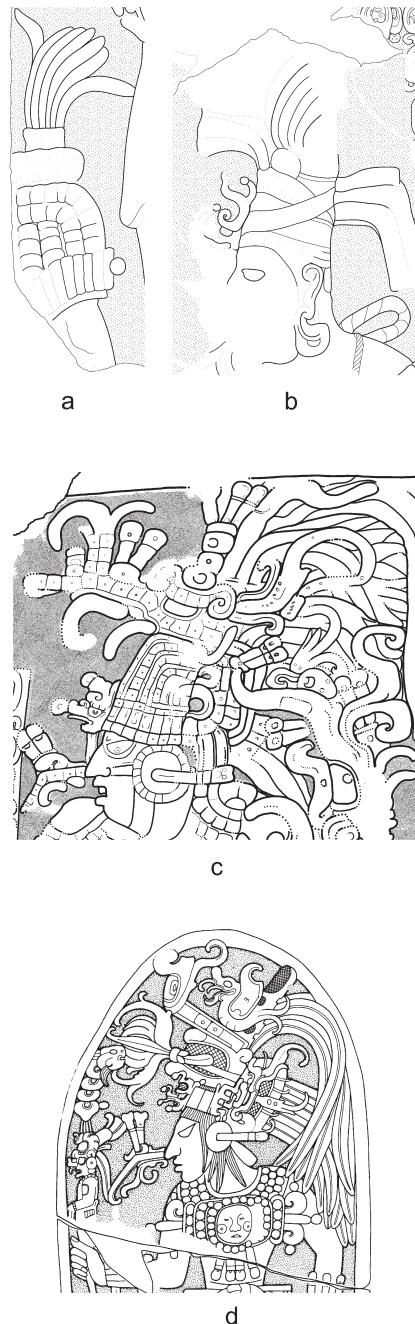
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<sup>9</sup> For instance, the same epithet *u chan tajal mo'* is assigned to K'awiil Chan K'inich, a ruler of Dos Pilas who lived one century earlier, from AD 741–761, and took the captive from the city of Ahkul named Tajal Mo' as war trophy and adopted this title into his nominal phrase (see also Martin and Grube 2008: 60).

a colonial cap worn by convicts of the Spanish inquisition”, and “Cougnaud et al. 2003 convincingly hypothesize that the Classic Maya term most likely refers to the colonial headdress worn by Bird Jaguar IV as depicted on DCB Stela 2 (Cougnaud et al. 2003)” (Prager 2012: 143).<sup>10</sup> Applying these parallels to the interpretation of Str. 4, I assume that the sequence recorded on Fragment F may designate a similar dignitary title as *aj yax cho(pat?)* or maybe *aj yax cho(l?)*/ *aj yax balun?*, or simply *aj yax cho*, describing a certain high office in charge of ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk. A conical, turban-like headdress appears frequently represented in the imagery of other monuments and each time seems to be equipped with a diadem in the form of the deity Huunal (compare, e.g., Tonina Monument 181; Sánchez Gamboa et al. in press; Sánchez Gamboa et al. in prep.), reason why I wonder if the term Yax Cho could describe a certain kind of turban headdress made of white textile bands and feathers, of which however, the most significant detail would have been the green-stone-diadem in form of Huunal worn by the dignitary as part of a ritual dress during special occasions (such as katun-anniversaries or other special calendar termination rituals; see also Stuart 2012); maybe in a similar manner as the more prominent Ko’haw-(war-) headdress made of greenstone-mosaics with an attached Huunal diadem, which is also often represented as conical Greenstone-Centipede Headdress with aquatic motifs, Waterlily and long green feathers, and often combined with the Huunal-diadem-headband as prototypic symbol of rulership/power (Figure 14). Yet, the applicability of the Hunnal-symbol to ritual dresses goes way beyond the coronation of the Maya kings and queens, as it is also attested for lesser socio-political/religious ranks and corresponding inaugurations of non-royal members of the court, such as the ritual offices of an *Aj K’uhuun*, *Ti’ Huun* (Sánchez Gamboa et al. in press; Sánchez Gamboa et al. in prep.), *Sajal*, and *Ch’ajoom*, as well as *Anaab*, to name just a few.

In context of the potential text sequences related to ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk there is a noteworthy group of fragments that recently could be joined to one matching sequence (Figures 2a, 5). The selec-

<sup>10</sup> Landa describes the festivities conducted during the month of Pop with an interesting detail regarding the ritual dress worn by the dignitaries for new year ceremonies: “The priest purified the temple seating himself in the middle of the court, clothed like a pontiff” (Tozzer 1941: 152).



**Figure 14.** Headdresses with attached Huunal-jewelry: *a, b*) Tonina Monument 181 (drawing by Guido Krempel), *c*) El Manantial Stela 6 (drawing by Guido Krempel), *d*) Machaquila Stela 4 (after Graham 1967: 71, fig. 51).

tion of interest consists of Graham's Block J, some pieces excavated in 2003, as well as a fragment re-discovered in the AAG-bodega and later added by the author. In 2008 already identified as a possible toponymic reference ending in **-ni-bi** by the author and Christophe Helmke (Christophe Helmke, personal communication, 2008; see also Helmke in this volume) the author's more recent add revealed that this ending is topped by the syllable **to** (Figure 2a). Although tentatively, due to the missing parts, I tend to read this block as *to(k?)-niib* "place of mist/clouds", which, to my knowledge, is a unique spelling as a place name called *tokniib* is not attested elsewhere in the corpus of Machaquila and nearby sites. Unfortunately, the glyph preceding the **to-ni-bi** collocation is missing, reason why no definite conclusions can be drawn from this sequence of titles. Nonetheless, the supposed term *tokniib* is followed by a complete Machaquila emblem glyph (**K'UH-T174-su-AJAW-wa**), for which there is good reason to believe that the *tokniib* toponym referred to the local king by means of an additional reference to a place name, eventually preceded by the agentive prefix **a\*/AJ\*?-to-ni-bi aj\*** *tokniib* 'He of the Place of Mist/Clouds', which would thus likely designate the place of origin of 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk (see also Helmke in this volume).

As an intermediary result, the titular sequence(s) associated with 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk can thus be reconstructed as follows:

*u chan tajal mo', aj yax cho(?), (aj)\*(?) tokniib k'uhul ...su(l?) ajaw, waxakwinik baah kab*

'Captor/guardian of Tajal Mo', he (of) the Yax Cho(?), (he of the?) place of mist, divine lord (lit.: 'orator') of Machaquila, 28 (provinces-) head of the land'

Remarkably, the names and titles associated with 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk are recorded on all classes of carved stones (Types I, II, and III) that do form the main text decorating the bench; he thus was one of the main subjects in at least four distinct sentences, whilst his lengthy title sequence likewise repeats at least two times.

## The Turtle Queen and the Proper Name of Structure 4

Without a doubt, one of the most telling and at the same time challenging portions for the identification and interpretation of the

entire dedicatory text of Str. 4 consists of the three glyph compounds recorded on Block D, that can be transcribed as follows:

**HUUN-la-na-ji OTOOT-IX-MAHK-AJAW-wa**

Alfonso Lacadena (2005: 238, fig. 4b) was the first to propose that this sequence may designate the proper name of Str. 4 as *hu'nal naaj otoot ix ahk(ul?) ajaw* 'the Hu'nal-palace-house of the Turtle-Queen', and he made pencil sketches in order to complement Graham's drawings and underline his arguments. With this, he provided us with a significant insight for the reading and interpretation of the originally intended function and meaning of this building. In his study on the distinction of the logograms **AHK** and **MAHK**, Marc Zender (2005) clarified that the here recorded turtle-logogram forming part of the woman's name is likely to be read *mahk* rather than *ahk* (as previously proposed; Iglesias and Lacadena 2003, 2005; Ciudad et al. 2004; Lacadena 2005), resulting in the reading of her emblem glyph as *ix mahk(ul?) ajaw* 'Lady/Queen of (the) Turtle(-place)'. In the same study, Zender also sheds some doubts on the reading of this sequence as 'Huunal-House', arguing that the initial glyph might instead be a zoomorphic version of the skybird **CHAN**. Based on this, he offers an alternate (yet tentative) reading of the sequence as *chanal naaj tuun otoot* 'Heavenly House (of the) Stone Dwelling' (Zender 2005: 11, Footnote 16). As part of his argument, he suggests that the logogram **OTOOT** 'house' is here conflated with a **TUN** 'stone' glyph.

At first, I do concur with the reading of the turtle carapace as **MAHK**, as this version indeed seems to derive from all other logo-graphic spellings in attested sequences in which individuals from a place named Akhul are mentioned (e.g., Dos Pilas, where the ruler K'awiil Chan K'inich bears the title **u-cha-CHAN-AHK-la-AJAW/AHK-lu-AJAW**, each time rendered with Zender's **AHK** instead of **MAHK**, the latter showing converging triangular crosshatched elements as an infix instead of the more common turtle carapace pattern; see Zender 2005). Furthermore, the **MAHK** sign can be distinguished clearly from another Turtle emblem glyph, the one used in reference to Cancuen rulers, which is always preceded by **ya-** and never misses the **K'IN**-sign infix into the carapace.

We can thus approximate this sequence backwards, assuming that a woman from the royal court of Mahk(ul) either conducted an unknown event at or in a house, or, in case the **OTOOT**-logogram includes an infix **yo** and thereby a possessed (3<sup>rd</sup> person singular) form, that the woman of Mahk(ul) was the assigned owner of the house (*y-otoot ix mahk ajaw*).

Now, returning to the possible proper name of the house preceding the woman's title, I tend to apply Alfonso Lacadena's reading for the initial glyph as **HUUN** rather than **CHAN** proposed by Zender, even though the two signs of interest can be barely distinguished, and the eroded surface of Fragment D makes this distinction even more difficult (the distinctive leaf or lash of textile dangling from the back of its head is in this case mostly covered by the ear jewels; but it may show a lash of textile in front of the head instead). Comparing some better-preserved attestations of the **HUUN** logogram in other contexts (see also, e.g., Taube 1998; Stuart 2012; Steinbach 2015), I still see more similarities with the head of **HUUN** rather than the **CHAN**-skybird but there also remains the option that the head here represents the Jester God in its avian guise (see Steinbach 2015).<sup>11</sup> In this regard, I read the sequence as **HUUN-la-na-ji OTOOT-IX-MAHK-AJAW-wa huunal naaj otoot ix mahk ajaw** 'the Huunal-Naaj House/Dwelling, Ix Mahk Ajaw'.

There is an additional feature forming part of the **OTOOT** glyph that calls for clarification. Zender (2005: 11) sees a clear **TUN** sign with proper reading as part of the **OTOOT** logogram. In my opinion, the 'stone'-element goes in accord with the 'wood'-element as part of the 'house-basement' for which I interpret these features as repre-

<sup>11</sup> In fact, as Penny Steinbach demonstrated in her thorough study on the distinction of Jester God symbols, the skybird and Jester God (or Huun) are closely related to each other, and there are good indicators for Pre-Classic precursors of the avian Jester God and differing ficus leaves that were clear templates for the Late Classic entity known as Hux Yop Huun 'three-leaved-headband/Huun'. As Steinbach (2015) further clarified, there is a clear distinction between this avian guise of the Jester God, its anthropomorphic representations, and an aquatic representation that do correspond with the three cosmic realms (heaven, earth, and water) and can be distinguished not only by their iconography (figurine, avian, ajaw) but were also arranged horizontally and vertically in a particular way in order to represent these cosmic realms as part of the dignitaries' dress. Most of the stelae from Machaquila are good examples for a naturalistic depiction of such Huunal-Headbands made of white paper and three Ficus-Huunal-diadems made of greenstone that are attached to Watersnake/Centipede headdresses (see, e.g., Figure 14d; see also Graham 1967: 68, 71, 73, 78, 80).

senting a stepped-platform made of wood and stone, on top of which stands a wooden construction with a rooftop made of braided palm thatch, and in front of it hanging a folded curtain (Figures 5, 10c). Following this idea further, I think it is even plausible to assume that this is not only just a prototypic rendering of a ‘house’ but could also provide us with clues regarding the manner Str. 4 got conceived and constructed by the ancients, given that a stepped basement made of stone and wooden features, and a wooden construction with open façade on top with a roof of perishable material would precisely correspond with the actual archaeological evidence for such a construction in case of Str. 4. And, assuming further that the building played a proper role in this narrative involving an action conducted by Ix Mahk Ajaw with or at this house, I suggest that the artist responsible for the design and palaeography of its dedicatory text would have chosen a representative sign depicting a proper stylized version of Str. 4 in order to label it (see Figure 10). In sum, I take the ‘house’ logogram as an unpossessed pure logographic OTOOT and assume that the woman conducted an event in (or at) a house named *huunal-naj(il?) otoot*.<sup>12</sup>

Lacadena (2005) reconstructs this sentence as (*huli*) *hu’nal naaj otot ix ahkul ajaw* ‘...arrived at the Hu’nal-house of Ix Ahkul Ajaw’. However, momentarily there is no firm evidence for the spatial arrangement of this fragment (which according to my reconstruction pertains to stones of Type II), and as will be clarified in the forthcoming, the verbal phrase *i-hul-i* is attested on a stone of Type III, reason why I prefer to leave the verbal phrase that must have preceded the name of the building open for debate (not the least because the arrival event does not refer to the here discussed woman of Mahkul, as will be shown in the forthcoming). This does not exclude the possibility that there was, eventually, yet another *huli*-event recorded on Type II stones that could be related to the nametag of Str. 4 (see, e.g., a previously undesignated fragment which might designate HUL?-? as well but cannot be put in sequence and does not preserve enough portions to propose a firm decipherment; see Figure 2d).

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<sup>12</sup> However, admit that former readings of this term as possessed form are likewise plausible and cannot be discarded; in any case, it can be assumed that the woman conducted an event with or at this house, and that it was in some manner also assigned to this same woman.

The as of yet unknown action conducted by the queen of Mahk notwithstanding, even more important for the interpretation of the function and meaning of Str. 4 is the name of the building itself designated as **HUUN-la-na-ji OTOOT**. For this nametag I have two differing reading proposals, both of which are plausible in my opinion and do lead in the same direction, however, each with differing implications for the grammar of this sequence. In the first scenario, the term *naaj* would have the frequently attested meaning as ‘building’ or ‘house’ (see also Stuart 1998: 381–382; Iglesias and Lacadena 2005: 18), and, in turn, the sequence may read *huunal-naaj(il) yotoot ix mahk ajaw* ‘the Huunal-Building/Structure, the House/Dwelling of Ix Mahk Ajaw’.

Another proposal emerges when tracking alternate lexical entries for the term *naaj*, and I wonder if the word root may in this case eventually have been *naj* or *naji(l)* for which we find the following additional pointing translations in Yucatec branches: *nah* ‘ser digno, merecer’; ‘necesario, preciso, ser necesario’; ‘acertar a lo que se tira’; *nahal/nahil* ‘ganancia, merecimiento, mérito, jornal, premio, gracia’ (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 550–551).

When applying the latter meaning as ‘merit’ or ‘earnings’ and following Alfonso’s identification of the initial glyph compound as **HUUN-la**, the intended wording may eventually have been *huunal naji(l) otoot* ‘the Huunal-Merit-House’. Subsequently, this then can be taken as evidence for the function of Str. 4 as a building that was specifically created for ceremonies that involved the consignment of royal headbands (*sak/ik' huun/hux yop huun*) and other paraphernalia. It may further explain why the **OTOOT** glyph is not written in possessed form (*y-otoot*) as it seems unlikely that such a ‘coronation-house’ for royal dignitaries would have been possessed/assigned to one female individual proper (in this case the Queen of Mahk). Instead, the local ‘Headband-Merit-House’ would probably have been used throughout generations by the entire royal lineage of Machaquila and would have involved certain representations of the prototypic deity of royal power, Huun or Hux Yop Huun<sup>13</sup> (e.g., as headband-diadems attached to other paraphernalia) that were

<sup>13</sup> The name is alternatively spelled Ux Yop Huun in the literature; as detailed further below, in the case of Machaquila the presence of **u-13, u huxlajun** on Block A (Graham 1967: 58, fig. 39) underlines the correct transliteration for the here used coefficient *huxlajun* ‘thirteen’, reason why the spelling Hux Yop Huun can be confidently applied.

probably kept within Str. 4 and were handed over at certain occasions in precisely this building's interior. Tentatively, I imagine that the honored dignitary would have sat on the central bench accompanied by family members or other high-ranking persons who'd present the prototypic symbol of power in form of a royal headband (*sak/ik' huun*) with greenstone diadem in order to dress up for a theatrical public ceremony observed from Plaza F.

After this re-evaluation of the two glyph compounds I suggest the following phrasing for Fragment D:

**HUUN-la-na-ji OTOOT-IX-MAHK-AJAW-wa**

[...] *huunal naji(l) otoot ix(ik) mahk ajaw [...]*

'[unknown event] the Huunal-Merit House, the divine lady (lit.: queen) of Mahk [...]'

## Who is who?

Fragment B records the sequence **ya-na-tz'i-ni** *y-antz?*, followed by a partially preserved name, **?-IX-?-CHAK-ki ...?** *Ix(ik) ...? Chaahk* (Figure 6). While the title (*y-*)antz' is only known as relationship statement attributed to females in other Late Classic inscriptions, and specifically from contexts where it is clearly preceded by the name of the dignitaries' mother (see also Grube and Luin 2014: 47, fig. 7), it can be tentatively suggested that ...? *Ix* ...? *Chaahk* is the name of a child which here follows after a parentage statement in its possessed form ('... is the Antz' of ...'). This further leads to conclude that a block preceding the *y-antz'* title would designate the name of the mother. In other words, the woman called ....? *Ix* ...? *Chaahk* must be the child in this narrative, whereas the name and/or additional rank indicating titles of the mother would have preceded her name. Unfortunately, no paternal relation statement recorded on Str. 4 has been found, so that it remains speculative how and if the mentioned woman was kin-related to 'Scorpion' Ti' *Chaahk*. However, given the repeated records of his name and titles combined with at least two female names or titles involved, it would not be farfetched to assume that both women were members of the same royal court. Therefore, I favour a scenario in which the woman entitled *Ix Bolon*

Paat Ehm Uni(iw?) may have been the ‘Turtle-Queen’ (*ixik mahk ajaw*) and at the same time the spouse of ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk, whereas ...? Ix ...? Chaahk may have been the child of this couple. Another—in my opinion equally plausible—scenario would see ...? Ix ...? Chaahk being the spouse of ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk, this making the Queen of Mahkul a possible candidate for the mother-in-law whose child may have become the spouse of the king. Both scenarios can be theorized, yet, neither constellation can be verified by the preserved fragments from Str. 4, reason why the real nature of their kennings remains uncertain and a matter of speculation for the time being.<sup>14</sup>

At this point, Block C comes into play (Figure 5). Here, again it is difficult to clarify the semantics of the text sequence, as it remains uncertain whether this block follows after the name of ...? Ix ...? Chaahk and could thus designate a title followed by an opaque verbal phrase (**IX-9-pa-ta EHM-u?-ni** *ix balun paat ehm-*ø *uniiw?* ‘Woman of Nine Tributes, descends from Uniwi?’), or, as a here preferred scenario, the complete block may refer to the name of the mother called Ix Balun Paat Ehm(ach?) Uni(iw)?/Sahbiin(?) ‘Lady Nine Tribute-Racoon(?) /Weasel(?) ...?’ (see Zender 2004a). An alternate reading for the logogram depicting a similar appearing but yet distinct sign showing the head of another mammal, namely the Long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*),<sup>15</sup> has been first proposed by Lopes (2005: 6–7), who suggested the value **SAHBIN** for the weasel-sign, a reading that has been detailed and discussed by Bernal 2018, who seconds the reading **SAHBIN** and also places this logogram in context of the nominal phrase assigned to the entity ‘God N Sahbiin’ which appears specifically in the 63-days cycle identified by Bernal (2018) as a proper calendar count related to Saturn- and fire-ceremonies. Yet, in the case of Machaquila, the mammalian head shows more similarities with other representations of racoons in Classic Maya writing and does show a furry tail in place of the ‘God N/ Pauahtun’-headdress that usually occurs with the ‘God N’-**SAHBIN**,

<sup>14</sup> Last but not least, also a third option concerning Block B, according to which the woman would be the mother of the king called Sinaan(?) Ti’ Chaahk (**si\*?-na-CHAK**), shall be considered as an alternate constellation until one or the other can be discarded with more certainty.

<sup>15</sup> I thank Yuriy Polyukhovych for having reminded me to include a more detailed discussion of this sign into the present article for the sake of presenting the various plausible options.

for which the identification of this animal as ‘raccoon’ **EHM(ACH)**, as convincingly argued by Zender (2004a) in light of his study of racoon representations, may seem more plausible. However, given that the following sign in combination with a terminating **-ni** eludes decipherment for the time being, the decision to read this sign either as ‘raccoon’ **EHM** or **EHM(ACH)** or alternatively ‘weasel’ **SAHBIN** shall remain open for debate. A supportive argument for the **SAHBIN** reading may be the fact that this sign often ends in **-na** (however, never attested with **-ni** as is the case for Str. 4) and in context of the nominal phrase of God N and the ‘Snake Lady’ (Lopes 2005); for which a possible hint may be recorded in the inscriptions of Str. 4. Nonetheless, this possible parallel remains speculative, too, not the least until a full decipherment of the here attested sequence **EHM?/SAHBIN?-u?-ni** can be established with more certainty. An alternate reading of this sequence as yet another differing proper nominal phrase evolves when transcribing the here attested undeciphered sign—showing an anthropomorphic head with a cross-hatched feature protruding from its eyebrow—apart from the surrounding sign which looks somewhat similar compared with the logogram **KA’ABA’** ‘name’, even though the common **K’A’ABA’** logogram usually shows yet other features with cross-banded textiles (see, e.g., the vessel K2573).<sup>16</sup> Taking the **-ni** ending as possible phonetic complement for a preceding weasel head with possible value **SAHBIN?-ni**, the whole collocation may then read as follows: **IX-9-pa-ta SAHBIN?-ni-u-K’A’ABA’ ix balun paat sahbiin u k’a’aba’** ‘Lady Nine-Tribute-Weasel is her name’.

While there can thus be distinguished two women whose names cannot be identified with certainty due to the mentioned variety of possible readings,<sup>17</sup> there is one more decontextualized fragment of a Type IV stone terminating in **...?-IX-1-na**, which I tentatively reconstruct as **K’UH\*-IX-1-na ix k’uhuun** (Figure 8d). Momentarily, there is no nominal phrase that can be associated with this title, but one may interpret this as evidence that either the child, **...? IX ...?** Chaahk, or her mother bore this title indicating a socio-political

<sup>16</sup> Applying the **u k’a’aba’** reading for this sequence, the name of the lady from Dos Pilas may read **IX ko-CHA’ [u?]K’A’ABA’? IX-MUT-la-AJAW ix(ik) ko’/kokcha’ u k’a’aba’ ix mutul ajaw** ‘Lady Turtle(?) Metate is the name of the Mutul woman’.

<sup>17</sup> Depending on which transliteration of the above discussed sign one prefers to apply.

rank which might be vaguely equated with ‘priestess’ (Zender 2004b; see also Sánchez et al. in prep.).

Besides ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk and the aforementioned women, there may be at least one more person mentioned in the text, given that there is a loose fragment (K) with a possible logogram **BALAM**, which could have formed part of a personal name. Momentarily, it cannot be clarified whether this fragment forms part of a nominal phrase, nor—if really the case—to which person this name refers, as the name *bahlam* was just too common during the Terminal Classic period and could relate to any not yet identified actor or even a deity in this narrative without having a clear semantic anchor. As an intermediary conclusion, it can thus be stated that the story of Str. 4 was mainly about three protagonists, namely the king of Machaquila, ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk, a woman called ....? Ix ...? Chaahk, and her mother, Ix Balun Paat Ehm(ach?) Uun(iiw)? But what happened?

## Recorded Events on Structure 4

Assuming confidently that Fragment k formed the beginning of the main text, and that this inscription starts with a Tzolk'in date followed by a verb (as already proposed by Iglesias and Lacadena 2005: 155), the compound consisting of three glyphs (?-ALAY?) should initiate the first verbal phrase (Figure 5). Unfortunately, this block is only partially preserved, but the second sign does look conspicuously like the head of the deity G1, which substitutes frequently for the common initial sign AL/ALAY. As a tentative assumption, I therefore read this text sequence as ...?-? **9-CHAK-SIH-hi a?-ALAY?-?** and speculate further that the initial *alay* would have been followed by a dedication verb (such as *t'abaay* or *k'ahlaj*) and an object that was presented or dedicated.

Both the corresponding object, as well as the subject of this sentence, remain elusive because so far it is known that the text starts with(?) Fragment k and a date, eventually followed by the initial term *alay*, but it is unknown which object or subject was originally positioned thereafter, and, as a matter of fact, there is a number of fragments pertaining to Type I bearing remains of references to ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk’, possibly to ...? Ix ...? Chaahk, Ix Bolon Paat Ehm Uniiw?, as well as to the mysterious ...? Bahlam?.

A noteworthy fragment appeared with the corner piece published by Grube (1989) (Figure 2m), which, in combination with Fragment a could form an interesting couple (Figure 5). The block starts with the glyph ZV3 (Macri and Looper 2003) which shows two volutes on top of an upside-down turned vessel that in some other instances is followed by **-la**. While the reading of this sign remains debatable, it may here work as verbal root *pul* followed by **tu-CH'EN?**, resulting in *pul? tu ch'en* 'burned the cave/city of....'. If this sequence is related to Fragment a—which was found in archaeological context in relative close distance to Block k, bearing the initial date ... 9 Keh—which unfortunately is highly speculative, the subject involved could have been the sequence ...?-**MUT\*-li** **4-K'AWIIL-CHAN-na** ... *mutul?/mutil? chan k'awiil chan*. Unfortunately, the logogram depicting a wrapped-up head terminating in the syllable **-li** cannot be identified with certainty, and it is tempting to assume—as has been by others—that it may refer to the place name of the Mutul-dynasty associated with Dos Pilas, Tikal, and other petty-states in the Rio Pasión region. However, I prefer to remain cautious with such a proposal since there is a large portion of the glyph missing here, and at closer look in comparison with other attestations of the Mutul emblem glyph, the wrapped-up creature forming the main sign of the Dos Pilas emblem glyph looks different. The question whether the verbal phrase *puluy? tu ch'een* connects with ...*mutul? chan k'awiil chan* must therefore remain open for debate until more evidence may surface in the future.

When discarding the previous scenario, another possibility may see the **MUT?-li** as object of the first verbal phrase, resulting in the sequence 'on the day .... 9 Keh [missing verb] the ...-il [and] the four heavenly/serpent-like K'awiil'.

As an alternate (likewise tentative) conclusion, we may thus assume that the object(s) involved in the first sentence could have been some sort of 'bundle' and four K'awiil effigies.

Jumping from here to the text recorded event on one of the supports (Type III stones), we find yet another sequence in which **u-K'AWIIL-la u k'awiil** 'the K'awiil of ....' plays a central role (Figure 7). The four corresponding blocks can be confidently combined to the following phrase:

**i-hu-li IX?-T174-ti?/tu?-su u-K'AWIL-la CHAN-la-CHAK-?**

'i-huli ix(?) put?su'(?) /put?su(l?) u k'awiil chanal chak ...?

'(and then) arrived the woman (at) Putsul(?) (and?) the K'awiil of the Heav-  
enly/Snake-like Chak ...?'

The first block mentions the verbal phrase *i-hul-i* '(and then) he/she/it arrived', which is followed by either the name of the travelling subject, the place of arrival, or both. Unfortunately, the next block is severely eroded but there remain sufficient rests of the contours and some details to transcribe this glyph compound as **IX?-T174-ti?/tu?-su**. The combination of the 'pebble-stone glyph' T174 (Thompson 1962: 448) followed by **ti** (or **tu**), and the syllable **su** strongly lead to suggest that this is a substitute for the hitherto undeciphered place name that forms part of the Machaquila emblem glyph. To my knowledge, this is a unique spelling since in all other cases the emblem glyph is written as **K'UH-T174-su-AJAW-wa**. Here, it appears to lack an **AJAW** glyph and was thus not meant to designate an emblem glyph but rather the proper name of the place of arrival. This farther leads to assume that the syllable **ti** (or **tu**) was meant to be a phonetic complement for the sign T174, a logogram composed of a common 'stone'-sign flanked by three-cornered dots, most likely representing gravel(-stones). The glyph is majorly attested with logographic function and recently Dmitri Beliaev proposed the reading **PUT** for T174, in accord with Albert Davletshin who noticed that the full-form of the sign may show T174 on top of another sign with the value **chi** in other contexts (personal communication, 2018).<sup>18</sup>

Both, the sole glyph T174 and the compound T174-'chi-HAND' are in few instances complemented by the syllable **tu** (see, e.g., Palenque, Temple XIX platform, Passage W-4; see Stuart 2005: 103), which seems to underline that the lexeme of interest here should end in CVt, reason why I second the **PUT?-tu puut** reading as plausible proposal for both, T174 and the compound T174-'chi-HAND' (Beliaev and Davletshin 2014). Nonetheless, this reading proposal calls for

<sup>18</sup> David Stuart (2005: 103) tentatively proposed the reading **HACH?-chi**, assuming that **chi** might function as phonetic complement to T174, which in the case of Palenque Temple XIX is followed by the name Salaj Bolon who is earlier mentioned as the one who receives 'the rope' in this narrative.

further investigation and full phonetic substitutions to assign a firm decipherment. Notwithstanding the translation of the term *put*, but applying the transcription **PUT?** as a working hypothesis, I suggest that the glyph compound recorded on Str. 4 could be read as **i-HUL-i IX-PUT?-ti?/tu?-su** *i-hul-i ix putsu'* ‘the woman arrived at Putsu’ (Machaquila). Consequently, if the *put* reading turns out to be correct, the Machaquila emblem glyph can be transcribed as **K'UH-PUT?-su-AJAW-wa** *k'uhul putsu' ajaw* ‘divine lord of Putsu’. The **su** syllable following after T174 may designate *putsu'*, with the *-su'* ending referring to ‘concentrated (or piled-up?)’<sup>19</sup> objects, or, as an alternate proposal already suggested by Lacadena, a *-su(l)* ending could be a toponymic prefix for ‘place of...’, eventually leading here to a possible reading as ‘place of piled up(?) / many(?) gravel(?)’. In both cases, it seems reasonable to assume that the emblem glyph is composed of a logogram followed by syllabic **-su**, for which a tentative reading as ‘place of (many?) Put(?) (gravels? or river stones?)’ seems plausible for the time being but calls for additional backup by means of fitting translations of the term *putsu'(?)* or *putsu(l) (?)*.

In sum, the text recorded on the left(?) support seems to describe the arrival of a woman at Machaquila (**i-hu-li IX-T174-ti-su** *i-hul-i ixik put?-su[?/l?]*), and since thereafter follows a possessed K’awiil, I currently do not see any other plausible option as to interpret this phrase as a reference to a woman (*ixik*) who arrived in the centre of Machaquila (*putsu'*) together with a K’awiil (object/effigy?) attributed to a character named ‘Heavenly (Serpent-like) Red/Great ...?’ . The last glyph of this block shows the head of a deity with prominent round nose, feline-ears and an antler stuck through its earhole. I wonder if this deity is related to the name of Wuk Sip or one involved in some 819-Day count passages which appears to be mentioned in the corpus of Yaxchilan (compare, e.g., to Yaxchilan Lnt. 30: E4; Palenque Palace Tablet C2-D3; see also Grube 2012: 139) and is also preceded by **CHAK** ‘red/great’ in many instances. Other attestations from Codex-style vessels show painted depictions of the old deity (Wuk) Sip lying on a throne-bench and being surrounded

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<sup>19</sup> In Yucatec we find, for instance, the lexemes *su'* and *suu'*, respectively, translated as *su'*: ‘espesa cosas como plantas; espesa cosa junta una a otra; *suu'*: cosas muy juntas y apretadas, como árboles, yerbas, puntos de costura, y muchas hojas en el árbol, y granos y lepra, etc.’ (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 740).

by a group of mourning women. The same deity is in other scenes associated with a deer-snake with K'awiil-tail, and Wuk Sip emerges out of the maw of this snake with his trumpet-shell. The snake is being conjured or curled (*kopem*) by a woman. In short, I wonder if the arrival of a woman at Machaquila with the K'awiil of the Snake-like Chak Sip(?) was in some manner conceptually related to the mentioned mythological episode involving the Deer-Snake, the Red/Great (Wuk?) Sip and K'awiil and may at the same time be associated with the *Nah Chan*-snakes mentioned as being the *wahy* of K'awiil in other inscriptions (e.g., Yaxchilan Lnt. 15, B2-G3).

As a tentative reading, I therefore propose the following phrasing for the inscription on the leftmost support of the bench: ‘and then the woman arrived at Machaquila (and/with) the K'awiil of the Heavenly/Snake-like Chak Sip?’.

I propose that the abovementioned woman bearing the title *ix k'uhuun* would have been the same woman who arrived in Machaquila.

The next event is recorded on the central support consisting of blocks Q+R+T+U, of which the first three are severely eroded and barely readable (Figure 6). Block R seems to involve a **u-1-?-HAB**, so that there is good reason to reconstruct a calendar count or distance number which connects to the already mentioned (‘i?') *tzutzuy u jun winikhaab* ‘(and then) got terminated the first 20-year-score of...’. So, now knowing that one of the three medallions terminated with the name and titles of ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk, we have enough evidence to reconstruct the narrative as ‘(and then) got terminated the first 20-year-score of/by [...] ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk ...’ and I take this as confirmation that the 20-year count refers to an anniversary celebrated either for or by this individual (eventually, a celebration of the house dedication venerating Structure 4 proper). Yet, the question remains which happening was remembered and celebrated, and as mentioned initially, neither a previous nor the later event can be calculated with precision due to the missing calendar round that would help to fix this event in time or relating it to one of the previously recorded events.

Meanwhile, all clearly recognizable verbal phrases have been discussed, leaving us finally with the task of tracing the signifi-

cance of the smaller, eroded, fully decontextualized, and potentially missing fragments that would complement the history of Str. 4.

To this category also belongs the well-preserved Block A—another elusive key-piece in this discourse—which can be transcribed mostly as (Figure 5):

**u-13-AK'?-nu-ch'a-lu pa-ti-ITZAM-[K'AN]AHK-ba-ka-ba**

*u huxlajun ak'(ot)? nuun? ch'al?/nuch'aal? pat itzamk'anahk baah kab*

Even though the block was preserved in superb condition when Graham (1963: 57, fig. 38) documented it in private collection,<sup>20</sup> a significant part at the lower left corner has been missing ever since and thereby complicates its reading and interpretation immensely, leaving yet more room for speculations.

The sequence starts with a common glyph **u** ‘his/her/its’, followed by the coefficient 13 on top of a sign that is majorly broken off and barely recognizable anymore. The next three glyphs can be identified as the syllabograms **nu**, **ch'a**, and **lu**, respectively, and were probably meant to be read from top to bottom,<sup>21</sup> leading us to the task of finding a plausible translation of the lexeme *nu..? ch'al(?)*, *nuch'a(l)? or nuch'uul?*.

For this part I have only tentative proposals to offer as I have not found any comparable sequences in the Classic Maya corpus so far, and quests of tracing lexical entries for *nuch'al* or *nun ch'aal* proved negative so far. But there are some remarkable entries for the terms *ch'a nup* and *ch'aal* which seem worth considering in this context (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 124–125, 581–582).<sup>22</sup>

Based on these entries, it can be hypothesized that the word root for the here recorded term may have been either *ch'aal nu(p)?* or *nuch'aal* and eventually related to the entries ‘juntar cabeza con cabeza, o punta con punta’, ‘confederarse contra alguno’, or ‘aliarse’.

<sup>20</sup> The one serving as doorstop at that time (Graham 2010: 250).

<sup>21</sup> Note that there is no other instance attested in this inscription in which the arrangement of the glyph compounds derives from the common reader order.

<sup>22</sup> CH'ALA KAN ‘deliberar; conferir; consultar unos con otros y tomar consejo y parecer así’; CH'A NUP ‘uno con otro y se compone por verbos’; CH'A NUP KAN ‘parlar y hablar uno con otro’; CH'AAL T'AN ‘terciar, terciar entre partes’ / *k'ulel tah* ‘terciar así’; NUCH ‘juntar cabeza con cabeza, o punta con punta’; NUCHAH *nuch* ‘unir o reunir dos o más cosas por las

The rest of the sequence can be transcribed with more confidence and continues with the phrase ‘... the back of Itzamk’anahk, *baah kab*’. From this can be drawn the conclusion that the first glyph compound records an event that either happened on or with the ‘back of Itzamk’anahk (the yellow/precious Itzam-Turtle’); a frequently attested name which plays a significant role in mythological contexts as epithet of one of the most prominent entities in Maya cosmology: Itzam in his guise of a turtle. Yet, there is also ample evidence for the same name attested in nominal phrases designating historical individuals (e.g., at Piedras Negras where kings with the name Itzamk’anahk resided). The here following *baah kab* title, which terminates this sequence on Fragment A, adds yet another riddle to the narrative.

At the end, the sequence recorded on Fragment A still remains elusive—not the least due to the missing piece at the lower left corner—but I suggest that it eventually refers to some kind of dance (for the decipherment of the logogram AK’ see also Grube 1992), eventually stating **u-13-AK’?-nu-ch’al-pa-ti-ITZAM[K’AN]AHK** *u huxlajun ak’ot(?) nuch’aal(?)pat itzamk’anahk baah kab* ‘his thirteen confederate(?)dance(s?) on the back of Itzamk’anahk of (the) first of the land’. The following *baah kab* title is either linked to a deity name (thus, ‘... the back of the Itzamk’anahk-Baah Kab’), or the preceding sequence should alternatively be understood as an extended titular phrase which describes the bearer of the *baah kab*-title as historic individual who conducted (or participated in) a certain (dance?)event that happened on the back of the ‘yellow/precious Itzam-Turtle’.<sup>23</sup>

As a final comment on Block A, I tend to exclude the possibility that Itzamk’anahk would in this case designate the name of a historic individual, even though this option cannot be discarded without having shed more light on the semantics and meaning of

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cabezas, encender fuego reuniendo tizones’; NUCH KAN ‘confederarse, aliarse, concertarse, y hacerse a una’; NUCH LUM KAN ‘disputar, concertar entre muchos’; NUCH LUUM KAN ‘juramentarse haciendo concierto, conversar, disputar entre muchos’; NUCH LUUM T’AN ‘confederarse contra alguno, hacer monipodio’.

<sup>23</sup> At this point, it appears worth noting that the giant Altar A which stood at the western entrance to Plaza A, seemingly aligned with Stela 2 and in front of Str. 20 (possibly erected sometime during the early or even mid-9<sup>th</sup> century) represents a huge (snapping?) turtle with K’awil emerging from its carapace at one side, and a ruler sitting inside the turtle’s belly surrounded by a quadrifoil frame. It may be farfetched, but I wonder if the event recorded on Fragment A could eventually have happened precisely in the ceremonial centre

this enigmatic sequence. The missing lower left corner may have designated a numerical classifier for the number 13, leading us to a possible translation as:

'the thirteen/thirteenth? gathering?/meeting? on the back of Itzamk'anahk (of the?) Baahkab';

or, here preferred with a tentatively reconstructed **AK'** logogram:

'his thirteen(th?) dance (during?/for?) the meeting (on) the back of the Itzam'anahk (of the) Baah Kab (lit.: first of the land)'

Despite Fragments k and A, respectively, there is no clear evidence for a third verbal sequence recorded on stones of Type I. Therefore, regarding the originally intended reading order and the possible events of the main portion of this dedication text no decisive conclusions can be drawn so far. But there is a high possibility that the king 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk, as well as the woman/women was/were involved as active participants (yet, we do not know who of these individuals was eventually mentioned in a relationship statement only, and who would have been the one who dedicated or handled the 'Four Heavenly/Snake-like K'awiils' at the beginning of the narrative, and who was, or how many of the protagonists were involved in the event that happened on, at, or with 'the back of Itzamk'anahk').

To conclude the epigraphic analysis, some fragments for which I do not see any matching context so far shall be mentioned briefly. One of these is a sequence composed of Graham's fragments G+H (Figure 5), which I tentatively reconstruct as one unit. It seems to record a paired *difrasismo*, maybe consisting of ...?-ka\*?-lo?-ni **AK'AB ka-lo-ni** ....-n ... ak'ab? kalon?. Nonetheless, I have no idea to

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of Machaquila (Plaza A). If so, the sequence may be a remembrance of an event conducted by either one *baah kab*, or as an alternate hypothesized scenario, even by a group of thirteen individuals, who gathered around Plaza A. Nonetheless, neither the one or the other reading can be verified with any certainty, and there remains yet another alternate reading when interpreting the Baah Kab title here as part of a preceding nominal phrase instead of it being a place name, which would result in the following phrasing: 'his 13(th?)dance(?) *nuch'al* at/on/with the back of the Itzamk'anahk, the Baah Kab'.

Date	Event	Object/Subject	Location	Associated Name(s)	Title(s)
<b>Type I stones</b>					
...? 9 Kéh	unknown	.... <i>alay?</i> /... (?) <i>chan</i> <i>Kawill chan</i>		'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk?	
	<i>pul?</i>	<i>tu ch'een?</i>		'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk? <i>Kuhul putsu</i> (?) <i>qjaw</i>	
	<i>hul?</i>	n.d.	Ix Balun Paat Ehm(?) Uniiw(?)		
	<i>u huxlajjuun ak'ot?</i> <i>nuch'aal</i> (?)	<i>pat itzamk'anahk</i>	'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk? <i>baah kab; u chan tajal mo'; aj yax cho,</i> <i>waxak windak baah kab, (aj)? tok(?)niib,</i> <i>K'uhul putsu</i> (?) <i>qjaw</i>		
<b>Type II stones</b>					
	unknown	<i>huunal naj(i) otoot</i>	Ix Mahk Ajaw (and 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk?)		<i>y-anitz'</i> (and <i>u chan tajal mo'</i> )
<b>Type III stones</b>					
		<i>i-hul-i ix putsu'</i>	<i>u k'awiil chanal chak</i> ...?	...Ix ... ? Chaahk???	[daughter of Ix Balun Paat Ehm(?) Uniiw(?); daughter(?) spouse(?) of 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk?]
DN? (one year later?)	<i>tzutuy</i>	<i>u jun winikhaab</i>		(...? Ix ... ? Chaahk and?) 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk?	<i>K'uhul putsu' qjaw; waxakwinak baah</i> <i>kab</i>
<b>Type IV stones</b>					
10 Kib 4 Pop (Jan, 848)	... <i>aj</i>	unknown	unknown		
unknown	<i>tajal? ti chanal</i>	Chak ...?		(...? Ix ... ? Chaahk???)	<i>ix* k uhuun?</i>

Table 1. List of chronological and narrative contents recorded on fragments pertaining to Machaquila Structure 4.

which other block this sequence may pertain and therefore do not wage a translation nor assigning it to another fragment.

Interestingly, the stones of Type IV contain at least two more verbal phrases. One follows the date 10 Kib 4 Pop and is probably written in passive voice (...*aj?*) but, unfortunately, is too eroded to make any sense out of it (Figure 8a).

The other is recorded on Graham's Fragment M and seems to record **ta?-ja-la ti? CHAN-la ... tajal ti chanal** '[...] ...torch-like heavenly/snake-like ....'. This block could well be continued with Block j as the latter begins with **CHAK** followed by the head of a deity, reminding at the sequence *u k'awiil chanal chak ...?* recorded on one of the supports (even though the head variant here seems to depict another entity). Thereafter may follow another verb, also in passive voice (...*aj?*); however, this block is likewise too mutilated to draw any final conclusion.

To wrap up the narrative, Table 1 lists the calendrical data, verbal phrases, associated subjects and their titles as well as locations involved, as far as the current inventory allows to conclude upon.

If my current assumptions are correct, then the main protagonist in this discourse was 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk, who was the legitimate lord (lit.: 'orator') of Machaquila, associated with or originating from *tok(?)niib* 'Place of Mist/Clouds', also known as 'the guardian of Tajal Mo', bearer of the title Aj Yax Cho, and a high dignitary commissioning 28 provinces (*waxakwinik baah kab*) as part of his socio-political office.

A second individual involved was the Lady of Mahk, eventually called Ix Balun Paat Ehm Uni(iw?), who may have been the mother of a child named ...? Ix ...? Chaahk.

The woman ...? Ix ...? Chaahk may have been the spouse of 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk, making Ix Balun Paat Ehm Uni(iw?) the mother-in-law of 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaahk; or, as a likewise possible scenario, ...? Ix ...? Chaahk could have been the child of 'Scorpion' Ti' Chaak, and eventually Ix Balun Paat Ehm Uni(iw?) then being the spouse of the king.

Having gained a rough overview of dates, events, names and titles involved, a final task is that of making sense out of the many decontextualized fragments and putting them in a plausible historical context. Therefore, not only its recorded inscriptions but also

the spatial and architectonical setting of Str. 4 must be taken into consideration, and it becomes further necessary to take a look at eventual comparable instances of carved benches and possible ‘Huunal-Houses’ from other sites.

### **Re-evaluating function and meaning of Structure 4**

Located in the northernmost part of the urban centre of Machaquila, Plaza F forms a highly enclosed area consisting of a number of buildings constructed on its western, southern and eastern side, whereas on the northern side a stairway leads down from the plaza to the riverbed (see Figures 4, 10). Access to Plaza F would have needed a pass through the interior of Str. 7, entering sideways from the western side through a narrow stairway on the southern side of Str. 4, from the opposite side through Str. 10, or, entering towards the stairway from the riverside (north). Whilst Graham defined the form of Str. 4 as indistinct, the Guatemalan-Spanish excavations clarified that it falls within the category of C-shaped buildings, an invention which is thought to having been a Terminal Classic innovation as part of cultural contacts with the northern peninsula of Yucatan (since c. AD 800). Despite Str. 4, Strs. 7 and 10 have been partially excavated as well and it appears that all buildings constructed around Plaza F show veneer masonry constructions as well as façade-columns and other architectonical elements that together support the working hypothesis which places the last phase of these buildings chronologically at the very end of Machaquila’s history (Ciudad and Lacadena 2006; Ciudad et al. 2003, 2004, 2011, 2013). Yet, it is worth noting that excavations in Plaza F also revealed one of the oldest floor plans of the site (Ciudad and Lacadena 2006: 146; Ciudad et al. 2005, 2011) which, when seen in comparison with the same early phase in plazas A, C, E, F, H and G (Figure 4a), confirms that Plaza F was in use and of some ritual significance as sector of the urban and ritual (administrative) centre of Machaquila long before the supposed reign of ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk and consorts during the mid-IX century. However, based on the clearly defined C-shaped plan of Str. 4, as well as decorative elements found in Str. 7 and 10 respectively, together with the elaborate veneer masonry and inclusion of mosaic stucco and stone façade decorations strongly leads to assume that the entire Plaza F got significantly remodelled as part of a very late urbanistic plan. If

so, and presupposed that the date corresponding to the year AD 848 is correct and corresponds roughly in time with the other fragments from Str. 4, it can be suggested that the dedicatory texts pertaining to this (and/or nearby buildings) were the latest additions to Plaza F in the course of a new design or re-modelling of the ‘Huunal-(Merit?) House’ which may have served a similar function—that is, to safeguard (or, put more literally, to house) the sacred royal headdress and paraphernalia—already during the reign of preceding dynasts.

‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk is thought to be the last known ruler of Machaquila, and if the tentative assignment of the date 10 Kib 4 Pop (AD 848) turns out to be correct, he must have followed the king Jun Tz’ak Tok’ in dynastic line shortly after AD 840; a date recorded on Stela 5 which corresponds to the longcount 10.0.10.0.0 6 Ajaw 8 Pop, when Jun Tz’ak Tok’, the guardian of Bob Tok’ (‘Coyote-Flint’), conducted a half-k’atun period ending ceremony, shortly after he ‘closed/ceiled his chamber’ (*u makaaw u wahy*) that happened five days earlier (10.0.10.17.5 13 Chikchan 13 Kumk’u). Since the history—as bequeathed to us by the known stelae—ends with this episode, there is no information about the faith of Jun Tz’ak Tok’. The main question for the interpretation of ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk’s reign thus becomes why there are no traces of monuments related to this seemingly likewise prominent king. Unfortunately, this question cannot be answered without unverifiable speculations. The gap may simply be due to the plundering of a so far unknown monument, or one of the sawn and robbed stelae documented by Christensen pertained to this ruler (as Stelae 18 and 19, as well as the rest of the preserved stelae from Plaza A can be excluded as well). Yet, there is also a row of completely mutilated stelae which seem to have been destroyed already in ancient times. One can thus wage the assumption that, in light of the seemingly intentional destruction of the bench in Str. 4, the history of the last king of Machaquila, ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk, may have been erased by a hostile action already in Terminal Classic times. But this, too, remains speculative until eventually another inscription associated with this king surfaces.

To conclude, and putting it in a nutshell, a last part of the present essay shall focus on some comparable examples of hieroglyphic benches from other textual sources and Classic Maya imagery in order to complement our understanding of the bench of Str.

4, thereby raising the question if the mere existence, form and recorded narrative(s) of such features at other sites could eventually be applied in order to explain the narrative discourse, function and meaning of Machaquila's 'Huunal-(Merit?)House'.

Fortunately, there is a wealth of painted and sculpted representations of thrones and benches in Classic Maya art, on which to base the study of form, function and meaning (see, e.g., Cresson 1939; Stuart 2005; Houston 1993: 108: fig. 4–9) (Figures 12–13).

A basic distinction between a bench and a throne needs to be made, not the least because there are at least two distinct terms attested in the Late Classic corpus (*teem*, and *tz'am*, respectively). In this regard, artists seemed to have obligatorily used the term *teem* 'bench' when designating nametags for flat constructions made of wood and stone and positioned within the interior of buildings, such as Str. 4 and its bench would certainly represent (compare, e.g., Figures 10 and 11a).

A pointing example is painted on a stuccoed vessel of unknown provenance (K1524; see Figure 12d), which shows one of the Paddler gods kneeing in front and gesturing with the Maize God who is shown sitting on his bench, bearing the dedicatory text *alay t'abaay u teem jun(?)ixiim* 'here is consecrated (?) the bench of the (One?)-Maize'. Interestingly, there is a scene happening in another chamber in which the Maize God is being dressed, and, as a guess, I wonder if the two lateral annexes of Str. 4 may have served precisely this function, that is, two separated rooms in which the dressing of the dignitary and preparations for inauguration ceremonies happened before the person sitting on the bench received the royal headband and other paraphernalia within the 'Huunal-(Merit?)House' as part of a theatrical stage (observed from a public gathering in Plaza F).

Another frequently attested term for a 'throne-bench' is *tz'am*, which designates, for instance, the 'seat' or 'throne' of K'awiil, as is recorded on a cornerstone from Dzibilnocac (Mayer 2015; see also Valencia 2018):

**a-ALAY-ya 1-OK-CHAN-na K'AWIL K'UH u-tz'a-ma pi-TE'-WAJ**

*alay jun ok chan k'awiil k'uh u tz'am pihte' waaj*

'here/this is the One-serpent-legged K'awiil deity (with) his throne (and) a load of/8 000 maizebreads'

There is a wealth of depictions of both benches and thrones with proper nametags attested in textual as well as iconographic sources, and as already a small selection demonstrates, also a notable number of throne-benches existed that were composed of long rectangular slabs resting on two supports. While the latter type is very common, especially among the known hieroglyphic throne benches (Figures 11, 12) with three or more supports—as hypothesized for Str. 4—are not attested frequently. However, they did exist, as, for instance, a throne bench with three supports and wooden features depicted on Cancuen Stela 1 may exemplify (Figure 13c).

The bench of Str. 4 appears to have been rectangular with sharp edges, with its medium level slightly protruding in profile, a design which is likewise attested on Late Classic ceramics and may thus serve as additional confirmation for the assumed shape and height (approximately 60–80 cm) of the bench.

After all, it is noteworthy that there is no fragment from Str. 4 which can be used as evidence for interpreting the inscription as standardized dedicatory formula for (or including) a proper nametag of a ‘throne’ or ‘bench’. Even though there remains the possibility that a still missing block would refer to a proper nametag, for now this option needs to be put in parenthesis as there is neither a **te-mu** ‘bench’ nor **tz'a-ma/TZ'AM** ‘throne/seat’ recognizable among the documented pieces. For the interpretation of the function and meaning of Str. 4, in my opinion the far more significant text sequence is recorded on Fragment D, with a potential nametag for the house (Str. 4 proper) as ‘Huunal-Merit-House’ and most likely an action conducted by the queen of Mahk and the king of Machaquila, ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk.

Another good example for comparison is the already mentioned Hieroglyphic Bench 1 of Dos Pilas (Figure 11b; see also Houston 1993: 108). The text records the erection of a stone (stela) and an incense-scattering conducted by ...?-ni Ti’ K’awiil, the ruler of Dos Pilas, and goes on with the record of the death of the woman Ix Wak Chan Jalaam Lem(?). Interestingly, the text then jumps from the horizontal slab to one of the circular panels on the left support, which records yet another death event, this time the passing of his wife, a woman from Cancuen. As is the case with Str. 4, there is a local ruler, his mother, and a spouse mentioned on the bench.

However, in Machaquila there are not many clues that would lead to suggest that the death of a person was the main theme and intention to construct this carved bench as a memorial. Instead, Str. 4 seems to record other historical events with a focus on two women, of whom one arrived in Machaquila and (the other?) conducted an event at the ‘Huunal-(Merit?)House’ (Str. 4). Therefore, I suppose that it was the spouse or child of ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk (maybe in company of her mother) who arrived, while her mother and husband (or father, respectively) received special attention in this narrative, and the main text of which great parts are still missing may have recorded historical events conducted by ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk.

Yet another prominent and maybe comparable example can be observed on Piedras Negras Stela 40 (Figure 13e), which depicts the ruler K'inich Yonal Ahk sprinkling incense into a chamber wherein a portrait of his deceased mother has been placed on a stone bench.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, so far the best known narrative involving a ruler and his parents in a ceremony within a palace house is recorded on Palenque’s Palace Tablet, a monument with dense text and pointing imagery that has been discussed by many scholars; yet, so far the most thorough study has been presented by David Stuart (2012) who clarified the reading for the name of the so called Jester God as Ux Yop Huun [Hux Yop Huun] ‘Three-leaf-Paper/headband’ and furthermore explains the significance of the Sak Huun and Hux Yop Huun symbolism as part of dignitaries’ dresses and objects involved in inauguration rituals. The iconography of the Palace Tablet shows the ruler K'inich K'an Joy Kitam II sitting in the middle of the scene while receiving the symbols of power in form a Ko'haw-headdress with Huunal-diadem from his mother (on the left) and a plate with textiles, flint and shield from his father (on the right).

The main theme of the text includes the story about the entity Huun, which on the one hand embodied the Ficus-tree as symbol and origin of (Amate-)paper, and at the same time served as symbol of royal dignity when being attached to the white headbands (*sak huun*) as Hux Yop Huun, the ‘three-leaved-Huun’ in form of three greenstone diadems (which can—not only literally—be equated with the ‘crown-jewels’ in Western cultures). The inscription on the Palace Tablet and many other sources do underline that the houses

<sup>24</sup> Note also the quadrifol motif decorating the support of the bench.

in which the ‘fastening of the headband/Huun’ (*k’al sak huun tu baah*) took place in these facilities; in case of Palenque’s Palace (Stuart 2012), the place of interest was House E, which in one instance (Palace Tablet, A8, C8, F6 and H5, respectively) is mentioned in the context of inauguration rituals by means of a most fitting proper nametag: *sak nuk naah* ‘the white-coated/painted building’.

Another telling example originating from Palenque’s Palace Oval Table and its corresponding hieroglyphic bench, the so called ‘Del Río Throne’ (Figure 11c; see also Robertson 1985, fig. 92; Stuart 2008; Polyukhovych 2012: 456, fig. B68), which also records the phrase *k’al sak huun tu baah* ‘was fastened/lifted the white Huun upon his image’; an additional hint that this ‘coronation-rite’ involving the presentation of a Huunal-headband took place on precisely this kind of carved bench within the ‘White House’ as one of the most valuable palace buildings. In this case, the observer of the scene sees the king K’inich Janaahb Pakal sitting on a bicephalic jaguar-throne while receiving a Ko’haw-headdress with Huunal-diadem and feather-top lifted to him by his mother.

## Conclusion

As evidenced by the synthesis of archaeological and epigraphic data, the inscriptions of Str. 4 recorded on Type IV stones once decorated a grade positioned at the entrance opening of the building at the lowermost level of its epigraphic program (Type IV) (see Figures 8, 10). The facing wall of the central bench was decorated with tenoned veneer-masonry stones and contained three levels composed of three distinct classes of carved stones (Types I, II and III) (Figures 5–7). It appears that the bench measured approximately 60–80 cm in height and spanned between 6–10 m in width, thereby covering most of the central area of the building and it would have been levelled plain at waist-height, terminating in the posterior (western) wall of Str. 4 (Figures 4e, 10). In general shape, it appears to have been arranged in a similar way as Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Bench 1, however, with the significant difference of being composed of three distinct levels of carved stones, and furthermore three instead of the more common two throne supports with circular reliefs. Yet, the importance of Machaquila’s carved stones goes beyond a focus on

just a bench as it was rather meant to emphasize the function of not only the bench but the entire building by telling the story about its commissioners and events that supposedly happened in the ceremonial centre of Machaquila, and, most importantly, by recording events that happened prior to the remodelling and dedication of the ‘Headband-Merit-House’ during the reign of ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk, his spouse, and the queen of Mahk at the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century. Presupposed that the author’s decipherment of the proper name of this building as ‘Huunal-(Merit?)House’ proves to be correct, Machaquila’s Str. 4 appears, for the time being, to be the first attested proper nametag for a building in which the otherwise frequently attested ritual of ‘fastening’ or ‘lifting the white headband’ was conducted (see also Stuart 2012; Steinbach 2015). Just as the ‘White House’ at Palenque, I propose that Str. 4 served as one of the most important buildings of Machaquila’s ceremonial centre and had administrative as well as diverse ceremonial purposes as a theatrical stage close to the river and facing east in direction of the rising sun and with a panoramic view at the natural hill; a house in which the members of the royal court received the paraphernalia and headdresses equipped with the prototypic symbol of power, Hux Yop Huun. The motivation of remodelling a former building and complementing it with an elaborately carved epigraphic program telling the history of its commissioners may have been motivated by a 20-year anniversary in honour of the inauguration or a battle victory celebrated by the last ruler of Machaquila, ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk, or by his family members as a retrospective act in honour of this ruler’s reign as divine ‘orator’ of the royal court.

In conclusion, the re-evaluation of the carved stones pertaining to Str. 4 demonstrates that there are still many gaps resulting in unanswered questions concerning the historic narrative about ‘Scorpion’ Ti’ Chaahk, the queen of Mahk, and ...? Ix ...? Chaahk. But it appears clear that the scattered remnants of these carved stones once decorated the entrance opening and a monumental stone bench as central feature of their ‘Headband-Merit-House’; a building consigned to a king and a queen whose glory seems to not have lasted for a long period in time, and which started to fade finally after a hostile act that experienced the destruction of this once impressive andulti-

mate monumental representation of royal dignity in Machaquila during the Terminal Classic.

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# **Monumental Discourse and Social Distinction: A Contextual Approach to Classic Maya Sculpture**

FELIX KUPPRAT

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

(kupprat@gmail.com)

VERÓNICA A. VÁZQUEZ LÓPEZ

University of Calgary

(veronica.vazquezlope@ucalgary.ca)

**Abstract:** The socio-political structures of the Classic Maya have received considerable attention, especially given the sudden advances made in epigraphy. Textual evidence has shed light on titles, offices and interaction among royal and—to some extent—non-royal elites, creating a differentiated panorama of basic mechanisms of social cohesion and distinction. As important as the contents of text and image are for the historical approach, comparably little attention has been paid to their context, i.e. their social function and use as media of communication. For some time, sculpted monuments have been considered as devices of political propaganda, through which the ruling elites legitimised their status. However, it has frequently been ignored who were the addressees of written and depicted messages and how people received and interacted with hieroglyphs and imagery. The spatial environments of monuments are extremely diverse, ranging from closed and sacred spaces to open plazas, so that we cannot assume that the messages they conveyed were meant for the same group of people. The reception of Maya media occurred not only in diverse spatial contexts, but also in specific social situations. In this article, we explore the relationship between the strategic use of visual media and social differentiation. Certain social actors were consciously included or excluded from the active and passive participation in the monumental discourse. When it comes to non-royal social units, we can distinguish various degrees of integration, dictated by the courtly authority, which reflect different political settings and strategies throughout the Maya area.

**Resumen:** Las estructuras sociopolíticas mayas del periodo Clásico han sido objeto de muchos estudios, en particular a partir de los avances en la epigrafía. La evidencia textual ha proporcionado información sobre títulos, oficios y la interacción entre la élite real y, en cierta medida, la no real, creando un panorama diferenciado de mecanismos básicos de cohesión y distinción social. Mientras los contenidos del texto y de la imagen son de gran importancia para el acercamiento histórico, el contexto, es decir su función social y uso como medio de comunicación, ha recibido muy poca atención. Por algún tiempo se consideró a los monumentos esculpidos como medios de propaganda política, mediante los cuales las élites gobernantes legitimaron su estatus. No obstante, frecuentemente se ha ignorado a los receptores de los mensajes escritos o representados, y cómo la gente recibía e interactuaba con los jeroglíficos y las imágenes. Los ambientes espaciales de los monumentos son extremadamente diversos, incluyendo desde espacios cerrados y sagrados hasta plazas abiertas, por lo que no se puede asumir que los mensajes que estos medios portaban se dirigían al mismo grupo de espectadores. La recepción de los mensajes mayas no sólo ocurrió en diversos contextos espaciales, sino también en situaciones sociales específicas. En este

trabajo exploramos la relación entre el uso estratégico de medios visuales y la diferenciación social. Ciertos actores sociales fueron incluidos o excluidos de forma consciente de la participación activa o pasiva en el discurso monumental. En cuanto a las unidades sociales que no forman parte de la élite real podemos distinguir diferentes grados de interacción, dictadas por la autoridad de la corte, lo que refleja distintos escenarios y estrategias políticas en toda el área maya.

In his extensive and erudite studies of ancient American writing systems, Alfonso was always concerned with the human sublayer of text and textual production. He saw the hieroglyph as an artefact, produced under specific historical circumstances by a determined group of actors. In search of the agents of hieroglyphic production, he employed palaeographic methods, for example in distinguishing the scribes of the Madrid codex in his PhD thesis (Lacadena García-Gallo 1995a, 2000; Ciudad Ruiz and Lacadena García-Gallo 1999). Alfonso was also interested in the networks of intellectual and social influences under which certain texts were composed. He constantly emphasised conventionalism and tradition as important traits of Mesoamerican writing, be it in his article on the writing schools of Tenochtitlan-Tlatelolco and Tetzcoco (Lacadena García-Gallo 2008a), the reconstruction of orthographic conventions in Classic Maya writing (Lacadena García-Gallo and Wichmann n.d., 2004) or the description of calligraphic archaisms (Lacadena García-Gallo 1995b). Of equal importance, Alfonso's work on vernacular traits in the Maya script (Lacadena García-Gallo and Wichmann 2002) and on foreign, non-Maya influences, are fundamental for subsequent works on the macro-ethnic landscape.

In 2007, Verónica and a group of friends were lucky to accompany Alfonso to Ceibal, in search of Central Mexican traits in Maya texts. Alfonso was excited to confirm his reading of a personal name on Ceibal Stela 13, published a couple of years later (Lacadena García-Gallo 2010: 389–390). Reading the sequence out loud—**e-je-ke**, possibly a form related to Nahua *eheca(tl)*—he could not help himself but to give the stela a kiss of joy (Figure 1). As a true field epigrapher, always looking for the conclusive detail, he had a passion not only for the text, but also for its tangible and ephemeral material bearers.

Here, we intend to connect these thoughts—about the production and intention of texts, on one hand, and about the materiality and changing contexts of written artefacts, on the other. In particular,



**Figure 1.** Alfonso Lacadena kissing Stela 13 at Ceibal, July 2007 (photograph by Omar Rodríguez Campero).

we focus on social stratification and the interaction between groups of different social status.

Ancient Maya socio-political organisation is known from two lines of evidence, which have been combined to different degrees in studies dealing with this topic. The first one parts from texts and images that illuminate the biographies of state protagonists, i.e. the godly kings and their immediate kin and subordinates (see Schele and Freidel 1990; Martin and Grube 2008). Social factions are very rarely mentioned in texts and their concrete identities are poorly understood, while larger collectives, such as the populations of certain cities, are virtually absent.<sup>1</sup> Both public and private imagery usually depict specific individuals, whose identities are often revealed by adjacent glyptic captions or related written narratives. Therefore, a historiography of the Maya based solely on text and image would be a narrative of royal lineages and, to a certain extent, of their highest-ranking subordinates. Alfonso's discussion of the office of *lakam* is one of the very few epigraphic insights we have regarding non-courtly social actors (Lacadena García-Gallo 2008b).

On the other extreme of approaches to Maya hierarchy, there is the analysis of settlement patterns, household archaeology and bioarchaeology. Maya society was organised in social houses, which are directly related to architecturally delimited domestic units with the *patio* group as one of the most common types (Willey 1980: 255; Wilk and Ashmore 1988; Hendon 1991, 2007, 2010; Gillespie 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Joyce and Gillespie 2000). Spatial and material indicators related to those households or household-clusters and their inhabitants enable us to distinguish ranks of social status, both within and between houses. Differences in size, construction materials and techniques, frequency and density of monumental adornment, as well as the quality and quantity of funerary offerings, are usually assumed to reflect differing access to materials and resources and thereby serve as proxies for social inequality. Rankings of status based on

<sup>1</sup> Several group identities based on cohabitation are expressed in the name phrases of individuals (see Tokovinine 2013). Nevertheless, there are very few cases in which larger collectives are referred to as agents or patients of events. A well-known example is the mention of *huxlajuun tzuk kuku'l naal(?)* 'the natives(?) of the thirteen divisions, of Kuku'l(?)' (see Houston et al. 1998: 280; cf. Tokovinine 2008: 251–252) at Dos Pilas (Hieroglyphic Stairway 2, west section, Step 4, D2–E1; Fahsen 2002: 16, fig. 8), whose 'heads were [piled up like] hills' and whose 'blood turned into pools'.

these indicators have shown rather fluent transitions from one category to the next, evidencing a complex social stratification (Willey 1980: 256; Hendon 1991; Chase 1992; Chase and Chase 1992; Haviland and Moholy-Nagy 1992; Adams 1995; Joyce and Gillespie 2000; Ensor 2013a, 2013b; also see Houston and Inomata 2009: 176–182); although some large *patio* group stuck out and have thus been interpreted as royal palaces (Harrison 1970; Inomata and Houston 2001a, 2001b; Christie 2003; Houston and Inomata 2009: 156–158; Delvendahl 2010; Barrientos Quezada 2014; Vázquez López 2015: 225–246).

Here, we ask how we can combine these two visions of Maya socio-political organisation in a model that includes the detailed accounts of courtly life and our more general understanding of urban society. On this occasion, we have chosen to direct our attention toward the direct interaction between different social sectors. Considering monumental art as our primary source for the socio-political activities of high-ranking individuals, we want to use this class of materials as a starting point for our discussion of socio-political cohesion and distinction.

Quite frequently we read about the propagandistic nature of Classic Maya texts and imagery. The general focus on royal actors and their closeness to the supernatural, ancestors and cultural heroes have led scholars to believe that courtly elites were worried in the extreme about the legitimacy of rulership and that they invested considerable resources in the creation of a sort of public self-advertisement. Sometimes, we might gain the impression that Classic stelae functioned analogously to modern billboards, set up in order to convince the major population that the current ruler was the best possible leader owing to shared ideals such as royal descent, success in warfare, religious dedication and closeness to the gods (see Marcus 1992; Demarest 2004: 213, 244). In general terms, this interpretation is certainly not erroneous, but we should critically question the intended and actual impact of Maya art in daily and ritual life.

The reception of monumental artefacts is determined by (1) decoding abilities, (2) accessibility, (3) willingness and (4) cultural practices, which leads us to the following statements:

1. Writing was, apparently, a highly specialised and prestigious activity, and also reading was probably not a skill shared among

the broader population (Houston and Stuart 1992; Houston 1994). Therefore, the potential direct receivers of glyphic texts were very few. Imagery was decoded by a far broader range of social actors, but we must also assume that in many cases “understanding” was limited to the most general motifs, while the interpretation of details and complex compositions required a high degree of familiarity with the canons of depiction and esoteric knowledge. Hence, we can state, in very general terms, that the use of glyphs was a means of limiting reception, while the use of imagery facilitated reception (cf. Parmington 2011: 17–18).

2. However, a far more differentiated approach to the reception of monumental imagery and text is a contextual analysis, where the impact of the medium depends on general access. Sculptures and mural paintings were used in a very broad range of spatial settings, from open and rather public plazas to private and even sacred enclosures. Some media were even hidden or made dysfunctional.<sup>2</sup> Thus, we have to consider the social function of a text or image in light of its location and the social practices that characterise it.
3. Willingness is another crucial factor for reception and should be included in an evaluation of the social function of Classic Maya media. Reception is active work and requires a certain amount of dedicated time and, at times, physical effort. Reading a full-figure text, crouching around an altar in order to read the text on its rim or lying down in the entrance of a house just to look at the carving on the underside of a lintel are not actions that occurred naturally on a day-to-day basis. It requires motivation and interest, and we might generally state that the bigger the effort required by a certain type of reception is, the less reception actually occurred in those instances.
4. Finally, we have to consider that Maya monuments were also agents in particular cultural activities. Especially the combina-

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<sup>2</sup> By “dysfunctional” we mean that media did not transmit messages to human addressees. We do not exclude the possibility that dysfunctional media were used as devices for the communication with supernatural beings, which in several cases is more than plausible.

tion of imagery and architecture was frequently employed to create stages for distinct spectacles, from the torture of prisoners to the personification of gods and the re-enactment of myth (Schele and Mathews 1998: 23; Inomata 2006; Pope 2006; Werness-Rude and Spencer 2015). In a similar way, stelae and altars were objects for (and even subjects of!) completion and offering ceremonies (Stuart 1996, 2010). The reception of these agentive media was closely tied to the activities carried out near them, so that the study of associated practices is key to understanding the function of any particular Maya monument.

Having pointed out these basic mechanisms, we would now like to review three cases of monument contextualisation, which illustrate the interaction of the ruling court with other social groups. First, we take a look at 7<sup>th</sup>-century Copan and the particularities of its monumental discourse. Then, we go on to discuss the settings of courtly sculpture at Palenque during the reign of Janaab Pakal (AD 615–683). Finally, we contrast these cases with evidence that points towards interdynastic relations at Late Classic Calakmul. The archaeological, iconographic and epigraphic specifics of the underlying analyses have been pointed out elsewhere (besides the cited literature see Kupprat 2015; Vázquez López 2015; Vázquez López et al. 2016), which is why the present discussion summarises the relevant results in support of a methodological exercise and focuses on the primary issues at hand.

### Copan: cultural integration and Mayanisation

The first case we want to discuss is that of Late Classic Copan. Culturally speaking, Copan is a peripheral site, at the eastern boundary of what researches commonly call the Maya area. Social actors who by material association can clearly be called Maya were present at Copan at least from the early 5<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Longyear 1952; Viel and Hall 2000; Sharer et al. 2005). For archaeologists, one of the most obvious indicators of Mayaness at Copan is the monumental sculpture, which includes complex glyptic texts in Classic Ch'olan and elaborate imagery, packed with pan-Maya motifs and messages (see e.g., Baudez 1994). Due to the exceptional quality of these material traits, few have questioned that Copan was ruled by Maya, and

data from Copan has more than once been used to exemplify general aspects of all Maya society.

Nevertheless, in the last couple of decades, the Mayaness of Copan's population has begun to be doubted. Bioarchaeological data suggests that Copan received huge quantities of immigrants during the Classic period, not only from the central and southern Maya lowlands, but also from the Guatemalan highlands and from western Honduras (Price et al. 2010, 2014; Miller 2015: 207–233; Suzuki 2015: 187–220). These foreign populations shared residences and adapted the local lifestyle to various degrees. Hence, Copan has been described as a “multi-” or “pluri-ethnic” state where different cultural practices and identities converged (see Fash and Fash 2006; Canuto and Bell 2013).

Monumental discourse at Copan reveals that the rulers and some prestigious non-royal groups invested considerable resources in the preservation of Maya cultural practices and beliefs. Probably more than anywhere else in the Maya world, stela texts deal with complex ritual operations and the invocation of deities and ancestors (see Stuart 1992: 170). Stelae and their altars are clearly identified as focal points of ritual, frequently possessed by particular supernatural entities, which were core elements in certain ceremonial activities. We believe that it was in this framework of communal practice that stelae transmitted messages and received particular attention. In these contexts, Maya cultural dominance was transmitted by the formal aspects of the ritual object, especially through the use of complex glyphic texts in Classic Ch'olan and other pan-Maya visual elements, as well as by ceremonial performance and content. In this sense, the stela–altar complex at Copan served as a device for Mayanisation, i.e. as a central point of inter-ethnic encounters under the umbrella of Maya ritual (Kupprat 2015: 232–235).

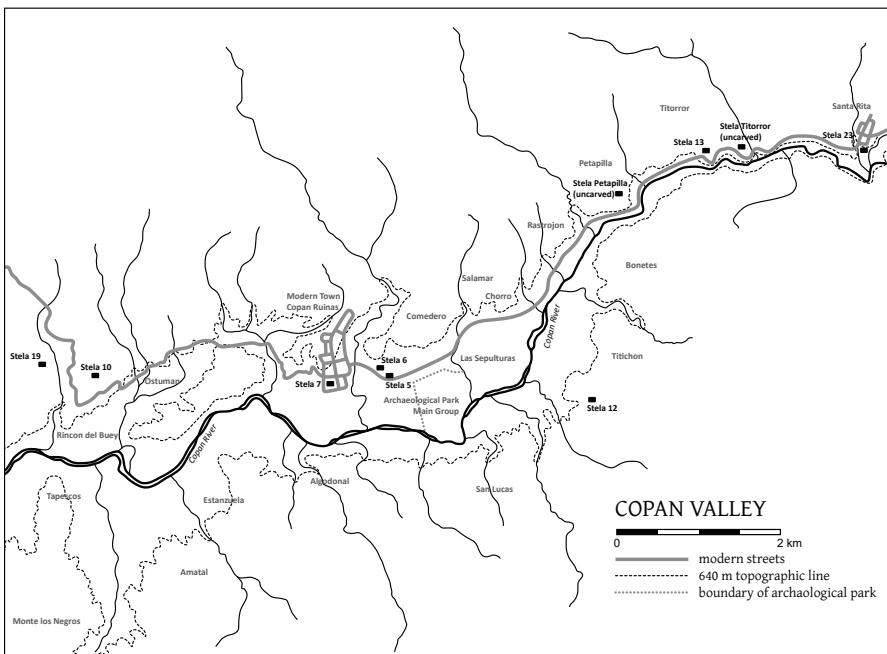
Formal changes in Copanec stelae and their distribution pattern reveal that rulers altered their strategies for socio-political cohesion several times during the Classic period. Unfortunately, the Early Classic corpus is highly fragmented, due to a major destruction event at some point of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, wherein most stelae and altars were hewn to pieces (Riese and Baudez 1983: 183–184; B. Fash 2004: 261–262; Sharer 2004). Nonetheless, it can be observed that early stelae were completely hieroglyphic with texts inscribed on one or

more sides (B. Fash 2004: 259; Kupprat 2015: 219).<sup>3</sup> Many of these monuments correspond to an early ceremonial group that lies now buried in the centre of the modern village Copán Ruinas (Morley 1920; W. Fash 2001: 88–90). The extensive use of hieroglyphs was not only an important marker of Maya ethnicity, but also a means of maintaining a certain exclusiveness with respect to esoteric knowledge and communication.

This canon changed towards the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century when the portraits of rulers became more common on the faces of stelae, reflecting the need to emphasise individual agency in ritual life. One could argue that the introduction of imagery on stelae allowed the basic message to be received quicker and by a broader audience. This might not have been the only reason for the appearance of portraits at Copan, but it certainly put a new emphasis on the persona of the ruler. The development culminated in the introduction of stelae with double portraits (one on each of the wide sides). In these, the ruler became even more present, while glyphs were more and more treated as a secondary feature.

The sudden increase of royal portraits on stelae coincides with a sudden spread of monumental sculpture over the Copan Valley on the eve of the eleventh *katun* in AD 652. The twelfth ruler, K’ahk’ Utí’ Juun Witz’ K’awiil was—as far as we know—the first to let stelae be set up outside the two urban ceremonial centres (Figure 2). He also seems to have been involved in the commissioning of altars at Río Amarillo (Schele 1987) and Quirigua (Looper 2003: 51–52). The outlying stelae have been discussed in several occasions; they may have served as astronomic, territorial-political and/or defensive markers (Morley 1920: 132–134; Proskouriakoff 1973: 171; Grube and Schele 1988; W. Fash 2001: 101–104; Wagner 2006: 156–157; Carter

<sup>3</sup> The only clear exception is Copan Stela 35 (Riese and Baudez 1983: 188–189, R-14, R-15). Certain motifs, such as the elongated twisted knot dangling from the belt, the fish fins attached to the disc ornaments of wrists and ankles, the inner-leg view of the same disc assemblage and the tubular beads of the necklace, very closely resemble their counterparts on mid-5<sup>th</sup> century stelae from the Petén, particularly stelae 1, 31 and 40 from Tikal (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: fig. 1, 51c; Valdés and Fahsen 1998: 84, fig. 6). This confirms the dating of Stela 35 as well as the strong stylistic influences from the central lowlands during this period (see Riese and Baudez 1983: 190). Copan Stela 53 has been dated to the same period (Bíró 2017: 10), but this proposal is based on a problematic date in its inscription, which might be either part of a retrospective narrative or simply not the assumed *katun* ending or not a date at all. Ruler 6 might be named in the text (Prager and Wagner 2017: 19–20), but even if this identification is correct, the chronological context remains unclear.



**Figure 2.** Map of the Copan Valley, pointing out the locations of the outlying stelae. Stelae 19, 10, 12, 13 and 23 were all dedicated for the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> *katun* in AD 652. Stelae 5 (AD 672) and 6 (AD 682), located just between the two ceremonial centres, have slightly later dates (drawing by Felix Kupprat after Willey et al. [1994: 6, fig. 2]).

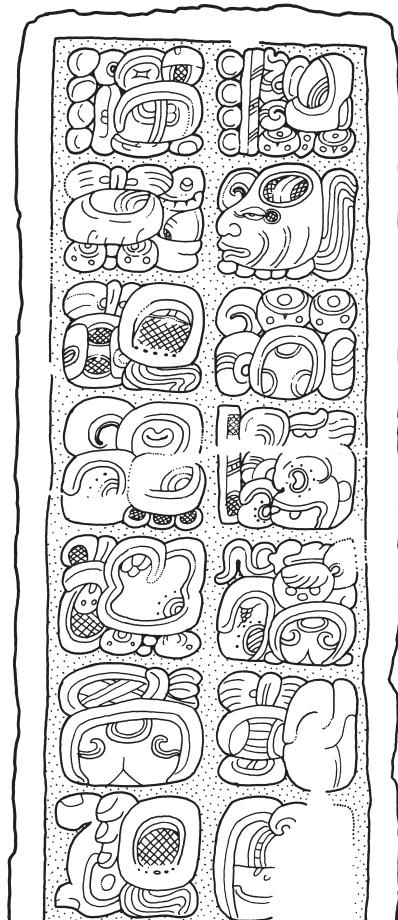
2014: 35–36). However, relevant for our argument is the social function of these monuments.

As we have already pointed out, stelae operated as media especially during the ritual activities in which they were involved. Therefore, we must understand K'ahk' Utí' Juun Witz' K'awiil's valley programme as a conscious attempt to decentralise the state's ritual activities and to include other (probably long established) ritual sites in courtly ceremonies. This was clearly a reaction to the otherwise well-documented population growth (Webster 2005: 42–43) and cultural diversification in Copan's surroundings in this period, and we suggest that 7<sup>th</sup>-century stelae had the following functions:

- I. Stela-related ceremonies in the Copan valley involved a larger rural population in ritual practices that were clearly marked as culturally Maya. The archaic full-glyphic format of many of the outlying stelae emphasised conservative Maya practices and a claim to cultural and ideological hegemony. Actually, there

is some concrete evidence that non-Maya religious practices were substituted and partially adapted by the Maya rulers: the presence of apparently non-Maya deities in 7<sup>th</sup>-century texts (Figure 3)<sup>4</sup> point towards syncretism, while the ritual burial of archaic sculpture (Fash and Fash 2006: 110–112)—at first look appearing as a respectful offering—represented in fact the removal of previously venerated objects from the public space (Kupprat 2015: 234). The strategy reflected here is one of cultural and ideological integration, which due to its hegemonic quality could be labelled as Mayanisation—a means quite necessary to legitimise a Maya king at the very edge of the Maya world.

- II. Royal portraits, whose elaboration required much more time and crafting skills than the rather shallow glyptic reliefs, were concentrated in the ceremonial centres and between them. Especially the two double portrait stelae of the 7<sup>th</sup> century—stelae 3 and 5 (Baudez



**Figure 3.** A list of Maya and (probably) non-Maya gods on the south side of Stela 13 at Copan (drawing by Linda Schele [SD-1040], photograph of the drawing courtesy of Ancient Americas at LACMA [[ancientamericas.org/](http://ancientamericas.org/)]).

<sup>4</sup> God lists on stelae P (Schele 1990: fig. 10) and 13 contain sequences of syllabographic signs, a structure expected for the rendering of foreign (i.e. non-Mayan) expressions (Bíró and Davletshin 2011: 1–2). The specific sequences do not render common Classic Maya expressions and there is a good chance that we are dealing with foreign theonyms (Prager and Wagner 2017: 11–13; see Bíró and Davletshin 2011; Bíró 2017), although all existing proposals for coherent readings in non-Mayan languages are highly tentative.

1994: 113, 129, fig. 50, 51, 61b, 62b)—were located at traffic nodes, one in the centre of the Middle Plaza and the other one next to or on the hypothetical road between Copán Ruinas and the Main Group. The need to represent the ruler, to make him omnipresent in the urban landscape seems to have been more urgent in the urban core than in the rural surroundings. This pattern betrays the growing influence of empowered groups, possibly with a Maya dominance, in the central area, which established some sort of competition with the court and its supreme ruler. This is probably also why the monumental discourse of the rulers of the 8<sup>th</sup> century became more and more restricted to the ceremonial and residential cores of the settlement, while sculpture integrated into non-royal domestic or palace architecture is documented for the later part of this period (see W. Fash 2005: 94–101; B. Fash 2011: 131–139, 149–171).

### **Palenque: cultural segregation and elitism**

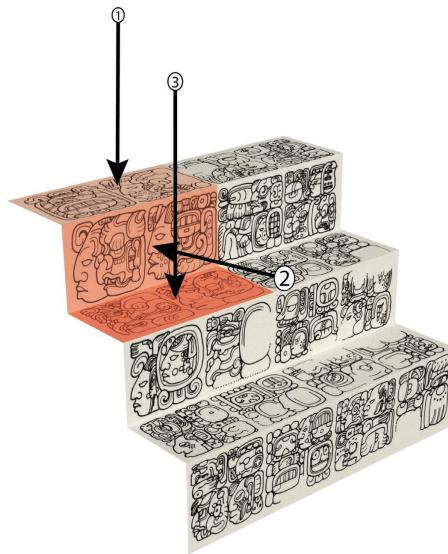
While K’ahk’ Utí’ Juun Witz’ K’awiil was Mayanising the Copan valley, one of the most emblematic rulers of Maya history, Janaab Pakal of Baake’l, was waging war in the plains of Tabasco at the opposite edge of the Maya world. He also redefined the canons of fine sculpture and architecture at Palenque. Interestingly, Janaab Pakal’s monumental discourse is basically the direct opposite of the contemporary phenomena at Copan. There were no stelae and very few altars on the plazas and courtyards of Palenque (Figure 4). Instead, stucco and stone sculpture, as well as mural paintings, are features of religious and courtly architecture and appear only on the façades and in the interiors of buildings that were built on massive platforms. The earliest known texts from Palenque were hidden from sight and—as media—dysfunctional. While the small dedicatory tablets of the Subterráneos (Schele and Mathews 1979: fig. 36) were rarely seen in the dark corridors of the Palace (see Parmington 2011: 76), other texts like the Hieroglyphic Stairway were arranged in a manner that required the reader to constantly run up and down the stairs in order to read the glyphs inscribed on the treads and risers (Figure 5). Another example is the dedicatory inscription of Palace House C: The glyphs were written on the bottom of the eaves and could



**Figure 4.** East Plaza at Palenque. Note the absence of stelae and the association of simple altars with the main structures, such as the Palace (left) and the Temple of Inscriptions (front) (photograph by Felix Kuprat).

only been seen standing in the East Court, close to the platform of House C, and then looking straight up (see Maudslay 1902: vol. 4, 17, pl. 24; Robertson 1985a: 69, fig. 335–336). These glyphs were definitely not used as a marker of cultural identity, as in Copan. Texts at Palenque were always directed more towards the intimate interiors of temples and Palace buildings, far from the eyes of the greater public. The imagery was a little more public, but the most important pieces, which today provide such a rich insight into Palenquean cosmovision and mythology, were, again, shielded from the eyes of the average passer-by who crossed Palenque’s plazas on a daily basis.

The façades of temples and Palace buildings included stucco panels with dedicatory inscriptions and portraits of the ruler and other courtly actors (Robertson 1983, 1985a, 1985b), which is why it has been proposed that the sculpted piers served as “Palenque’s version of the stela” (Schele 1986: 118). Some of these piers, along with other elements of architecturally integrated sculpture, were indeed visible from the plazas, but never reached the degree of publicness that we can assume for stelae at other sites. The monumental platforms of the major temples and the Palace created a significant



**Figure 5.** Model of the inscription of the Hieroglyphic Stairway at Palenque, Palace, House C, indicating the reading order of this dysfunctional text (model by Felix Kupprat, based on a drawing by Linda Schele [Schele and Schele 2000: no. 138]).

distance to the spectator on the plaza level, impeding the observation of graphic details and particular glyphs. Moreover, the difference in height between the observer and the graphic representation marked social and cultural detachment and, hence, tangible social inequality. While elsewhere stelae were the focal points of public ritual, façade sculpture at Palenque served as a remote stage setting for the ceremonies carried out on the plaza below. A stela could be approached, surrounded and maybe even touched, but the sculpted piers at Palenque were beyond the reach of the commoner and marked the realm of the privileged and powerful.

The exclusiveness of state art at Palenque reflects a strategy of cultural segregation and what we may call intellectual elitism. Monumental texts and imagery were made for the few, most influential social actors at Palenque, and by including some and excluding others from the intimate experience of media reception, Janaab Pakal forged alliances with the heads of the dominant houses of the 7<sup>th</sup>-century polity. Even some of the most important performances, in which Janaab Pakal impersonated deities like the Maize God or Balun Yookte' K'uh, were carried out in the rather restricted build-

ings and courtyards of the new Palace, with a limited capacity for spectators (Kupprat 2015: 243–267; *in press*).

The reason for Palencano intellectual elitism lies certainly in the circumstances of Janaab Pakal's accession to power. He was probably not the son of a former king and was put on the throne as an infant after an obscure episode of military defeat and political turbulence (see Schele and Freidel 1990: 220–224; Martin and Grube 2000: 161; Stuart and Stuart 2008: 149, 165; Bernal Romero 2011: 32–36). He had to find a way to legitimise his position without recurring to the common discourse of royal descent. Thus, he chose to keep his competitors—the old elite of Palenque's most important houses—close, granting them certain intellectual privileges. In a more public domain, Janaab Pakal focused on the depiction of his military agenda and success, making physical violence and military superiority the most effective argument against insurgent notions among the people of Palenque. It was during the king's last years, under the influence of his son and successor Kan Bahlam, that a new narrative was forged, which reconstructed a far more continuous narrative of the Baake'l dynasty (see Schele and Mathews 1998: 104–110; Kupprat 2015: 301).<sup>5</sup>

Some of the allies of Janaab Pakal are known from glyptic texts. One of the most important was Ajsul, a high-ranking 'lord of fire' (*yajaw k'ahk'*) and priest (*ajk'uhu'n*) who apparently was responsible for the construction of the subterranean corridors of the Palace. A text on a limestone censer stand found in Group IV at Palenque (López Bravo 1995: 100–104; Schele and Schele 2000: no. 110–112) narrates his accession to office, but the protagonist of the text is another individual, Ajsik'ab, who is said to have been not only a *ti'sak hu'n* ('spokesperson to the crown') and *sajal*, but also a 'stone-person' (*ajtuun*) and 'artist' (*chuwen*).<sup>6</sup> Some artefacts recovered in the burials in Group IV, such as "writer's needles" and stamps

<sup>5</sup> How accurate or manipulated these retrospective accounts are is a debated topic (see Grube 2006; Stuart and Stuart 2008: 182; Bernal Romero 2017: 32; Vega Villalobos 2017: 62–67). Here, we merely emphasise that Kan Bahlam's discourse with its dynastic lists and ties to divine actors and mythology is quite different from Janaab Pakal's testimonies.

<sup>6</sup> The hypothesis that Ajsik'ab and Ajsul were already in office before Janaab Pakal acceded to power (Jackson 2005: 183–187, 221–223; 2013: 32–34; Bernal Romero 2011: 33–34) cannot be corroborated (see Stuart and Stuart 2008: 163–164), since the text on the censer stand states that Janaab Pakal's successor K'ihnich Kan Bahlam oversaw a burial event prior to

(López Bravo et al. 2004: 11), indicate that there was a long tradition of scribes and artists at this domestic compound. Another noble from Group IV, Chak Suutz', even had his own carved tablet with a royal coronation scene made and placed within the largest structure of the main courtyard (Ruz Lhuillier 1952: 35–39; Schele 1991; Wald 1997), by which he expressed his exceptional closeness to the 8<sup>th</sup>-century ruler Ahku'l Mo' Naahb.

The Proyecto Regional Palenque under the direction of Rodrigo Liendo Stuardo has continued to excavate the main courtyard of Group IV, where many recently discovered burials confirm a long occupation from the Early Classic onwards (also see Rands and Rands 1961; López Bravo 1995: 106–110; Chávez Salazar 2015; Liendo Stuardo 2016). The preliminary analysis indicates that the eastern section of the patio was used as a funerary site for several centuries, while the patterns of funerary practices seem to be rather constant, indicating cultural homogeneity (Liendo Stuardo 2016). Thus, it seems that Group IV was the seat of a powerful local house, even before the accession of Janaab Pakal. Apparently, Janaab Pakal established a close relationship to the individuals of highest status from this and other important houses in order to build an alliance, which in turn decentralised the control over the larger population.

### **Calakmul: interdynastic alliances**

Finally, let us move from the peripheries right into the heart of the Maya lowlands, to Calakmul where the relationship between architecture and sculpture provides information on the interaction of empowered social units. Defining the southern extreme of the Central Plaza, Structure II constitutes the most important building of this ancient city. Its seven phases of construction, covering a lapse from the late Middle Preclassic to the Terminal Classic (Folan et al. 2001: 65; Enríquez Ortíz and Rodríguez Campero 2006: 409; Rodríguez Campero 2009, 2012), represent a valuable sample of the architectural history of the site. Three stelae (43, 114 and 116) and one doorjamb (115) were found on the lower platforms of Structure

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the death of AjSik'ab. The date is given as 4 Manik 10 Zac, which can only correspond to AD 701. Hence, AjSik'ab died in AD 701, 52 years later than what has been proposed in some earlier publications.

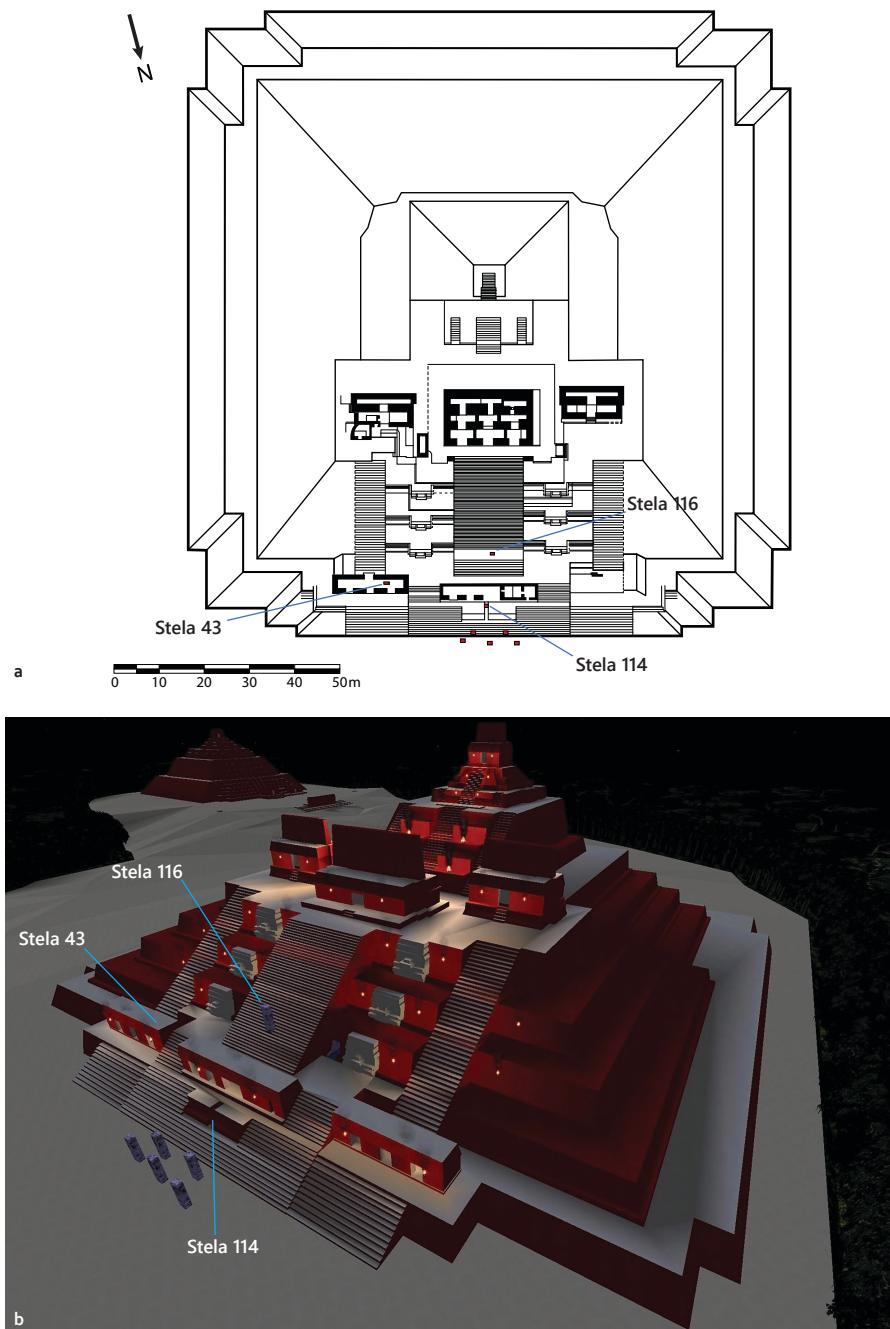
II, while five more stelae (38–42) are associated with the plaza level to its north.

The 5<sup>th</sup> modification of this structure, Substructure II a-I (following the sequence established by the Proyecto Arqueológico Calakmul under the direction of Ramón Carrasco Vargas) corresponds to the Early Classic, when massive masks and lateral stairways were added to the façade (Rodríguez Campero 2009: 1344). Stela 114 was erected for the ending of the 9<sup>th</sup> “baktun” in AD 435 at the lower part of the central stairs. So far, this is the earliest dated monument at the site. Several decades later, in AD 514, Stela 43 was erected, probably at the eastern extreme of the first platform. An altar on the plaza floor seems to be aligned with this stela (see Valencia Rivera et al. 2014; Vázquez López et al. 2016).

The 6<sup>th</sup> phase (Structure II-A) was built towards the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Rodríguez Campero 2009: 1344). During the construction of this phase, some parts of the platform were demolished and a series of vaulted rooms were added. One of these rooms—Building II-1, located in the eastern section of the north façade—served as an enclosure for Stela 43. Stela 114 has a similar history, for it was protected by a vaulted niche built around the monument during the 6<sup>th</sup> phase of construction (Figure 6a, b).<sup>7</sup>

As Simon Martin (2005) has pointed out, Stela 114 was erected by a *k'uhul* “Bat Head” *ajaw*, a ‘godly lord of the “Bat Head” [dynasty]’, while Stela 43 was commissioned by a *k'uhul chatahn winik*, a ‘godly Chatahn person’. Both lords belonged to lineages that ruled at Calakmul at different points of the Early Classic, long before the arrival of the Kanu'l at the beginning of the Late Classic (Martin 2004, 2005; Nalda Hernández 2004; Velásquez García 2004; Helmke and Awe 2016a, 2016b; Martin and Velásquez García 2016; Velásquez García and García Barrios 2018). The fact that these early stelae were intentionally integrated into the new architectural programme of Structure II under the auspices of a Kanu'l ruler seems to reflect

<sup>7</sup> There is insufficient stratigraphic data to say with any certainty if these were the original locations of stelae 114 and 43, or if they were reset in later times. According to William Folan's team, who found Stela 114, the monument was reset in antiquity (Marcus and Folan 1994: 24; Pincemin et al. 1998: 312). However, Ramón Carrasco Vargas believes that Stela 114 was found in its original location and that the Late Classic niche was built in an attempt to preserve it (Rodríguez Campero 2009: 1347). The same argument can be made for the location of Stela 43.



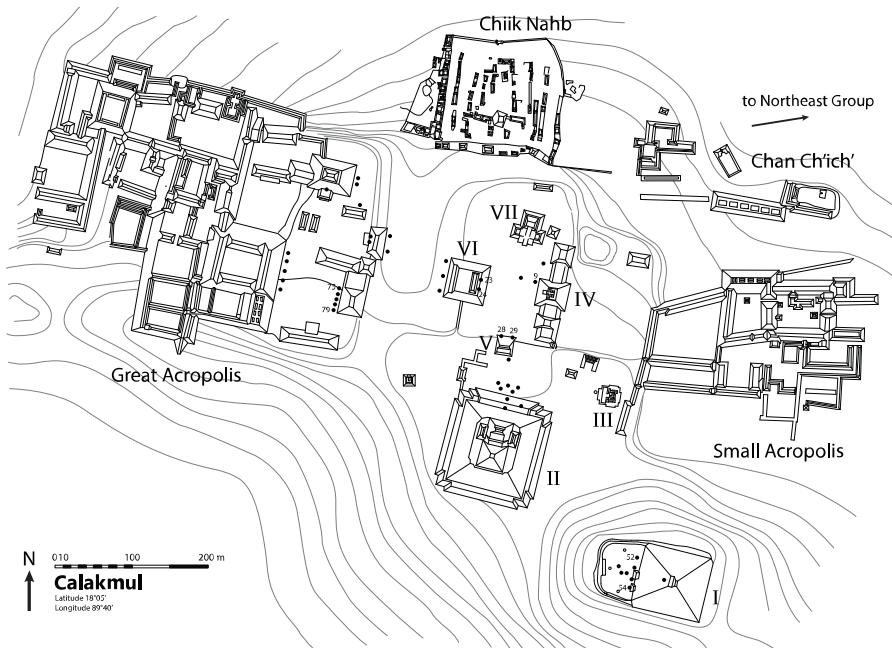
**Figure 6.** Structure II at Calakmul and the locations of stelae 43, 114 and 116: *a)* Plan based on a drawing by Emely González G. (redrawn by Verónica Amellali Vázquez López; courtesy of Ramón Carrasco Vargas), *b)* 3D-model by Rocío Ruiz Rodarte (courtesy of Ramón Carrasco Vargas, © Proyecto Arqueológico Calakmul).

ongoing relations between the former and the current dynasties (Valencia Rivera et al. 2014; Vázquez López et al. 2016). Instead of destroying or burying the stelae of old rivals, the Kanu'l rulers chose to keep them functional in the most emblematic of all architectural compounds, a decision that reflects the respect for the still influential and probably politically active rival lineages. Thus, both the Chatahn and the Bat Head dynasties appear to have played a significant political role at Calakmul during the Late Classic, although it was hardly enough to be represented in contemporary sculpture. Stelae 114 and 43 were moved to the architectural background, while a stela battery in front of Structure II emphasised the undisputable reign of the Kanu'l. In the case of Stela 43, access was restricted by the new enclosure, converting it into an instrument of rather private ritual activities.

A doorjamb (labelled Stela 115 by Folan and his team [Marcus and Folan 1994]) and Stela 116 are also associated with the 6<sup>th</sup> constructive phase of Structure II. The former mentions the name of Kanu'l ruler Yihch'aak K'ahk', while the latter, located in a prominent location at the centre of the principal stairway, depicts a woman, possibly the wife or mother of Yihch'aak K'ahk' (Martin 1998; García Barrios and Vázquez López 2011, 2012), conducting a ritual of incense scattering.

This leads us to another type of monuments that was frequently used by the Kanu'l and their allies during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century: the so-called paired stelae. These monuments depict the royal couple—and occasionally mother and son, like in Naranjo (for studies related to paired stelae see Marcus 1987, 1992; Joyce 2000; Reese-Taylor et al. 2009; Stewart 2009; García Barrios and Vázquez López 2011, 2012; Vázquez López 2015, in press; Jabłońska 2016). Paired stelae occur as two separate monuments where the depicted figures face each other, or as a single monolith, depicting one of the figures on each of the wide sides.<sup>8</sup> These monuments show the importance of marital alliances as a strategy of social networking. Due to a principally patrilocal system, the women depicted at Calakmul were usually members of other lineages who married into the royal house dominated by the Kanu'l (see Martin 2008; Vázquez López and Kupprat 2018). In consequence, the *ixkanu'l ajaw*—daughters of the Kanu'l

<sup>8</sup> Small monolithic panels representing the couple on one of its sides seem to be thematically related to these conventions (e.g. La Corona Element 19 [Martin and Stuart 2009: 23]).



**Figure 7.** Epicentre of Calakmul. Paired stelae are marked with Arabic numbers (map by Verónica A. Vázquez López, based on Ruppert and Denison 1943: pl. 61).

ruler—or women from other social units close to the Kanu'l dynasty women of the Kanu'l lineage were depicted outside Calakmul, as spouses of foreign rulers.

The marriage contracts that the Kanu'l established with other social units—as a source of exogenous life—implied the transmission of status, material goods and political authority from one lineage to another. Here, women who had a higher social rank than their spouses (hypogamy) worked as vehicles of these transactions or negotiations, where both sides received social, economic and political benefits, obligations and exchanges (Vázquez López 2015, *in press*). The paired stelae were usually located in open, public or semi-public areas, at the bottom of a platform or at the entrance of a building (Figure 7). This spatial context reflects the importance of the royal couple, publicly proclaiming inter-house alliances and the ideal of bilinear descent. Rank among lineages was frequently marked by a simple directional code: the character of lower social status tends to look her/his left and the one of higher social status to her/his right (Vázquez López *in press*).

Another type of inter-house relation at Calakmul may be represented in the Northeast Group, c. 1 km north-east of the Central Plaza. This group is a secondary palace compound with two plazas (A and B) surrounded by monumental platforms, a large compound with a rectangular plan and several patio groups (Carrasco Vargas et al. 2008: 78–79). A total of 13 stelae have been registered on the two main plazas, most of them uncarved. Stela 105 refers a date that is related to the reign of Yihch'aak K'ahk' (AD 692) (Martin 1998). The architectural complexity of the group and the quantity of monuments reflect the importance of the people who lived in the patio groups and their direct ties to the Kanu'l dynasty. A probable reference to Yihch'aak K'ahk' and his rule can be interpreted in two different ways: (a) the inhabiting social unit had a direct relation with Yihch'aak K'ahk' through kinship and/or (b) the inhabitants had been granted a right to monumentality, with the condition to mention the ruler (Vázquez López 2015: 214–215). This parallels the type of intellectual elite formation seen at Group IV in Palenque and, up to a certain point, ritual integration evidenced by the outlying stelae in the Copan Valley.

## Discussion

A context-based analysis of monumental inscriptions and imagery shows that the communicative qualities of sculpture cover a wide range, from complex esoteric art to the public display of power relations. Regarding the distinct strategies of royal/non-royal integration in the political field, we identify three basic mechanisms:<sup>9</sup>

1. Cultural-religious integration: Stela–altar pairs as ritual subjects constituted ceremonial spaces. These spaces can be open (accessible) or closed (restricted), central or peripheral. Depending on the specific configuration of ceremonial space, integration is directed towards the larger population or towards smaller, more selective groups.
2. Intellectual elitism: The restriction of monumental space creates a feeling of exclusivity among the privileged few who obtain

<sup>9</sup> These may be compared to Andrea Stone's (1989) discussion of strategies of disconnection and connection.

access. This creates a divide between those who have access and those who do not. Belonging to the elite becomes a social desire, and the power to include or exclude certain individuals or groups becomes a means of creating allegiance among peers and subordinates. Elitism is also in play when it comes to the display of selective contents or codes of communication, such as hieroglyphic texts which were read only by the very few.

3. Social affiliation: Finally, the location of monuments also provides information about social affiliation and hierarchy. Those who had the privilege of collocating monumental sculpture in their courtyards or houses clearly marked their closeness to the ruler and his house. On the other hand, the representation of non-royal parties in public imagery is to be seen as an overt acknowledgement of social pacts, be it through marital alliances or other relational mechanisms.

All three mechanisms can be recognised in every one of the three settings we discussed here, but emphasis clearly differed. In 7<sup>th</sup>-century Copan, for instance, we notice an attempt of large-scale cultural integration, but at the same time, there are traces of competition among the local elites in the monumental discourse. From the ruler's perspective, integration was necessary since his legitimacy was based on Maya ideology, in particular on the acknowledgement of descent and ritual; rivalling forms of social organisation and religious practices and beliefs were probably a threat to the very institution of the *k'uhul ajaw*.

In Palenque, there are extremely few indicators of cultural integration through monumental sculpture, but elitism is overtly marked. This might indicate that Palenquean society was structured in a more lineal manner, with strict mechanisms of subordination at various levels. In this scenario, the ruler only had to control a relatively small number of high-ranking leaders who in turn controlled the larger population through the hierarchic ladder. At the same time, we can tie some of those sub-leaders to specific domestic units which represent social houses.

The Maya house was constituted of one dominant lineage—and maybe sometimes more—and a number of affiliated individuals from other lineages, such as spouses, but probably also lower-ranking

servants. Both, blood ties and affinity are expressed in visual media and it becomes clear that the reproduction of the house was a major concern for the Maya. The relations expressed through monumental intertextuality at Calakmul refer to the dominant house, the court of the Kanu'l, in relation to other lineages and their houses, probably both local (the *chatahn winik* and the Bat Head lineage) and foreign. Some of them may have resided in the secondary palaces at Calakmul, but this can only be substantiated by further excavations.

We attempted to show how the hitherto invisible participants in monumental discourse can be approached through the analysis of receptive space. The spatial relation of one sculpted monolith to another, as well as accessibility and code choices reveal some of the intentions of the authors and the social profiles of the addressees. However, we also have to be aware that not all sculptures functioned as social media. Some images and texts were hidden or inaccessible and served as devices for the communication with otherworldly entities or simply as tools for giving meaning and value to otherwise profane objects.

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# **What Is in a Headdress? Maya Glyptic Names Integrated into Visual Narrative**

BOGUCHWAŁA TUSZYŃSKA

Independent researcher

(gloria@amu.edu.pl)

**Abstract:** Maya monuments from the Classic period (AD 250–900) represent portraits of kings and queens wearing ornamented garments, with jadeite jewels and headdresses composed of numerous elements. Yet, with increasing familiarity with Maya writing and taking a closer look, we also find a very interesting feature of Maya headdresses: hieroglyphs spelling out personal names. This is an iconographic motif already observed by Herbert Spinden in 1913, and later discussed by other scholars, such as David Kelley, Tatiana Proskouriakoff and Linda Schele. Thereby glyptic names are integrated into a visual narrative. Although in most cases the names identify exactly the persons portrayed, examples also exist of headdresses composed of elements that spell out the names of certain venerated ancestors or mythical entities.

**Resumen:** Los monumentos mayas del período Clásico (250–900 d.C.) representan retratos de reyes y reinas, vestidos con trajes suntuosos, joyas de jade y tocados compuestos de elementos múltiples. Sin embargo, con un dominio mayor de la escritura glífica maya y mirando con atención, podemos encontrar un rasgo muy interesante de los tocados mayas: glifos deletreando nombres personales. Este motivo iconográfico fue observado ya por Herbert Spinden en 1913 y más tarde por David Kelley, Tatiana Proskouriakoff y Linda Schele. Así, nombres glíficos están integrados en una narrativa visual. Aunque en la mayoría de casos los nombres identifican exactamente a las personas retratadas, existen también ejemplos de tocados compuestos por elementos que deletrean los nombres de algunos ancestros venerados o entidades mitológicas.

I dedicate this article to Alfonso Lacadena, who should be remembered, besides as an author of many great publications, as an excellent tutor for advanced workshops during European Maya Conferences. His incredible knowledge and passion for Maya epigraphy and Mayan linguistics, his great enthusiasm, kindness and humour made each workshop a very special event with an atmosphere of its own. Alfonso Lacadena is one of those who cannot be replaced. He has left an empty place behind and we will never forget him.

Looking at the portraits of Maya nobles represented on monuments, above all on stelae, we can admire their elaborate attires and complex headdresses, consisting of beautiful quetzal feathers, zoomorphic masks, images of deities or other mythological entities and symbols associated with royal power or warfare. Sometimes,

being familiar with Maya hieroglyphic writing, we can detect details in the headdresses that conform to elements of writing. In 1913, Herbert Spinden in his pioneering *Study of Maya Art*, for the first time drew the attention to some sculptures showing people with glyphs over their heads or on their bodies, although he did not give examples of any particular headdresses (Spinden 1975: 95).

In 1982, David Kelley recognized that wearing headdresses with the names of the individuals represented a common practice in Mesoamerica (Kelley 1982: 38). However, regarding Classic Maya headdresses, Kelley stated that they seemed often to be associated with particular ceremonies rather than with personal names (Kelley 1982: 46). In fact, at that time, very few examples from the Maya area were known. In 1959, Heinrich Berlin had signalled the possibility of the existence of some relationship between the headdresses of the ancestors represented on the walls of the sarcophagus of K'inich Janahb Pakal in the Temple of Inscriptions at Palenque and their corresponding name-glyphs (Berlin 1959: 1–8). More or less at the same time, Tatiana Proskouriakoff noticed the name of Lady 'K'atun' placed in the centre of her headdress on Stela 1 from Piedras Negras, dedicated in AD 711 (Proskouriakoff 1960: 471).

With the passing of time and thanks to many advances in epigraphic and iconographic studies, it has become clear that the names of the Maya nobility appear not only in inscriptions accompanying their portrayals, but also in their headdresses, being integrated into the visual narrative, and giving the impression that the texts and images complement each other. For the Maya, a headdress was a marker of social status and identity, while the head or the face was the primary manifestation of personality (Houston and Stuart 1988: 83; Grube 2002: 348; Houston et al. 2006: 68). However, what we find in Maya headdresses are glyphs spelling out not only the royal names and titles of the people represented on monuments, but also that of their ancestors or even the names of mythical entities. Let us take a look at some portraits that allow us to observe these features.

Some special examples show that the name-glyphs can even form a headdress itself. On the west side of Altar Q at Copan, dedicated in AD 776 by the king Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat, we find a portrait of the dynastic founder, whose name adorns his headdress (Stuart and Schele 1986). It consists of glyphs **YAX** and **K'IN** (for *k'inich*), and a



**Figure 1.** *a)* A detail from the west side of Altar Q at Copan with portraits of the kings K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' (left) and Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat (right). On top of the headdress of K'inich Yak K'uk' Mo' one sees the glyph **YAX**, placed above the **K'IN** sign, and a full figure of a quetzal (*k'uk'*) (photograph by Boguchwała Tuszyńska), *b)* the glyptic name of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' as it appears in the inscription of Stela 10 at Copan (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

figure of a quetzal *k'uk'* with the glyph for *mo'* infixated into quetzal's eye (Figure 1a), providing the full royal name K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', which is also found in other inscriptions at Copan (Figure 1b).

Another beautiful and frequently mentioned example can be seen on Stela 22 from Naranjo, dedicated in AD 702 by the king K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk, whose elaborate headdress consists of glyphs spelling out his royal name (Martin and Grube 2000: 77; Grube 2002: 337) (Figure 2a) that can be compared with the one given in other inscriptions (Figure 2b).

The partly broken Pier Panel from Temple XIX at Palenque represents the image of K'inich Ahkul Mo' Nahb III, the king who ruled from AD 721 to AD 736. A part of his name, *mo'*, is represented by the macaw head and adorns his headdress, whereas the square-nosed serpentine figure probably spells *k'inich* (Martin and Grube 2000: 173; Stuart 2005: 22–23) (Figure 3a). The full form of the name Ahkul Mo' Nahb, also used by the previous rulers, can be seen, for example, on the Panel from Temple XVII at Palenque (Figure 3b).



a



b

**Figure 2.** a) The upper part of Stela 22 from Naranjo with the elaborate headdress of K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk. On the left side, there is a big image of a flame *k'ahk'*, forming the first part of the royal name. Other glyphs appear above the king's head (photograph by Felix Kupprat), b) the name of K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk recorded in the inscription of the vase K927 (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

In the case of that Pier Panel what we find in the headdress is only one part of the full royal name, which is not unusual, especially at Palenque. On the walls of the already mentioned sarcophagus of K'inich Janahb Pakal, the headdresses of important ancestor portraits are adorned with glyphs that also form only parts of their names (Schele and Mathews 1998: 119–122). For example, in the headdress of Akhul Mo' Nahb I there is a turtle head for *ahk* and a



**Figure 3.** *a)* Detail of Pier Panel from Temple XIX at Palenque with a portrait of the king K'inich Ahkul Mo' Nahb III. A macaw beak, seen above his head, forms a part of his royal name (photograph by Boguchwała Tuszyńska), *b)* detail of Panel from Temple XVII at Palenque with the name of Ahkul Mo' Nahb. A macaw's beak can be seen on the right, upper part of the glyph block (photograph by Boguchwała Tuszyńska).

macaw beak for *mo'*. The king K'an Joy Chitam I has the glyph *chitam* with *k'an* infixated into its eye. Above the head of Kaan Bahlam I, one can find a head of a jaguar for *bahlam*, while in the case of the king's parents there is a quetzal *k'uk'* as part of the mother's name, Sak *K'uk'* (Figure 4), and a macaw *mo'* with the glyph *hix* in its eye as part of the father's name K'an Mo' Hix.

In her detailed discussion on the monuments from Piedras Negras, Clancy (2009) mentions Stelae 25, 6 and 14 with the images of kings K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, II and III, respectively, all of them represented with elaborate headdresses in the form of a great turtle head, *ahk*, being the turtle part of their royal names. On Stela 25, dedicated in AD 608, in the headdress of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, the glyphs *yo* and *NAL* are also visible, providing the word *yo'nal* (Clancy 2009: 27). On Stela 6 (Figure 5a), dedicated in AD 664 by K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II, the glyph *yo* can be found as well (Clancy 2009: 101), though, because of

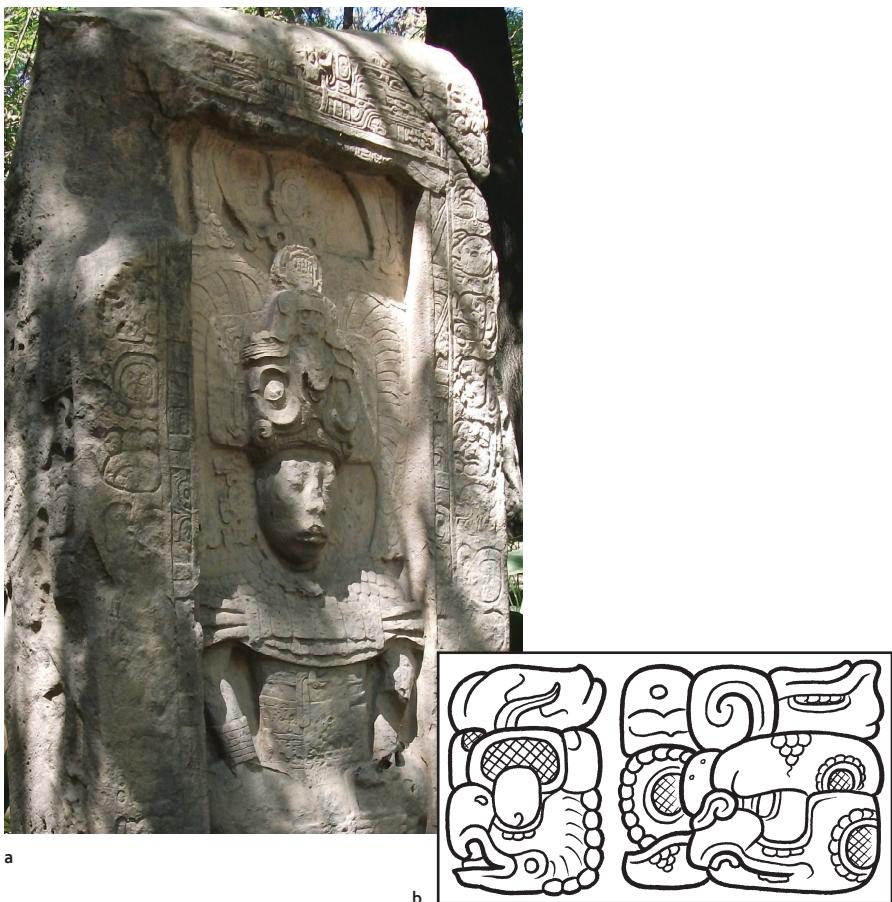


**Figure 4.** Detail from the wall of the sarcophagus of K'inich Janahb Pakal. The headdress of his mother, Lady Sak K'uk', is adorned with a quetzal head *k'uk'*, forming a part of her name (photograph by Boguchwała Tuszyńska).

erosion, it is difficult to distinguish it on Stela 14, dedicated in AD 761 by K'inich Yo'nal Ahk III. Name glyphs of Yo'nal Ahk appear in many inscriptions at Piedras Negras, with different variants of logograms and syllabic spellings (Figure 5b). What is also very interesting is that in the headdress of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II on Stela 2 from AD 697 we find the glyph for the word *kooj* 'puma' (Clancy 2009: 82; Burdick 2010: 158), *Kooj* being the childhood name of the king, providing us with a very good example of a pre-accession name integrated into a visual narrative.

More examples of headdresses with glyphs spelling out personal names of Maya nobles can be found at other sites. On Stela 40 from Tikal, dedicated in AD 468, Valdés and Fahsen (1998: 72) observed the name of the king K'an Chitam, represented by a peccary head for CHITAM with the glyph K'AN infixated into its eye. On the lateral side of the same stela, in the portrait of the king's mother, Lady Ahiin, her name glyphs include the female head for *ix* and the caiman head for *ahiin* (Martin 2003: 41). For its date (AD 751), Stela 20 of Tikal can be attributed to the king Yik'in Chan K'awiil and the glyph for *k'awiil* is still visible in his headdress (Martin and Grube 2000: 50).

Stela 1 from Arroyo de Piedra, dedicated in AD 613, represents the image of the ruler Wakoh Chan K'inich, whose name adorns



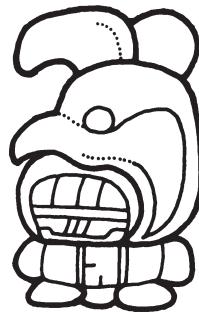
**Figure 5.** *a)* The upper part of Stela 6 from Piedras Negras. The headdress of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II is formed by a big turtle-head for *ahk* (photograph by Boguchwała Tuszyńska), *b)* the name Yo'nal Ahk given in the inscription on Stela 3 from Piedras Negras (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

the headdress. The head of a bird (known as a ‘laughing falcon’) for *wakoh* with a sky sign **CHAN** on its beak rests on top of the head of the Sun God *K'inich* (Gronemeyer 2013: 15) (Figure 6a) and it can be compared to the same name given in the inscriptions (Figure 6b). At the same site, on Stela 2 from AD 731 we find a part of the name of the king Chak Bin Ahk in his headdress (Houston and Mathews 1985: 16).

On the headdress of ruler Tajal Chan Ahk, represented on Panel 3 from Cancuen, dedicated in AD 795, there is a sky sign **CHAN** and a head of a turtle for **AHK**. Although the sign **TAJ** is not clearly visible, it is possible that part of it appears above, overlapped by the sign for



a



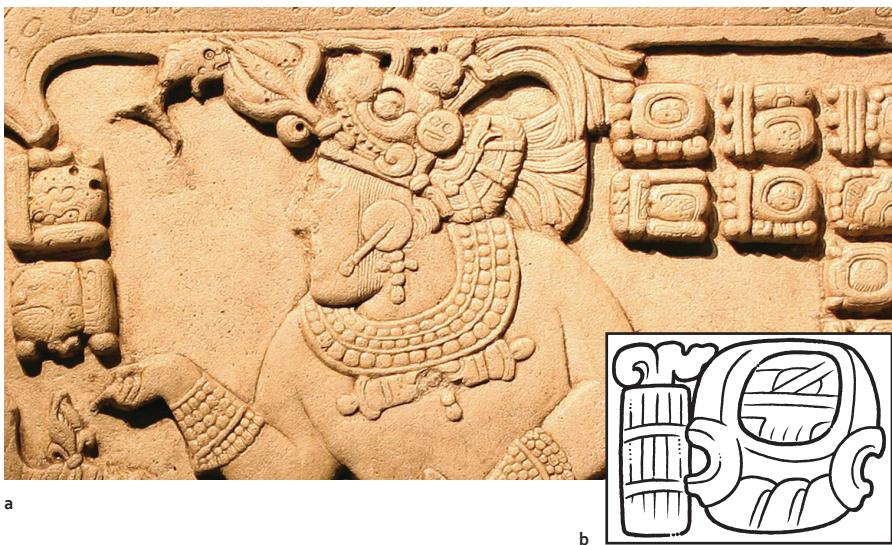
b

**Figure 6.** a) Detail of Stela 1 from Arroyo de Piedra with the headdress of Wakoh Chan K'inich. In the right upper corner of the photo we can see the image of a bird *wakoh* with the *chan* sign in its open beak, placed above the head of the Sun God *K'inich*, b) the name of Wakoh Chan K'inich, used by one of the previous kings, as it appears in the inscription on Stela 4 from Tam-arindito (photograph and drawing by Sven Gronemeyer).

*chan* (Figure 7a), providing the full form of the king's name which can be seen in the accompanying inscription (Figure 7b).

At El Peru, Stanley Guenter (2014: 157–159) noticed some examples of the royal name of K'inich Bahlam in his headdress, with the head of a jaguar for *bahlam*, emerging from the sun symbol *k'in*. This headdress can be observed on Stela 1 from AD 657, Stela 12 from AD 672 (Figure 8) and Stela 35 from AD 711, all of them dedicated by the same king. Another way of representing royal names on the monuments from El Peru can be seen on Stela 27, dedicated in AD 741, probably by king Bahlam Tz'am (Guenter 2014: 160). In this portrait, his personal name is not given directly above his head but can be found in small cartouches on quetzal feathers forming part of his headdress. Interestingly, the name and title of K'inich Bahlam's wife, Lady "K'abel", are also rendered in special cartouches within the quetzal feathers of her headdress on Stela 34, dedicated in AD 692 (Miller 2000: 470–475). Therefore, we can assume that the portrait of Lady "K'abel" could have served as an example for the later king.

Besides Stela 34 from El Peru and the aforementioned Stela 1 from Piedras Negras, there are more female portraits with names



**Figure 7.** *a*) The headdress of Tajal Chan Ahk, portrayed on Panel 3 from Cancuen, with the turtle-head for *ahk* and the sign *chan* above it (photograph by Harri Kettunen), *b*) the name of Tajal Chan Ahk as it appears in the accompanying inscription. In this case the turtle head is substituted by another logogram for *ahk*, representing a turtle carapace with the glyph for *chan* infixated (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

adorning their headdresses. Héctor Mejía and José Miguel García Campillo (2004: 812–817) suggest that the glyphs in the headdress, of Lady Ohl, can refer to the woman represented on Stela 6 from Itzimte, dating from the second part of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. On Stela 26 at Naachtun, from the 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, we find the glyphs for Lady Tzutz “Nik”, though it is difficult to establish if she was a historical personage or some mythical entity (Mathews 2013: 91–92; see Nondédéo et al., this volume). It is also possible that glyphs spelling out female names appear on stelae at Coba and Calakmul, yet, we are not able to establish it with certainty because of severe erosion of the monuments.

Among the various examples of glyphs adorning the heads of Maya nobles, we find not only their names but their titles, as well, yet, in those cases the information on each person’s identity is given in the accompanying text. On the Palenque Palace Tablet, the scene in the upper part represents the moment of accession of K’inch K’an Joy Chitam II, who receives the royal insignia from his parents. The headdress of the mother, Lady Tz’akbu Ajaw is formed by the glyphs Chiit Nahb K’uh (Burdick 2010: 268), the name of a supernatural



**Figure 8.** A detail of badly eroded Stela 12 of El Peru. In the headdress of K'inich Bahlam a jaguar head for *bahlam* is still visible, emerging from the *k'in* sign for *k'inich* (photograph by Boguchwała Tuszyńska).

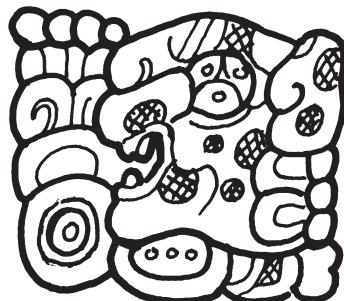
entity. This godly title precedes the personal name of Lady Tz'akbu Ajaw in the inscription carved on the same panel. A headdress with glyphs spelling out a title instead of a personal name can also be seen on Panel 1 from La Corona, dedicated in AD 677 by K'inich ? Yook.<sup>1</sup> As his most important title was Sak Wayis, which sometimes replaces his royal name in inscriptions, it is exactly its glyptic form that we can admire on the front of the ruler's elaborate headdress (Figure 9a). Although the title Sak Wayis (Figure 9b) was used by other elite people associated with the area of influence of the powerful Kanu'l kingdom (Grube et al. 2012: 23), the caption with the name of K'inich ? Yook is incised in the proximity of his image, leaving no doubt that it is his portrait.

Until now we have been considering examples of headdresses with personal names or titles identifying the figures represented on monuments. However, we have to be aware of the fact that sometimes the headdresses are adorned with names that can refer to deceased and venerated ancestors, dynastic founders or even mythical and legendary rulers. What we find very confusing is the portrait on Stela 9 from Lamanai, dedicated in AD 628 by the king K'ahk'

<sup>1</sup> Question marks indicate that glyphs forming parts of names have not been deciphered yet.



a



b

**Figure 9.** *a)* Detail of Panel 1 from La Corona. The headdress of K'inich ? Yook is adorned by glyphs **SAK** and a jaguar head **WAY** for *wayis*, forming his title *Sak Wayis* (photograph by Boguchwała Tuszyńska), *b)* the title *Sak Wayis* given in the inscription on Element 13 from La Corona (drawing by Nikolai Grube).

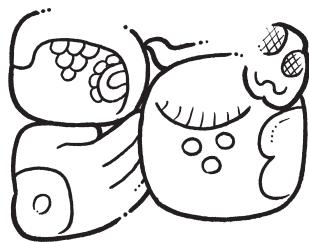
Yipyaj Chan Yopaat<sup>2</sup> (Closs 1988; Reents-Budet 1988). The problem is that on the headdress of the person we find glyphs for the name Tzik'in Xook, probably of the previous ruler, also mentioned in the accompanying inscription. So, we have two options, first that it is a portrait of Tzik'in Xook, and second that it is the image of K'ahk' Yipyaj Chan Yopaat with the headdress of his predecessor, just to confirm the king's claim to rule and the relationship maintained between rulers and their ancestors, which can also be seen in other similar examples.

Stela 2 from Copan was dedicated in AD 652 by K'ahk' Utí' Witz' K'awiil, whose image is represented on the front of the stela. However, his headdress (Figure 10a) is adorned by glyphs spelling out the name of the 4<sup>th</sup> ruler, K'altuun Hix (Figure 10b), who held power at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Grube and Schele 1988), and he is also mentioned in the inscription on the Papagayo Step and on Altar Q (Martin and Grube 2000: 201–202). This case is particularly interesting and unusual, as the name that adorns the headdress does not

<sup>2</sup> The reading of the royal name as K'ahk' Yipyaj Chan Yopaat has been suggested by Christopher Helmke (personal communication, 2016).



a



b

**Figure 10.** a) The upper part of Stela 2 from Copan. The headdress of the king K'ahk' Utí' Witz' K'awiil is composed with a hand sign for **K'AL**, the **TUN** sign and the feline's head for **HIX**, giving the name of K'altuun Hix (photograph by Felix Kupprat), b) the name of K'altuun Hix given in the inscription on Altar Q at Copan. In this case the feline head is substituted by another logogram for *hix* (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

belong to the father or grandfather of the king represented on the monument, nor to the founder of the dynasty. To find an explanation for this, it is necessary to look for a relationship between K'altuun Hix (the 4<sup>th</sup> ruler) and K'ahk' Utí' Witz' K'awiil (the 12<sup>th</sup> ruler), and to pay attention to a very special place in the city of Copan, where now we can admire the final construction phase of Temple 26. At the very beginning, after the death of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', the dynasty's founder at Copan, his son and successor, K'inich "Popol Hol", chose a place for the veneration of his father where the Motmot capstone (with portraits of Yax K'uk' Mo' and "Popol Hol") and Stela 63 were set (Fash 2001: 79). Some decades later, that structure, named Papagayo by archaeologists, was modified by K'altuun Hix, who dedicated the Papagayo Step with the inscription containing a form of a direct speech that, according to David Stuart (2004: 243), seems to be an oration by K'altuun Hix directed to K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'. The



**Figure 11.** Detail of the Panel from Temple XXI in Palenque. The headdress of K'inich Janahb Pakal is adorned by the name of a legendary or mythical ruler. The same name is given in the accompanying glyptic caption, seen on the left (photograph by Felix Kupprat).

Papagayo Temple, as a cult place of the dynastic founder, was very important to the kingdom of Copan and, even partly engulfed by subsequent structures, called Mascarones and Chorcha, the shrine was accessible for some 250 years (Fash et al. 2004: 78–81; Stuart 2004: 231). Chorcha was built during the reign of K'ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil and became his final resting place (Martin and Grube 2000: 202). K'ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil, representing himself on Stela 2 with the headdress bearing the name of K'altuun Hix, probably wanted to be identified with that Early Classic king and to be perceived as his direct successor in rebuilding the very important sacred precinct, associated with the cult of the dynasty's founder at Copan.

In the centre of the scene of the panel from Temple XXI at Palenque, dedicated in AD 746 by K'inich Ahkul Mo' Nahb III, we can see the image of his great grandfather, K'inich Janahb Pakal. The accompanying text tells us that he impersonates Ch'a ? Ukohkan Kan, whose name adorns the ruler's headgear (González Cruz and Bernal Romero 2003: 8–9) (Figure 11). We do not know exactly who that legendary person was. Arnoldo González Cruz and Guillermo Bernal Romero (2012: 97), taking into account that the inscription



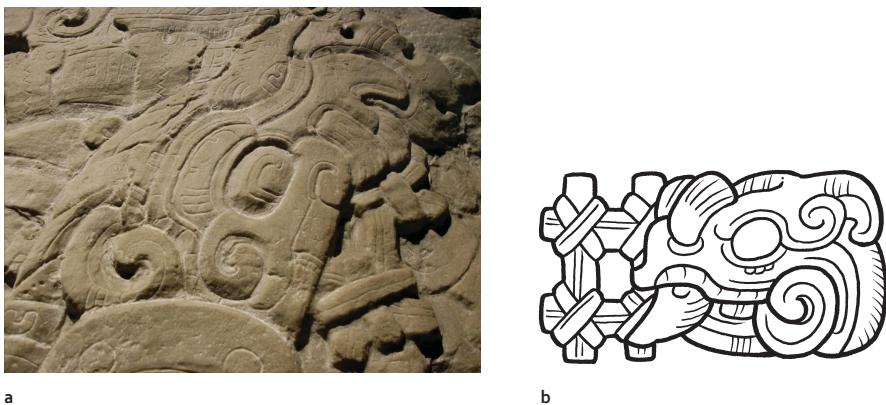
**Figure 12.** *a)* Detail of Stela 31 at Tikal, showing the part of the headdress with glyphs spelling out the royal name of Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II. The head of the god *K'awiil* appears between rising hands for *sihyaj*, with the glyph **CHAN** below, *b)* the name of Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II given in the inscription on Stela 31 (photographs by Boguchwała Tuszyńska).

mentions the first collocation of the images of the patron gods in the temple in 252 BC, suggest that Ch'a...? Ukohkan Kan<sup>3</sup> was the founder of the cult to those deities in Palenque. On the other hand, according to David Stuart (2012: 139), the glyphs in the headdress refer to the names of two different semi-mythical ruling figures.

Undoubtedly, the most striking example of various names integrated into a visual narrative comes from Stela 31 from Tikal, the iconography of which has already been broadly discussed by many scholars (Schele 1986; Schele and Freidel 1990: 157; Van Stone 1996: 51–52; Baudez 1998: 149; Martin and Grube 2000: 34–35; Burdick 2010: 146–150; Stone and Zender 2011: 24–25). However, it is worth mentioning this example, considering the topic of this article. Stela 31 was dedicated in AD 445 by Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II, whose figure is represented in a very rich attire on the front of the monument. His headdress is adorned with glyphs forming his royal name (Figure 12a), which can also be seen in the accompanying inscription (Figure 12b).

Between his name and the ear flare we find glyphs spelling out the name of the dynasty's founder at Tikal, Yax Ehb Xook (Figure 13a). The glyph **YAX** appears in the upper part with an image of a

<sup>3</sup> The first part of this name is still undeciphered, but the initial phonetic complement *ch'a-* indicates that the word begins with *Ch'a-*.



a

b

**Figure 13.** *a)* Detail of Stela 31 from Tikal. The glyphs for the name of the dynasty's founder, Yax Ehb Xook, composed within the attire of the king Sihyaj Chan K'awil II (photograph by Boguchwała Tuszyńska), *b)* the name of Yax Ehb Xook as it appears in the inscription from Stela 39 at Tikal (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

wooden scaffold for *ehb* (on the right) and a shark's head for *xook*, giving the full royal name known from other inscriptions at Tikal (Figure 13b).

In his right hand, Sihyaj Chan K'awil II holds aloft the headdress with the name of his grandfather, 'Spearthrower Owl' (Figure 14), appearing in a small cartouche (Stuart 2000: 483–484; Nielsen and Helmke 2008: 467–468).

In the upper part of Stela 31, above the head of Sihyaj Chan K'awil II, we can observe a floating figure, an iconographic motif quite common on Tikal's monuments from the Early Classic period. Representations of floating figures of ancestors or gods conjured during vision rites served not only to show their symbolic presence and their protection, but also to prove the king's right to the throne (Schele and Freidel 1990: 141–142, 157; Baudez 1998: 149). On Stela 31, in the headdress of the floating figure we find the glyphs for the name of Yax Nuun Ahin I (Figure 15a), the father of Sihyaj Chan K'awil II, also mentioned in the inscription on the same stela (Figure 15b).

There is one more glyptic name, Sak Hix Muut (Figure 15c) that seems to emerge from the open jaws of a snake as a conjured entity (Figure 15a, lower right part of the photograph). It is the name of the ancestral king venerated at Tikal and mentioned in the inscriptions



**Figure 14.** Name-glyph of 'Spearthrower Owl', grandfather of Sihyaj Chan K'awil II, placed in a small cartouche on Stela 31 from Tikal (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

as a supervisor of ceremonies (Stuart 2007; Helmke and Nielsen 2013).

Thus, Stela 31 from Tikal provides an extraordinary combination of headdresses with the royal name of the king portrayed, the names of his father and grandfather, the names of the dynastic founder and even that of a legendary ruler.

When revising the Maya headdresses with personal names

or titles, one also finds examples of nominal headdresses seen in images of captives taken during war, which seems a little unusual. It is well known that captives were represented without their clothes and adornments in Maya iconography, and that their names or titles were given on the lower parts of their bodies as a means of humiliating them. However, there are some examples of captives with their names integrated into their headdresses. Although Catherine Burdick (2010: 162) states that those captives wear their names in the headdresses as an indication of the office they held, it does not seem to be a convincing assertion. On Maya monuments, there are many representations of nobles captured during battles, but in almost all cases, the names of those captives are given on their legs, loincloths or in separate captions placed in their proximity, and not on their headdresses. As each rule has its exceptions, we may assume that this could have been done for special reasons: the importance the captives had for the rulers in some particular and crucial moments in the history of the kingdoms. Therefore, let us proceed by taking a look at the images of the captives whose names or titles adorn their headdresses.

Panels from the East Court of House C of the Palenque Palace represent captives with their names and/or titles given not only in the inscriptions, but also adorning their headdresses (Figure 16a) (Kelley 1982: 47; Robertson 1985: 67–69; Schele 1994: 5; Van Stone 1996: 49–50; Martin and Grube 2000: 164–165; Stuart and Stuart 2008: 155; Burdick 2010: 163–165). House C was built during the reign of



a



b



c

**Figure 15.** Details of Stela 31 from Tikal: *a*) The name of Yax Nuun Ahii I with rotated glyphs in the headdress of the floating figure, *b*) glyphs spelling out the name of Yax Nuun Ahii I, as they appear in the inscription. There is the head of caiman for *ahiiin* with the sign *yax* on the left side, and the sign *nuun* above the head of the caiman (photographs by Boguchwała Tuszyńska), *c*) the glyptic name of Sak Hix Muut. There is an image of a bird for *muut* with the head replaced by the glyph **SAK** with **HIX** infixated into it (drawing by Christophe Helmke).

K'inich Janahb Pakal who took the throne after a difficult time for his kingdom brought about military attacks by Calakmul in AD 599 and AD 611 (Martin and Grube 2000: 159–161). Trying to re-establish Palenque's political power, the ruler, probably not being able to take direct revenge on Calakmul, decided to wage war on its allies. In AD 659 Palenque's army captured nobles from Santa Elena and Pomona. That victorious campaign was the crucial event for the renewal of Palenque's military as a regional power (Martin and Grube 2008: 165;



a



b

**Figure 16.** a) Detail of a panel from the East Court of House C of the Palenque Palace. The headdress of the captive Ahiiin Chan Ahk is adorned with a caiman head for *ahiiin*, forming a part of his personal name. b) Monument 27 from Tonina with the name of the captive K'awiil Mo' mentioned in the inscription (photographs by Boguchwała Tuszyńska).

Stuart and Stuart 2008: 158–159). This way of presenting the captives taken during that war could have served K'inich Janahb Pakal to emphasize that very important moment in his kingdom's history.

Monument 178 from Tonina represents the image of the bound lord K'awiil Mo', whose name is mentioned in the accompanying text and in his headdress (Miller and Martin 2004: 185; Burdick 2010: 162). According to Miller and Martin (2004: 185), the importance of this capture is indicated by the fact that it was also mentioned on Monument 27 (Figure 16b) and in the inscriptions modelled in stucco. K'awiil Mo' was in some way associated with Kaan Bahlam II, the king of Palenque, one of Tonina's greatest enemies. This capture,



**Figure 17.** Altar 8 from Tikal with the image of the bound captive Wilan Chak Tok Wayaab. His title, Chak Tok Wayaab adorns his headdress seen in the left, upper part, and it is also given in the glyph block, in the first row of the second column (photograph by Boguchwała Tuszyńska).

which took place in AD 692, during the war against Palenque, was an extremely significant event in the conflict between these kingdoms, being the first step for Tonina to gain dominance over the region (Martin and Grube 2000: 181).

Another example of a captive represented with his headdress comes from Altar 8 at Tikal with the image of the bound lord Wilan Chak Tok Wayaab (Figure 17), who was taken prisoner and sacrificed in AD 748, although Altar 8 was dedicated three years later, in AD 751 (Martin and Grube 2000: 50). As in the case of K'awiil Mo' at Tonina, the capture of Wilan Chak Tok Wayaab is also mentioned on two other monuments: the Rock Sculpture on the Maler Causeway and on Column Altar 1, which clearly indicates its importance (Martin 2000: 111–113). The titles, *Huk Tzuk* and *Chak Tok Wayaab*, used by that lord give us information as to his origin. The title *Huk Tzuk* was associated with the nobles from the region including the sites such as Naranjo, La Naya, Yaxha and Tubal (Beliaev 2000: 63–65), and for

*Chak Tok Wayaab*, the title found in his headdress, referred to the elite associated with the polity of Holmul (Beliaev 2000: 74–75; Tokovinine 2006: 9–11; Martin and Grube 2008: 50). After earlier victorious wars of Tikal against Calakmul (AD 659) and its allies, El Peru (AD 743) and Naranjo (AD 744), the city of Holmul was to be defeated in the next stage of the great military campaign of Tikal's rulers.

Considering the historical contexts for those scarce examples of the images of captives, who, even when represented in a humiliating posture, still wearing headdresses with their nominal phrases, it can be assumed that such departure from traditional canons, generally accepted in Maya iconography, might have been allowed if the rulers wanted to emphasize the importance of the captures and, consequently, of the successful wars that assured the revival of the kingdom's fortunes.

The practice of representing portraits of nobles with their names written in their headdresses was not limited to monumental sculpture, which was mostly displayed in public spaces. There are also many examples from smaller artefacts, such as a shell trumpet (Schele and Miller 1986: 83–84; Burdick 2010: 145), a greenstone plaque discovered in Lake Güija in El Salvador (Houston and Amaroli 1988: 4; Burdick 2010: 151), a small stone cylinder (Houston 2007), a censer stand from Palenque representing the head of the dynastic founder K'uk' Bahlam or his namesake, with the headdress in form of a quetzal *k'uk'* with jaguar ears for *bahlam* (Martin and Grube 2000: 174; Miller and Martin 2004: 230) or a jade piece, found in the cenote at Chichen Itza, with the portrait of the king of Piedras Negras, Yo'nal Ahk II, whose headdress looks like the head of a puma *kooj* as his pre-inaugural name (Martin and Grube 2008: 145). Some other examples can be found on ceramics, such as the plate with a portrait of Chak Tok Ich'aak (Martin and Grube 2000: 1), or the polychrome vase showing a palace scene with a lord, whose headdress is adorned with a caiman head for *ahiin*, probably referring to the king Yax Nuun Ahiin II (Martin and Grube 2000: 51; Martin 2003: 32).

According to Burdick (2010: 112), the collocation of personal names in headdresses was used as a convention easily interpretable even for illiterate people or foreign viewers. However, her assessment is still open to discussion for various reasons. On the basis of the portraits presented above, we can see that not all of them can

be found on publicly accessible monuments, as some were located inside palaces, temples or even tombs with restricted access, not to mention those represented on private, portable objects. Moreover, even if illiterate people were able to recognize the glyphs referring to the names of rulers, it could only work in cases wherein the personal names or titles adorning the headdresses identify the individuals represented on monuments. Conversely, it could not have worked in cases wherein the names of ancestors or personified mythological entities are rendered. The most important thing, that has to be taken into account when considering the possibility of an interpretation of names by illiterate people is the nature of the Maya script. The same word could be written not only as a logogram or a syllabic structure, but also as a combination of both. It should be emphasized that one of the characteristic features of Maya hieroglyphic writing was polyvalence. With prevalent homophony, different graphic signs existed for the same logogram or syllabogram. Sometimes variants of glyphs, different from those we find in headdresses, were used for the names given in inscriptions, which requires knowledge of numerous glyphs and not only of a few of them. Thus, it seems risky to assume that such pictorial imagery was meant for illiterate people or foreigners. Depending on the name integrated into their headdresses, the Maya kings and queens wanted to indicate their personality or to draw attention to some particular ancestor, either historical or mythological, who had been of special importance in emphasizing the king's heritage. And probably such was the message left for posterity.

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# **La Piedra de la Creación de Palenque y el sistema diédrico de representación**

ANA GARCÍA BARRIOS

Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid

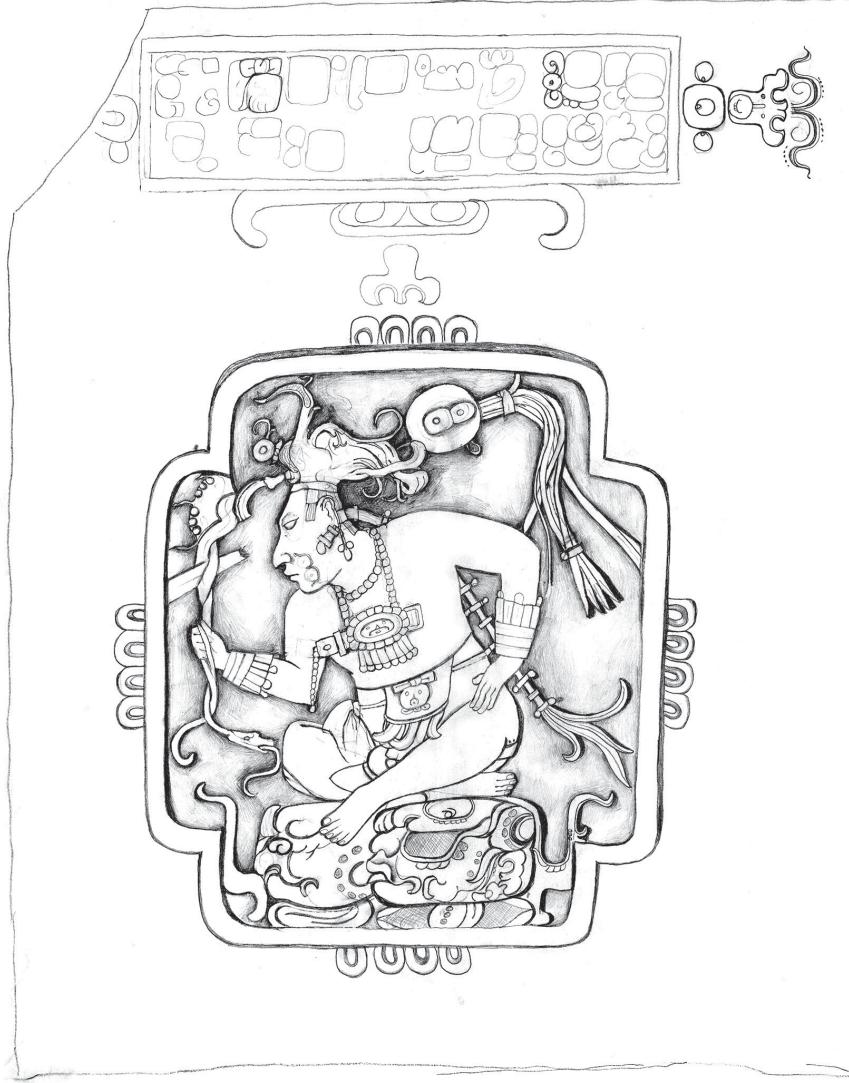
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**Resumen:** En este breve ensayo se analiza la Piedra de la Creación de Palenque desde una perspectiva de la historia del arte, con el fin de entender cómo los antiguos mayas proyectaron y compusieron las figuras.

**Abstract:** In this brief essay I analyze the Creation Stone from Palenque from an art historical perspective, in order to understand how ancient Maya figurative depictions were planned and composed.

El monumento que resguarda el Museo del sitio de Palenque, conocido como “Piedra de la Creación”, es un fino y liso tablero de caliza que en su día fue pulcramente trabajado mediante las técnicas de incisión y rebajado. En él se pueden ver dos cuadrilobulados ocupados por personajes sedentes en su interior, el rey K’ihnich K’uk’ B’ahlam y el dios Chaahk (Figura 1). Cada uno de esos cuadriles está acompañado por un texto en su parte superior.

La Piedra de la Creación apareció en mi vida hace ya unos cuantos años, cuando revisaba con mucha atención el corpus maya en busca de cualquier vestigio de Chaahk. Fue una de las piezas de la tesis doctoral que más emociones produjo en mí. Lo recuerdo muy bien, porque en ella vi la mano del escultor jugando con la planta y el alzado, y sentí que intentaba construir algo muy similar a lo que, muchos siglos después, estableció Pablo Picasso con el cubismo: las tres dimensiones. Ciertamente, Picasso rompió con las normas tradicionales empleadas hasta entonces sobre volumen y perspectiva. Esto lo consiguió descomponiendo los objetos en figuras geométricas. Para Picasso era fundamental entender la esencia primaria del objeto a representar, y para llegar a esa esencia consideró imprescindible descomponer la figura en los diferentes elementos que la integraban. Con ello intentó ver no sólo lo que había delante, sino también lo que estaba detrás, a los lados, arriba, abajo, porque sólo se puede entender un objeto si se mira desde todos los ángulos.



**Figura 1.** Palenque, Panel de la Creación, lado izquierdo (dibujo de Linda Schele, cortesía de Ancient Americas at LACMA [[ancientamericas.org](http://ancientamericas.org)]).

Salvando las distancias, algo similar vi yo en la intención del artista que realizó la Piedra de la Creación.

Esta idea, un tanto descabellada, me llevó a mantener varias conversaciones con Alfonso Lacadena<sup>1</sup> sobre esta pieza, en espe-

<sup>1</sup> Alfonso dirigió mi tesis doctoral y escuchó, con mucha paciencia y generosidad, todas las elucubraciones acerca de cómo yo imaginaba que los artistas mayas veían las imágenes, acciones y talentos de Chaahk.



**Figura 1 (continuación).** Palenque, Panel de la Creación, lado derecho (dibujo de Linda Schele, cortesía de Ancient Americas at LACMA [[ancientamericas.org](http://ancientamericas.org)]).

cial en lo referente a la composición de la escena: la disposición en planta de la cueva y la ubicación del dios en su interior en alzado y de frente. Un año o dos después, Alfonso se enfrentaba a la excavación de la estructura cuadrilobulada que está en el centro de la Plaza A de la ciudad de Machaquilá, lo que produjo nuevas conversaciones sobre la forma planimétrica que empleaban los mayas para representar estos recintos (Lacadena 2006; Ciudad Ruiz et al. 2010).

En este ensayo no se pretende analizar la Piedra de la Creación en profundidad, la intención es acercarse al objeto desde una perspectiva de la teoría del arte —lo que no hice en su momento en la tesis porque se iba de tema— con el fin de aproximarme a la forma en que los antiguos mayas proyectaron las figuras<sup>2</sup>.

### **El asiento del rey K'ihnich K'uk' B'ahlam**

En su día, la Piedra de la Creación debió formar parte del respaldo de un trono que se esculpió durante el mandato de uno de los últimos soberanos de la ciudad de Palenque, K'ihnich K'uk' B'ahlam II (764–763 d.C.). Parece que su reinado brilló más por sus artistas y escultores que por su gobierno (Martin y Grube 2002: 174). De la Garza y colegas (2012: 252–255) sugieren que el sitial o trono estuvo ubicado junto a la Casa E del Palacio, en el lado sur de la torre, y compuesto por al menos cuatro piezas o planchas de piedra caliza delicadamente trabajadas, rebajadas, incisas y esgrafiadas, que recubrían una base o banco de mampostería. La Piedra de la Creación se empleó como respaldo; el magnífico Tablero de los 96 Glifos sirvió de asiento y, sobre dos patas trapezoidales, se apoyó todo el conjunto.

### **La Piedra de la Creación**

Comenzaba esta reflexión recordando el tiempo que pasé observando el dibujo en línea de Chaahk en la Piedra de la Creación y digo dibujo porque hasta hace muy pocos años no me encontré cara a cara con el original, el cual sobrecoge más aún al ver el tamaño. Un dibujo sobre papel y sin escala, como nos hemos mal acostumbrado a ver, deja libre a la imaginación y más cuando el monumento que se está mirando se llama “lápida”, término que lleva a figurarnos un formato de la pieza bastante grande y ciertamente, así es, la lápida es grande pero el retrato de Chaahk, sentado sobre un trono de piedra dentro de una cueva, es de dimensiones muy reducidas, no es mayor

<sup>2</sup> Soy consciente que no se puede obviar la importancia del monumento y lo que representa, así como su relación con el entorno y contexto donde se encontró —en un muro entre la Torre y la Casa E del Palacio, éste último un lugar de ritual y entronización real—, datos que son relevantes para entender el significado de esta pieza, por ello se recomienda revisar trabajos anteriores que permitan dar una visión más amplia del objeto y su importancia en el contexto político palencano (ver Robertson 1985; Stuart 1998, 2003, 2005; Schele y Freidel 1999; Bernal Romero 2011; de la Garza et al. 2012; Kuprat en prensa).

de 45 cm. Pese al pequeño tamaño de la talla todos los detalles son observables y no hay un error en el cincel, al revés, la minuciosidad es tanta que parece más obra de un primoroso orfebre que de un escultor.

El artista dispuso al dios de frente, con el rostro de perfil y sentado con las piernas dobladas; una reposa a la manera oriental sobre el trono de piedra (**TUN**) y la otra pliega hacia su tronco, postura en apariencia un tanto desenfadada. La pierna plegada sobre el torso genera un escorzo frontal que, además de lograr dar peso y volumen a la figura, produce un apoyo perfecto. Es la fórmula con la que el artista consigue dar profundidad a la obra. Recordemos que los mayas aparentemente no emplearon perspectivas, puntos de fuga, ni cualquier indicativo visual para sus fondos que siempre están vacíos y sólo se llenan con la línea de la figura que delimita la base donde se dibuja o esculpe. En este sentido, a veces un recogido de cortinas en una esquina de la escena revela que la acción se desarrolla dentro de una habitación o palacio. En el caso que nos compete es el cuadrilobulado el recurso estándar que indica donde se desarrolla la acción.

En este retrato Chaahk está engalanado con sus adornos: caracoles marinos para el tocado que sostiene el cabello y valvas de ostras o madreperlas para cubrir sus orejas. Todo está en sintonía con el agua. Son materiales relacionados con su naturaleza acuática y con su componente hídrico (García Barrios en prensa a: 33–35; en prensa b). Por eso su cuerpo, piernas y brazos están marcados con signos de agua (ver Schele y Miller 1986: 49; García Barrios 2008: 208). Ese aspecto acuoso está también señalado por roleos de agua que se encuentran encima de su orejera y en la comisura de la boca.

Además, de forma general su cabello voluminoso, ensortijado y recogido es en sí mismo una nube que contiene agua de lluvia. Esta idea se corrobora cuando se sustituye la melena del dios por el signo de nube —una S tumbada rodeada de puntos que simbolizan gotas de lluvia—, cuyo logograma se lee **MUYAL** ‘nube’ (García Barrios 2008: 155–156; Stone y Zender 2011: 143). Uno de estos ejemplos se encuentra en la imagen de Chaahk esculpida en el lateral de la Estela D de Copán (Figura 2). Esta sustitución se encuentra también en otras piezas del Clásico Temprano, como el hacha de jade procedente de Costa Rica (ver García Barrios 2008: 155). Incluso remontándonos más atrás en el tiempo, llegando a los albores del Preclá-



**Figura 2.** Copán, Estela D, lateral. Chaahk con el signo **MUYAL**, nube, en la cabeza (dibujo de Ana García Barrios).

sico, David Grove (1994: 167) fue el primero en observar que en la Estela 1 de Izapa, el pelo de Chaahk semeja una nube (ver también García Barrios 2008: 155–156; en prensa a: 139). Hay que destacar, que el virtuoso artista que llevó a cabo la Piedra de la Creación se consagró con esmero a representar minuciosamente el cabello de nube del dios, creando delgadísimas líneas en zigzag, como si de una corriente de agua se tratase (Figura 3).

En este escenario, Chaahk, además de estar estrechamente vinculado con el agua, también se muestra cargado de elementos vegetales. El logograma **NAL** ‘maíz’, lo lleva colgando en la parte posterior del tocado, a la altura de la orejera. De su boca abierta se ramifican figuras vegetales y floraciones que además trepan y asoman discretamente por la parte frontal del tocado<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Son diversos los contextos en Palenque donde agua y maíz se ven actuando juntos, como se aprecia en el Templo de la Cruz foliada (Stuart 2006: 140), o como argumenta Felix Kupprat (en prensa), la Casa E del Palacio reproduce la Montaña Florida y en su interior se hacían rituales dedicados al dios del maíz. No hay que dejar de lado que todo apunta a que la Casa E fue el lugar de entronización de K'ihnich Janaab' Pakal, de Ahkal Mo' Naab' y de K'ihnich K'uk' B'ahlam tal y como describe el texto del Tablero de los 96 Glifos (de la Garza et al. 2016: 254–255).



**Figura 3.** Detalle del cabello de Chaahk en el Panel de la Creación (fotografía de Daniel Salazar Lama).

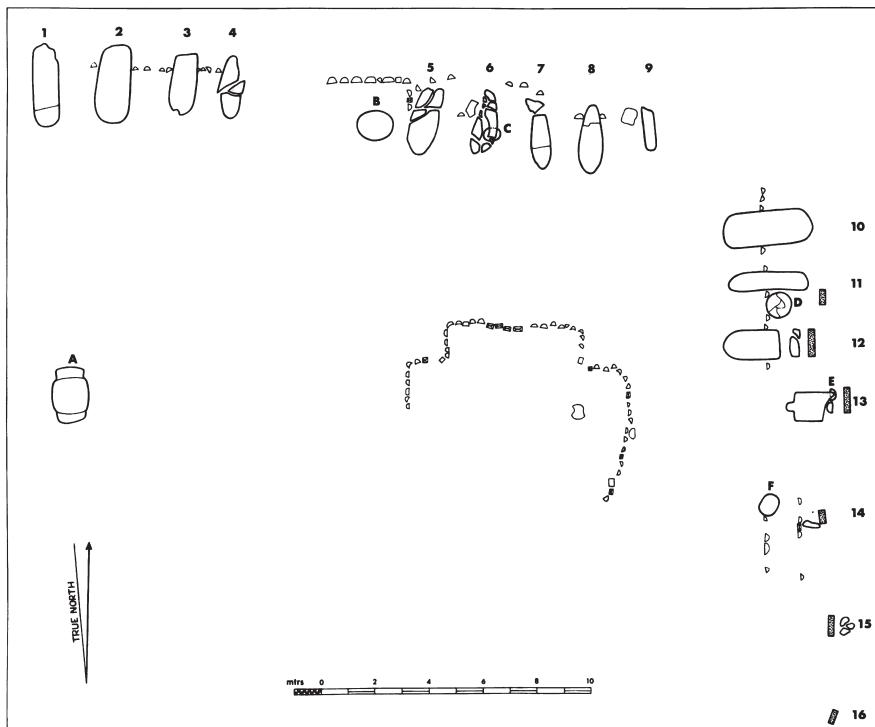
En todo este contexto, Chaahk está en pleno movimiento, conseguido al tener el cuerpo de frente, pero a la vez su cara girada y de perfil hacia su izquierda mientras bate sus brazos hacia la derecha. Ademanes que recuerdan a los que realiza cuando está enarbolando su hacha mientras danza en torno a un cerro. Aquí, el hacha —principal emblema del dios— no existe. Probablemente, porque ese objeto de poder ya se lo ha entregado al rey K'ihnich K'uk' B'ahlam, quien está representado al lado, dentro de otro cuadrilobulado de dimensiones semejantes en el mismo tablero. En trabajos anteriores se ha argumentado que los reyes eran sancionados y legitimados por dioses y en casos concretos por Chaahk (García Barrios 2006). Esto ocurría en cuevas o en el interior de la montaña, como se aprecia en

los vasos de Estilo Códice de la Confrontación y en diversas imágenes de gobernantes sentados dentro de cuadrilobulados. Esta idea de que el dios legitima al gobernante el día de su entronización encuentra sentido en el texto ubicado en la parte superior del cuadril de Chaahk, que describe la decapitación de un ser, posiblemente el dragón de la inundación, por una entidad sagrada formada por Chaahk y GI<sup>4</sup>. Recordemos que en Palenque es el dios GI el que se menciona en la Plataforma Jeroglífica del Templo XIX decapitando al saurio (Stuart 2005). En otros escenarios parece que el verdugo es Chaahk, como se aprecia en el Tablero Margarita de la ciudad de Copán (ver el dibujo de Daniel Salazar Lama en Valencia Rivera y Salazar Lama 2017: fig. 7d). A esto hay que añadir que este trono, donde debió sentarse el rey el día de su acceso al poder, estaba ubicado, como decimos, junto a uno de los muros de la Casa E, cuya iconografía sugiere que la arquitectura debió servir de escenario para recrear el pasaje de la muerte del dragón de la inundación. Tanto los gobernantes de Palenque, como de otras ciudades, por ejemplo Piedras Negras, se involucraban en este episodio mitológico el día de su ascenso al trono, mostrándose como los decapitadores del saurio, victoriosos y garantes del nuevo tiempo que daba comienzo con su reinado (García Barrios 2015: 11-48).

Volviendo al marco cuadrilobulado, hay que destacar que en la mayoría de las culturas de Mesoamérica, desde los olmecas hasta los mexicas, estos recintos cuadrilobulados fueron por excelencia los íconos que representaron la cueva y su interior (Schele y Miller 1986; Bassie-Sweet López 1991; Brady y Prufer 2005; López Austin y López Luján 2009; Romero Sandoval 2016).

Chaahk es uno de los seres que más veces fue representado dentro de esta forma que sintetiza la cueva (García Barrios 2006, 2007, 2008, 2016, en prensa a). Las cuevas son portales que permiten el acceso y la comunicación con el mundo sagrado y sobrenatural, donde

<sup>4</sup> El texto dice ‘es cortada la cabeza del pescador del día y de la noche, así lo ordenó el gran dios Joven GI-Chaahk’ (ver también de la Garza et al. 2012: 253). Ciertamente, la pesca es una de las actividades que más realiza Chaahk, desde el Preclásico hasta el Posclásico (ver García Barrios 2007: 267-278; 2008: 355; en prensa a: 101, 105-109) y encaja bien con la cantidad de arroyos y lagunas cercanas de las que se conseguían peces, manatíes y tortugas, animales que han sido encontrados de forma amplia en el registro arqueológico (ver Varela Scherrer 2016: 128-132; 2017), sin embargo, parece que el texto alude a la acción de decapitar al dragón que produce la terrible inundación.

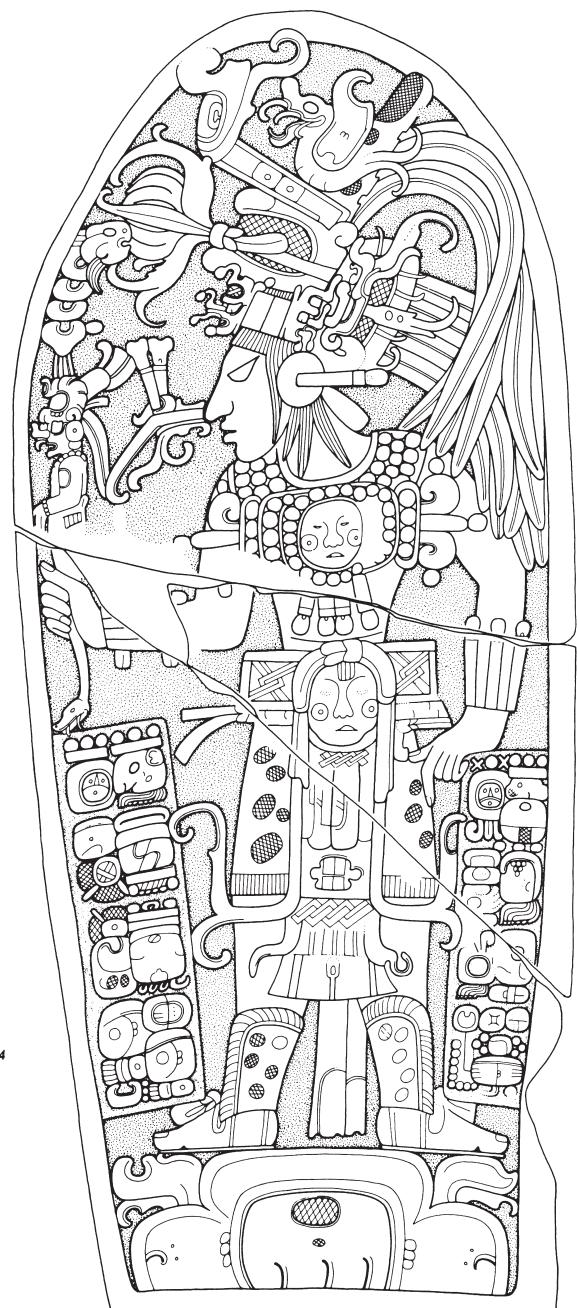


**Figura 4.** Machaquilá. Cuadrilobulado de la Plaza A de Machaquilá (dibujo de Ian Graham [1967: Figura 42], imagen cortesía del Middle American Research Institute de la Universidad de Tulane).

habitan los dioses y los ancestros. Su interior húmedo, a veces con ríos, es un lugar de vida y fertilidad. Son muchas las ciudades donde se han encontrado estelas, paneles o altares con escenas de personajes reales y seres sagrados dentro, en el interior o sobre el cuadrilobulado, como es el caso de Machaquilá (Lacadena 2006; Ciudad Ruiz et al. 2010).

### El cuadrilobulado y el sistema diédrico de representación

En el año 2005 Alfonso excavó el cuadrilobulado ubicado en la plaza A de Machaquilá (Figura 4). Una estructura que generó muchas expectativas en él. Según sus palabras (Lacadena 2006: 77): “la recurrencia de los motivos cuadrilobulados en las representaciones iconográficas contrasta con su excepcionalidad como construcción física real en el inventario de estructuras arqueológicas”. Ciertamente, contamos con un número elevado de imágenes de personajes en portales



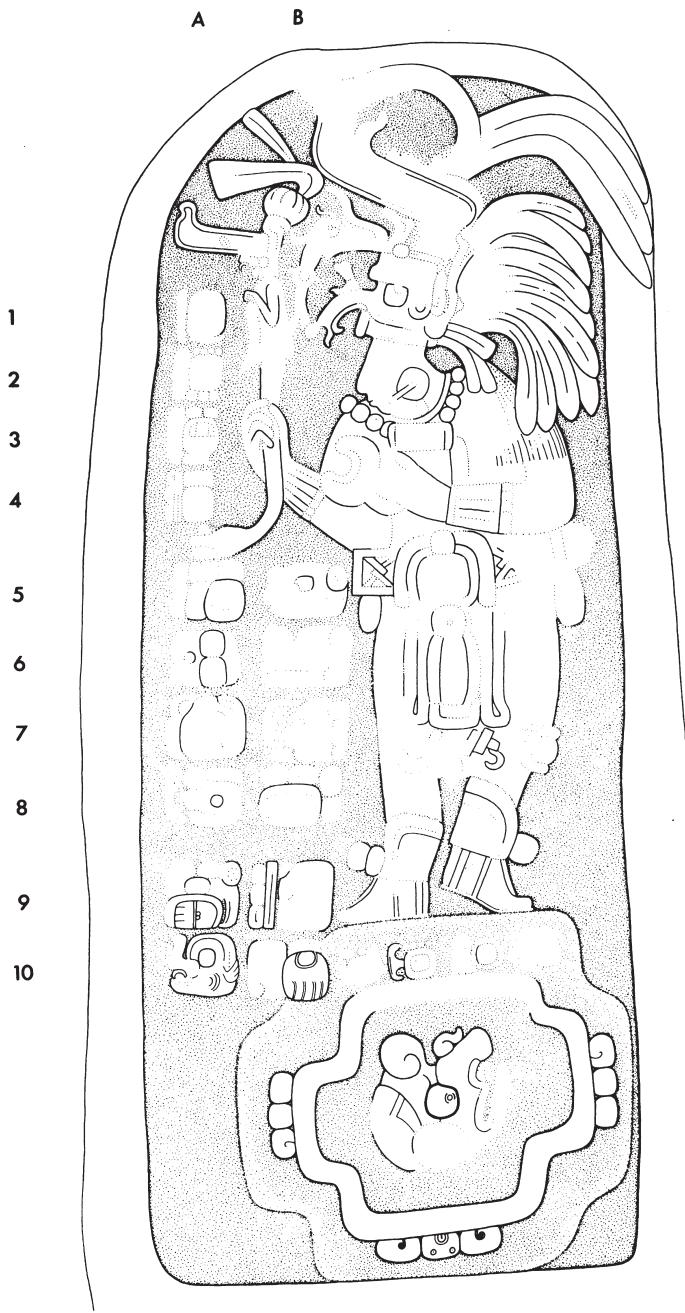
**Figura 5.** Machaquilá, Estela 4, Gobernante erguido sobre medio cuadrilobulado (dibujo de Ian Graham [1967], imagen cortesía del Middle American Research Institute de la Universidad de Tulane).

cuadrilobulados, pero pocos ejemplos de estos en arquitectura. En los últimos años, este diseño se ha ido registrando arqueológicamente en ciudades tanto preclásicas como clásicas. El cuadrilobulado, por tanto, no funcionó exclusivamente como un recurso visual sino también como un espacio de actividad física. Alfonso (2006: 77–79) no se equivocaba al intuir que lo que estaba representado en las estelas de Machaquilá: el rey de pie sobre medio cuadrilobulado en planta (Figura 5)<sup>5</sup>, reproducía una instantánea de los gobernantes realizando sus ceremonias sobre la estructura cuadrilobulada de la Plaza A. Según él esta fórmula “seguía las convenciones de representación planimétrica del arte Maya”, los personajes se representaban dentro o ante el cuadrilobulado o cueva.

En este sentido hay que tener en cuenta que el modo de representar se adapta según el formato donde se plasma la escena. En una estela es difícil hacer un cuadrilobulado, que tiende a ser circular, e introducir dentro una figura humana, por eso en Machaquilá cuando se aplica esta representación en las estelas lo resuelven ubicando al personaje de pie y sobre el medio cuadrilobulado en planta, aunque en realidad es exactamente la misma proyección que se advierte en la Piedra de la Creación, con Chaahk totalmente dentro de la cueva.

La Piedra de la Creación, las estelas de Machaquilá (4 y 10) y el recinto cuadrilobulado de esta misma ciudad servirán de ejemplos para argumentar la hipótesis de que los mayas aplicaban el sistema diédrico de representación. Los ejemplos escogidos, pese a que según los soportes las figuras son proyectadas de diferentes formas, representan lo mismo; el personaje siempre aparece en alzado frontal, ya sea de pie sobre el cuadrilobulado o sentado frontalmente en su interior. En cambio, debemos imaginar el momento real en que el protagonista estaba erguido, detenido o danzando (Figura 6) realizando cualquier actividad ritual sobre el cuadrilobulado arquitectónico. La visión del espectador desde la plaza era la de un personaje de pie (en alzado), sobre una plataforma sin más, pues su visión del escenario era frontal y no se apreciaría la forma de cuadril de la cueva. Otra posibilidad es que el observador estuviese mirando desde un punto

<sup>5</sup> David Stuart y Stephen Houston (1994: 33) fueron los primeros en relacionar el espacio cuadrilobulado con las representaciones iconográficas situadas a los pies de los personajes en las estelas, señalándolo como un elemento topónimo del sitio.



**Figura 6.** Machaquilá, Estela 10, Gobernante danzando sobre el cuadrilobulado dibujado en planta, con Chaahk en su interior (dibujo de Ian Graham [1967], imagen cortesía del Middle American Research Institute de la Universidad de Tulane).

muy elevado y entonces si se vería el cuadrilobulado en planta y el personaje en alzado.

Llegado a este punto, creo que lo que yo vi en su día y que no supe describir con la terminología adecuada en la Piedra de la Creación, hoy se puede explicar con el método de representación geométrica conocido como sistema diédrico, que consigue convertir las tres dimensiones del espacio (alto, ancho y profundo) en las dos dimensiones que admite un plano. Esto se logra mediante el abatimiento de la figura a representar, en este caso un cuadrilobulado. Al abatirlo se puede obtener bien una planta, un alzado o un perfil. Este sistema reduce a dos dimensiones la proyección del objeto. Alfonso tenía razón al hablar de la disposición planimétrica en el arte maya, “dentro o delante de”, pues ciertamente es el plano el que invita a resolver la composición de la manera que lo hacen los mayas, con la combinación de dos proyecciones del sistema diédrico; una cueva diseñada en planta con una figura superpuesta en alzado frontal. Superponiendo estas dos proyecciones: planta y alzado, el artista maya obtenía el efecto deseado que, en mi opinión, no era otra que facilitar al espectador el entendimiento de la realidad. Romper con las normas geométricas y de perspectiva es una forma original de representar de manera más nítida y clara la escena para ser comprendida.

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# **Roles y temas iconográficos desempeñados por los ancianos mayas prehispánicos desde una perspectiva de género**

Rocío GARCÍA VALGAÑÓN  
(rociogv\_@hotmail.com)

**Resumen:** En esta publicación se abordan los roles desempeñados por los ancianos, así como los temas iconográficos en los que participan, prestando especial atención a aquellos protagonizados por las mujeres mayores. El objetivo es ver el papel jugado por éstas en su sociedad, así como la importancia que se les atribuía, a partir de su representación en el arte. De este modo, se observa que desempeñan roles comunes a los personajes humanos, pues la mayoría de las representaciones femeninas lo eran, a diferencia de lo que ocurría con los ancianos varones que, en el arte, generalmente son sobrenaturales. Además, las mujeres mayores suelen ejercer los mismos papeles que la mayoría de las más jóvenes; sin embargo, presentan también una serie de actividades propias de los varones que las diferencia de aquellas. Así pues, se llega a la conclusión de que estas mujeres son más valoradas cuanto más se parecen a aquellos.

**Abstract:** This text addresses the role of the elderly, as well as the iconographic themes in which they participate, paying special attention to the tasks carried out by old women. The objective is to determine the function played by these women in their society, along with their importance, based on how they are depicted in art. It can be observed that most female figures in Maya art represent human characters, while old men mostly represent supernatural entities. In addition, old women usually play the same part as younger women. However, they also carry out a series of male activities that distinguish them from the former. Thus, these women gained esteem to the degree that they resembled men.

“**S**i he visto más lejos es porque estoy sentado sobre los hombros de gigantes.” Alfonso solía recordarnos esta frase de Isaac Newton a sus alumnos, para poner de manifiesto cómo el avance en cualquier disciplina es posible gracias a los pasos dados por quienes nos precedieron. Y, ciertamente, Alfonso es un gigante entre gigantes, gracias al cual sus alumnos hemos podido avanzar. En mi caso particular, me dio el impulso que necesitaba para finalizar mi tesis doctoral, una tesis de la que parte este trabajo y que pretendo que sirva de testimonio de su apoyo e inspiración durante todos estos años.

Mi investigación inicial se enfocaba en la figura de las ancianas mayas prehispánicas en la iconografía. Pero, como me hizo ver el Dr. Lacadena, para entender mejor el rol social de estas mujeres, era

necesario contextualizar su situación en su comunidad, extendiendo así mi investigación a los varones ancianos, tanto a su condición física como cultural. Y es en esta última parte en la que me centro a continuación.

## **Roles desempeñados**

Para conocer el rol de los ancianos en la iconografía maya se analizaron sus imágenes —así como la de ciertos personajes de edad y sexo dudosos— en los recipientes cerámicos, las figurillas, la escultura monumental, la pintura mural y una serie de objetos misceláneos.

Al analizar obras de arte resulta evidente que la posición que adoptan los personajes en la escena, sobre todo el nivel que ocupan y la dirección hacia la que se orientan, aportan información sobre su rol y estatus. En la iconografía maya, la mayoría de los individuos suele mostrar una posición lateral y un tamaño similar, salvo cuando se quiere destacar a uno de ellos que entonces ocupa más espacio, representándosele a una mayor escala y con el cuerpo —y excepcionalmente el rostro— de frente. Otra manera de diferenciarles es situarles en una posición elevada con respecto al resto, por lo que el nivel que se ocupa en la escena es un indicador más de estatus. Como apunta Houston (1998: 341–343), en estas escenas las figuras protagonistas suelen mirar de derecha a izquierda; mientras que los individuos secundarios se sitúan detrás de éste o bien dirigen su mirada hacia el mismo, de izquierda a derecha; y, cuanto más alejados de éste, menor suele ser su estatus.

Los ancianos pueden desempeñar tres roles diferentes, según detenten un rol principal, secundario o de igualdad con respecto al resto de actores en escena. Cuando aparecen aislados, dado que acaparan toda la atención, desempeñan un rol similar al de figura principal. Por otra parte, cuando cabalgan sobre un animal, se considera que el primero es el personaje principal (Kerr 2008: no. 1991), mientras que cuando quien carga al anciano es otra persona —generalmente una mujer— y muestra un tamaño superior al de éste, el principal es quien carga. En el caso de figurillas, cabezas o animales cargados, no se consideran a la hora de asignar roles, salvo en el caso de que estos últimos tengan rasgos antropomorfos.

A la hora de evaluar los roles adoptados por los ancianos, se ha tenido en cuenta que pueden ejercer varios al mismo tiempo, en relación a su interlocutor y al personaje principal, de existir este; del mismo modo que pueden participar en varios temas iconográficos.

## Rol principal

Aunque no es imprescindible que un anciano presida una corte para identificarle como personaje principal, es habitual verles adoptando ese papel<sup>1</sup>, orientados de derecha a izquierda y en posición elevada o diferenciada del resto. Suelen sentarse sobre tronos, estructuras de piedra o cabezas monstruosas, apoyarse sobre cojines y quedar enmarcados en estructuras palaciegas.

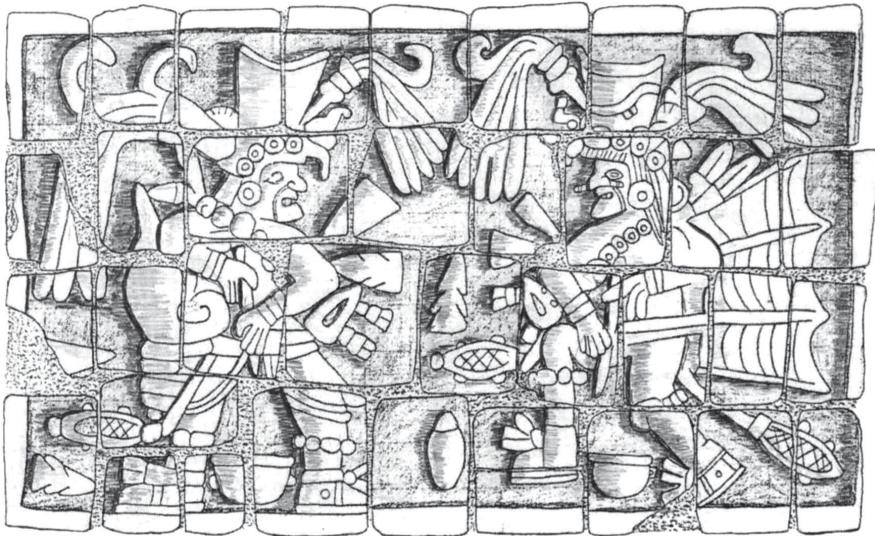
Lo que diferencia este rol principal de la representación aislada y del tema del gobernante, es que en el primer caso ha de interactuar con individuos con un rol secundario. Estos gobernantes suelen ser sobrenaturales, principalmente Itzamnaaj, seguido de los Dioses L y G; y en el 90% de los casos se encuentran a la derecha de la escena, como corresponde a su elevado estatus<sup>2</sup>.

En algunos vasos hechos a molde se observa a varios hombres sentados sobre tronos, ocupando el del medio un nivel superior, sobre una cabeza esquelética y/o monstruosa (Kerr 2008: no. 9105). Además, este individuo central muestra el pecho frontalmente, a diferencia de los individuos laterales, que pudieran ser *yajawoob* o gobernantes bajo el mandato de otro superior.

Por otra parte, en algunos vasos polícromos (Kerr 2008: no. 1386) dioses ancianos —generalmente el Dios D— interactúan con animales antropomorfizados o bien con otros individuos al mismo nivel. Sin embargo, la presencia de un cojín a sus espaldas indica un mayor estatus que el de su interlocutor (Kerr 2008: no. 4339).

<sup>1</sup> “De esta suerte, subiendo por grados al trono, se conseguía que los Reyes siempre fuesen proyectos en edad, cargados de méritos y muy experimentados así en lo político como en lo militar” (Fuentes y Guzmán 1882-83: 167).

<sup>2</sup> Según Houston (1998), en las cortes sobrenaturales —o al menos en aquellas del Infra-mundo— se subvertiría esta norma, pues los individuos más destacados se sitúan a la izquierda (Karl Taube, en Houston 1998). Sin embargo, en esta investigación no se ha observado dicha tendencia.



**Figura 1.** Chichén Itzá: Panel 9 de la Fachada norte y este inferior, de la Casa de los Falos (Nájera 2012: fig. 9; dibujos de Guillermo Couoh Cen y Peter J. Schmidt; Schmidt 2003: tomo 3, fig. 23).

## Rol igualitario

El segundo rol desempeñado por los ancianos es el igualitario, donde los personajes suelen aparecer frente a frente al mismo nivel, en un tamaño similar, generalmente de perfil y sin adoptar posturas de respeto. No se consideran en esta categoría las imágenes duplicadas en la misma postura y orientación, pero si las que muestran a individuos diferentes y/o con distinta orientación. Es el caso del vaso K2696 (Kerr 2008), donde dos versiones del Dios L se sientan frente a frente sobre sendas cabezas esqueléticas, lo que podría situar la escena en el Inframundo (Clancy et al. 1985; Grube 2001: 284).

También en recipientes hechos a molde los dioses L y K'awiil (Kerr 2008: no. 3801) participan en una escena similar. En otro vaso elaborado con la misma técnica (Kerr 2008: no. 1273) se encuentra una escena poco habitual, donde varios gobernantes humanos muestran el pecho frontalmente al mismo tiempo; lo que pudo deberse a que durante el Clásico Terminal, periodo del que data, las relaciones de poder no eran tan piramidales como anteriormente, sino que el gobierno descansaría en un consejo o *multepal*. A dicho periodo o posterior corresponden también representaciones monumentales

de ancianos en la misma postura en sitios de Tierras Bajas del Norte como Chichén Itzá (Figura 1).

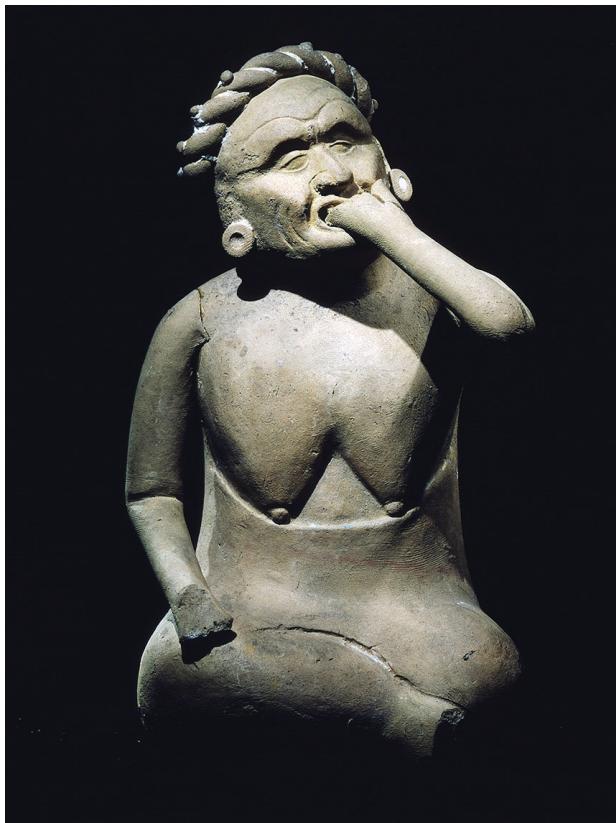
Volviendo a la representación en situación de igualdad de los dioses K y L, esta podría ser un reflejo del ciclo agrícola, en el que ambas deidades son complementarias (Martin 2006, 2010). Sin embargo, según Tokovinine y Beliaev (2013: 187) también son enemigos, pues el primero baja al Inframundo para sustraer su riqueza, los granos de cacao, en los que se basa el comercio.

Otro tipo de relación de igualdad se observa en los códices (Marhenke 2003–2012), entre las parejas sentadas sobre el suelo o en un petate, generalmente formadas por un anciano y una mujer joven. Sin embargo, en la página 42b del Códice de Dresde, así como en las páginas 75 y 76 del Códice de Madrid encontramos a parejas formadas por una mujer y un varón ancianos, aunque la ausencia de glifos nominales en este último caso dificulta su identificación. En otras escenas codiculares (p. 22 del Códice de París), así como en los vasos pintados, se encuentran grupos de individuos desarrollando una misma actividad, como tocar música o juntarse en torno a un brasero, por lo que suele identificárseles como Pauahtunes (Vail y Hernández 2018) o Dioses N (Kahn 1990: xxiii). En otras ocasiones interactúan con animales antropomorfizados (Kerr 2008: no. 1774), en escenas muy similares a aquellas en las que éstos se presentan subordinados ante el Dios D; aunque, en este caso, lo hacen al mismo nivel.

El rol mostrado por los ancianos puede resultar poco claro en algunos casos, como en el vaso K0578 (Kerr 2008), donde el Dios N es agarrado por la muñeca por un varón armado y con el pecho de frente, por lo que podría tener un rol igualitario o secundario con respecto al joven.

## Rol secundario

Este tercer rol lo suelen mostrar los ancianos en presencia de un gobernante o *ajaw*, en un nivel inferior al de este y una orientación de izquierda hacia derecha. Estos ancianos acostumbran a sostener algo en las manos —una ofrenda o tributo— o bien a colocarlas en posición de saludo y respeto. Estas posiciones, clasificadas por Miller (1981, 1983), consisten en cruzar los brazos sobre el pecho, con una mano sobre la muñeca, el brazo, el hombro o en la axila opuesta (Kerr



**Figura 2.** Figurilla tipo Jaina del Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia de México (fotografía de Jorge Pérez de Lara; Schele 1997: pl. 31).

2008: no. 1485), o bien sobre la cara (Kerr 2008: no. 7534) o la boca (Miller 1983). También contamos con la figurilla de una mujer mayor que introduce los dedos de la mano en su boca (Figura 2), lo que pudiera ser interpretado como un signo de respeto o saludo, pero que se asemeja más a los signos de temor mostrados por algunos cautivos. No obstante, la ausencia de contexto impide aseverarlo. Otras figurillas de ancianas aisladas de Tierras Bajas —así como de la costa Pacífica— se llevan la mano a la mejilla, no así los varones, por lo que pudiera tratarse de un gesto propio de las mujeres. Puede ocurrir que los individuos secundarios se dispongan en dos niveles frente al trono, alcanzando los del nivel superior una altura más elevada que la del gobernante; sin embargo, esto no les confiere un prestigio mayor que el del dirigente y, a diferencia de éste, se sientan

directamente sobre el suelo. Este gobernante puede ser humano o sobrenatural, soliendo coincidir la naturaleza del gobernante y de sus cortesanos.

En la escultura monumental lo más común es que tanto el individuo principal como el subordinado sean humanos y, generalmente, de edad dudosa. Suele representarse al subordinado en un nivel e incluso en un tamaño menor, y desempeñar éste un papel de servicio o de cautivo humillado. Los rasgos sobrenaturales o animales son más comunes en los recipientes, destacando los de mono y jaguar. Los rasgos de jaguar están presentes en el humillado Dios L (Kerr 2008: no. 1398), cuando le pide al conejo y a las deidades solar y lunar que le sean devueltas sus insignias (Dütting y Johnson 1993: 168–175). Otro anciano con rol secundario frente a una posible diosa lunar es Huk Si'p (Kerr 2008: no. 8685), Señor de los Venados. El marco que rodea a la diosa tiene forma de caracola, un elemento que Huk Si'p suele hacer sonar y del que puedeemerger, al igual que el Dios N, lo que podría indicar algún paralelismo con dicha deidad. Igualmente, el Señor de los Venados es representado con el mismo rol secundario frente a dirigentes humanos, como en K1979 (Kerr 2008).

En un mismo vaso (Kerr 2008: no. 5113) coexisten varios varones con tocado de red y colgante de concha sentados frente a una mujer dispuesta frontalmente, en el mismo nivel que esta o inferior, y menor estatus. Se trata de un caso excepcional, teniendo en cuenta el escaso porcentaje de mujeres representadas en la iconografía maya, y más aún tratándose de una posición principal en un soporte diferente a la parviescultura. Volviendo a los individuos con tocado de red, no todos han de ser identificados como Dios N o escribas, pues pudo ser un atuendo común a diversos funcionarios de la corte, de ahí que ocupen un lugar secundario frente al gobernante. Otro varón con rol secundario y rasgos del Dios N (como el colgante de concha) y edad incierta se encuentra en un vaso moldeado (Kerr 2008: no. 9261) en el que se presenta ante otro hombre joven y una deidad lunar detrás, sentados estos dos últimos sobre una cabeza monstruosa. A este respecto Taube (1989: 360) considera que el Dios N sería el contrapunto de los gobernantes, pues su gusto por el alcohol, los enemas y las mujeres sería contrario a la dignidad que se espera de aquellos.

## Representación aislada

En cuanto a los individuos representados solos, es un grupo numeroso, pues incluye la mayoría de imágenes de bulto redondo en escultura monumental, parviescultura y miscelánea —destacando las figurillas, portaincensarios, cabezas monumentales y mascarones—, así como las representaciones bidimensionales, cuando aparecen aisladas o repetidas.

Su representación aislada dificulta la interpretación del contexto; sin embargo, sirve para llamar la atención sobre los mismos, sea para venerar a deidades o para recalcar la humillación de cautivos, como el del escalón del Monumento 27 de Toniná. En cualquier caso, la frecuente representación de ancianos en esta categoría pone de manifiesto que, si bien su número fue reducido, desempeñaron un papel destacado.

## Temas con presencia de ancianos

Teniendo en cuenta estos roles, se han analizado los temas iconográficos en los que participan los ancianos (así como los personajes de edad y sexo dudosos). Se les encuentra en escenas presidiendo una corte, portando armas y tomando rehenes, pero también humillados como cautivos. A menudo surgen de caparazones de tortuga, caracolas, fauces, flores e, incluso, del pecho de aves acuáticas; exhiben telas de araña o alas de insecto sobre la espalda y cargan pesos sobre la misma. Puede verseles consumiendo tabaco, alcohol y enemas en escenas de música y danza, formando parejas con mujeres más jóvenes o siendo cargados por estas; pero también cargando a niños, adultos y animales. Participan en rituales, presenciando sacrificios o llevando a cabo sangrías, intercambiando ofrendas, sosteniendo recipientes y volcando el líquido contenido en estos. Tejen, escriben y tallan figuras, comercian, navegan y atienden a las abejas. Incluso, su cabeza sirve para sostener elementos y personificar a seres ancianos. Sin embargo, las mujeres están presentes en menos de la mitad de estos temas, que se exponen a continuación<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Para un estudio pormenorizado de todos los temas, puede consultarse la tesis doctoral de la que parte este texto (García Valgañón 2016).

## Gobierno

El primer tema a tratar es el de los gobernantes, la mayoría de los cuales fueron incluidos en la categoría de rol principal. Como se ha comentado anteriormente, mientras que éste implica la interacción con individuos con rol secundario, los gobernantes pueden estar solos. Por otra parte, los individuos con rol principal pueden protagonizar temas diferentes al de gobernante, como los moribundos sobre bancas o los cargados a lomos de animales.

El gobernante suele ocupar superficies elevadas, detrás del cual —así como delante— suelen disponerse individuos de estatus inferior. También puede sentarse directamente sobre el suelo, pero en ese caso se ubica en una estructura techada, con un cojín de respaldo y/o con el pecho de frente, mientras que el resto de personajes están de perfil y adoptando posturas de respeto.

Cuando estos dignatarios son humanos —generalmente en figurillas, vasos hechos con molde y escultura monumental— su aspecto acostumbra a ser más maduro que anciano. Pero lo más común es que éstos sean sobrenaturales, siendo abundantes en los recipientes pintados, especialmente los dioses L y D.

En cuanto a las figuras femeninas, en la página 42a del Códice de Dresde una anciana —posiblemente identificada en el texto como Chak Chel— sostiene en las manos lo que parece ser un recipiente o espejo, sobre el que aparece la cabeza del Dios C. Aparte de éste y la anciana, no hay nadie más en la escena, pero su ubicación sobre una estructura piramidal permite incluirla en la categoría de gobernante o similar. Lo mismo ocurre con la anciana del vaso K5451 (Kerr 2008) que sostiene a un niño en los brazos, al igual que otras mujeres en la escena. Sin embargo, el hecho de estar sentada sobre una banca de piedra y en un nivel superior al de aquellas le confiere mayor estatus que al resto, y la presencia de un varón erguido y armado frente a ella refuerza esta idea.

En otro vaso (Kerr 2008: no. 0559) una mujer de edad dudosa está sentada sobre una banca y sostiene un conejo en las manos, posiblemente recién nacido de la mujer que tiene enfrente, interpretada por Miller y Martin (2004: 97) como diosa lunar. Tanto la anciana dudosa de este vaso como la del anterior presentan una orientación de izquierda a derecha, a la inversa que la mayoría de los gober-



Figura 3. Monumento 148 de Toniná (dibujo de Julia Henderson; Houston et al. 2006: 208, fig. 6.4).

nantes, lo que es excepcional, al igual que lo es encontrar a mujeres en este papel destacado.

### Captor

Los ancianos, así como los personajes de edad dudosa, pueden ser vistos tanto como cautivos como captores, agarrando a sus rehenes por el cabello, el brazo o bien mediante sogas. Los captores más habituales son los Dioses D, G y N en el Códice de Madrid (pp. 85–86a, 88a y 89a) atrapando a individuos más jóvenes. Pero, dado que deidades de otras edades llevan a cabo la misma actividad, vemos que ésta no es exclusiva de la edad avanzada, como tampoco lo es de este tipo de soporte.

En un grafiti de Tikal se encuentra al Dios N (según Houston et al. 2006: 217) con una caracola en torno al torso y agarrando por el cabello a otro individuo. Por otra parte, en el Monumento 148 de Toniná una mujer en la misma postura agarra por el cabello a un individuo, al que parece que va a decapitar (Figura 3). Tal escena no es habitual en la iconografía de las mujeres mayas, por lo que se ha propuesto su identificación como el aspecto guerrero de Chak Chel (Ayala 2002). Sin embargo, dado que su edad es incierta, no se puede afirmar sin lugar a dudas que el de captora sea un tema propio de las ancianas, máxime cuando también se ha propuesto que pudiera tratarse de una violación (Houston et al. 2006: 208) o de una lucha gladiatoria.

## Armas

En relación con el tema anterior, puede verse a los ancianos armados —con escudo, lanza, hacha o navaja de obsidiana o pedernal— o con el cuerpo protegido por una coraza de aspecto almohadillado, posiblemente de algodón. Entre ellos están los Dioses L y N, así como individuos humanos, principalmente en figurillas de estilo Jaina (Kerr 2008: no. 2853) y en soportes de Tierras Bajas del Norte durante el Clásico Terminal y el Posclásico, como la columna oeste del Templo Norte de Chichén Itzá (Schele y Schele 2000: no. 5068).

En el Códice de Madrid se puede observar a individuos —generalmente el Dios D— con cuchillas o perforadores de obsidiana (Vail y Hernández 2018) y realizándose autosacrificios. Por otra parte, en las páginas 75a-76a se ve a la pareja formada por los Dioses D y O según Vail y Hernández (2018), quien interpreta que los triángulos sobre los glifos de tamal que sostienen serían navajas de piedra. También en el Vaso del Nacimiento (Kerr 2008: no. 5113) ancianos de ambos sexos sostendrían navajas de obsidiana y pedernal, aparentemente destinadas al ritual (Taube 1994: 667). Excepcionalmente, en una figurilla de estilo Jaina se representa a una anciana dotada de rasgos felinos, tales como las orejas, las fauces y aspecto fiero. Por este motivo, algunos autores la han identificado como Chak Chel (Schele 1997: 164; Halperin 2014: 136), como a la también armada mujer del ya mencionado Monumento 148 de Toniná, por el aspecto belicoso de ambas.

Salvo estas excepciones, se trata de un tema vinculado con varones, generalmente jóvenes; aunque, como se ha visto, también se asocia con algunos mayores. En el caso de figurillas como la del anciano armado como guerrero con un vientre prominente y una curiosa expresión en el rostro (Kerr 2008: no. 6086), pudo tratarse de un ejemplo del humor ritual del que habla Taube (1989); sin embargo, los demás ejemplos no parecen tener un carácter cómico.

## Sacrificio

Además de con la captura y la guerra, a los mayores se les puede vincular con el sacrificio, aunque es más común que ellos mismos se inflijan la penitencia, como se avanzaba en el apartado anterior. Landa (1973[1566]: 51) mencionaba a los viejos chaces, ayudantes del *nacon* o *nacom*, que sostenían las extremidades de las víctimas mientras eran sacrificadas; pero en las imágenes sólo se les muestra de pie junto a sacrificados con el pecho abierto sobre altares de piedra (Kerr 2008: ns. 0928 y 1377).

En cuanto a las escenas de autosacrificio, éstas suelen consistir en la perforación del pene y el paso por el orificio de cuerdas, así como la realización de cortes en lengua y orejas con navajas de obsidiana y espinas de manta raya, respectivamente (Códice de Madrid: 82b, 95a y 96b). En algunos casos, la sangre se derrama sobre semillas, por lo que el acto pudo tener finalidad fecundadora; posiblemente la misma que los sacrificios por extracción de corazón de los jóvenes anteriormente mencionados (Asensio 2014: 273). Los individuos que llevan a cabo estos rituales suelen ser deidades, como Itzamnaaj y el Dios N, pero también se encuentra a humanos de diversas edades, al menos en los códices. En cuanto a las mujeres, el único ejemplo corresponde a una de edad dudosa en la página 40c del Códice de Madrid, que pudiera estar horadándose la lengua con un perforador de hueso (Vail y Hernández 2018); pero se ha interpretado igualmente que estaría cosiendo sobre un bastidor o, bien, sosteniendo un cuenco frente a la boca (Rosemary A. Joyce, comunicación personal, 2013).

## Rituales de esparcimiento de incienso

Aparte de las escenas de sacrificio, los ancianos pueden relacionarse con el ritual mediante prácticas tales como esparcir y quemar semillas y granos de incienso o *pom*, así como sostener e intercambiar ofrendas, generalmente de comida. En la página 28c del Códice de Dresde puede verse al Dios D arrojando pequeños elementos circulares al suelo, quizá semillas o incienso, mientras que en la página 35a del Códice de Madrid, Vail y Hernández (2018) identifica al Dios N haciendo lo mismo<sup>4</sup>.

En el Vaso del Nacimiento (Kerr 2008: no. 5113), los tres ancianos ante un brasero son identificados por Taube (1994: 667) como dioses N, por el tocado que portan. Esta es una deidad asociada al incienso también en los códices, donde es común encontrar a mayores frente a braseros, sosteniendo en la mano o quemando en estos pellas de copal. Entre tanto varón hay una única anciana, identificada en el texto como Sak Ixik, haciendo esto mismo en la página 107b del Códice de Madrid. Esta escena podría tener relación con la afirmación de Landa 1973[1566]: 48) de que, en tiempos de necesidad “hasta las mujeres, muchachos y mozas entendían en esto de quemar incienso y suplicar a Dios les librarse del mal.”

## Ofrenda o tributo

Junto a los quemadores de incienso, en contextos rituales suelen encontrarse vasijas llenas de ofrendas —generalmente de comida—, como cacao, maíz, corazones, piernas de venado y panes de pavo e iguana. En los códices, ancianos de ambos sexos sostienen en la mano glifos *waj* ('tortilla, tamal'), como un augurio positivo de abundancia de alimentos. Sin embargo, en ocasiones no queda claro si son los que ofrecen o los que reciben el presente. Es el caso de una mujer mayor en el Códice de Madrid (p. 11a) con signos de comida sobre la mano, lo que parecen ser hojas de maíz a la espalda y cola de alacrán, por lo que pudiera tratarse de una deidad. Desafortunadamente, los glifos asociados no tienen fácil lectura.

<sup>4</sup> Aunque el palo cavador en este caso hace pensar que pueda tratarse de una escena de siembra. Donde no hay duda de que lo que se está realizando es una ofrenda es en el Altar 4 de El Cayo y en la Estela 15 de Nim Li Punit, donde los granos son arrojados directamente a un brasero por varones de edad incierta.



Figura 4. Figurilla de Jaina (fotografía de Jorge Pérez de Lara; Schele 1997: lámina 30).

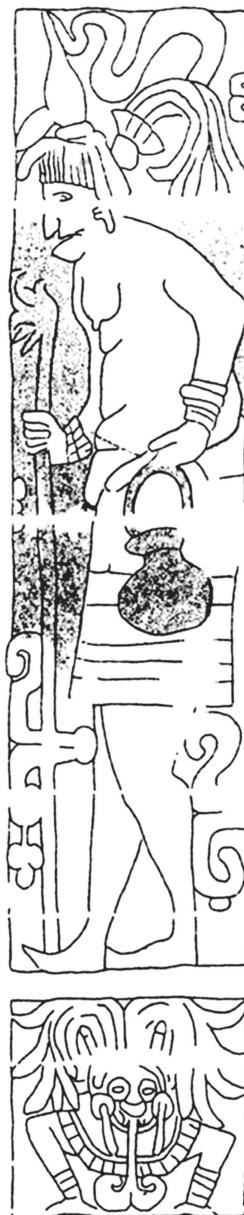
### Sostiene recipiente

Es común ver a los más mayores sosteniendo o presentando recipientes de diversas formas y tamaños e incierto contenido. Sus porteadores más habituales son individuos emergiendo de fauces serpentinas y caracolas y con tocado de red, así como mujeres; y, dado el reducido número de éstas en iconografía, sorprende encontrar a tantas ancianas desempeñando una misma actividad, especialmente en los recipientes pintados. Gran parte de ellas se concentra en el Vaso del Nacimiento (Kerr 2008: no. 5113) y Taube (1994: 675) relaciona la escena con el baño o aspersión y las ofrendas que se llevan a cabo cuando nace una criatura, a manera de retribución a las deidades de la muerte. Puede vérselas sentadas y con la vasija en la mano o el regazo, o bien de pie y con el recipiente delante o a su espalda, en actitud contemplativa o de servicio. Una curiosa escena de este tipo se encuentra en la página 9c del Códice de Dresde, donde

los Dioses A y D sostienen una pequeña vasija en las manos, vestidos con falda y mostrando pecho femenino. Esta feminización de las deidades pudiera deberse a la relación que se establece entre los recipientes y tareas como el abastecimiento de agua y la preparación de comidas y bebidas, asignadas a las mujeres (Landa 1973[1566]: 58; Benavides 1998: 41). Dentro de esta categoría entraría una figurilla del Museo Fuerte de San Miguel en Campeche (Figura 4), de una anciana con una pequeña vasija entre las manos. Sin embargo, la interpretación de la que carga una vasija por el asa en la Columna 16 del Templo de los Guerreros de Chichén Itzá parece ser más compleja (Figura 5), y pudiera reflejar la participación de ciertas mujeres en un sacrificio con paralelismos con los rituales celebrados en el centro de México.

### Vertido de líquido

Otro tema relacionado con los recipientes, y generalmente desempeñado por mujeres y en los Códices de Dresde y Madrid, es el vertido del líquido que contienen. En el Códice Dresde estas muestran el tocado de serpiente (p. 39b y 43b) y, ocasionalmente también, rasgos felinos y de deidad (pp. 67a y 74), mientras que en el de Madrid tienen un aspecto más humano (pp. 10b y 93c). A estas figuras femeninas suele identificárselas en el texto como Chak Chel; y, la única ocasión en la que no aparece su nombre (p. 93c del Códice de Madrid), en lugar de arrojar líquido sobre el suelo, lo hace sobre un individuo sentado. En este mismo códice, el Dios G sostiene un recipiente pequeño en la mano y el agua parece caer sobre su cabeza, y



**Figura 5.** Anciana del lado Este de la Columna 16 del Templo de los Guerreros de Chichén Itzá (Baudez 2004: 274, fig. 108b).

en idéntica pose puede encontrarse a los Dioses A, H y K, por lo que no es una tarea exclusiva de mujeres ni de ancianos.

Es habitual que el Dios B o Chaahk acompañe a las mujeres en este tipo de escenas, lo que resulta lógico dado el vínculo del mismo con la lluvia. Quizá por eso aparece en compañía de una mujer de edad dudosa vertiendo ambos agua de vasijas en la página 30a del Códice de Madrid. El líquido también puede emanar de su cuerpo, así como del de tres individuos representados frontalmente en las páginas 30b, 32b y 33b del mismo códice. Lo particular de estos personajes es que, además de tener los labios alargados del dios del viento y otros rasgos de dioses particulares, muestran aspectos femeninos como la falda, el pecho y/o el tocado de serpiente.

Otra deidad masculina a la que se relaciona con la lluvia (Thompson 1950: 114–115, en Taube 1992: 79; Taube 1992: 81), y que suele acompañar a las mujeres en este tipo de escenas, es el Dios L. Se le reconoce por su gran sombrero de ala ancha y puede representársele vertiendo agua de una vasija invertida, como en la página 74 del Códice de Dresde, donde acompaña a una Chak Chel de aspecto felino. Al Dios L se le relaciona con los jaguares, por lo que resulta llamativo que se encuentre a dos de estos animales antropomorfizados, con el atado de pelo sobre la frente característico de la deidad y arrojando líquido de una vasija en el vaso K1207 (Kerr 2008).

## Espejos

Dado que a los ancianos se les atribuyen capacidades oraculares, se les puede relacionar con los espejos, como portales a otro mundo. Pueden aparecer sobre el trono de Itzamnaaj o bajo éste cuando se entrevista con el Dios N (Kerr 2008: no. 0530) o con animales antropomorfizados (Kerr 2008: no. 7265). Este suele aparecer sentado sobre tronos, al igual que una anciana sobre una estructura piramidal en la página 42a del Códice de Dresde. Dicha mujer, identificada en el texto posiblemente como Chak Chel, sostiene en las manos un elemento de bordes curvados hacia fuera, que en Vail y Hernández (2018: Códice de Desde 42a-44a) y Houston et al. (2006: 68) se han interpretado como un espejo<sup>5</sup>. Sobre el mismo aparece el rostro del Dios C, símbolo de lo divino, por lo que puede tener alguna relación

<sup>5</sup> Puede verse un espejo de forma similar en K0559 (Kerr 2008).

con la función oracular que se atribuye a los espejos. Reforzando esta hipótesis está la identificación como Chak Chel —por parte de varios autores (Wagner 2001; Fields y Reents-Budet 2005: 159)— de una figura portaespejo de edad y sexo dudosos (Kerr 2008: no. 1955), donde el espejo podría tener una finalidad tanto estética como ritual (Taube 1996: 25; Uriarte 2004).

## Danza y música

Otro tipo de rituales implica danza, música y/o teatralización, y generalmente se identifican por la aparición de abanicos y sonajas (Taube 1989) y por las posturas de baile. Estos elementos acostumbran a aparecer en manos de ancianos, animales y seres grotescos, pero también en las de seres reales y, cuando se trata de figurillas, a la vez suelen ser instrumentos musicales (sonajas y silbatos).

Es frecuente ver a individuos soplando trompetas de concha. En la mayoría de los casos, se trata de Huk Si'p, el Señor de los Venados, y su función no parece ser la de hacer música. El resto de individuos asociados a este instrumento son de edad dudosa, pues no es seguro si el aspecto que ofrece su boca se debe a la falta de dientes o a la postura que ésta ha de adoptar para soplar (Kerr 2008: no. 6294).

En la página 21a del Códice de Madrid se puede ver al Dios D tocando un instrumento de percusión, mientras que en la página 34a del Códice de Dresde (Vail y Hernández 2018: 32a-39a) se identifica a los músicos como Pauahtunes en torno a la cabeza cercenada del Dios del Maíz. Junto a estos parece reconocerse a una anciana tocando otro instrumento, que sería la única conocida desempeñando tal actividad.

En cuanto a la danza, suele mostrarse a ancianos bailando con mujeres más jóvenes, que pudieron tener la finalidad catártica del humor ritual de Taube (1989), al mostrar parejas inusuales e incluso imposibles (por ejemplo, mujeres e insectos) para sancionar cuales eran las uniones y comportamientos considerados adecuados. Sin embargo, ni siquiera en esta clave de humor se representa a ancianas bailando con varones jóvenes.



Figura 6. Figurilla de pareja olmeca (Coe 1996: 319, fig. 240).

## Parejas

En algunos casos, no está claro si las parejas formadas por ancianos y mujeres jóvenes están danzando o si se trata de otro tipo de escena. Estas son comúnmente plasmadas en figurillas de la costa del Golfo y, dado que muchas de ellas fueron elaboradas usando los mismos moldes, tan solo se diferencian por pequeños detalles modelados a mano (adornos, tocados, etc.). En ocasiones, el varón puede ser de edad dudosa o mostrar incluso rasgos zoomorfos, teniendo un precedente en figurillas olmecas similares (Figura 6).

También en los recipientes puede encontrarse la escena del varón avanzando hacia la mujer, donde el primero es identificado como Dios anciano, Dios N o Señor de los Venados —Huk Si'p— (Kerr 2008: no. 1339), mientras que la segunda recibe los nombres de Snake Lady (Kerr 2008), Dragon Lady o Señora Dragón (Kerr 2008: no. 1382) (Robicsek y Hales 1981; García Barrios y Valencia 2011). En otro tipo de escenas, el Dios L ata o desata las muñecas de la joven (Kerr 2008: no. 0511), en lo que se ha interpretado como un enlace entre ambos.



Figura 7. Figurilla de anciana con niño olmeca (Coe 1996: 135, fig. 5).

Una escena similar, en la que un anciano —identificado como Dios B, D o N— y una joven se sientan en el suelo o sobre un petate es frecuente en los códices y ha sido interpretado por Vail y Stone (2002) como una alusión al acto sexual. Solo en una ocasión (p. 42b del Códice de Dresde) la mujer es representada como una anciana, y aparece frente a frente con el Dios B, sentados ambos sobre sendos glifos. Al igual que en otras escenas donde aparece en la misma compañía, es identificada en el texto con un bloque nominal similar al de Chak Chel.

### Carga a niño

Otro tipo de tema implica cargar a niños, donde generalmente las cargadoras son mujeres de todas las edades, y es muy común en la parviescultura tanto de Tierras Bajas como en Tierras Altas y la costa Pacífica. La mayoría de estas imágenes data del Clásico, aunque nuevamente tienen un precedente en las figurillas preclásicas olmecas (Figura 7). Acostumbran a sentarse con las piernas cruzadas



Figura 8. Figurilla de varón cargando niño a la espalda (fotografía de la Fundación Ruta Maya).

con niños de edades diversas sobre el regazo o a la espalda, y pueden presentar aspecto animal —generalmente de mono—. Taube y Taube (2009: 253) consideran que estas ‘abuelas mono’ pudieron ser una sátira de los roles sociales femeninos. En otro registro de difícil interpretación en el Vaso del Nacimiento, una anciana con rasgos felinos avanza hacia un individuo de pequeño tamaño también con rasgos de jaguar, que podría representar a un niño o a un anciano. Es difícil diferenciar a unos y otros pues ambos presentan rasgos físicos similares, como son la calvicie, las arrugas, la ausencia de dientes y una íntima relación con mujeres jóvenes. Además, en este caso, el hecho de emerger de fauces ha sido entendido como una metáfora del nacimiento.

Stone (1991: 199) hace una lectura diferente de este tipo de representaciones, al entender que lo que sostiene la figurilla de una anciana es el cuerpo de un niño sacrificado (National Museum of the American Indian, nº 23/6143), al igual que cuando los varones presentan ante sí a infantes yacentes. Por otra parte, también hay alguna figurilla masculina, en este caso de transición entre Tierras



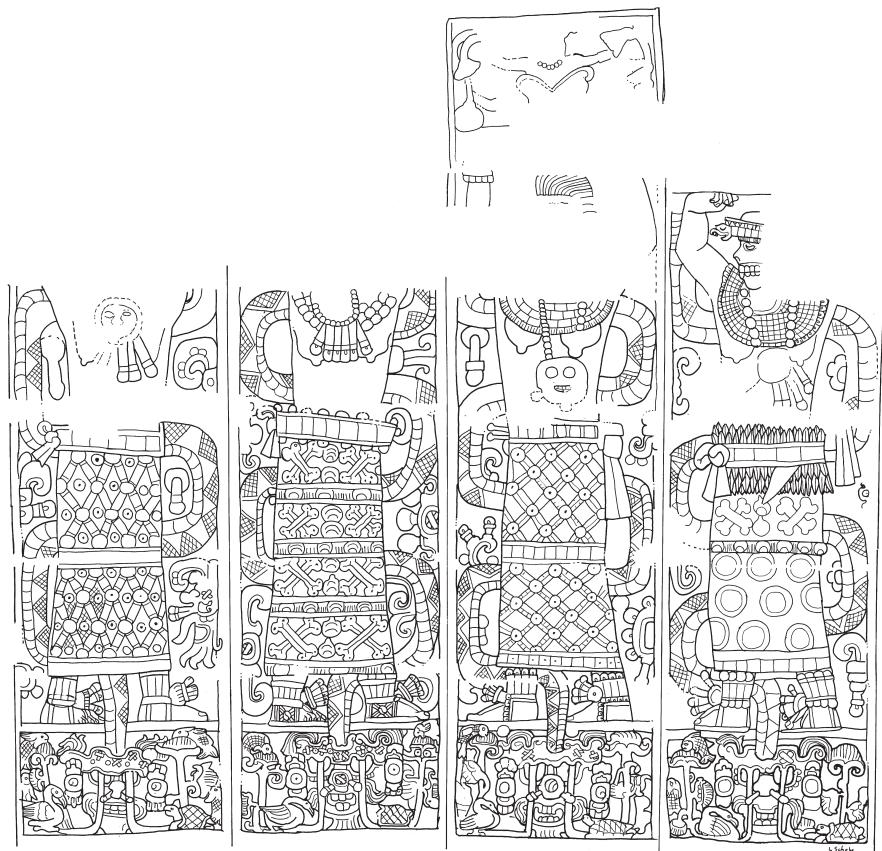
Figura 9. Figurilla de Lubaantun (Joyce 1933: lámina 4, fig. 2).

Altas y Tierras Bajas, que carga a un niño (Figura 8), pero no ante sí tumbado, sino cargado sobre la espalda. Por lo tanto, no es un tema exclusivo de las ancianas, ni siquiera de las mujeres; sin embargo, éstas protagonizan la mayoría de las escenas de este tipo.

### Carga a animal

Además de niños los ancianos suelen cargar animales y, dado que la cría doméstica era una tarea asignada a las mujeres, es común encontrarlas en pequeña escultura cargando perros y otros animales similares (Figura 9).

En el caso de los ancianos varones, lo que suelen cargar son aves para el sacrificio (Kerr 2008: no. 8569), venados en escenas de caza y conejos o roedores en registros de edad dudosa, como objetos de comercio. En esta categoría vuelve a aparecer la mujer —también de edad incierta— sosteniendo un conejo en el vaso K0559 (Kerr 2008); pero, como ya se dijo, en este caso, más que un objeto de sacrificio o comercio, parece tratarse del resultado del parto de la Diosa lunar. Así pues, los animales se asocian a individuos de diferentes edades



**Figura 10.** Columna interior norte del Templo Inferior de los Jaguares de Chichén Itzá (dibujo de Linda Schele [SD-5044], cortesía de Ancient Americas at LACMA [[ancientamericas.org](http://ancientamericas.org)]).

y a ambos sexos, así como a individuos de sexo y edad dudosos (p. 30b del Códice de Madrid), por lo que no fue una tarea exclusiva de ninguno de ellos.

### Sostiene peso

Otro elemento a sostener son pesos sobre la espalda, los hombros o los brazos, como es el caso del Dios N, que aparece en la escultura monumental con marcas de piedra sobre el cuerpo. Se le puede encontrar en las fachadas y bancas de Copán, en las columnas del Altar 1 de La Corona, así como sobre la entrada al Templo IV de Uxmal. También otros, como el Dios L (Tablero central del Templo del Sol de Palenque) e Itzamnaaj (p. 20b del Códice de Madrid) soportan el peso de tronos



Figura 11. Columna interior del Templo de las Grandes Mesas, Chichén Itzá (Joyce 2000: 107).

y estructuras sobre sus espaldas en monumentos y códices. La posición del primero resulta humillante para una deidad anciana hacia la que se espera un trato respetuoso; sin embargo, ambos muestran una fortaleza sorprendente en gente supuestamente debilitada por la edad.

Por lo tanto, quienes sostienen pesos sobre sus espaldas suelen ser varones ancianos, pero también los hay de aspecto maduro y, excepcionalmente, hay cuatro mujeres en los lados de la columna interior norte del Templo Inferior de los Jaguares de Chichén Itzá (Figura 10). Estas presentan el pecho caído de las ancianas; sin embargo, cuando se conserva, su rostro es esquelético y no muestran otros rasgos de vejez, por lo que se las considera de edad dudosa. En la columna interior del Templo de las Grandes Mesas de la misma ciudad se observa

a otra mujer de edad incierta con los brazos alzados como el resto de Pauahhtunes (Figura 11), por lo que no es una función exclusiva de los varones ancianos, aunque estos son mayoritarios.

## Árbol o planta

Además deemerger de flores, como en las figurillas de la costa del Golfo, algunos ancianos las sostienen en las manos, como en las pinturas murales de Xcaret (Con 2001: 488–489) y en la página 15c del Códice de Dresde, o bien están relacionados de algún modo con elementos vegetales. Por ejemplo, en la página 69a del Códice de Madrid aparece un árbol con puntos y barras, al que Vail (2002, en Vail y Hernández 2018) denomina ‘árbol de la creación’ y ‘árbol número’. Junto a éste se encuentra Itzamnaaj, una deidad relacionada con tales elementos vegetales, pues su cuerpo se transforma en planta de tabaco en el Códice de Dresde (p. 15a) y su cabeza sustenta o da lugar a otro árbol (p. 41b). También están ambos presentes en el Códice de Madrid, con un aspecto más realista (p. 24a), así como en un vaso pintado (Kerr 2008: no. 1607).

Por otra parte, diversas deidades codicales sostienen en las manos glifos *waj*, ‘tamal o tortilla’, sobre los que pueden aparecer lo que se ha interpretado como brotes vegetales (Vail y Hernández 2018: Códice de Madrid 10a-13a). En uno de estos casos, la sustentadora es una anciana (p. 72a del Códice de Madrid) identificada en el texto como Sak K’uh (posiblemente otra manera de referirse a Sak Ixik). En cualquier caso, se advierte una estrecha relación entre el mundo vegetal y los mayores, generalmente varones.

## Apicultura

Otros elementos con los que se relaciona a los ancianos son las abejas y las colmenas en el Códice de Madrid, así como las diversas fases de recolección de la miel y la cera (Vail 1994: 42). En este contexto se encuentra a Itzamnaaj y, posiblemente, al Dios N<sup>6</sup>, pero también a deidades jóvenes, como el Dios del Maíz, por lo que no es exclusivo

<sup>6</sup> Esto es congruente con el hecho de que Thompson (1934, 1970) identifique a los Bacabes como patrones de las abejas. Por otra parte, según Landa (1973[1566]: 96), en las fiestas de los señores de los colmenares en el mes *Tzec*, se hacían ofrendas a los cuatro Chaces, quienes estaban relacionados con los Bacabes y el Dios N.

de los mayores. Así mismo, también están presentes dos mujeres ancianas y una de edad dudosa desempeñando esta misma función.

En dos de estos casos hay dudas sobre el sexo y la edad de los personajes, por la ausencia de pecho en el primero (p. 108c del Códice de Madrid), y la boca de insecto en el segundo (p. 105a). Sin embargo, se cree que son mujeres por la falda larga de tejido enrejado y por la aparición del nombre Sak Ixik en uno de los casos. Las dos llevan en la cabeza lo que Seler (1902–1923, 4: 738) ha interpretado como antenas de abeja, lo cual podría indicar que se trata de deidades de dichos insectos. Vail y Stone (2002: 221–222) consideran que son la versión anciana de la diosa terrestre Ixik Kab', mientras que Bassie-Sweet (1991: 100, en Vail y Stone 2002: 209) relaciona a las diosas de las colmenas y la miel con Colel Cab<sup>7</sup>, la Señora de la Tierra mencionada en el *Chilam Balam de Chumayel*. Por su parte, Redfield y Villa Rojas (1934, en Love 2011) registraron el nombre de X-mulzen Cab como ‘Señora de las abejas’. Así pues, parece existir una relación entre las deidades femeninas, la tierra y dichos insectos, aunque el vínculo con estos últimos parece extensible a los varones.

## Tejido

Una última actividad, común entre las mujeres, es la del tejido. Mientras que en las figurillas éstas son jóvenes, en los códices son ancianas las que hilan o tejen, dependiendo del manuscrito y de la diosa implicada. Así, mientras que Sak Ixik se dedica a hilar en el Códice de Madrid (p. 102c), Chak Chel teje sobre el bastidor en el de Dresde (p. 2b) y en telar de cintura en el de Madrid (102d). Junto a esta última pueden aparecer los Dioses A y D desempeñando idéntica función, con aspecto masculino en el Códice de Dresde (p. 2b y 2c)<sup>8</sup> y femenino en el de Madrid (p. 79c) —como cuando en el de Dresde sostenían pequeñas vasijas en las manos—. Igualmente, estos pueden sostener un tejido con ambas manos junto al Dios B, tanto en el Códice de Madrid (p. 84b) como en vasos como el K1485 (Kerr 2008); una tarea ésta que, curiosamente, no parecen desempeñar las mujeres, a pesar de su relación con el tejido.

<sup>7</sup> Colel o Kolel Cab es un término empleado para referirse a la abeja nativa de Yucatán (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 333; Bricker et al. 1998: 119).

<sup>8</sup> También en esta página un Dios E de aspecto masculino teje sobre bastidor

## Comentarios

A lo largo de este texto se han abordado los roles y temas mostrados por ancianos e individuos de edad y sexo dudosos, y especialmente por las mujeres, en la iconografía maya.

De los cuatro roles tratados, la mayoría de los ancianos se muestra en igualdad con sus interlocutores, sin que se aprecien jerarquías claras. En un segundo lugar está su representación aislada; y, de lejos y con un porcentaje muy similar, en tercera y cuarta posición, aquellos que adoptan un rol secundario y principal, respectivamente. Pero, dado que, como se comentó anteriormente, cuando se presenta a un individuo solo, éste se convierte en el foco de atención, los ancianos ocuparon posiciones destacadas en la mayoría de los casos.

Teniendo en cuenta los tipos de soporte, se observa que en escultura monumental, parviescultura y miscelánea predomina la imagen aislada de los ancianos, mientras que en recipientes y códices el rol más numeroso es el igualitario, y en la pintura mural se impone el rol secundario por estrecho margen sobre el igualitario. No obstante, cuando se tienen también en cuenta los personajes de edad incierta, el rol igualitario se pone en cabeza en la pintura mural, mientras que en el resto de soportes se mantienen constantes las tendencias anteriores.

En cuanto a las imágenes femeninas, se aprecia un predominio del rol igualitario; mientras que en segundo y tercer lugar —y por estrecho margen— están el rol principal y la representación aislada, respectivamente; siendo, por lo tanto, minoritario el rol secundario. Estos porcentajes son muy similares a los generales, con la diferencia de que el rol principal asciende de la última posición a la segunda, otorgándoles a las ancianas mayor protagonismo en escena. Esto se debe, en gran parte, a su papel como cargadoras de niños. Y si se añaden las representaciones de ancianas dudosas, los resultados obtenidos son muy similares a los de la muestra general.

En la mayoría de los casos los personajes son sobrenaturales, y se les reconoce gracias a elementos tales como los ojos de deidad, frentes y cejas curvadas características y marcas corporales como las que identifican superficies brillantes. En cuanto a los registros humanos, suponen aproximadamente una tercera parte de la muestra total. Al analizarse la distribución de roles en la muestra humana, se observa

que los porcentajes son muy similares a los de la general. La única diferencia es que los individuos humanos son representados solos con mayor frecuencia que en la muestra general, mientras que el rol igualitario es, consecuentemente, algo inferior. También es muy similar la distribución de roles por soportes, lo que vendría a confirmar que tanto los humanos como las deidades desempeñan los mismos papeles.

Tres cuartas partes de las ancianas seguras y dudosas entran dentro de la categoría humana; siendo el porcentaje superior si se tiene en cuenta únicamente a las primeras. Así pues, son pocas las diosas ancianas frente a una mayoría masculina, lo que es indicativo de la naturaleza asignada a unas y otros; sin embargo, no hay que olvidar que el rol principal es más común entre las mujeres que entre los varones.

En cuanto a los temas, al analizar la muestra general durante la investigación doctoral se vio que, entre todos los representados, predominan aquellos en los que los ancianos entregan o reciben ofrendas o tributos, gobiernan, emergen de caracolas, caparazones y fauces, se emparejan con mujeres jóvenes y sostienen recipientes y armas, sea para infringir sacrificios o para combatir. Lo que más sorprende en individuos debilitados por la edad es su frecuente papel como sostenedores de grandes pesos, para lo que emplearían otro tipo de fortaleza, según Taube (1992: 146), procedente de sus conocimientos esotéricos. Así pues, los temas más destacados están relacionados con el ritual y con los diversos aspectos y funciones del Dios N, debido igualmente a la frecuente presencia de esta deidad en la Iconografía. Estos ancianos muestran una fuerte relación con la tierra y el ciclo vegetal, fuente de sustento de pueblos agricultores como los mayas; pero también por su vínculo con el Infra-mundo, como gobernantes de la corte subterránea y por su relación con el Sol nocturno. Después de todo están próximos a la muerte y, cuando sean difuntos, harán de la tierra su morada. Si se tienen en cuenta también los personajes de edad dudosa, siguen destacando los mismos temas, tan solo cambian de orden algunos.

Cuando se analizan los temas en función de los soportes, queda de manifiesto su desigual distribución. Los temas principales son más frecuentes, por este orden, en los recipientes, la escultura monumental y la parviescultura. Además, parece apreciarse cierta

especialización según soportes; así, en la escultura monumental abundan los ancianos sosteniendo pesos; en la parviescultura, las parejas formadas por ancianos y mujeres jóvenes; en los recipientes, los gobernantes; en los códices y la pintura mural, las ofrendas; y en los objetos misceláneos, los navegantes. Si se tiene en cuenta también a los personajes de edad dudosa nuevamente se observa el mismo patrón, lo que puede indicar que, a la hora de representar ancianos, tan importante como los rasgos físicos de vejez, son las tareas desempeñadas.

Al centrar la atención en los temas con presencia femenina llama la atención la gran cantidad de ancianas representadas solas y cuya actividad desempeñada se desconoce (más frecuentemente que entre los varones), que en muchos temas se encuentra un único ejemplo femenino —en ocasiones dudoso—, y que las categorías en las que las mujeres están presentes de manera más frecuente, son muy limitadas. De los 35 temas generales, las mujeres están presentes en 17; 13 si se considera únicamente a las ancianas seguras, y menos aún si se tienen en cuenta únicamente los temas con más de un ejemplo. Estas están presentes en algunos de los temas más comunes en la muestra general, como son sostener recipientes, ofrendas, armas y parejas y, curiosamente, el del gobierno. Otros temas femeninos no tan comunes entre los varones son los de vertido de líquidos, sostener adultos, niños y animales y el del tejido, más relacionados con la esfera doméstica. Además, están presentes en los temas de sostener plantas, la apicultura, la música y la danza, el incienso y los espejos, vinculados muchos de éstos con el ritual, mientras que están ausentes del resto. El mismo patrón se mantiene cuando se incluye a los personajes de edad y sexo dudosos e, incluso, a aquellos que combinan elementos femeninos y masculinos.

Ninguno de los temas analizados es exclusivo de los ancianos, pues se encuentran personajes jóvenes o maduros desempeñándolos, por lo que la iconografía no parece evidenciar cambios bruscos en las actividades debidas a la edad, sino sólo tendencias. Unas tendencias estas que son más marcadas cuando se tiene en cuenta el sexo de los personajes.

En cuanto a la naturaleza de los ancianos, al ser menos numerosos, los humanos están presentes en dos terceras partes de los temas, en algunos de los cuales están muy poco representados. Sin

embargo, cuando aparecen, la distribución por temas es similar a la de la muestra general. Tampoco se aprecian grandes diferencias entre los roles desempeñados por humanos y por figuras femeninas, pues la mayoría de estas son mortales, a diferencia de lo que ocurre con los varones. Todo esto pone de manifiesto cómo eran concebidas por parte de su sociedad, atribuyéndoseles una participación menor y menos variada que a los varones y menos imbuida del carácter sobrenatural de aquellos. La mayoría de las ancianas se dedica a tareas tradicionalmente femeninas, tales como sostener a niños y animales, al tejido, así como a sostener recipientes y hacer ofrendas. Sin embargo, también presentan una mayor vinculación con el gobierno de lo esperado y muy superior al que muestran las mujeres jóvenes. Así pues, si bien las mayores tienen una presencia muy limitada en todos los sentidos en comparación con los varones, éstas destacan cuando se comparan con el resto de mujeres, pues las primeras desempeñan algunas tareas consideradas tradicionalmente como masculinas. Quizá ello se deba a que, según envejecen, las personas van asumiendo rasgos físicos y tareas propios del otro sexo; y, en una sociedad tan patriarcal como la maya, es lógico pensar que, cuando más se parezcan a los varones, más valoradas serán las mujeres.

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# **Las vasijas matadas: Reflexiones sobre la concepción de los objetos y las connotaciones simbólicas de la práctica**

ALEJANDRA MARTÍNEZ DE VELASCO CORTINA  
(alejandramartinezdev@gmail.com)

**Resumen:** Los antiguos mayas tuvieron una compleja cosmovisión reflejada en su vida ceremonial y ritual. En ocasiones la descripción de algunos rituales fue registrada en textos jeroglíficos de algunos objetos del periodo Clásico. Sin embargo, otros no dejaron rastro escrito, pero pueden estudiarse mediante las evidencias materiales y su relación con los contextos arqueológicos donde fueron localizados, así como a través del simbolismo asociado tanto a los objetos como a los espacios. El presente artículo busca explicar aspectos importantes del ritual que consiste en la perforación intencional de ciertos platos, cajetes, cuencos, ollas, tinajas y vasos, que en el mundo académico se conocen como “vasijas matadas”.

**Abstract:** The ancient Maya had a complex worldview that was reflected in their ceremonial and ritual life. The descriptions of certain rituals were recorded in hieroglyphic texts on objects of the Classic period. However, others that are not attested in written form can be studied through the material evidence and the archaeological context, as well as the symbolism of space and object. The present article explains important aspects of ritual that consist in the intentional perforation of certain plates, bowls, pots, and jars, which are known as “killed vessels”.

Conocí a Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo en la VI Mesa Redonda de Palenque que se llevó a cabo en noviembre del 2008. Era mi primera experiencia en uno de estos eventos y estaba sumamente entusiasmada de asistir. Había leído el origen de las mismas y en más de una ocasión me imaginé siendo parte de ese grupo de intrépidos mayistas. Aunque habían cambiado totalmente el formato de las mesas y el número de participantes, me pareció muy emocionante estar ahí. Hacía poco tiempo que había ingresado a la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México y María Elena Vega fue mi guía para ir identificando a cada uno de los comensales. Entre los amigos estaba Alfonso, que con su energía brillaba con luz propia. Lo veías apasionado compartiendo sus reflexiones con los colegas, escuchando atento las de otros y abierto para considerar cualquier nueva idea. Fue en las comidas y cenas que conocí su alma joven, alegre y —sobre todo— ocurrente, pues le encantaba relatar historias de sus amigos de una manera quijotesca. Historias que escuché una y otra vez a través

de los años. Como aquel primer buceo de Erik Velásquez García, que Alfonso convirtió en una epopeya; o la de Albert Davlestshin, quien pasó una navidad con la familia Lacadena y los deleitó con una dulce melodía en ruso, que cuando tradujo de su lengua natal resultó ser una tragedia griega. Por supuesto, yo también fui protagonista de sus historias, pero alegremente acepté ser la víctima, a cambio de pasar un gran momento y muchas carcajadas.

Él también se volvió protagonista de las mías. Recuerdo cuando María Elena Vega y yo hicimos una reunión para proponer el proyecto del libro *Los mayas: voces de piedra* —título que le debemos a Alfonso— (Martínez de Velasco y Vega 2011), aprovechando la congregación de investigadores por el *Congreso Internacional de Mayistas* que se llevó a cabo en la Ciudad de México en el 2010. Alfonso estaba entre los invitados a participar. Hicimos una cena en la casa y Diego, mi marido, nos cocinó su famosa receta de *chiles en nogada*. Después de varias copas de vino y una buena cena logramos generar el interés de todos para concretar su realización. Desgraciadamente a Alfonso, por su carga académica, no le fue posible entregar su trabajo para la primera edición, pero unos años más tarde participó con un artículo titulado *Lengua y literatura mayas jeroglíficas*, que definitivamente enriqueció el contenido del libro (Lacadena 2015):

Expresiones cuidadas y altamente codificadas, figuras o recursos literarios constituyán la prueba de la existencia de toda una nueva tradición literaria desconocida hasta ese momento, una tradición a la altura de otras grandes tradiciones literarias de la humanidad como las del Próximo y Extremo Oriente antiguo o la grecolatina (Lacadena 2015: 113).

A través de los años admiré su lealtad con sus alumnos —entre los que me encontraba—, a los cuales nos acogía y cuidaba cual padre intelectual que era. Es así, como en más de un fin de taller, seminario o curso, en lugar de una mesa de ocho, acabamos en verdaderas verbenas celebrando. Siempre tuvo la capacidad de sacarle lo mejor a cada momento y, sobre todo, de hacerlo inolvidable para todos. No hubo cena, comida, clase, ponencia o reunión, que no estuviera llena de ese buen humor que lo caracterizaba.

Admiré siempre su generosidad con los amigos, misma que nos mostró a todos los mexicanos cada vez que llegamos a su España querida. Estoy segura que la pobre de Laura, su esposa, se vio arrastrada a más de una expedición que organizaba en los pueblos circun-

dantes de Madrid. Alfonso pisó suelo mexicano por última vez en octubre del 2018, pero su presencia aún está entre nosotros, quedó marcada en el recuerdo de sus historias, sus clases y conferencias impartidas, pero también, en las aportaciones que tuvo en las investigaciones de otros. Nunca dudó en compartir su conocimiento, yo en particular me vi beneficiada cuando aceptó ser mi sinodal de tesis de maestría sobre “las vasijas matadas” (Martínez de Velasco 2014), la cual no sólo revisó con escrutinio, sino me proporcionó información de un ritual similar llevado a cabo en el Paleoindio —periodo de la Prehistoria americana a la que dedicó su último año de estudio— y que, de acuerdo a sus palabras, me haría quedar muy bien y me ayudaría a ampliar mi visión sobre rituales de terminación<sup>1</sup>.

## **La fragmentación ritual de lítica en el Paleoindio americano ¿una práctica de desactivación ritual?**

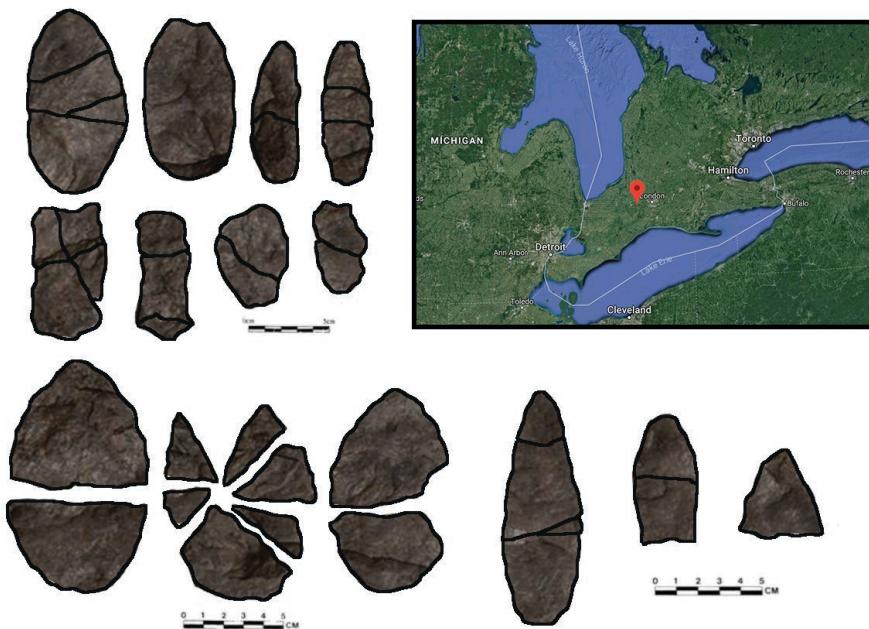
La referencia de la fragmentación ritual de lítica —principalmente puntas de pedernal—, hace aproximadamente 10 000 años, y la evidencia de que estos antiguos pobladores de América trasportaran los artefactos desde grandes distancias —hasta 200 km— para fragmentarlos en un área pequeña, que hoy corresponde al sitio arqueológico de Caradoc, Canadá (Deller y Ellis 2001), me llevó a cuestionarme el origen tanto geográfico como temporal de la práctica. Me pareció fascinante que se realizaran rituales de esta magnitud desde hace tanto tiempo (Figura 1).

Nunca antes había reflexionado sobre el pensamiento religioso de los paleoindios, y si bien el ritual descrito anteriormente es de naturaleza desconocida, existe la posibilidad de que pueda asociarse a la concepción de “desactivación ritual” —de la que hablaré más adelante—, a la que han sido sometidos artefactos de diversa índole dentro y fuera de Mesoamérica.

Alfonso además de permitirme viajar mentalmente hasta la zona arqueológica paleoindia de Caradoc, me sugirió que buscara explicar la intención de la práctica de “las vasijas matadas” con una perspectiva multifuncional. Lo anterior me estimuló a tener un panorama más amplio durante el análisis del material y de sus contextos arqueológicos. Es así como busqué evidencias que explicaran la naturaleza

<sup>1</sup> El comentario de Alfonso fue acertado, esa referencia fue percibida por mis sinodales como relevante.

## CARDOC, ONTARIO



**Figura 1.** Fragmentación ritual de lítica durante el periodo Paleoindio, localizada en el sitio arqueológico de Cardoc, Canadá (composición de Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo a partir de Deller y Ellis 2001: figs. 1–4; dibujo de Fernanda de Lascurain Martínez de Velasco).

numinosa, inmaterial y ligera que habita en los objetos creados por el ser humano, al igual que los vínculos temporales o perdurables que se generan entre los objetos materiales y las personas que los crearon o que los poseyeron.

### Los objetos como receptáculo de esencias

Existe una consistencia en las referencias tanto iconográficas como en los testimonios procedentes de crónicas coloniales y de grupos contemporáneos, para establecer que ciertos objetos importantes dentro de la vida ritual y cotidiana de los mayas son y fueron concebidos como materia pesada donde habitaban entidades anímicas, cuerpos ligeros o esencias (López Austin 2009: 10, 13; Martínez de Velasco 2014: 40; Velásquez García 2015: 177–195).

Las continuas alusiones a la vitalidad de lo que concebimos como inanimado, “los objetos”, forman parte de los testimonios de fray Bartolomé de Las Casas descritos en la *Apologética Historia Sumaria*

(1967), así como de las crónicas de la antigua historia quiché que sobreviven en el *Popol Vuh*. La existencia de historias paralelas dentro y fuera de Mesoamérica que contemplan la rebelión de los objetos y animales contra el hombre, puede ser indicativo que este pensamiento formara parte de un mito nativo-americano muy antiguo, y que si bien muestra claras diferencias también puede vincularse con el concepto mutuo de los objetos animados (Martínez de Velasco 2014: 40).

Los acontecimientos de los testimonios anteriores tienen lugar durante los diversos ordenamientos del cosmos. Los mesoamericanos y andinos los describen mediante diferentes mitos que comparten el relato de la primera creación como un acontecimiento protagonizado por los dioses, al cual le siguieron infructuosos intentos de crear al ser que los sustentaría y a su medio ambiente. En cada uno de estos relatos se revela un mundo catastrófico de transgresiones (Quilter 1990: 46, fig. 2a, 3–4; Recinos 1990: 5–6; Taube 2009: 33–36), el viejo orden da principio a uno nuevo, a un nuevo Sol, nuevos seres y nuevas relaciones (Allen 1998: 19). Es en los momentos de caos cuando los objetos participan como seres animados en la vida de sus creadores. Sin embargo, fuera de un orden lógico, “el de servir a sus amos”, como lo muestran los relatos del *Popol Vuh* cuando los instrumentos se vuelcan contra el hombre:

Llegaron entonces los animales pequeños, los animales grandes, y los palos y las piedras les golpearon las caras. Y se pusieron todos a hablar, sus tinajas, sus comales, sus platos, sus ollas, sus perros, sus piedras de moler, todos se levantaron y les golpearon las caras [...] Y a su vez sus comales, sus ollas les hablaron así — Dolor y sufrimiento nos causábais. Nuestra boca y nuestras caras estaban tiznadas, siempre estábamos puestos sobre el fuego y nos quemábais como si no sintiéramos dolor — [...] las piedras del hogar, que estaban amontonadas se arrojaron directamente desde el fuego contra sus cabezas causándoles dolor [...] (Recinos 1990: 14–16).

Es solo cuando se ha dado fin al último ordenamiento que el mundo toma el curso esperado y comienza la era del hombre actual, todo ocupa el lugar que le corresponde y los seres numinosos son limitados en cuanto a su lugar y tiempo de actuar. Para López Austin (2009: 10, 13) la diferencia entre el tiempo del mito y el mundano se da con el primer amanecer, evento a partir del cual los dioses son destinados a estar contenidos en cuerpos de materia pesada, un

cascarón que reduce su tiempo y espacio de expresión, pero también permite que se hagan perceptibles a los seres humanos.

Entre los grupos mayas actuales existe una consistencia en pensar que todos los objetos importantes para el hombre tienen *ch'ulel*, ‘alma’, ‘animal compañero’, ‘espíritu’, ‘pulso’, que procede del sustantivo *ch'uh*, ‘dios’ o ‘cosa santa’ (Vogt 1993: 38; Guiteras Holmes 1996: 249–250). Un ejemplo de este pensamiento lo encontramos entre los lacandones de Chiapas, quienes consideran a sus vasijas de ofrenda como seres vivos con todas sus partes anatómicas, que inclusive pueden ser femeninas o masculinas. Los llaman *läk k'uh*, ‘dios plato’ (Freidel et al. 1999: 211–212).

Un ejemplo de lo anterior lo podemos encontrar entre los mayas del Clásico. De acuerdo a Martha Cuevas, Guillermo Bernal y otros investigadores, los incensarios de Palenque fungían como encarnaciones terrenales de los númenes sagrados y el gobernante, al crearlos, se asumía como una entidad generadora o procreadora (Garza Camino et al. 2012: 136). Para Guillermo Bernal (comunicación personal, 2010) el texto jeroglífico del Tablero de la Cruz de esta ciudad, que indica que los veinte varones de GI eran los hijos del gobernante K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam, es una evidencia de lo anterior.

A través de las referencias pasadas no podemos discernir si para los mayas todos los objetos creados por el hombre fueron considerados como dotados de vida. En mi opinión, este concepto está ligado a aquellos que formaron parte de la vida cultural de estos grupos, muchos de ellos de uso ritual o ceremonial, pero también algunos de uso cotidiano, como lo muestran las vasijas matadas sin decoración alguna encontradas en los grupos residenciales periféricos de Tikal.

### **Activación o desactivación ritual de los objetos**

Los objetos materiales no fueron concebidos por los grupos mesoamericanos como entes vivos *per se*, sino como receptáculo de esencias anímicas. Entre los mayas del Clásico hay una ausencia de relatos de los procesos para transformar a un objeto material —una estela, escultura o vasija— en un objeto animado. Sin embargo, sabemos de la existencia de especialistas en temas numinosos y expertos rituales que se encargaban de estos procesos (Zender 2004). Un ejemplo de lo anterior podría ser el ritual llevado a cabo por el gobernante de

Palenque K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam y su sacerdote Nuk Yajaw Chan (el 21 de julio de 690) solamente un día después de la quema de los dioses incensarios (Garza Camino et al. 2012: 136–137).

Aunque alejado en el tiempo, contamos con un testimonio interesante que nos puede ayudar a imaginar cómo fueron algunas de las ceremonias de “activación ritual” entre los mayas del Clásico. Como parte de las crónicas de la época colonial, el obispo Fray Diego de Landa en su obra *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* describe la creación de los dioses:

Ivan con mucho temor, segun dezian, criando dioses [...], y sacavanlos de la casilla, y ponianlos en otra ramada para ello hecha en el patio, en la cual los bendezia el sacerdote con mucha solemnidad, y abundancia de devotas oraciones, aviendose primero el y los oficiales quitado el tizne de que, porque dezian que ayunaban en tanto que hacian [ídolos], estaban untados; y quemado el encienso bendicto, assi los ponían en una petaquilla embuelto en un paño, y los entregaban al dueño, y el con asaz devoción los recibia. Luego predicava el buen sacerdote la excellencia del officio de hazer dioses nuevos y del peligro que tenian los que hazian si acaso no guardavan abstinencias y ayunos [...] (Brasseur de Bourbourg 1864: 240, 242).

Para María Elena Vega y para mí, la efigie del dios K'awiil que sostiene con ambas manos K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam en el Tablero de la Cruz Foliada de Palenque, Chiapas, podría ser una referencia iconográfica de lo descrito por Landa. Bajo la imagen de K'awiil se aprecia un paño o tela que cae, probablemente utilizado para cubrir a la deidad antes del momento del ritual. Es probable que, al descubrirla, el dios K'awiil se viera identificado en su imagen y su esencia vital ocupara a la efigie sagrada que además acompañaría al gobernante durante toda su vida (Martínez de Velasco y Vega Villalobos 2018).

Otra referencia iconográfica que podría relacionarse con el relato de Landa, es la imagen esgrafiada sobre el cráneo de un pecarí, localizada en la Tumba 1 de Copán, Honduras (Figura 2). Sobre su superficie se muestra, dentro de una cueva, la imagen de dos personajes que flanquean una estela envuelta en algún tipo de textil que, de acuerdo a Andrea Stone y Mark Zender (2011: 81), tendría la función de resguardar el alma del objeto en un momento de debilidad por su reciente creación. A mi parecer, existe también la posibilidad de que la estela fuera descubierta después de ser transportada de su lugar de creación al sitio donde se llevaría a cabo la ceremonia de final de



**Figura 2.** Cráneo de pecarí procedente de la Tumba 1, Copán, Honduras. En la imagen se muestra una estela cubierta por un textil, posiblemente representando parte del ritual que antecede a su dedicación en 8.17.o.o.o (dibujo cortesía de Barbara Fash).



**Figura 3.** Estela Pillar, Tulum, Quintana Roo. Las dos perforaciones realizadas sobre la piedra de este monumento nos indican que fue sometida a lo que se ha llamado ritual de desactivación. Es interesante el observar como las horadaciones intencionales evitan a la figura central (fotografía cortesía del British Museum, no. registro AM1924.0510.1)

periodo y fecha de dedicación del monolito (8.17.0.0.0, en 376 d.C.), momento en el cual la esencia vital del objeto ingresaría al mismo.

Así como hay evidencias de rituales para introducir esencias a ciertos objetos, también hay referencias de objetos sometidos a rituales de “desactivación” que transformaron la función para la cual fueron creados. Un ejemplo de lo anterior lo encontramos en el lado sur de la Estela I de Quiriguá, que expresa que Waxaklaju'n Ub'aah K'awiil, “18 Conejo”, fue hecho prisionero e inmolado en el año 738. La derrota del gobernante copaneca trajo como consecuencia la captura y destrucción de las deidades patronas del sitio: “[las efigies] de madera fueron hechas prisioneras. El fuego fue taladrado [en las efigies de] Chan[te'] Ajaw [y] K'uy Saak, los dioses de Waxaklaju'n Ub'aah K'awiil’ (Martínez de Velasco y Vega 2018).

Un sin fin de esculturas y estelas han sido encontradas en contexto rotas o mutiladas intencionalmente. La cara fue el sitio predilecto para golpearlas cuando no fueron fragmentadas. Un ejemplo particular es la estela Pillar de Tulúm, Quintana Roo, que fue cuidadosamente perforada sin tocar la imagen del gobernante representado, es probable que la intención fuera solamente la de terminar la función de la estela pero preservar la presencia del dignatario (Figura 3). A mi parecer, la horadación intencional de vasijas es una expresión más de estos rituales de desactivación.

### **Contextos arqueológicos de las vasijas matadas**

La asociación sistemática de los restos materiales con su contexto arqueológico permite recabar información indispensable para establecer patrones que faciliten la comprensión de cualquier ritual. En el caso específico de “las vasijas matadas” o “desactivadas ritualmente”, los contextos arqueológicos donde fueron localizadas son variados: entierros, una plataforma residencial con áreas de cultivo, cuevas, cenotes y chultunes.

Aquellas extraídas de complejos funerarios muestran una clara relación con los restos del inhumado, sin embargo, las procedentes de cuevas y cenotes parecen estar asociadas con los espacios sagrados en los que fueron depositadas, más que con otros objetos materiales u osamentas.



**Figura 4.** Variedad de formas de las vasijas matadas: a) Cajete de procedencia desconocida colección del Museo Juan Antonio Valdés, b) Vaso de procedencia desconocida, colección del Museo Juan Antonio Valdés, c) Olla tipo efígie de procedencia desconocida, colección del Museo Juan Antonio Valdés, d) Cuenco de San Isidro (MNAH Cat. 5-3237/Inv.10-128069), e) Figurilla de Jaina, Campeche (MNAH Cat.5-3508/Inv.10-534690), f) Venenero (MNAH Cat.5-534/Inv.4-9627), g) Botellón con asas, Comitán, Chiapas (MNAH Cat.5-2646/Inv.10-357276), h) Plato con venado, procedencia desconocida (K5440, fotografía © Justin Kerr, colección de St. Louis Art Museum Cat. 215.1979) (ver Martínez de Velasco 2014: 294-334, Catálogo vasijas matadas no.102, no. 151, no. 152, no. 171, no. 65, no. 173, no. 165 y no. 95, respectivamente). Reproducción de los materiales del Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia autorizada por el Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

Es interesante destacar que la forma física de “las vasijas matadas” es variada: platos, cajetes, vasos, cuencos, ollas, botellones, vasijas tipo efígie, así como figurillas de molde<sup>2</sup> (Martínez de Velasco 2014: 292-334) (Figura 4). Otro aspecto relevante es la relación directa entre su formato y el espacio en el que fueron depositadas. Por ejemplo, una pequeña olla tipo efígie con vertedera que representa

<sup>2</sup> Esta afirmación proviene del análisis sistemático de 173 vasijas matadas procedentes de toda el área maya, resultado de la investigación de tesis de maestría.

al dios gordo proviene de un área residencial de Kaminaljuyú en la zona de cultivo, de acuerdo a Juan Antonio Valdés (comunicación personal, 2010). Por su parte, “las vasijas matadas” procedentes de cenotes, cuevas y chultunes, son ollas, botellones o tinajas de diversos tamaños. Aquellas extraídas de entierros se limitan a cajetes, platos y personajes en figurillas de molde (tradición específica de la isla de Jaina, Campeche). En cuanto a los vasos, no ha sido posible determinar su contexto arqueológico.

Tenemos suficientes evidencias para asegurar que la vida ritual y ceremonial de los antiguos mayas fue compleja. La descripción de algunos rituales fue registrada en textos jeroglíficos o recogida en crónicas coloniales, así como representada a través de imágenes en cerámica, pintura mural y escultura. Sin embargo, no existe ninguna referencia específica de la práctica de las “vasijas matadas” en este tipo de fuentes. Debido a lo anterior, el análisis de la relación entre “las vasijas matadas” y el contexto arqueológico donde fueron depositadas ha resultado de vital importancia para lograr una aproximación en la comprensión del simbolismo detrás de la práctica.

### **Las cuevas y cenotes**

El pensamiento mesoamericano se caracteriza por su específica y compleja concepción y ordenación del espacio, donde el paisaje natural forma parte integral de este mapa simbólico con que los pueblos antiguos concibieron el universo. Dentro del mismo, la cueva y el cenote juegan un papel importante, pues los antiguos pobladores de estas tierras los concebían como un pasaje entre el mundo visible de la superficie terrestre y las regiones del inframundo y el lugar donde habitaban y/o transitaban ancestros, dioses y seres numinosos, cuyas actividades, se pensaba, afectaban a todos los segmentos de la sociedad (Stone 1995; Prufer 2005: 215; Vogt y Stuart 2005: 155; Martínez de Velasco 2014: 56).

Los restos materiales depositados en estos espacios sagrados son evidencia de que desde tiempos remotos hasta nuestros días fueron el escenario de una gran variedad de rituales y ceremonias. De principal interés para este estudio se encuentran las referencias de Barbara MacLeod y Dennis E. Puleston (1978: 39–46), así como Keith M. Prufer (2005: 186–222) y Andrea Stone (1995: 18, 2005: 249–268)

sobre numerosas vasijas e incensarios efígie rotos intencionalmente en cuevas. De acuerdo a sus descripciones, muchas eran ollas que fueron encontradas en grietas, lugares húmedos y de difícil acceso, e inclusive algunas fueron colocadas de manera estratégica bajo estalactitas (ver Stone 1995: fig. 2.5) (Figura 5). Los mayas modernos de la comunidad chol de la Montaña de Tila, piensan que las estalactitas son los pechos de la diosa madre que alimenta a la tierra con el gotear del agua y las estalagmitas son penes erectos, que cuando se encuentran representan el acto sexual que para ellos es un poderoso símbolo de fertilidad (Vogt y Stuart 2005: 174–175). Es probable que estas creencias provengan de un pensamiento antiguo.

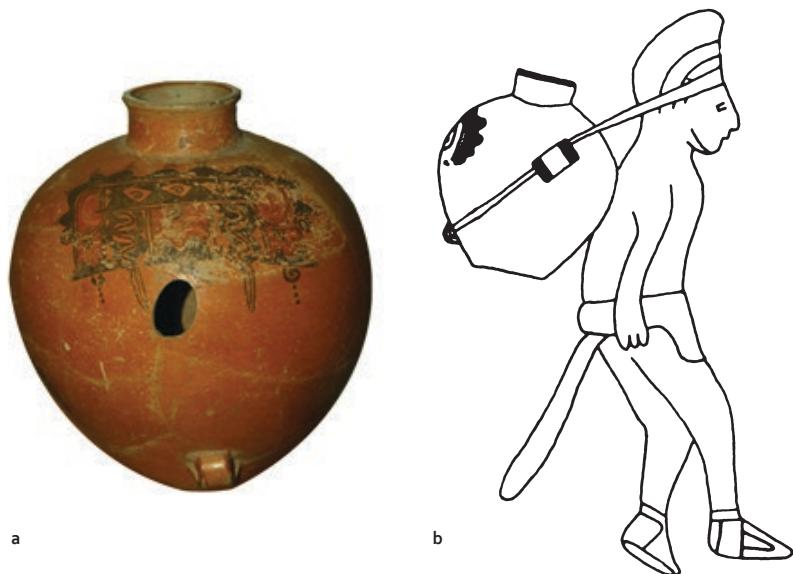
Una tinaja de triple asa, cuidadosamente perforada (Figura 6a), forma parte de la colección del Museo Regional de Antropología de Yucatán, Palacio Cantón. La decoración corresponde a las vasijas descritas y dibujadas por Wyllis E. Andrews como resultado de una expedición realizada en 1962 a la Gruta de Chac, Yucatán. Él propone que estas ollas de grandes dimensiones debieron haber sido cargadas sobre la espalda y, como sugiere su reconstrucción en un dibujo, sostenidas por la cabeza con un mecapal (Figura 6b). Lo anterior es probable ya que es común ver hombres y mujeres cargando ollas o bultos de esta forma hoy en día, por ejemplo, aquellos que portan los sacerdotes ch'ortí' con agua extraída de una fuente sagrada para rituales de la lluvia (García Barrios 2018: 103).

En el interior de la gruta Andrews encontró miles de jarras policromas rotas con decoración de elementos acuáticos (Andrews 1975: 12–16) —predominantemente ranas— que describe minuciosamente y sobre las que saca las siguientes conclusiones:

The fact that these elaborate polychrome jars, instead of coarse unslipped and unpainted vessels, were used under such likelihood of breakage indicates that the cave had sacred as well as utilitarian attributes in ancient times [...]The



**Figura 5.** Olla de alabastro, cueva cerca de Simojovel, Chiapas (MNAH. Cat. 5-3082/Inv.10-533277, Martínez de Velasco 2014: 329, Cat. no.154). Reproducción autorizada por el Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia



**Figura 6.** a) Tinaja “matada” con triple asa estribo, procedente de la Cueva de Chac, Yucatán, México (fotografía cortesía del Museo Regional de Yucatán, Palacio Cantón, Cat. MM1984-5:9/ Inv.10-290430; reproducción autorizada por el Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia). b) Las tinajas de estas características debieron haber sido cargadas con mepacal (dibujo de Wyllis E. Andrews 1975: fig. 3; cortesía del Middle American Research Institute, Universidad de Tulane).

almost complete absence of any artifacts other than water jars and gourds would argue strongly [that it was never inhabited] (Andrews 1975: 19).

Para Andrews la cueva tuvo un carácter utilitario y ritual. Sin embargo, el uso cotidiano ha sido descartado por Michael P. Smyth (2005: 10) quien encontró en los alrededores dos chultunes, una plataforma ceremonial y dos estelas que, según expresa, miran hacia la abertura de la gruta. Por otro lado, comenta que el tipo cerámico “Chac Polícromo” al que pertenece la “olla matada” no fue encontrado en excavaciones de los sitios cercanos, aunque si es común para la región Puuc. Lo anterior es una evidencia de que la gruta fue visitada por peregrinos y utilizada como un espacio sagrado para efectuar rituales relacionados con el dios de la lluvia. Andrews (1975: 11) plantea que las vasijas se fragmentaron al ser transportadas por el estrecho pasaje que tenían que recorrer los indígenas a gatas para obtener agua. Smyth (2005: 5–6) opina que sin duda pudo haber algunos accidentes durante el acarreo de agua al exterior de la cueva, pero que los miles de fragmentos cerámicos —uno con una

perforación intencional— localizados en el estanque y su entorno inmediato, no pudieron ser más que resultado de una actividad ritual. Desde mi punto de vista, las evidencias anteriores y el conocimiento que se tiene sobre el papel que jugaron las cuevas en la cosmovisión maya me lleva a la conclusión de que la olla procedente de la Gruta de Chac, a la que se le realizó una horadación intencional, fue sometida a un ritual cuya función está relacionada con la obtención de agua virgen para uso ceremonial. El que la “olla matada” fuera además fragmentada, me invita a pensar que la destrucción —ya sea total o parcial— de las vasijas localizadas en cuevas, corresponde a un mismo ritual que busca ofrecer el objeto o simplemente dar por terminada su función. A este respecto, en el área del Petexbatún, además de perforar la vasija era común cortarle los soportes.

Otro contexto en el que se han localizado “ollas matadas” son los cenotes. Estos espacios son característicos de la península de Yucatán y fueron un medio necesario de obtención de agua y, por ende, el principal factor para determinar la localización de algunos centros de población en las Tierras Bajas del Norte. Cuando las aguadas y cisternas se secaban, los mayas peninsulares obtenían el agua para beber de las cuevas y cenotes de la región. Los restos arqueológicos encontrados en los cenotes, tales como joyería, cerámica, huesos humanos, huesos animales y lítica, denotan la importancia de estos espacios en la vida ritual de los antiguos mayas (Pedroza Fuentes 2010: 51) pues, como establece Brady (1997: 603), los lugares más sagrados son aquellos que combinan los elementos fundamentales de tierra y agua.

En 1980 se creó el Departamento de Arqueología Subacuática del INAH, y desde entonces se han realizado trabajos sistemáticos que han aportado datos por demás interesantes y que corroboran el carácter sagrado de estos espacios naturales (Luna Erreguerena 2010: 25–26). Los cenotes registrados hasta la fecha con restos arqueológicos muestran una gran variabilidad en la distribución y características de los materiales. Por ejemplo, en el de Las Calaveras, el gran número de osamentas contrasta con la pobre muestra cerámica, o en el de *Kan Kab' Che'en*, se ha cuantificado el mayor número de vasijas, lo cual contrasta con el hallazgo de una sola osamenta humana sin cráneo (Pedroza Fuentes 2010: 51).

Los ejemplos de “ollas matadas” encontradas en estos cuerpos de agua son escasos. La primera fue localizada en el cenote cercano al Templo II en la zona arqueológica de Chichén Itzá y la segunda en el cenote del conjunto de Xcanyuyum de la misma ciudad. Carmen Rojas Sandoval (2007: 60), investigadora de la Subdirección de Arqueología Subacuática del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, indica que se han encontrado un importante número de vasijas en cenotes, cuyas características permiten plantear la hipótesis de que pudieron haber sido utilizadas para colectar agua virgen y para ser ofrendadas después de haber sido matadas (ver Rojas Sandoval 2007: 60; Pedroza Fuentes 2010: 51).

Como recapitulación, es importante recordar que las vasijas encontradas en chultunes, cuevas y cenotes, son: ollas, jarras, tinajas y botellones, formatos todos ellos utilizados comúnmente como recipientes para contener o transportar algún líquido<sup>3</sup>. Además, como vimos anteriormente, hay suficientes evidencias para asegurar que estos espacios donde fueron arrojadas o depositadas “las vasijas matadas” son considerados de alta sacralidad y fueron el escenario de una gran variedad de rituales y ceremonias, muchas de ellas relacionadas asimismo con la generación de lluvia y la obtención de agua (García Barrios 2018: 110).

## Complejos funerarios

Los reportes arqueológicos de las excavaciones de las ciudades de Tikal, Altar de Sacrificios, Uaxactún y Uxul, me proporcionaron, además de un *corpus* significativo de “vasijas matadas”, valiosa información para poder relacionar estos objetos con rituales funerarios. El resultado de un análisis sistemático de los entierros donde fueron depositados platos y cajetes sometidos a tan particular ritual, me permitió poder asociarlos con los restos óseos, así como con la ofrenda depositada (Martínez de Velasco 2014: 65–163).

Es a través de las evidencias de los contextos funerarios que he podido recabar una información rica y consistente que me ha permitido un mayor acercamiento a la comprensión sobre la intención del ritual. Claramente aquellos ejemplos donde se conjunta una rica

<sup>3</sup> Es con una olla que Yax B’alum vierte agua sobre la hendidura del caparazón abierto de donde emerge el dios del maíz.

iconografía, y/o datos históricos del personaje inhumado, y/o textos jeroglíficos, fueron los de mayor valor para generar las interpretaciones que se presentan más adelante.

En los contextos funerarios, se muestra un vínculo entre “la vasija matada” y el personaje inhumado, que se explica así: (1) con la presencia de un solo plato o cajete en el entierro, (2) con la colocación estratégica del mismo sobre, abajo o a unos centímetros de la cabeza del individuo, y (3) con la consistencia de ciertos temas pintados sobre su superficie.

¿Por qué perforar ritualmente una sola vasija dentro de la rica ofrenda de algunos entierros? A mi parecer, este hecho puede explicarse mediante la concepción que tenían los antiguos mayas de la vitalidad de los objetos y la relación que se establecía entre los mismos y las personas que lo poseyeron. Estas ideas han prevalecido entre los mayas actuales de los Altos de Chiapas donde la interacción más importante en el universo se da entre las almas innatas de las personas y las esencias vitales de aquellos objetos que fueron importantes para ellos (Vogt 1993: 38). Si tomamos en cuenta las ideas anteriores, la “Fórmula Dedicatoria” escrita en objetos personales en el periodo Clásico, que relaciona definitivamente al objeto con su poseedor, adquiere otra dimensión. Por otro lado, la peligrosidad de dejar objetos personales del fallecido se expresa entre los grupos tzotziles, quienes una vez que el ataúd está fuera de casa se efectúan en el cementerio acciones simbólicas como romper y quemar ropa y objetos asociados con el difunto (Vogt 1993: 45).

El texto jeroglífico de un “plato matado” que representa al dios del maíz emergiendo del caparazón de una tortuga (la tierra), indica que perteneció a Titomaj K’awiil (ver Figura 12), un gobernante de procedencia desconocida. Aunque este plato fue saqueado es probable que su origen fuera el complejo funerario donde descansó Titomaj K’awiil.

Otro ejemplo corresponde a la pieza cerámica sometida a “occisión ritual” que representa al “Monstruo K’an”<sup>4</sup> y que proviene de la Tumba I, de Uxul, Campeche. El texto jeroglífico señala que se trata del plato de Yootot Tihl, personaje cuya referencia solo aparece en

<sup>4</sup> Deidad que se ha vinculado con el dios del maíz, inclusive de su cabeza emergen hojas de este cereal. Se le ha llamado de esta manera porque uno de sus elementos distintivos es este jeroglífico K’an.

un plato de características similares pero de procedencia desconocida. Según Kai Delvendahl y Nikolai Grube (2013: 22–27) no hay suficientes evidencias para asegurar que los restos óseos de la Tumba I pertenezcan a este joven, sin embargo, el plato fue colocado boca abajo sobre el cráneo del individuo y la Fórmula Dedicatoria lo relaciona directamente con Yootot Tihl.

Me pregunto, ¿de no haber pertenecido a Yootot Tihl por qué colocar un plato sometido a un ritual tan específico sobre una parte del cuerpo cargada de tanto simbolismo? Diversos estudios muestran que para los mayas, la cabeza es considerada como el centro de conciencia que conlleva el nombre, la personalidad y la reputación de los individuos. Es en este centro anímico donde se coloca el máximo símbolo de poder político, o dónde se identifican elementos nominales, o colocan instrumentos vinculados con el oficio; todo lo anterior enfatizando la identidad personal del individuo (Houston et al. 2006: 61, 64; Velásquez García 2015: 179). Por otro lado, a los tzotziles actuales se les entierra generalmente con sus prendas de diario dobladas bajo el cráneo, además hay un periodo de tres días considerados peligrosos para los sobrevivientes, puesto que el difunto no acostumbra a estar lejos de sus seres queridos y desea su compañía (Guiteras Holmes 1996: 124, 126).

Considerando lo anterior, no parece una casualidad que dentro de la rica ofrenda funeraria del entierro de Jasaw Chan K'awiil, gobernante de Tikal (Harrison 2002: 142–144, fig. 85–86), fuera elegido un tintero de cerámica en forma de caracola (Culbert 1993: fig. 65a) —con el jeroglífico para *sib'ik*, ‘tizne, tinte, hollín’ (Montgomery 2002: 138)— y colocado a unos centímetros de la cabeza del dignatario<sup>5</sup>. La relación entre el tintero y el gobernante probablemente se deba a que durante su reinado se rompe el hiato que había sufrido Tikal durante casi 100 años. Es Jasaw Chan K'awiil quien regresa la escritura monumental a la ciudad, y seguramente esta fue una de las actividades que más prestigio le dio en vida (Martínez de Velasco Cortina 2014: 81, 303, cat. no. 47).

El colocar una sola “vasija matada” en el complejo funerario la distingue del resto de la ofrenda. El elegir la cabeza como referencia

<sup>5</sup> Estas conchas de caracol cortadas longitudinalmente fueron utilizadas por escribas como contenedores de pigmento, su uso puede corroborarse tanto arqueológicamente como a través de las imágenes de vasijas mayas.

para su disposición, la relaciona de una manera inminente con el inhumado. Y el someter a tan particular ritual a vasijas con temas tan específicos, habla de una intención simbólica precisa.

### **Iconografía de las vasijas matadas procedentes de complejos funerarios**

La persistencia en cánones estilísticos y temas representados en las “vasijas matadas” que provienen de entierros, es indicativo del simbolismo asociado al ritual. No parece ser una casualidad la ausencia de escenas complejas con varios participantes, como aquellas que se desempeñan en la corte, en el juego de pelota o en la caza. Ni la omisión de deidades como Chaahk, el Dios L, Dios N, la diosa lunar o el dios solar. Por el contrario, la iconografía de las “vasijas matadas” está constituida por personajes de la corte, dioses patronos de alguna actividad, entidades anímicas conocidas como *wahyis*<sup>6</sup> y escenas mitológicas asociadas con el renacimiento del dios del maíz o la representación individual de esta joven deidad.

Es significativo destacar que, salvo por las escenas mitológicas, las imágenes representadas son de carácter individual. Esto es de suma importancia ya que para Stephen Houston, David Stuart y Karl Taube (2006: 74, 78) las imágenes talladas, modeladas o pintadas son una transferencia del ser representado. Es decir, los mayas replicaron la imagen del retratado y con ella la esencia vital del mismo. Con lo anterior, al encontrarnos con la imagen de un dios o personaje estaríamos también frente a su esencia.

También es valioso señalar que, de manera general, el retratado fue colocado individualmente en el área central y que es sobre su imagen donde fue elaborada la horadación ritual en la vasija. Estas apreciaciones me llevan a pensar que una de las intenciones de someter a la vasija al ritual fue la de liberar la esencia vital contenida en la imagen, con la intención de se fusionara completamente con su igual. Entre los tzotziles al morir, el alma innata del fallecido va recogiendo los restos de su esencia en las uñas, pelo o carne que dejó en el camino durante su vida, posiblemente entre los mayas del periodo Clásico estas ideas también formaron parte de su cosmovisión (Vogt 1993: 45).

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<sup>6</sup> Seres numinosos que conforman el organismo del ser humano.



**Figura 7.** Estilización de la Serpiente de la Guerra con una parcela infija en su parte central (K5567, fotografía © Justin Kerr).

### La vasija matada como medio de identidad

Los artistas mayas tallaron o pintaron en los tocados de los personajes diversos instrumentos vinculados con sus oficios tales como la fibra enrollada en el huso, en el caso de las tejedoras; o los pinceles, códices o tinteros, en el de los escribas, debido a que semejantes implementos enfatizaban sus identidades personales (Christina T. Halperin en Velásquez García 2011: 244; Martínez de Velasco 2014: 260–261).

Las vasijas matadas colocadas sobre, abajo o a unos centímetros de la cabeza del difunto en el entierro, parecen corresponder a este patrón. Los retratos de personajes de la nobleza —probablemente gobernantes— o escribas, son la referencia más directa. Sin embargo, en mi opinión, algunas deidades patronas también fueron utilizadas para distinguir el oficio del inhumado. Por ejemplo, “la serpiente de la guerra” con actividades bélicas; Itzamnaah y el “mono-escriba”, con la escritura y su gremio; y de manera particular, el dios del maíz danzando con un yugo en la cintura, para los jugadores de pelota (Boot 2003: 19–21).

La serpiente de la guerra además de tener una asociación bélica, presenta elementos de fertilidad. En algunas representaciones en vasijas estilo códice, tanto en su forma más simple, como en su versión más completa, lleva infijo el jeroglífico K’AN. Hay ejemplos también donde el jeroglífico es sustituido por una parcela que descansa sobre el sílaba -na, complemento fonético de CHAN-na,



**Figura 8.** El dios del maíz como danzante con elementos del juego de pelota: a) Plato de la región de Tikal, procedencia desconocida (K5076, fotografía © Justin Kerr), b) Plato de procedencia desconocida (K5880, fotografía © Justin Kerr), c) Plato de procedencia desconocida (K9085, fotografía © Justin Kerr) (ver Martínez de Velasco Cortina 2014: 292, 293, Cat. no.11, no.12, no.16, respectivamente).

‘serpiente’, o de K’AN-na, ‘amarillo, precioso’ (Figura 7). Seguramente éste es un recurso del artista para establecer la relación de la deidad con temas de fertilidad y el maíz, ya que K’AN se ha asociado con este cereal (Martínez de Velasco 2014: 230).

Es interesante también el hecho de que el dios del maíz lleve la indumentaria del juego de pelota en algunas “vasijas matadas”. ¿Por qué no utilizar directamente el retrato del jugador? A mi parecer, esto es un recurso que tiene una doble intención, la primera vincular a la imagen con una actividad, y la segunda asociarla con la joven

deidad que, como veremos más adelante, fue altamente representada en las vasijas matadas (Figura 8).

### **La entidad anímica *ohlis***

Una de las deidades protagonistas de las “vasijas matadas” es el dios del maíz danzando que, adelantamos, en el contexto funerario está directamente asociada con su recorrido arquetípico después de la muerte. La analogía entre el ciclo de la vida del hombre y el ciclo del dios del maíz es un tema trabajado por un sin fin de autores desde hace varias décadas, pero me basaré en aquellos realizados por Erik Velásquez García (2015: 178, 182–183) y Alfredo López Austin (1984: 252–255) sobre la concepción de los dioses dentro del cuerpo, para explicar la continua alusión al dios del maíz en la cerámica sometida a horadación ritual.

Para ambos autores el hombre está conformado por diversas “entidades anímicas” o “dioses” concentrados en puntos específicos del cuerpo. El alma del dios creador es considerada la esencia vital que se deposita en el hombre al nacer, para Velásquez García el *ohlis*, ‘corazón’, ‘centro’ o ‘ánimo’ entre los mayas del Clásico, ‘alma-corazón’ entre los actuales y también la esencia del dios del maíz. Una evidencia de que esta “alma-corazón” es el dios del maíz la encuentra en el hecho de que, a partir del Clásico, el mismo logograma es utilizado para referirse a **WAAJ-ji**, ‘tamal’, así como **OL-la**, ‘corazón’ (Love 1989: 343–357; Stone y Zender 2011: 229). Por su parte, en los relatos del *Popol Vuh*, libro sagrado de los antiguos quiché, también se expresa que solamente de masa de maíz se formó la carne y sangre de los primeros hombres (Recinos 1990: 86–87). Las referencias anteriores son interesantes, ya que la esencia liberada de las vasijas en cuestión es el alma innata de todos los seres humanos, posiblemente su función en el complejo funerario sea la de señalar el camino que debe seguir después de la muerte.

### **La entidad anímica *wahyis***

Las imágenes de seres fantásticos con elementos antropomorfos y zoomorfos fueron asociadas con el logograma **WAY** por Nikolai Grube y Werner Nahm (1994: 686–715). Por su parte, Houston y Stuart (1989: 1, 14) describen a estos seres como: “un animal o fenó-

meno celeste que comparte la conciencia de la persona que la posee". Después de un análisis de estos seres sobrenaturales y sus contextos, Stuart expresa que se trata de una práctica poco entendida de naturaleza siniestra y oscura, pero importante dentro de la ideología de los reinados del Clásico. También las entiende como manifestaciones animadas de fuerzas oscuras ejercidas por brujos de los antiguos mayas, en un intento de perjudicar a otras personas en forma de enfermedades, dolencias en el cuerpo u otro tipo de desgracias, pero siempre con la finalidad de hacer daño (Stuart 2005: 160–161; *vid.* Martínez de Velasco 2014: 193–214).

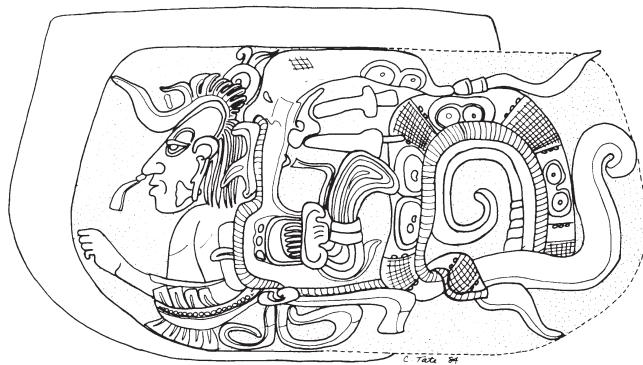
Es Velásquez García (2011: 244, 251; 2015: 187–195), apoyándose en diversas investigaciones, pero principalmente López Austin (1984) en los trabajos sobre *El cuerpo humano e ideología*, quien plantea que se trata de "entidades anímicas" que en la cosmovisión maya clásica son concebidas como partes del cuerpo sobre las que se tiene control. Después de un estudio minucioso, las conclusiones a las que llega el investigador con respecto a los *wahyis* son las siguientes: se pueden equiparar con ciertas reservas a conceptos del "naguallismo" pero no del "tonalismo", forman parte del organismo del ser humano, corresponden a un fenómeno cultural asociado con la élite que ejercía el poder, poseen una conciencia independiente que no siempre coincide con la de su poseedor humano, se proyectan fuera del cuerpo durante el sueño con la finalidad de hacer el mal o proteger, deben de mantenerse en anonimato ocultando su nombre personal o utilizando uno falso para protegerse del daño o brujería que pudieran sufrir de parte de sus enemigos. Los dioses además de los gobernantes tienen la capacidad de tener una o más de estas sustancias, como lo muestra el texto jeroglífico del Dintel 15 de Yaxchilán (Figura 9a), que especifica que la "Primera Serpiente" es el *wahyis* de K'awill (Martínez de Velasco 2014: 180).

La representación de estas entidades anímicas en las vasijas matadas se limita a jaguares antropomorfos, al dios de la muerte, el mono antropomorfo, seres descarnados, aves con cabezas cava-véricas, aves de rapiña con cola de pez y otros seres indescriptibles dentro del mundo terrenal (Martínez de Velasco 2014: 309–314).

En mi opinión, la presencia de estas entidades anímicas en las vasijas matadas puede explicarse desde dos ángulos: los *wahyob'* de dioses y aquellos de seres humanos. Los primeros participan en

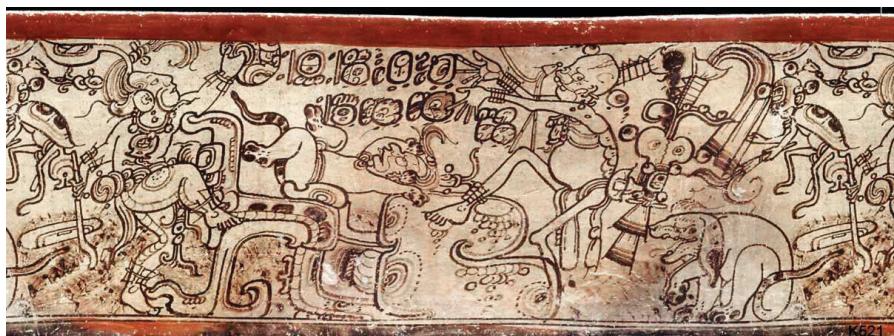


a



b

**Figura 9.** La Primera Serpiente o Serpiente de las Visiones es el *wahyis* del dios K'awiil de acuerdo al texto jeroglífico: a) Dintel 15 de Yaxchilán (fotografía cortesía del British Museum), b) vasija estilo Chocholá con dios del maíz emergiendo de las fauces de la Primera Serpiente (dibujo cortesía de Carolyn Tate; Tate 1985: fig. 7).



a



b

**Figura 10.** En la primera escena mitológica el Dios A participa lanzando al Bebé Jaguar, mientras que en la segunda éste es sustituido por el jaguar del lirio acuático: a) K521, b) K1152 (fotografías © Justin Kerr).

escenas mitológicas y parecen asistir a otros dioses en diversas actividades, además hay evidencias de que hubo dioses que pudieron tener una o más de estas entidades anímicas. Por ejemplo, la “Primera Serpiente”, que sabemos es el *wahyis* de K’awill, aparece en la imagen de una vasija estilo Chocholá con el dios del maíz emergiendo de sus fauces (Figura 9b), el ofidio funciona como umbral para el tránsito de la joven deidad por diversos niveles del cosmos. Otro ejemplo es el Dios A, que participa en una escena mitológica lanzando al Bebé Jaguar mientras que Chaahk abre la tierra con su hacha (Figura 10). Posiblemente el Dios A sea la entidad anímica de la deidad de la lluvia.

Los segundos, son aquellos que forman parte del cuerpo de los seres humanos. Grube y Nahm (1994) han clasificado más de diez variantes de felinos con sitios o personajes diversos. Por ejemplo, *K’ahk’ Hix*, ‘jaguar de fuego’, lo asociaron con el topónimo de *K’an*

Witz, ‘montaña amarilla’, que para ellos posiblemente se trata del sitio de Ucanal, departamento de Petén, Guatemala.

Como conclusión, aquellas entidades que pertenecieron a los dioses tuvieron la función de asistirlos, mientras que las entidades que forman parte del cuerpo humano, al ser consideradas una extensión del ser figurado, deben de ser liberadas, no solo para evitar los peligros que genera su presencia en el mundo de los vivos, sino también para que se unifiquen con la esencia del ser que conforman y así no quede influencia negativa en el mundo terrenal.

## Escenas mitológicas

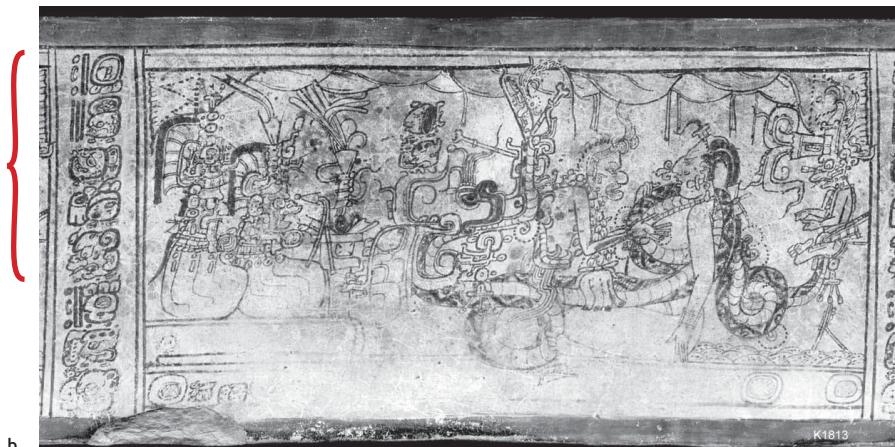
En las imágenes de algunas “vasijas matadas” localizadas en entierros, se reproducen escenas mitológicas que, a mi parecer, forman parte de una misma trama y cuyo desenlace final es el renacimiento del dios del maíz.

La primera escena representa al **Dios Viejo que emerge de la pierna serpentina del dios K’awiil**, el mismo que acosa a la Señora Dragón (García Barrios 2010: 73–74) (Figura 11a). Aunque no es claro el simbolismo detrás de estas imágenes, el texto jeroglífico del plato matado K3702 habla del nacimiento de Chaahk (...muluk wakaklaju’n [\*huklaju’n] ihk’sijo’m sihyaj Ha’...[Chaahk], ‘[En el día] ... muluk, 18 [\*17] ch’e’en, Ha’ ... Chaahk nació’). Este texto está incompleto pero puede ser reconstruido a través del vaso K1813 (Figura 11b) que representa la misma escena. El texto jeroglífico indica que nace Chaahk como la primera lluvia (*yax ha’al Chaahk*, “Chaahk es la primera lluvia”). Su nacimiento es para García Barrios (2018: 119, 123) el resultado de la relación incestuosa del Dios Viejo con su hija, conocida como la Señora Dragón.

La segunda escena mitológica corresponde al **sacrificio del Bebé Jaguar**. Como parte de la trama participan: el dios de la lluvia en su advocación de *Yahx Ha’al Chaahk*, ‘Chaahk es la Primera Lluvia’, el monstruo Witz, el bebé jaguar, el Dios A y un ser numinoso con cuerpo cadavérico (ver Figura 10a). García Barrios (2010: 71, 73; 2011: 186) opina que el papel de Chaahk en estas escenas es el de abrir la tierra con su hacha para que el infante penetre por ella. De la misma manera relaciona esta escena con la apertura del cerro *Pa’xit*, sitio mitológico donde se localiza y extrae este grano de acuerdo a los



a



b

**Figura 11.** El Dios Viejo emerge de la pierna serpentina de K'awiil y acosa a la Señora Dragón. Como consecuencia de este acto incestuoso, de acuerdo a los textos jeroglíficos, nace Chaahk como la primera lluvia: a) Plato matado estilo códice, procedencia desconocida (K3702, fotografía © Justin Kerr), b) Vaso estilo códice, procedencia desconocida (K1813, fotografía © Justin Kerr) (ver Martínez de Velasco Cortina 2014: 292, Cat. no. 4).

relatos del *Popol Vuh*. Por su parte, Simon Martin (2002: 53) considera que el acontecimiento plasmado en estas vasijas está conectado con el concepto de *k'ex* que proviene de fuentes etnográficas y que se define como un sustituto ofrendado al inframundo como intercambio por una nueva vida o recuperación de una enfermedad:

Es casi como si la muerte del bebé jaguar es el sacrificio que se requiere para que el dios del maíz renazca [...] ¿Qué evento podría ser precursor al nacimiento del maíz que el terminar con la temporada de secas y su sol ardiente para dar lugar al comienzo de las primeras lluvias (Martin 2002: 57).

De acuerdo con García Barrios lo anterior permite sugerir que las escenas del ritual del Bebé Jaguar encuentran su contraparte en los sacrificios infantiles mencionados por diferentes cronistas en el centro de México, en donde los niños eran sacrificados en cuevas para los dioses de la lluvia (García Barrios 2008: 254, 265). Ceremonias que además se han constatado en toda Mesoamérica mediante restos arqueológicos.

La tercera y última escena mitológica es la del **dios del maíz que emerge del caparazón de una tortuga**. En la iconografía del plato matado K1892 se representan a los hermanos gemelos Ju'n Ajaw y Yahx B'alun que flanquean al dios del maíz asistiéndolo (Figura 12). Zender (2005: 10) opina que Ju'n Ajaw vierte semillas a la tierra previamente abierta por los dioses del rayo, trueno y lluvia, mientras que Yahx B'alun claramente vierte agua de una olla sobre su padre. Este evento para él se lleva a cabo en una isla flotante basándose en los motivos de agua y lirio acuático colocados en la parte inferior del caparazón de la tortuga. Karl Taube (2009: 67) plantea que la aparición de los gemelos en esta escena no es casualidad, que la travesía al inframundo por parte de los jóvenes se da para rescatar a su padre, relato que también significa la búsqueda del maíz. Por su parte, Zender (2005: 9–10) indica que el término “caparazón” tiene entradas en el diccionario para “cerco” o “prisión”, con lo cual el caparazón de tortuga simboliza la tierra quebrantada que deja la época de secas y en la cual queda apresado al dios del maíz hasta ser liberado por Chaahk con su hacha de rayo y la lluvia que reblanquece la tierra.

La presencia de estos tres eventos mitológicos en el contexto funerario recuerda a la analogía que existe, para los mayas, entre los ciclos agrícolas y el ciclo de la vida. De la misma manera busca establecer la participación de los dioses en el renacimiento del dios del maíz u o'hlis, “alma innata de todos los seres humanos”.



**Figura 12.** El dios se muestra atrapado en la hendidura del caparazón de la tortuga, escena previa a su renacimiento. Plato matado estilo códice perteneciente a Titomaj K'awiil, un gobernante de origen desconocido (K1892, fotografía © Justin Kerr; Museum Of Fine Arts, Boston no. 1993.565) (ver Martínez de Velasco Cortina 2014: 292, Cat. no. 1).

## Recapitulación

La concepción que los antiguos mayas tenían de los objetos como contenedores de sustancias ligeras así como el pensamiento de que el retrato es una extensión del ser figurado, son principios indispensables para explicar la intención de la práctica de las vasijas matadas. En mi opinión, los objetos pueden funcionar como una analogía de esa “materia pesada” o “cascarón” a la que se refiere López Austin (2009: 10, 13) para los dioses, donde a través de ciertos rituales son insertadas sustancias ligeras, entidades animáticas o esencias en el mismo. Como consecuencia de estos actos se transforma el simbolismo del objeto y se establece una nueva relación entre el mismo y

el hombre, vínculo que es positivo durante la vida del poseedor, pero con su muerte se vuelve una presencia peligrosa para los vivos.

Así como los dioses tienen sus momentos de actuar y mueren, las entidades encapsuladas en el retrato de dioses u hombres deben de ser liberadas para fusionarse con la esencia del ser que falleció. Pienso que las vasijas donde participan varios actores no son consideradas como una alusión al mito, sino la actuación de los dioses en ese momento liminar.

La permanencia de las sustancias ligeras en los objetos depende de la voluntad del hombre, aunque no a su libre albedrío, ya que la vida ritual está estrechamente ligada al simbolismo detrás del acto y es altamente institucionalizada. La destrucción parcial o total de los objetos cargados de vida es necesaria para liberar esos seres numinosos de su encapsulamiento. La horadación intencional de vasos, cajetes, ollas, tinajas, conocidos en el mundo académico como “vasijas matadas”, es solo una expresión de la práctica.

Como bien comentó Alfonso, la práctica del ritual de “las vasijas matadas” no puede explicarse desde una sola perspectiva. Y así, en estas páginas, he hablado de la concepción que tenían los antiguos mayas sobre esencias que habitaban en los objetos, de la idea sobre el retrato como una extensión del ser figurado, de la función y disposición estratégica de la vasija sometida al ritual en relación con el contexto arqueológico donde fueron depositadas y de la relación de la misma con el personaje inhumado. Todos estos elementos de vital importancia para reafirmar la intención simbólica del ritual.

**Agradecimientos:** Quisiera finalizar este trabajo agradeciendo a nuestro amigo Alfonso por todas las aportaciones que tuvo en mi vida. La sensibilidad que tenía para percibir un mundo oculto para otros, me la regaló sugiriéndome leyera *El universo elegante*, libro que he disfrutado navegando en las noches oscuras del océano Pacífico, imaginando la música que generan los microscópicos lazos de energía vibrando en el universo.

¡Qué difícil la despedida Alfonso! La flecha de Zenón golpeó directo al corazón de los que te conocimos. No estábamos preparados para tu pronta partida, aunque nos diste una última lección de gratitud y aceptación que nos acompañará toda la vida. Acepto que te hayas adelantado querido amigo, porque tengo la certeza de que ahora

vibras al son de la música en ese universo elegante y no tardaremos mucho en invocarte entre los grandes, pero en lugar de con rituales de sangre, con una botella de vino y cantando Mujeres Divinas.

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# **Moradas oscuras: Un ensayo de interpretación de los templos mesoamericanos**

Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariagos

Yale University

(oswaldo.chinchilla@yale.edu)

**Resumen:** En la antigua Mesoamérica, los templos se concebían como moradas de los dioses y, a la vez, como montañas en cuyas profundidades se albergaban los dioses. La analogía ha sido demostrada fehacientemente en múltiples estudios arqueológicos, epigráficos e iconográficos, mientras que los estudios etnográficos demuestran la pervivencia de tales creencias. Resta, sin embargo, explicar los fundamentos religiosos de esta metáfora. ¿Cómo se explica, en términos de la cosmología mesoamericana, la creencia de que los dioses habitan al interior de las montañas? ¿Qué implicaciones conllevan estas creencias para entender la naturaleza de los dioses? En esta contribución se plantean explicaciones basadas en la lectura de pasajes míticos que sugieren que los dioses comparten la naturaleza de los habitantes de eras anteriores, que no soportaron la luz, y se escondieron en el interior de la tierra a la salida del sol. Como tales, pertenecen a un ámbito anterior al mundo actual, son incapaces de vivir sobre la tierra abierta y no comparten el orden moral de la sociedad humana. Son análogos a los seres impúdicos que habitan en los bosques y las montañas, o en países lejanos. Con su forma semejante a la de los cerros y sus pequeñas cámaras, como cavernas oscuras, los templos proveen lugares idóneos para servir como moradas para los dioses.

**Abstract:** In ancient Mesoamerica, temples were regarded as dwellings for the gods, and at the same time, as mountains that sheltered the gods inside their depths. The analogy has been amply demonstrated by archaeological, epigraphic, and iconographic studies, while ethnographic studies show the resilience of such beliefs. Yet there are unresolved questions about their religious underpinnings. How do we explain the belief that the gods live inside the mountains, in terms of Mesoamerican cosmology? What implications does it have for our understanding of the gods and their nature? In this contribution, I propose explanations based on mythical passages, which suggest that the gods shared the qualities of the inhabitants of former eras, who were unable to endure light, and hid under the earth when the sun came out. As such, they belong to a prior realm, before the current world. They are incapable of living in the open earth and do not partake in the moral order of human society. They are analogous to the immoral beings that inhabit the wilderness or live in distant countries. With their shapes that approximate the hills, and their restricted chambers, like dark caves, the temples provide appropriate spaces to serve as dwellings for the gods.

*La línea que separa el mundo de las creencias religiosas de otras manifestaciones de la cultura no es fácil de trazar entre los mayas antiguos.*

Lacadena e Iglesias (2006: 658)

Hace más de cincuenta años, Evon Z. Vogt observó que los zinacantecos modernos concebían a las montañas como lugares de residencia de los dioses (Vogt 1964). Los cerros sagrados conocidos como *kalvaryos* servían como lugares de reunión para los dioses ancestrales, llamados *totilme'iletik*. Las cruces que se alzaban junto a las cuevas y los nacimientos de agua eran portales que permitían a los iniciados acceder a la morada donde habita *yahval balamil*, el dueño de la tierra. Al observar la forma de las montañas que rodeaban el pueblo, Vogt se preguntó si estarían relacionadas con las pirámides prehispánicas, y si los antiguos mayas construirían los templos para replicar la forma de las montañas donde habitaban los dioses.

Estas preguntas han estimulado mucha atención desde entonces, y se ha acumulado evidencia que confirma la intuición de Vogt. Se ha demostrado repetidas veces que los templos mesoamericanos se concebían como montañas y, a la vez, como moradas de los dioses. Las cuevas y los abrigos rocosos se suelen considerar como recámaras donde habitan los dioses y, a la inversa, las recámaras de los templos se equiparan con cavernas que se abren al interior de las montañas (Stone 1995; López Austin y López Luján 2009; Moyes y Brady 2012; Taube 2013). En las páginas siguientes resumiré brevemente la evidencia, que ya es bastante conocida, pero, a la vez, me concentraré en una cualidad esencial de estos espacios: la oscuridad.

Adelantándome a mis conclusiones, sugiero que los dioses a quienes se rinde culto en las montañas se conciben como seres endebles, incapaces de soportar la luz del sol. Pertenecen a una era anterior al establecimiento del orden moral de la sociedad humana, que empezó con el advenimiento del sol. Por eso requieren de espacios sombríos como los que se encuentran en el interior de las montañas y en lo profundo de las cavernas, pero también en los templos que recrean estos espacios en las comunidades humanas. En apoyo de estos argumentos, recurriré a comparaciones que involucran evidencia arqueológica y epigráfica, interpretaciones derivadas de los textos del siglo XVI, e información etnográfica recabada en

comunidades modernas, cuyo estudio conjunto permite derivar explicaciones amplias sobre la naturaleza de los dioses y de sus oscuras moradas.

### **Las montañas como moradas de los dioses**

La identificación de los templos con las montañas y con las casas de los dioses está plenamente documentada entre los nahuas del siglo XVI. Eduard Seler (1996: 96) señaló la relación del Templo Mayor de Tenochtitlan con la montaña mítica Coatepetl, el ‘cerro de serpientes’ donde nació Huitzilopochtli y donde triunfó sobre su hermana mayor y sus 400 tíos. Seler demostró que los componentes arquitectónicos del gran templo se correspondían con los lugares que se mencionan en la versión del mito recopilada por Sahagún (1989: tomo 1, 202–204). Otro ejemplo es la gran pirámide de Cholula, que se conocía ya en el siglo XVI como Tlachihualtepetl, ‘cerro construido’, si bien ese no debió ser su nombre original (McCafferty 1996; López Austin 2006; Ruz Barrio 2006). Por otro lado, en nahuatl los templos se designan como *teocalli* o el plural *teocalmeh*, ‘casas de los dioses’ (Thouvenot 2014: 319). Así, los informantes de Sahagún describieron las ‘casas’ del Templo Mayor de Tenochtitlan como *jcal catca Huitzilopochtli*, ‘casa de Huitzilopochtli’, e *jcal catca Tlaloc*, ‘casa de Tlaloc’ (López Austin 1965: 76).

De modo parecido, en el Popol Vuh, los templos de los tres dioses tutelares *k’iche’s* se designan como *nima’q tz’aq*, ‘grandes edificios’, y como *rochoh Tohil*, *rochoh Avilix*, y *rochoh Hacavitz*, ‘casa de Tohil’, ‘casa de Avilix’ y ‘casa de Hacavitz’ (Christenson 2004: 286; Craveri 2013: 224). En los idiomas mayas coloniales de las tierras bajas, yucatecos y ch’olanos, se les llamaba *k’una*, *ch’ulna* o *ch’ululna*, términos que significan ‘casa de dios’ o ‘casa sagrada’ (Kaufman y Justeson 2003: 460). El término *k’uhnah* aparece en las inscripciones jeroglíficas del periodo Clásico, pero no es frecuente (Boot 2009: 118). Los templos suelen recibir nombres propios que contienen el término *nah*, ‘casa’, y también se usa la frase posesiva *yotot*, ‘su casa’, que va seguida del nombre del dueño del edificio. Houston (1998: 352) llamó la atención hacia las representaciones de los templos en miniatura en Copán, etiquetados como *u waybil k’uh*, ‘dormitorio del dios’. Los templos funerarios también se designan como *muknal*, ‘lugar de entierro’ (Stuart 1998: 397).

El término *witz*, que Stuart (1987) descifró como ‘montaña’ o ‘cerro’, aparece ocasionalmente en los nombres de los templos, pero es en la decoración escultórica donde se ven más claramente las alusiones a las montañas. Guiados por el desciframiento de Stuart, David Freidel, Linda Schele y Karl Taube reconocieron muchos de los mascarones que adornan los basamentos y las fachadas de los templos mayas como cerros personificados (Freidel y Schele 1990: 71–72; Stuart 1997; Schele 1998; Taube 2004). En ocasiones, la decoración escultórica convierte las puertas en fauces enormes de monstruos *witz* que se abren como las bocas de las cuevas. La analogía convierte a los basamentos en cerros elevados, y a los templos mismos en cuevas. Andrea Stone (1995: 35–36) ha explicado la relación de los templos con las cuevas, y Taube (2003) ha percibido conceptos similares en las esculturas preclásicas de la costa sur y en el arte olmeca.

Los estudios arqueológicos, tanto en el área maya como fuera de ella, han producido abundante información sobre el uso ritual de las cuevas. Se ha demostrado ampliamente que las cuevas fueron espacios favorecidos para el culto religioso, tanto en el área maya como fuera de ella. Hasta el presente, las montañas y las cuevas juegan un papel crucial en la religión tradicional de los pueblos mesoamericanos (Brady y Prufer 2005; Prufer y Brady 2005). En particular, las cámaras más recónditas y oscuras dentro de las cuevas suelen ser escogidas como lugares de culto. Como las cuevas, las recámaras que se abren al interior de los templos son estrechas y oscuras. Herbert Spinden resumió en palabras breves el ambiente sombrío de los templos:

La recámara interior, que recibe solo la luz difusa de la puerta exterior, puede haberse considerado apropiadamente como el lugar más sagrado [*holy of holies*] y la misteriosa residencia de la divinidad (Spinden 1975: 100, traducción del autor).

## **La paradoja de la luz y la oscuridad**

En su estudio etnográfico sobre los ch'orti's en los años 30 del siglo pasado, Charles Wisdom describió lo que podemos llamar “la paradoja de la luz y la oscuridad”:

La *luz* parece representar el conocimiento y es asociada con el dios-sol, que es patrono de los hombres sabios. La *oscuridad* es protectora de los objetos

sagrados, por lo cual éstos son tenidos en lugares oscuros, sea cerrando las puertas de las casas que los albergan o guardándolos en arcones, gaveteros o algo similar. Se dice que la luz, si es constante, “lastima” el santo. También se considera que la oscuridad favorece el desarrollo de las ceremonias, por lo cual los profesionales esotéricos ofician en cuartos oscuros o en lugares umbríos del bosque. Se cree que es más fácil entrar en contacto con las deidades al amparo de la oscuridad, ya que ésta les sirve de manto protector. El aislamiento y el secreto son estrechamente asociados con la oscuridad (Wisdom 1961: 485).

En Mesoamérica, la luz y el calor del sol son las fuerzas vitales más importantes. Favorecen el crecimiento de las plantas y los seres humanos, se asocian con la fuerza y la salud, y con todos los aspectos positivos y moralmente aceptables de la vida (Gossen 1979; Graulich 1981). El ciclo diario del sol provee modelos para la vida humana e impone orden y estructura en el mundo. En los mitos cosmogónicos, el advenimiento del sol marca el momento en que se crearon las condiciones propicias para la vida: el sol secó la tierra y acabó con los seres monstruosos que la poblaban en las eras anteriores (López Austin 1996: 54–57). Por el contrario, la oscuridad está llena de peligros. Se reconoce que la luz y el día nacen de la oscuridad de la noche, pero a la vez, éstas se asocian con las enfermedades, la muerte, los hechizos y otros aspectos negativos de la vida. Entonces, ¿por qué se esconden los santos ch'ortí's en la oscuridad? ¿De qué se protegen, y por qué los lastima la luz?

Para explicar la asociación de los dioses con las montañas, los bosques y las cuevas, varios autores han recurrido a la explicación que ofreció fray Bartolomé de Las Casas en su *Apologética Historia Sumaria* (Thompson 1959; Stone 1995: 17). En un capítulo dedicado a la religión de las gentes de Guatemala, el obispo de Chiapa escribió:

En muchas partes acostumbraban tener sus ídolos en lugares ásperos y cuevas esceltas y ocultas metidos, por algunas razones: lo uno, por tenelles más reverencia, porque les parecía que, si estuviesen donde muchas veces los viesen, sería ocasión de algún menosprecio; lo otro, porque algunos de los vecinos no los hurtasen teniéndolos donde todos supiesen dellos, porque en los templos no acostumbraban tener puertas, y lo tercero, porque los de otros pueblos o de los que tenían por enemigos no viniesen con gente de armas a hurtallos también (Las Casas 1992: tomo 3, 1189).

Stone (1995: 15–18) concluyó que la situación apartada e inaccesible hacía de las montañas y las cuevas lugares apropiados para el culto religioso, realzando la sacralidad de los dioses y de sus lugares

de residencia y alejándolos de los no iniciados. También advirtió, citando a Gary Gossen (1974), que la distancia y el movimiento hacia lo desconocido se equiparan con la inmersión en el pasado mítico, en el tiempo de los ancestros. Este es un asunto importante al que volveré más adelante.

En una exploración intercultural, Daniel R. Montello y Holley Moyes (2012) sugieren que el significado religioso de las cuevas se relaciona con respuestas emocionales y cognitivas compartidas en el comportamiento humano. La falta de luz y la topografía tridimensional, compleja y recluida de zonas oscuras de las cuevas provoca desorientación y reducción de los estímulos sensoriales, que conduce a una percepción de estos ambientes como peligrosos, misteriosos e ilegibles. Son espacios inapropiados para la vida humana y, por lo mismo, se les suele considerar como lugares trascendentales, aptos para ser incorporados en los mitos y empleados en el ritual.

Stone (1995) y Taube (2003) han señalado que, en Mesoamérica, las cuevas y las montañas se conciben como lugares salvajes, apartados y esencialmente contrarios al ámbito ordenado y sacralizado de los poblados. Son lugares carentes de estructura, ocultos a los rayos benéficos del sol, habitados por fieras, espantos y otros seres peligrosos, alejados del comportamiento social y moral de las comunidades humanas. Se suelen contar entre sus habitantes los jicaques, los lacandones o los *ch'olwinq*, gentes salvajes y repulsivas que viven entre los árboles, pero que también se suelen considerar como poseedores de vastos cacahuatales o tesoros que esconden celosamente (Gossen 1992; Schackt 2004). A veces atacan o secuestran a quienes se aventuran a deambular por las montañas, donde no se debe entrar a la ligera. Surge otra vez la paradoja: si los dioses son habitantes de las montañas y las cuevas, ¿son acaso semejantes a las criaturas atroces que los habitan? ¿Cómo son los dioses, y por qué viven en esos lugares desamparados?

## **La oscuridad y los dioses**

La explicación que voy a ofrecer se basa en la comparación de los mitos que narran lo que pasó cuando salió el sol, y describen cómo la gente de la era anterior no pudo soportar su resplandor. En lugares tan apartados como el pueblo q'anjob'al de Santa Eulalia, Guatemala,

la comunidad mazateca de Jalapa de Díaz, Oaxaca, así como en Zinacantán, Chiapas, se habla de gentes primigenias, que carecían de cualidades morales y contrariaban las normas sociales y estéticas de la gente actual. Por ello, no fueron capaces de vivir bajo la luz del sol de la nueva era. Simplemente no la resistieron, se enterraron para protegerse, se convirtieron en piedra o se quemaron (La Farge 1947: 64–65; Laughlin 1977: 76–77; Pérez Moreno 2009: 61–62; Chinchilla 2017: 64–69).

Narradores tzeltales y totonacas, muy distantes entre sí, aseveran que, aún enterradas, las gentes de la era anterior todavía sufren por el calor del sol (Siegel 1943; Horcasitas 1962). Según un relato mam de Quezaltenango, los habitantes de la era anterior eran brujos y cuando salió el sol se enterraron en ollas de barro. Se piensa que sobrevivieron bajo la tierra o escondidos en lugares apartados, como los sitios arqueológicos (Hostnig y Vásquez 1994: 3–6). En Yucatán, se les asocia con los aluxes, seres pequeños y perniciosos que viven en los bosques y en los sitios arqueológicos. Según testimonios recabados hace más de un siglo por Alfred Tozzer y subsecuentemente por otros autores, vivían en la oscuridad y se convirtieron en piedra cuando salió el sol. Sus imágenes petrificadas todavía se encuentran en las ruinas (Tozzer 1907: 153–154; Ligorred 1990: 126–127; Gutiérrez 1992). Muchas veces se les atribuyen fallas morales, como el impudor sexual y el canibalismo. En la comunidad mixteca de Nuyoo, se dice que se apareaban libremente, como perros y que “no reconocían a sus madres ni sus padres”, o sea que eran incestuosos. Cuando salió el sol murieron de miedo, pero algunos se escondieron en las cuevas (Monaghan 1995: 32, 49).

Hace varias décadas, John Fought recopiló un mito ch'orti' que describe vívidamente lo que pasó cuando salió el sol:

Y la gente que había,  
Dice que cuando salió el sol sobre los cerros  
Y ellos se espantaron, tuvieron miedo  
Dijeron “hoy nos perdemos”  
Entonces se juntaron, se reunieron todos  
Empezaron a dispararla con escopeta  
Lo tiraban con bomba  
Para que lo bajaran  
Cuando vieron que no podían  
Entonces dijeron

Y ahora qué vamos a hacer  
 Vamos a perder  
 Porque no hallamos manera como para bajar este enemigo  
 Entonces aquella gente  
 No aguantaban el cielo para ver  
 Se quemaban  
 Y para que volteen a ver el cielo  
 Y se quedaban ciegos  
 Dice que algunos buscaban piedra que tiene corredor y se metían.  
 E buscaban corredor de alguna piedra o peña, allí se escondían.

(Fought s.f., transscrito por el autor)

La mayoría murieron. Solo se salvaron los que se escondieron en las cuevas o en los troncos de los árboles, y sus descendientes aún viven allí. Son seres repugnantes, “gentes que comen gente”, caníbales que salen por la noche a buscar víctimas para llevarlas a sus cuevas y devorarlas. Recordemos el testimonio etnográfico de Wisdom sobre los ch'orti's: la luz “lastima” a los santos, que prefieren los lugares umbríos del bosque o la oscuridad de una gaveta (Wisdom 1961: 485). Esto sugiere que los santos tienen mucho en común con las “gentes que comen gente”, los que no resistieron el fulgor del sol.

De hecho, los santos ch'orti's modernos son como los dioses en el Popol Vuh, quienes, al advertir que ya se aproximaba la salida del sol, les pidieron a los ancestros k'iche's que los ocultaran en las montañas: “a un lugar escondido llevadnos! Se ha acercado el amanecer” (Craveri 2013: 159). En una frase que parece aludir a la construcción de templos, pidieron que edificaran (*chitz'aq*) lugares donde dejarlos para que no fueran a encontrarlos los guerreros. La intención parece ser, pues, la que registró Las Casas: ocultarlos y protegerlos para que no fueran hallados o robados por los enemigos de los k'iche's. Sin embargo, la comparación de este pasaje con los testimonios etnográficos acerca del destino de la gente de la era anterior hace pensar en otra explicación: los dioses k'iche's fueron incapaces de soportar la luz del sol.

Obedientes, los ancestros k'iche's encontraron lugares entre los bosques, en los barrancos y en las montañas para cada uno de los tres dioses. Aquellos lugares estaban llenos de animales salvajes, “muchas, pues, eran las culebras, muchos también los jaguares, los cascabeles, los cantiles” (Craveri 2013: 160). Cuando salió el sol, los dioses se transformaron en piedra, junto con las fieras mismas. No

dice el Popol Vuh que fueran a quemarse, ni que se opusieran al advenimiento del sol, pero los dioses compartieron la suerte de las gentes de la era anterior en los mitos modernos: tuvieron que entrar en las profundidades de la tierra, ponerse a salvo a la sombra de los bosques y los barrancos, y se transformaron en piedra. Corrieron la misma suerte que se les atribuye a las gentes de las eras anteriores en las narraciones mitológicas ya citadas, recopiladas en numerosas comunidades de México y Guatemala.

Hay un paralelo en los mitos nahuas del siglo XVI, que, sin embargo, revierten el sentido de las creencias que prevalecen en el área maya. Los dioses no se escondieron del resplandor del sol, sino al contrario, fue el sol quien requirió la sangre y el vigor de los demás dioses, y rehusó moverse a menos que todos murieran. Los dioses accedieron y fueron sacrificados. De hecho, prefirieron morir antes que vivir entre la gente de la era actual. Según la versión de Sahagún, se preguntaron: “¿Como podremos vivir? No se menea el sol. ¿Hemos de vivir entre los villanos? Muramos todos, y hagamos que resucite por nuestra muerte” (Sahagún 1989: tomo 2, 482). Según la Leyenda de los Soles, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli trató de flechar al sol para que se moviera, sin lograrlo. El propósito es diferente, pero el intento de atacar al sol es similar a los esfuerzos de las gentes que trataron de bajar al sol con escopetas y bombas, en el mito ch'ort'i'. Explica la Leyenda de los Soles, “Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli era el hielo”, lo que parece ser un papel apropiado para un oponente del sol (Tena 2002: 183).

El sacrificio de los dioses nahuas se ha interpretado generalmente como un paradigma para el sacrificio humano, que se justifica por la necesidad de alimentar al sol (Graulich 2016: 72–75). Esa justificación no aparece en los mitos modernos, pero el resultado es el mismo: los dioses nahuas resultan equiparados con los habitantes de la era anterior, que no sobrevivieron el advenimiento del sol.

## Conclusión

Para concluir, retorno a mi propuesta inicial. Los dioses mesoamericanos son como los seres de la era anterior, que fueron incapaces de resistir el fulgor del sol. Por eso se ocultaron bajo la tierra, en las cuevas y en las montañas, donde se les rinde culto. Los dioses viven en las profundidades umbrías de las montañas, y por eso los templos

deben ser como montañas. Paradójicamente, estos edificios traen hasta el centro mismo de las comunidades humanas una parte del mundo desordenado donde habitan los dioses, ajeno a las normas establecidas a partir del advenimiento del sol. Los templos proveen refugios apropiados para estos seres que pertenecen al mundo salvaje de los bosques y las cuevas, y que no podrían vivir de otro modo en el orden moral de la sociedad humana.

Esta es una generalización y, desde luego, no todos los dioses son así; la excepción más notable es el dios solar mismo. Hay otras excepciones, casos especiales y variaciones históricas que debemos considerar caso por caso. Una exploración completa de la naturaleza de los dioses se escapa a los límites de este trabajo, pero brevemente y, en forma muy general, se puede afirmar que son seres poderosos, capaces de proveer bienes y causar daños incontables, pero a la vez, son seres endebles que requieren atenciones constantes de los seres humanos, cuya tarea es proveerles el sustento, cuidados y lugares para vivir. Los templos son espacios idóneos que replican el ambiente umbrío de las montañas cubiertas de bosques y las recámaras ocultas de las cuevas donde la luz del sol no alcanza a penetrar. Son las oscuras moradas de los dioses.

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# **Los escribas del Códice de Dresde: Un análisis de las páginas 1–2**

KAJETAN JAGODZINSKI

Universidad Complutense de Madrid

(kajetan.jagodzinski@gmail.com)

**Resumen:** Este artículo analiza paleográfica e iconográficamente el contenido de las dos primeras páginas del Códice de Dresde con el fin de establecer el número de ‘manos’ que realizaron este fragmento del manuscrito. Los resultados de la investigación han revelado la necesidad de revisar las clasificaciones existentes. Asimismo, se ha detectado una palabra nueva para ‘braguero’ en el corpus glífico maya.

**Abstract:** This article analyzes the content of the two first pages of the Dresden Codex in terms of its paleography and iconography. The objective of the present study is to establish how many different ‘hands’ had taken part in preparing this Maya manuscript. The results show that it is necessary to revise the current classification of scribes of the Dresden Codex. Moreover, a new word for ‘loincloth’ was detected in the corpus of Maya hieroglyphic texts.

Este artículo forma parte de una investigación más amplia acerca de los escribas que elaboraron el Códice de Dresde. El objetivo que se persiguió fue la identificación del número de manos que habían intervenido en las dos primeras páginas de dicho manuscrito, a partir de la identificación de los rasgos estilísticos y escriturarios de cada amanuense. Para ello se utilizó la metodología propuesta por diferentes investigadores españoles (Lacadena 1995, 2000; Ciudad Ruiz et al. 1999; Sanz Castro 2000).

El manuscrito ha sido objeto de múltiples investigaciones a lo largo del tiempo, que han contribuido a un mejor entendimiento de la cultura maya. El trabajo realizado por los científicos ha dado lugar a una amplia bibliografía que abarca gran variedad de temas, desde la religión y la lingüística —a través del estudio iconográfico—, hasta la astronomía y el calendario, entre otros (p. ej. Taube 1992; Wald 2004; Bricker y Bricker 2011)<sup>1</sup>. Sin embargo, el estudio de los amanuenses que participaron en la confección del Códice de Dresde es uno de los asuntos menos tratados. Hasta la fecha sólo se han publicado tres

<sup>1</sup> Una amplia recopilación de la bibliografía existente se puede encontrar en la edición del Códice de Dresde preparada por Thomas Lee (1985), el libro de Salgado Ruelas (2001) o la página específica (SLUB s.f.) de la Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (SLUB).

	<b>Zimmermann</b>	<b>Grube</b>	<b>Velásquez</b>
Escriba 1	2	1–3	1–2
Escriba 2	3–23	4–23	3–23
Escriba 3	24, 78–43(45–63), 62–77(29–44)	24, 78–52(45–74), 62–77(29–44)	24, 25–54(46–74), 62(29), 63bc–72bc(30bc–39bc), 73–74(40–41), 75ab–78ab(42ab–45ab), 69a–72a(36a–39a)
Escriba 4	45–49(65–69)	55–58(25–28)	55–58(25–28)
Escriba 5	49–54(69–74)	63a–68a(30a–35a)	63a–68a(30a–35a)
Escriba 6	55–58(25–28)	75c–78c(42c–45c)	75c–78c(42c–45c)
Escriba 7	65–68a(32–35a)		
Escriba 8	75–78c(42–45c)		

Tabla 1. Clasificación de los escribas según diferentes autores.

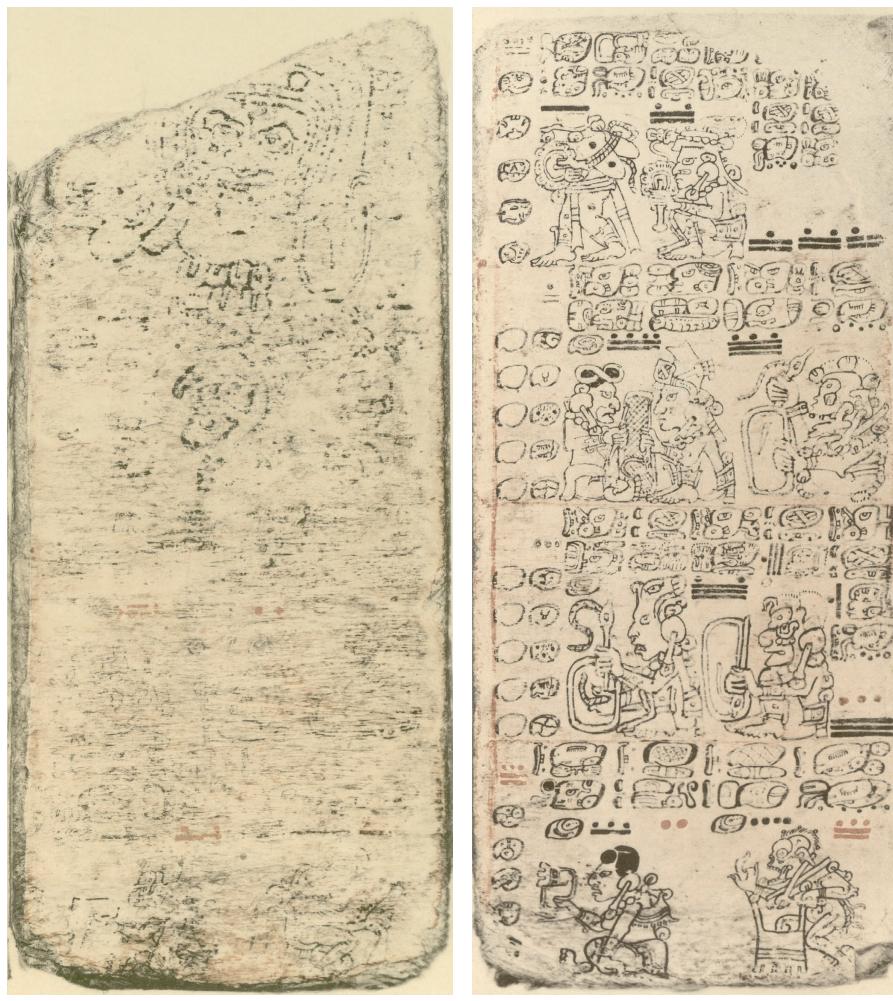
trabajos sobre esta cuestión realizados por Günter Zimmermann (1956), Nikolai Grube (2012) y Erik Velásquez García (2016).

En el primer cuadro (Tabla 1) se presenta una recopilación de las propuestas de cada uno de estos autores sobre el número de escribas que participaron en la elaboración de las dos primeras páginas del códice<sup>2</sup>. Zimmermann (1956: lámina 5) ha atribuido la página 2 al escriba 1, sin considerar la página 1, probablemente debido a su mal estado de conservación<sup>3</sup>. Según Grube (2012: 33), el escriba 1 fue responsable por haber confeccionado las páginas 1–3. Por su parte, Velásquez García (2016: 6) propone que el escriba 1 realizó las páginas 1–2 y el escriba 2, las siguientes páginas (3–23).

El análisis de las páginas 1–2 del códice es complicado y problemático por el mal estado de conservación de la página 1, que impide conocer y analizar detalladamente el contenido de los dos primeros almanaques (1a y 1b). Sólo en la sección 1c puede reconstruirse el texto glífico y la iconografía, facilitando los datos imprescindibles para establecer un complejo grafémico y determinar rasgos estilísticos de este amanuense. Desafortunadamente, el análisis permanecerá para siempre incompleto, ya que en el pasado se perdieron los fragmentos del manuscrito precedentes a la página 1. Esto puede

<sup>2</sup> El cuadro sigue el sistema de paginación que aparece en el trabajo fin de máster de Macarena López Oliva (2012). Entre paréntesis se encuentra la numeración estándar del códice que se ha utilizado erróneamente a lo largo del tiempo. La numeración correcta precede la de paréntesis.

<sup>3</sup> Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo en su tesis doctoral (1995: 184–185) expresó ya la necesidad de revisar la clasificación de Ernst Zimmermann.



a

b

**Figura 1.** El Códice de Dresde: *a)* Página 1, *b)* Página 2 (edición de Förstemann, cortesía Ancient Americas de LACMA).

apreciarse en “La tabla de Marte”, en el reverso de la página en cuestión, que está inconclusa por la falta de los almanaques que deberían seguir el cuadro (Thompson 1988: 51, 263; Grube 2012: 216).

Gracias a la comparación de la edición proporcionada por SLUB (2010) y la edición escaneada de Ernst Förstemann (1892), accesible en la red, ha sido posible distinguir algunos detalles en las páginas 1–2, que proporcionan nuevos datos acerca de sus autores (Figura 1).



**Figura 2.** El dios de la Muerte de la sección 2b (edición de Förstemann, cortesía Ancient Americas de LACMA).

Esta información ha constatado la necesidad de revisar las clasificaciones propuestas por los investigadores anteriores.

## Análisis de la página 2

El punto de partida para el presente análisis es la página 2, al conservarse casi por completo. Pueden apreciarse algunos daños en el margen superior derecho y desgaste en la parte inferior de dicha página. Afortunadamente, este deterioro no influye mucho en el entendimiento del contenido. La página consta de cuatro secciones diferentes. Algo único si se analiza en conjunto todo el manuscrito, pues las páginas suelen organizarse siguiendo un sistema que las divide en 2 o 3 bandas<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Por el término ‘bandas’ se entiende diferentes partes de las cuales se compone la página, al contrario del término ‘secciones’ que son “unos universos cerrados en cuanto a su contenido, pero al mismo tiempo variables en cuanto a su extensión, ya que podían identificarse con un pequeño almanaque ocupando una banda horizontal dentro de una página, o desarrollarse a lo largo de varias páginas” (Lacadena García-Gallo 2000: 36).

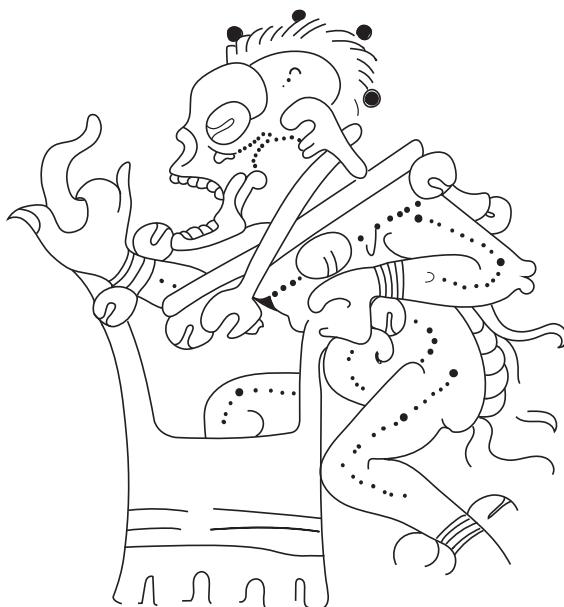


Figura 3. La diosa A del almanaque 2d (dibujo de María Soler Gómez).

### Estudio formal de las imágenes

A nivel iconográfico se puede observar una incompatibilidad que marca el contraste entre las secciones 2a-2c y 2d, dividiendo así la página 2 en dos partes diferentes. Esta divergencia visual se manifiesta en varios aspectos, como, por ejemplo, la calidad y fluidez de la línea que delimita los contornos de las figuras. El ejemplo más claro es la comparación entre el dios de la Muerte (o el dios A, según la tipología propuesta de Schellhas) de la sección 2b y el de 2d, los cuales son totalmente distintos en cuanto al nivel de ejecución del personaje<sup>5</sup>.

La figura del dios A de la sección 2b se caracteriza por la asimetría y la falta de armonía en los trazos, debido a una ausencia de proporción entre los elementos de su cuerpo y los objetos que agarra. Un ejemplo es el tamaño similar del dios de la Muerte y la aguja que él mismo sostiene (Figura 2). También hay que resaltar un cambio significativo en cuanto a la calidad de la pintura. Todo ello ilustra el bajo nivel del artista.

<sup>5</sup> Meredith Paxton (1986) fue la primera investigadora en detectar esta peculiaridad, pero sin analizar con profundidad este tema.

La sección 2d muestra una de las imágenes más dinámicas y elaboradas del Códice Dresde, al representar a la diosa A en el momento exacto en que se pone la falda (Figura 3)<sup>6</sup>. Esta figura fue muy trabajada por este escriba, apreciándose su maestría en los pequeños detalles, como, por ejemplo, el meñique derecho de la diosa A que, junto con el extremo de la falda, que ondea en el aire, subraya la dinámica de esta imagen. Además, la línea que delimita los contornos de este personaje es muy fluida y fina. Parece que las secciones 2a-2c han sido pintadas por un aprendiz, al contrario que la sección 2d, donde se nota la gran sensibilidad y habilidad del artista.

Otro elemento que distingue estos dos fragmentos es la manera de pintar las manos. En las secciones 2a-2c se ha detectado un patrón iconográfico que se mantiene casi por completo en dichos almanaques. Éste consiste en representar de forma esquemática la parte interna de la mano con los dedos doblados, sin necesidad de que su número corresponda con la realidad, y con el pulgar siempre marcado. Se observa que representar la realidad anatómica entre el brazo y la mano no es un factor que determine el estilo del artista, porque sólo en dos ocasiones se representaron la mano derecha junto con el brazo derecho: en la primera figura de Jun Ajaw del almanaque 2a y en la tercera figura, el dios A, del almanaque 2b. En el resto de los casos, estos dos elementos no concuerdan entre sí.

Es interesante destacar que en la figura 1 de la sección 2c se produce una ruptura del paradigma iconográfico, ya que el escriba no pintó la cara interior de la mano. Concretamente representó la parte externa de la mano izquierda, que fue dibujada en el brazo derecho.

En el caso del almanaque 2d, el escriba intentó respetar la anatomía humana en las representaciones de los dioses. Si se observan las manos del dios A puede comprobarse que se diseñaron de forma naturalista. Sin embargo, el dibujo de la joven diosa de la Luna (la diosa I) resulta más complejo pues, a pesar de que el brazo y la mano izquierda coinciden a nivel anatómico, no existe una correspondencia en el brazo derecho, donde vuelve a dibujarse la mano izquierda. Teniendo en cuenta que este amanuense era un artista de gran habilidad y sensibilidad, se puede suponer que la ruptura con

<sup>6</sup> Albert Davletshin llamó mi atención acerca de la identificación de este ser sobrenatural como la diosa A.

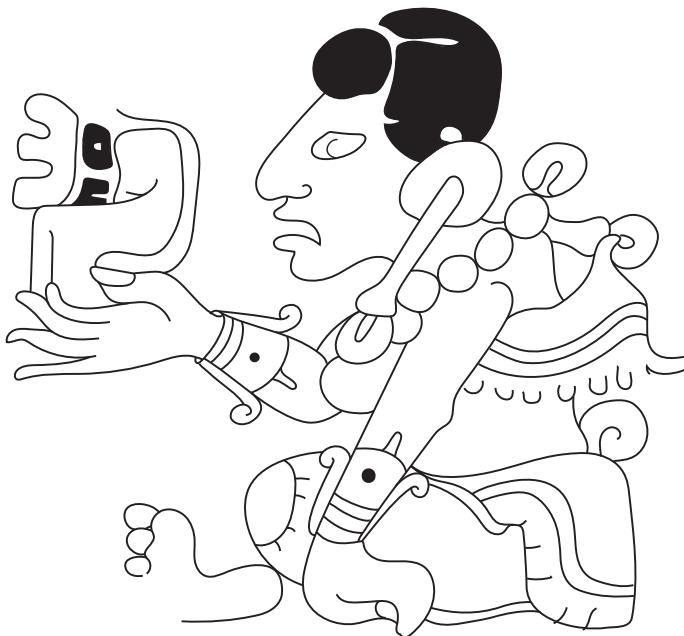


Figura 4. La diosa I del almanaque 2d (dibujo de María Soler Gómez).

el diseño iconográfico anterior no ha sido accidental, sino motivada por algún factor. Quizás la joven diosa de la Luna presenta una mano ‘incorrecta’ para crear una sensación de profundidad o estabilidad del objeto agarrado por ella en la representación, o por una convención estilística que se desconoce (Figura 4).

La singularidad del almanaque 2d también se manifiesta en la forma de pintar el pie, que está separado del muslo y tiene el arco plantar muy marcado. La imagen de la joven diosa de la Luna es un ejemplo claro de esta peculiaridad, la cual no se repite en las páginas siguientes (3-23). En ellas predomina la tendencia de representarlo esquemáticamente, muy pegado al muslo o incluso debajo de él. En algunos casos aparece un gancho dentro del pie. La única representación que se parece a la de la joven diosa de la Luna se encuentra en el almanaque 1c, en la parte inferior de la página 1.

### Estudio paleográfico formal del texto

Por otra parte, el análisis paleográfico de la página 2 ha proporcionado datos que parecen indicar la existencia de dos complejos gráfe-



**Figura 5.** El glifo ‘mortandad’ del Códice de Dresde: *a)* almanaque 2b, *b)* almanaque 2d (edición de SLUB-Dresden, cortesía SLUB-Dresden).

micos distintos. El primero engloba las secciones 2a-2c; y el segundo la 2d. Estos resultados se suman al análisis de los elementos iconográficos, anteriormente explicado. El glifo ‘mortandad’, *chamal*, según la lectura de Velásquez García (2016: 16–17), es fundamental para detectar las ‘manos’ de cada uno de los escribas al ser el único signo que aparece en todos los almanaques de la página 2. Para analizar este glifo hay que considerar dos elementos de la cabeza: el ojo y los trazos que componen la mandíbula. En el Códice Dresde se ha podido detectar un comportamiento escriturario que muestra una relación entre la forma de ejecución del ojo del glifo ‘mortandad’ y el elemento interior del glifo *ik*, ‘viento’, reflejándose en ambos la elegancia o descuido del trazado.

La forma de ejecutar el ojo del glifo ‘mortandad’ en las secciones 2a-2c es descuidada y rápida, al contrario que en el almanaque 2d, donde fue pintado con cautela y cuidado (Figura 5).

Si el trazo del ojo de la cabeza es descuidado o elegante, esto también se ve reflejado dentro del signo *ik*, como, por ejemplo, en el caso de la sección 2c. En el almanaque 2d no se dispone del glifo calendárico, pero, por analogía con otros ejemplos, se puede suponer que dicho escriba cumple con esta regla (Figura 6).

Se han identificado dos maneras de dibujar la mandíbula del glifo *chamal* en función del número de trazos. Las secciones 2a-2c se caracterizan por el uso de dos trazos, por ello la mandíbula tiene uno de sus extremos más curvo. El segundo trazo asciende casi vertical y se junta con la línea que define la parte superior de la cabeza. El mismo patrón se repite en el glifo *kimi* del calendario *tzolk'in*. En cambio, en la sección 2d se observa una sola línea que cruza de forma diagonal la cabeza.



a

b

**Figura 6.** Los glifos del Códice de Dresde: a) Glifo *ik'* del almanaque 2c (edición de Förstemann, cortesía Ancient Americas de LACMA), b) Glifo *ik'* (almanaque 1ob) y la 'mortandad' (almanaque 1oa) ejecutado por el mismo escriba (edición de SLUB-Dresden, cortesía SLUB-Dresden).

Otros indicadores del número de escribas que participaron en la elaboración de estas páginas son: el glifo **HUT?** (Stuart 2005: 66–68) o **LEM?** (Stuart 2010: 291) que acompaña al dios A y dios E, y el glifo **WINIK**. En el primer caso se puede observar dos formas de escribir este signo. En la sección 2d, la forma es más redondeada que la de los almanaques 2a–2c.

Las diferencias en el glifo **WINIK**, como número de 20, se perciben en el interior del cartucho. En las tres primeras secciones contiene un círculo en medio, mientras que en el almanaque 2d, éste se encuentra en la parte superior derecha, ligado al contorno principal (Figura 7).

Los argumentos paleográficos y estilísticos anteriores llevan a concluir que la página 2 fue ejecutada por dos escribas diferentes. El escriba 1 preparó los almanaques 2a–2c; y el escriba 2 el 2d.

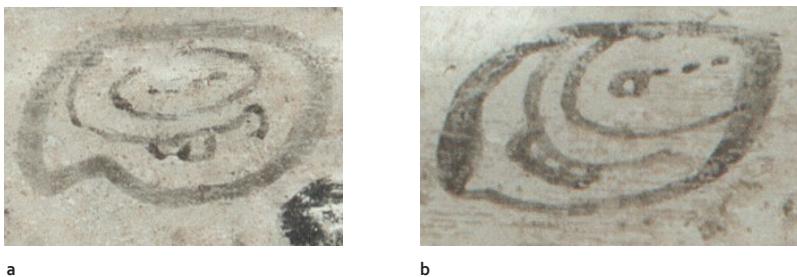
## Análisis de la página 1

El mal estado de conservación de la página 1 ha provocado una escasa atención a su análisis en los diferentes comentarios publicados sobre el Códice de Dresde (Förstemann 1906: 55; Thompson 1988: 81; Grube 2012: 70; Velásquez García 2016: 14).

## Estudio formal de las imágenes

La sección 1c proporciona datos que permiten identificar los personajes pintados y reconstruir los glifos de ambos *t'oles*<sup>7</sup>. La primera

<sup>7</sup> J. Eric S. Thompson (1988: 10) define este término como “una columna en un libro. Parte o subdivisión de un almanaque. Habitualmente incluye un grupo de glifos [...] y, abajo, generalmente la imagen de la deidad patrona.” *T'ol* es un sinónimo del término *frame* y sección.

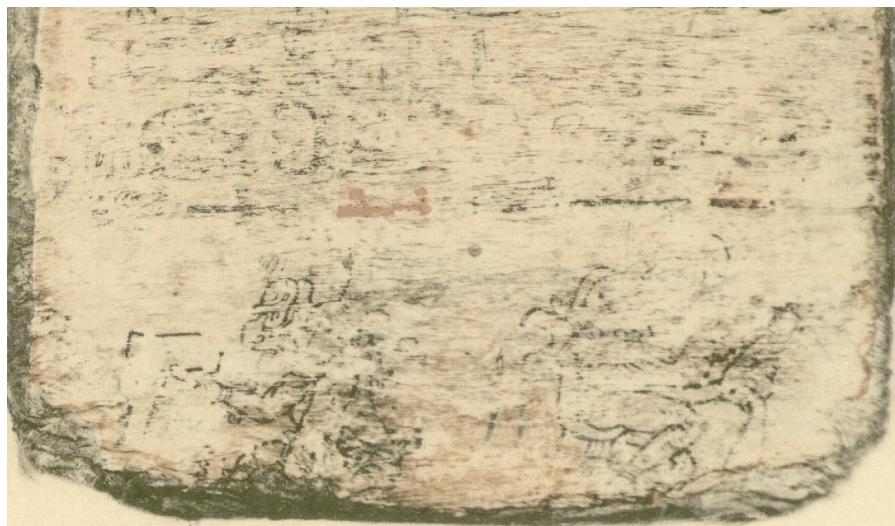


**Figura 7.** El glifo **WINIK** del Códice de Dresden: *a)* almanaque 2c (edición de Förstemann, cortesía Ancient Americas de LACMA), *b)* almanaque 2d (edición de SLUB-Dresden, cortesía SLUB-Dresden).

figura puede identificarse a nivel iconográfico como Itzamnaaj o el dios D (Figura 8) (Förstemann 1906: 55). Si se observan los vestidos del bloque glífico A2, situados en la parte superior de la figura, puede comprobarse la presencia de su nombre. Sin embargo, el caso del segundo personaje es más complicado por haberse conservado solamente algunos trazos de la parte inferior del cuerpo, estando la cabeza y el torso muy erosionados. Afortunadamente algunos de los elementos conservados como el ano, las marcas en la piel y los ojos sacados, permiten identificar a este ser sobrenatural como el dios de la Muerte (Figura 9a). Los glifos situados en el bloque C2, como en el caso anterior, muestran el nombre de la deidad y permiten confirmar su identidad. Pueden apreciarse en la versión de SLUB los restos del signo **HUT?** o **LEM?** y el fragmento del ojo dentro de la cabeza.

La estructura del almanaque 1c es muy parecida a la de la sección 2d. La relación entre ambas se manifiesta en varios aspectos como su pertenencia al mismo tipo de almanaque de 5 por 52 días con dos números de distancia: 26/26 días en el 1c y 28/24 días en el 2d, o la peculiar forma de pintar el pie que mencionamos anteriormente.

La comparación de la composición figurativa entre ambos almanaques muestra la existencia de un patrón semejante: la primera figura de la sección está sentada y agarra un objeto; la segunda se encuentra en movimiento. En el caso del almanaque de la página 2 se trata de una falda. Las frases se traducen, según Velásquez García (2016: 17), como: 1) ‘Uh Ixik recibe (*k’am*) la falda (*upik*), [el pronós-



a



b

**Figura 8.** Los almanaques del Códice de Dresde: a) 1c, b) 2d (edición de Förstemann, cortesía Ancient Americas de LACMA).

tico es] hijos de mujer, hijos de hombre', 2) 'Kiimil la falda (*upik*) abrocha (*k'al*), [el pronóstico es] mortandad'.



Figura 9. Los dioses del almanaque 1c: a) el dios A, b) el dios D (dibujo de María Soler Gómez).

### Estudio paleográfico formal del texto

Los verbos de la sección 1c se han localizado en los bloques A1 y C1. En ellos aún son visibles los vestigios de la sílaba **u** y **wa**. Estos restos indican que se trata del verbo transitivo en voz activa (Bricker 1986). Gracias a las ediciones de Förstemann y SLUB, se ha podido detectar algunos elementos diagnósticos de la sílaba **k'a** (trazos del ojo y la mandíbula) y la sílaba **ma** (dos círculos poco visibles, cuya línea de conexión no se ha conservado) en el bloque A1. El mal estado de conservación del bloque C1 sólo ha confirmado la existencia de unos

borrosos vestigios del cartucho de un glifo, que probablemente antes era la sílaba **k'a**. La identificación de los glifos del bloque A1 y C1 se basa en las analogías estructurales a nivel textual e iconográfico entre ambos almanaques (1c y 2d), explicadas anteriormente. Por lo tanto, se puede suponer que en la sección 1 se trata de dos raíces verbales: *k'am* (A1) y *k'al* (C1).

La reconstrucción del texto glífico de la banda 1c proporciona más analogías con el almanaque 2d. En los bloques B2 y D2 se han identificado signos que determinan el carácter de cada *t'ol*. El primero es positivo, porque aparece el glifo **NIK?** (Schele y Grube 1997: 130), cuya lectura es discutida<sup>8</sup>. La forma de su ejecución es idéntica a la del glifo *ajaw* en la sección 2d, que se caracteriza por pintar un círculo con un puntito dentro, debajo del cartucho. Aunque muy erosionado, el bloque D2 indica que el pronóstico de este segundo *t'ol* es negativo. Se ha conservado poco de éste, como por ejemplo los trazos de la mandíbula, pero es suficiente para identificar en estos vestigios el glifo ‘mortandad’. Además, estadísticamente, el dios de la Muerte aparece acompañado con mucha frecuencia por este signo. También se puede constatar que el patrón de pronósticos, positivo-negativo, se repite en estas dos secciones.

Teniendo en cuenta los significados de los verbos propuestos para este almanaque, hay que intentar identificar el objeto que agarran los seres sobrenaturales en la sección 1c. El análisis detallado de la iconografía de este fragmento del códice proporciona algunos indicios en cuanto a la posible identificación del dicho elemento. Los trazos conservados del primer *t'ol* del almanaque 1c parecen indicar que el objeto se encuentra doblado y una parte cuelga libremente de la mano del dios D, indicando la flexibilidad del material (Figura 9b)<sup>9</sup>. Las mismas características se reflejan en la representación del elemento agarrado por la joven diosa de la Luna en el almanaque 2d. Es interesante añadir que en ambos casos (el dios D y la diosa I) se mantiene la ausencia de concordancia anatómica entre la mano que sostiene el objeto y el brazo donde ésta se ubica.

<sup>8</sup> A lo largo del tiempo varios autores sugirieron diferentes lecturas del signo T533 como, por ejemplo: **BOK?** (Christian Prager), **MOK?** (Barbara MacLeod y Luis Lopes), **YAK?** (Erik Boot), **PUK?** (Marc Zender) o **SAK?** (David Stuart) (ver Vélez-García 2016: 21).

<sup>9</sup> William Gates, en su edición del Códice de Dresde (1932), representa este objeto como vasija, pero el análisis del texto y la iconografía de los almanaques 1c y 2d no lo confirma.

La segunda escena del almanaque 1c muestra al dios A vistiéndose con una larga (desdoblada) prenda de ropa que pasa entre las piernas. Por el contexto y la comparación con la sección 2d, es posible suponer que se trata de una tela cuyo objetivo era cubrir la zona genital, en este caso, masculina.

Es interesante notar que en el corpus iconográfico procedente del periodo Clásico se encuentra una escena similar a ésta en la vasija K1560 (Kerr 2008), que representa al dios L, casi por completo privado de su ropa. Como bien se ha explicado anteriormente (Nielsen y Wichmann 2000: 59–77; Beliaev y Davletshin 2006), dicha representación forma parte de un mito en el que un conejo roba la ropa perteneciente al dios L.

Esto permite suponer que el objeto representado en la sección 1c se puede identificar con una prenda de vestir llamada ‘braguero’. Asimismo, la definición de la entrada ‘braguero’, *eex* en yucateco, del Cordemex (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 164) concuerda con la representación analizada anteriormente: “Banda angosta y larga de algodón de diferentes colores que usaban los antiguos mayas como vestimenta, esta banda pasaba entre las piernas y unas tres o cuatro veces por la cintura las partes colgantes en el frente y por detrás eran ornamentadas con bordados y otros adornos”.

Resumiendo, el análisis formal del texto y las imágenes han proporcionado nuevos datos que permiten distinguir al menos dos escribas diferentes, responsables de la confección de la página 2. Uno de ellos creó los almanaques 2a-2c y otro, las secciones 2d y 1c.

Desgraciadamente, el resto de la página 1 no se preservó bien, ya que sólo se ven los vestigios de dos antiguos almanaques. Debido al mal estado de conservación de estas dos secciones, es prácticamente imposible atribuirlos con certeza a un escriba concreto. Los trazos que se han conservado permiten realizar solamente una descripción muy general de este fragmento del códice. En el almanaque 1b se observan tres personajes que se encuentran en posición sedente. Como indica Velásquez García (2016: 14), “el tercero o último de ellos se ubicaba en las fauces de un cenote, aguada o cavidad subterránea (*way*)”. También se ven los restos de los coeficientes 13 y 2, y un número de distancia de 15 días (Velásquez García 2016: 14).

En el primer almanaque se observa un rostro representado de frente, un caso raro en el arte maya. Förstemann (1906: 55) lo inter-

<b>Idioma mayense</b>	<b>Término ‘braguero’</b>
proto-maya (pM)	*weex
yucateco (YUK)	eex
itzá (ITZ)	wex
mopán (MOP)	wex
proto-cholano (pCh)	wex
ch'ortí' (CHR)	ex
ch'ortí' (CHR)	ex
ch'ortí' (CHR)	ex
ch'oltí' (CHT)	vex
ch'ol (CHL)	wex
tzotzil (TZO)	wex
tzeltal (TZE)	wex
chontal (YOK)	wex

**Tabla 2.** El término ‘braguero’ en diferentes lenguas mayenses (Keller y Luciano 1997: 281; Kaufman y Justeson 2003: 1006).

pretó como un tipo de frontispicio, pero J. Eric S. Thompson (1988: 81) refutó esta propuesta, indicando que los restos de “barras y puntos numéricos sugieren un almanaque como el que rodea a la escena de tamaño similar de la página 3a”. El mal estado de conservación de esta banda impide un análisis más detallado.

### Algunas observaciones sobre el nuevo término ‘braguero’

Desgraciadamente, los bloques glíficos (B1 y D1) donde se ubica este término están erosionados casi por completo, impidiendo así la lectura de los signos. A pesar de este inconveniente, es posible presentar algunas observaciones generales acerca de la presunta forma de escribir ‘braguero’ en el almanaque 1c (Tabla 2).

El análisis del dicho fragmento procedente de la edición de Förs-temann parece indicar que en el bloque B1 se encuentran al menos dos elementos: dos círculos (?) y una cabeza zoomorfa o antropomorfa (?). Las fotografías de SLUB no sirven de ayuda en este caso.

El término en cuestión se pudo escribir de tres posibles maneras: 1) con un logograma, 2) con un logograma y sílaba(s) o 3) con sólo sílabas. Parece que la primera opción es menos probable porque se han localizado al menos dos signos en el bloque. El cuadro ilustra posibles formas de escribir dicha palabra (Tabla 3).

Lo fundamental en este caso es tratar de identificar idiomas usados en el Códice de Dresde y especialmente el almanaque 2d y 1c. Según diferentes autores, se pueden detectar influencias de las lenguas de

Grupo I	Grupo II	Grupo III
u-we-xe	we-xe	ye-xe
u-WEX-xe	u-WEX	ye-xi
ye-EX-xe	WEX-xe	ye-EX
ye-EX-xi	WEX-xi	EX-xe
	we-WEX	EX-xi

Tabla 3. Diferentes formas de escribir el término ‘braguero’.

la rama yucatecana y cholana (p. ej. Vail 2000; Wald 2004). El cuadro 3 recopila las formas del término ‘braguero’ en diferentes lenguas mayenses<sup>10</sup>. Asimismo, lo que hace difícil el pleno desciframiento de esta palabra es su única recurrencia (*hapax legomenon*) en el corpus glífico maya<sup>11</sup>.

## Conclusiones

Resumiendo todos los argumentos anteriores, las clasificaciones de los amanuenses, propuestas por varios científicos, deberían ser revisadas. Con base en la investigación realizada de este fragmento del manuscrito, se puede constatar que la página 2 fue ejecutada por dos escribas diferentes. El escriba 1 preparó los almanaques 2a-2c. El escriba 2 fue responsable de confeccionar las secciones 2d y 1c. Debido al deterioro de la página 1, es imposible atribuir con certeza los almanaques 1a y 1b a un escriba en concreto. Asimismo, al reconstruir la sección 1c, se ha identificado un nuevo término en el corpus de textos mayas: ‘braguero’, aunque su pleno desciframiento está abierto a debate.

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<sup>10</sup> Un análisis más detallado de algunas propuestas más del desciframiento se ha publicado en la revista *Studia Europaea Gnesnensis* (Jagodzinski 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Vale la pena mencionar que en la escritura náhuatl *maxtatl*, equivalente al ‘braguero’ en maya, se solía representar como una prenda de ropa anudada (p. ej. Códice Mendoza 13r).

Macarena López Oliva, Zoraida Raimúndez Ares y Elizabeth Wagner resultaron de mucha ayuda para la presente investigación. María Soler Gómez ha realizado amablemente los dibujos de las Figuras 4, 5 y 10.

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# **Codex Painting Practices and Scribal Interactions in Postclassic Mesoamerica: A View from Color's Materiality in the Madrid Codex**

DAVIDE DOMENICI  
University of Bologna  
(davide.domenici@unibo.it)

**Abstract:** The non-invasive chemical analyses performed on the Madrid Codex by the MOLAB mobile laboratory provided new data that are useful to rethink issues such as codex painting practices and scribal interactions in Postclassic Mesoamerica, both of them topics that Alfonso Lacadena tackled in his too short a career. The chemical characterization of the painting materials employed in the manuscript allows a deeper understanding of the work of the various scribes who painted the Madrid Codex, as well as of different aspects of the intellectual and technological interactions that they had with Highland Mexican scribes.

**Resumen:** Los análisis no-invasivos realizados por el laboratorio móvil MOLAB sobre el Códice de Madrid han proporcionado datos que arrojan nueva luz sobre las prácticas artísticas de los pintores de códices, así como sobre las interacciones escriturarias en la Mesoamérica del Posclásico, temas estos que llamaron la atención de Alfonso Lacadena a lo largo de su demasiado breve carrera. La caracterización química de los materiales pictóricos empleados en el manuscrito permite un mayor entendimiento del trabajo de los escribas que pintaron el Códice de Madrid, así como sobre las diferentes modalidades de interacciones intelectuales y tecnológicas que tuvieron con escribas del Altiplano mexicano.

It was October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Alfonso, his wife Laura, Rafael “Rach” Cobos and I were in Ávila, the beautiful Spanish medieval city. That it was the date of the infamous “discovery of America” was pure coincidence. During the two previous days we had been attending a conference on ancient cities in Madrid and it was over a drink that Alfonso had suggested driving us to Ávila. Once there, we strolled around and visited some monuments; we had good food, some drinks and laughed a lot. Inevitably, our conversations often dwindled toward our shared scholarly interests. Alfonso was especially curious about the results of the chemical analyses that, together with other colleagues, we had recently performed on the Madrid Codex, a manuscript that Alfonso himself had thoroughly studied before. We agreed that the new scientific data could provide new insights into issues he had written about, such as the complex manuscript's creation or the evidences of Postclassic interregional scribal interactions.

Then time passed and, even if we met on other occasions, we didn't have the chance to discuss this again; I only marginally tackled some of those themes in a conference presentation in 2013. When the sad news about Alfonso's death reached me, that pleasant day in Ávila came back to my mind. Therefore, when I was invited to participate to this *Gedenkschrift* in his honor, I did not hesitate to retake the issues we had discussed six years ago. I consider it an opportunity to continue a dialogue with such an inspiring and incredibly good-humored colleague.

### The Making of the Madrid Codex

As a member of the project *El Códice Tro-Cortesiano del Museo de América de Madrid*, organized by the Universidad Complutense and the Museo de América (Ciudad Ruiz 2000), Alfonso Lacadena worked primarily on paleographic aspects; his main aim was the identification of the different scribes who intervened on the manuscript, as well as the detection of specific scribal behaviors and their spatial and chronological variations (Ciudad Ruiz et al. 1999; Lacadena 2000). In so doing, he was pushing further a research venue he had pioneered before (see also Satterthwaite 1938; Zimmermann 1956; Lacadena 1995; Sotelo Santos 2002).

The formal variations of a selected set of meaningful signs were thus used by Lacadena to identify discrete *graphic complexes*, each of them corresponding to the work of a scribe. In this way he was able to identify the work of nine distinct scribes, who painted different amounts of the 243 sections that conform the entire manuscript. Each of these scribes displayed his own scribal *tendencies*, such as recurrent graphic preferences, and even intentionally deployed specific ways (blank pages, changes in the number of horizontal bands) to visually distinguish his own work from those previously painted by other artists (Lacadena 2000: 45–47, 56, 78–80).

Within the same project, Luis T. Sanz Castro performed a similar analysis of the formal variations of Madrid Codex's imagery and identified ten different iconographic units, each one potentially corresponding to the work of a single artist. The matching between these ten iconographic units and the nine graphic complexes (that is, scribes) identified by Lacadena was not perfect but still remark-

able; at least some of the mismatches seem to have been caused by the fact that the analysis of the imagery took the page, and not the section, as its basic unit (Sanz Castro 2000: 99–102). Two major differences were anyway noticed: first, a single graphic unit (Sanz Castro's Scribe 2) was identified along the pages whose glyphic texts were attributed to two different scribes (Lacadena's Scribes 2 and 3); second, three different graphic units (Sanz Castro's Scribes 3, 4, and 5) were identified within the pages whose glyphic texts were attributed to a single scribe (Lacadena's Scribe 4), the one who wrote on almost one quarter of the entire manuscript. While Sanz Castro did refrain to establish a direct correspondence between iconographic units and graphic complexes/scribes, Lacadena clearly suggested that the same artist traced both the glyphic text and the images of each section (Ciudad Ruiz et al. 1999: 74, 88–89; Lacadena 2000: 47, 66; Sanz Castro 2000: 99–102).

Since most of the abovementioned analyses focused on the formal variations of writing signs and images, Lacadena's conclusion strictly means that the same person was most probably responsible of both writing and drawing with *the black paint*. And what about the red and blue colors? In his analysis of the behaviors of the different scribes, Lacadena also noticed traits related with coloring patterns, such as the prevalent direction of the blue brush strokes, the intensity of the red color used to divide the sections, or the hue of the blue color, thus implicitly suggesting that the scribe himself also painted the color areas (Lacadena 2000: 56–60, 67, 69, 71 73, 75). Nevertheless, Lacadena and his colleagues rightly warned that changes in color tonality properly indicate different painting sessions rather than the hands of different painters. Within the manuscript, a change in (both blue and red) color tonality sometimes coincides with a change in the artist's hand, but on other occasions they also occur within pages attributed to the same individual; indeed, Scribe 4 would have been responsible of at least fifteen different painting sessions (Ciudad Ruiz et al. 1999: 76; Lacadena 2000: 29–31).

A close inspection of the color occurrences within the manuscript, and especially those of the blue one, reveals interesting patterns: at least in some cases, the different hues of Maya Blue were clearly voluntarily employed. The most telling case is that of the pages attributed to Scribe 1, where the use of a bright and a greyish

hue of Maya Blue makes clear that the greyish one (whose original visual appearance is unknown) was perceived as green, since it was employed to paint green items such as jade earspools; interestingly, the absence of the grey hue in the lower (b) sections of pages M2-M7 suggests the lack of that color in an entire painting session. Scribe 2 voluntarily used two different densities of the bright hue, as can be observed (among many possible examples) in the eyebrow of a snake on M16b or the in turtle's carapace on M17b; different dilutions were employed by the same scribe for visual effects such as the spotted body of the Rain God in M12b. Scribes 3, 4, and 5 only employed the bright hue, with involuntary variations within the color areas due to uneven laying of the paint. Within the work of Scribe 4, the amount of Maya Blue dramatically drops, almost disappearing, from M38 to M49, then reappearing in the following, final sections/sessions; in most of his work, Scribe 4 also employed an especially light tone of the red paint. Scribe 5 did not use colors (apart from red dividing lines and numerals) on pages M57-M59, and started using them only from M60 onwards. Scribe 6 only used the grey hue of Maya Blue, clearly employing it both for blue and green items, with the exception of sections M73a and M74a where the bright hue is employed; in his last painting sessions, including the famous almanac at M75-M76, no Maya Blue is employed. This lack of blue color in some way "anticipates" the following sections painted by Scribe 7, completely lacking Maya Blue and also employing a rather limited amount of red. Maya Blue is also extremely rare in the last pages of the manuscript, painted by scribes 8 and 9; in the pages attributed to the former, the red color shows again a fairly restricted use in the imagery.

Strictly speaking, the association between specific coloring patterns and the pages attributed to the same scribe, as well as the fact that the beginning of the work of a new scribe coincides with a new coloring session, does not necessarily imply the work of a single person. Recurrent associations between scribal tendencies and painting habits (such as painting in horizontal strokes or following the frame line) could suggest the work of a single person, but they could also indicate that each scribe worked with his own team of collaborators, a possibility that cannot completely ruled out. Changing color patterns observed *within* the pages attributed

to the same scribe could either reflect variations in the behavior of an individual or the intervention of different artists; this possibility, or at least the fact that writing and coloring were done during different session, is also suggested by the fact that red is employed for numerals in pages where the same color is completely absent in the imagery. In lack of more compelling evidence, it is safe to adhere to Lacadena's proposal of a single artist writing, drawing and coloring each section, but the possibility of a more collective work should be kept in mind.

For instance, the study of other Mesoamerican manuscripts revealed patterns that suggested the intervention of various artists, each one using a different color. It is the case of the early colonial Codex Mendoza, where systematic and differential uses of colors (such as the frequency of tridimensional effects in green areas, or the amount of errors—such as trespassing the black frame line of the images—in red areas) were interpreted by Kathleen S. Howe as evidence of a collective work done by a number of differently skilled artists. In her words “the consistent use of a particular system of color application for individual pigments indicates a workshop system” (Howe 1992: 29). The various artists would have maybe worked under the supervision of a “master” painter who employed the black color and that was thus the main responsible of the formal aspect of images and glyphs. Even if some of the distinguishing behaviors noticed by Howe could have been induced by material constraints, such as the liquidity of the cochineal lake which also trespassed through the pages of European paper,<sup>1</sup> the possibility that in early colonial Central Mexico codex painting was a collective enterprise, done in workshop-like contexts, is intriguing.

A systematic application of colors is also suggested by details that can be seen on other manuscripts: on Codex Borbonicus' page 28, for example, what should have been a blue area (a horizontal stripe in the banner at the top left corner of the page) was “forgotten” and left unpainted, a fact that suggests some kind of serial work: an area inadvertently left blank by one of the first painters would have been

<sup>1</sup> The practice of mixing clay with cochineal lake, so far detected on codices Fejérvary-Mayer, Laud, Borgia, Bodley, and Selden, could have been precisely aimed at increasing the density of the paint. Interestingly enough, Codex Florentinus' Nahuatl text on cochineal color in Book XI, Chapter 11, includes the expression *nitlatlapaltilahua*, “I thicken cochineal”, see Dupey García 2015: 225, 231.

easily spotted only at the very end of the whole coloring process and, on occasions, not even then. We also identified a constant coloring sequence on Codex Madrid, whose pages were first divided with red lines and then filled with imagery (and glyphs?) drawn with the black paint; after that, the images were colored, first filling the red areas and then the blue ones (Buti et al. 2012: 171). The presence of unpainted areas on the Madrid Codex, on the other hand, is not really telling, since the whole manuscript reveals a very low degree of internal coherence as far as color use is concerned (e.g. the many different color patterns of the elements composing the Rain God), a fact that gives the impression of a very unsystematic, at times even hectic coloring work. Obviously, a recurring coloring sequence does not necessarily imply the intervention of different persons, since a same artist could have sequentially and systematically laid the different colors, using a single-color container and a single brush at one time. But, at the least, the detection of the same sequence in parts of the manuscript whose black lines were traced by different artists suggests the existence of shared, standardized painting practices.

Further insights could proceed from the chemical characterization of the painting materials employed on the manuscript. Which kind of materials did they use? Does the work of each “black line artist” coincide with specific sets of technologically distinct painting materials?

Understanding these aspects could provide new insights into the barely known territory of color production and circulation in ancient Mesoamerica. We do not know, for example, to which degree the paints were produced by specialized craftsmen and then sold or distributed to the artists or if, on the contrary, they were prepared by the artists themselves. It is also possible that such practices changed over time: for instance, it has been argued that while the mural painters working in Classic period Maya royal courts prepared their own colors, Postclassic artists could have purchased them in markets, as suggested by the higher standardization of the employed materials (Magaloni 2001: 187–188; Houston et al. 2009). In Central Mexico, the sale of painting materials in markets—some of them imported from the lowlands and often sold in tablets (actually *tlaxcalli*, ‘tortilla’)—is recorded in various passages of Codex Florentinus’

Books X and XI (see Dupey García 2015). Nevertheless, palatial workshops could have been supplied by patrons who received the colors through tribute: for instance, early colonial documents such as the *Matrícula de Tributos* and *Codex Mendoza* record that Mexico-Tenochtitlan obtained cochineal as a tribute item.

Which part of the colors' preparation process rested in the hands of the painters is unclear: if the extraction of dyes from plants or the technologically complex production of organic-inorganic hybrids could have been performed by specialized craftsmen, painters would have anyway employed the raw materials to prepare the actual paints by producing lakes, diluting and mixing materials, adding fillers, etc. The agency of the actual painters, whose personal preferences and techniques would have created a wide range of different paints, seems to be witnessed by the results of chemical analyses so far performed on pre-Hispanic Nahua and Mixtec codices, which revealed a high degree of material diversity, with no codices perfectly alike in terms of palette (see below); on occasions, the color range also changes within a same manuscript, often in coincidence with limits of thematic sections, indicating that each painter (or group of painters) used one or more sets of colors. In sum, even if the extant corpus of pre-Hispanic manuscripts is so restricted as to prevent any sound generalization, analytical data give the impression of a low degree of standardization in the process of color production in Post-classic Central and Southwestern Mexico.

We had all these questions in mind when, as part of a wider research project, we planned the MOLAB campaign of non-invasive chemical study of the Madrid Codex (Buti et al. 2014).<sup>2</sup> Obviously, the results of the work carried out by Andrés Ciudad Ruiz, Alfonso Lacadena and Luis T. Sanz Castro were instrumental in devising our strategy of analysis. Due to time constraints, we had to select a rather

<sup>2</sup> MOLAB is a European mobile facility of the Center of Excellence SMAArt (*Scientific Methodologies Applied to Archaeology and Art*) of the Perugia University and of CNR-ISTM (Institute of Molecular Science and Technologies of the National Research Council), devised to perform non-invasive analyses of painting materials (Miliani et al. 2010; Brunetti et al. 2016). Since 2009, I have been collaborating with the MOLAB team in a research project focused on non-invasive analyses of pre-Hispanic and colonial Mesoamerican codices; the project has been carried out in the framework of the European projects CHARISMA (*Cultural Heritage Advanced Research Infrastructures: Synergy for a Multidisciplinary Approach to Conservation/Restoration*) and Eu-ARTECH (*Access, Research and Technology for the conservation of the European Cultural Heritage*); for further details on the results so far obtained, see references in note 5.

limited number of color areas to be tested with the various MOLAB instruments. The choice of the points to be tested was further restricted by limitations deriving from the vertical frame in which the codex had to be mounted, as well as from the need to minimize its handling. We had initially hoped to test at least two points of a same color in areas attributed to each of the nine scribes, but we had to limit our analyses to eight pages of the so-called Cortesiano fragment, corresponding to the work of four scribes, namely 1, 2, 5, and 6. The selected points were studied with the following techniques: Visible and infrared (NIR) microscopic imaging, X-ray fluorescence, Reflection mid-FTIR, UV-vis absorption and emission, UV-vis reflection spectroscopy, and Micro-Raman spectroscopy.<sup>3</sup>

The results were extremely uniform all over the manuscript: in fact, despite being one of the longest known Mesoamerican manuscripts, the Madrid Codex displays one of the smallest palettes ever recorded. Its long *amate* paper strip was covered with a white calcium carbonate background and then painted using vegetal carbon black, a red mixture of hematite and kaolin, and Maya Blue, the organic-inorganic hybrid pigment prepared with indigo and paligorskite clay.

The absence of magnesium carbonate impurities in the background suggests that the lime was obtained from calcareous limestone typical of the Yucatan peninsula, rather than with the dolomitic limestone that often occurs in the Southern Lowlands; this trait, joined with the absence of calcium sulphate, makes the painting surface of the Madrid Codex similar to the Maya mural painting surfaces that Diana Magaloni assigned to Technical Group 2, typical of north-eastern Yucatan from Late Classic (AD 600–900) onwards (Magaloni 2001: 169). The fact that the measurement of the white background gave identical results on both sides of the codex suggests that the whole manuscript was prepared in a single working session. If used when only few sections had been painted, the codex would have thus included lots of blank pages, ready to be painted by future scribes. This would not have been unusual: some codices show today a completely blank side (e.g. Codex Selden) and in some instances the two sides of a single manuscript were obviously painted in different periods (Codex Nuttall, Codex Vindobonensis), probably even in different locations (Codex Cospi; see below);

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed description of the techniques see Buti et al. 2014: 169–170.

even more to the point, Codex Cospi *recto* is only painted on thirteen of its twenty pages, leaving seven of them blank.

Even if vegetal carbon black is almost invisible to our instruments—its presence is inferred from negative evidence—microscopic observation on the Madrid Codex showed that while the outlines of the figures and the hieroglyphic inscriptions were painted with a compact and very covering black paint, the inner black areas of the figures are often much more degraded, painted with a less covering paint. Such difference, probably due to the use of a different binder, suggests that black areas within the figures were filled during the subsequent coloring process that also involved red and blue paints.

The red color used all over the manuscript, in different hues varying from brownish to orangey, is a mixture of hematite and kaolin. This mixture is the same that was employed in the mural paintings of Mayapan's Temple of the Fisherman Mural (Q95) and of the Hall of Solar Symbols (Q161) (see Vázquez de Ágredos Pascual 2010: 213), a technological link also matched by clear iconographic analogies between the Madrid Codex and Q95 murals (Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003a: 29).

It must be noticed that the uniformity of the analytical results is in part due to limitations of the instrumental set up: non-invasive spectroscopic techniques cannot easily detect binders and are usually devoid of quantitative significance. This warning is especially important for the blue areas, since all of them gave the same signals indicating the presence of indigo and paligorskite, not detecting compositional differences even in those areas where chromatic variations are clearly visible to the naked eye (as previously observed by Andrés Escalera in 1994; Escalera, personal communication, 2012), as in the case of the pages attributed to Scribes 1 and 2. Indeed, the variations within the chromatic range of Maya Blue, invisible to our instruments, could have depended not on its constituent materials but on different preparation techniques, such as variations in temperature and dilution. Apparently, most of these variations (excepting those of scribes 1 and 2) were unintentional, sometimes coinciding with different painting sessions and thus probably depending on involuntary variations during the preparation of the paint.

Despite the abovementioned instrumental limitations, the general uniformity of the results obtained on the Madrid Codex is still striking. Even if unfortunately dismissing the possibility of matching the scribes' works with specific painting materials, it clearly shows that the various artists shared a very similar, often identical, set of painting materials; all this bespeaks of a material and technological standardization that what has been previously observed for Postclassic Maya mural painting. Considering that the amount of Maya Blue drops dramatically—or even disappears—in coincidence with the work of scribes 7, 8, and 9, and especially that this trait is “anticipated” in the last pages painted by Scribe 6, we can also imagine that the various artists participated in a same sphere of pigment circulation, at times suffering some kind of shortage of the precious blue pigment, as also suggested by the lack of this color in specific painting sessions attributed to Scribe 4.

Lacadena proposed that the scribes who painted the Madrid Codex could have been priests that sequentially inherited the manuscript, thus following a pattern similar to the one recorded by Alfonso Villa Rojas (1987) in the Yucatec settlement of X-Cacal, where a single manuscript was sequentially owned by four members (three generations) of a family at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lacadena 1995: 52–53). Nevertheless, we do not know if such pattern, with individual priests adding new contents to their own manuscripts, could have been also common in more formal institutional settings, especially during pre-Hispanic periods marked by a higher degree of political centralization. Lacadena himself, wondering if the preservation (and, arguably, the creation) of manuscripts was either a centralized or an individualized activity, cited an interesting passage from Diego de Landa, where the Franciscan wrote that the *Ah Kin May* priests of Mayapan were high religious officials who painted books and even distributed them to lesser priests sent to provincial settlements. In such a centralized system, the priests could have been trained in *calmecac*-like schools, where they would have also learnt the art of codex painting (Tozzer 1941: 27, cited in Lacadena 2010: 399; see also Love 1994: 13).

The strong graphic and material uniformity witnessed by both visual inspection and scientific analyses of the Madrid Codex, apparently in contrast with the many “hands” who worked on it, suggests

that the various scribes not only worked within a same (Postclassic-early colonial) late “stylistic period” of Maya writing culture (Lacadena 1995: 289–413; 2000: 31), but also that they shared more localized painting practices, and perhaps even common circuits of pigments’ production and distribution. In such a situation, more than a lineal, inter-generational inheriting of the manuscript, one could imagine the sequential work of artists working in a same workshop, probably over a not too long time period. The abovementioned similarity between the hematite and kaolin red color employed by all the artists working on the Madrid Codex and the one used on late, “Mexicanized” Mayapan murals (Q95, Q161), dated to the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003a: 29), even raise the possibility—as previously suggested by G. Vail (cited in Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003a: 28; Vail 2015: 461)—that the manuscript could have been painted in Mayapan itself. Such an hypothesis would be coherent with the proposed dating of some Madrid Codex almanacs to AD 1436–37 (Bricker 1996: 172–180; Graff 1996: 167), with its usage of the yearbearers of the Mayapan calendar (Vail and Hernández 2006; Hernández and Vail 2010: 351–358), with similarities between objects represented on the codex and northern Yucatec material culture (e.g. Graff 2000; Graff and Vail 2001; Paxton 2004), as well as with the fact that the manuscript was most probably confiscated by a Spanish official in Northern Yucatan (Chuchiak 2004).<sup>4</sup> In light of this possible link between the Madrid Codex and Mayapan, it would be tempting to correlate the shortage of Maya Blue that seems to have affected the work of scribes 7, 8, and 9 with the progressive disruption of trade networks that must have accompanied the last, troubled decades of Mayapan’s life during the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Masson and Peraza Lope 2010: 80).

## Postclassic Scribal Interactions

Another topic that sparked Alfonso Lacadena’s curiosity and that could be fruitfully approached from the point of view of materials’ analyses is that of interregional scribal interactions. Postclassic Maya scribes, and especially those working in centralized institutional settings such as the one sketched above, must have worked in

<sup>4</sup> For a synthesis of the debate concerning the provenance and dating of the Madrid Codex see Vail and Aveni 2004: 10–14.

a dynamic intellectual environment, with intense flows of information being exchanged with distant regions, both within and outside the Maya area. A telling symptom of such cultural dynamism is the fact that some of the scribes who worked on the Madrid and Dresden codices were clearly bilingual, being proficient both in Yucatecan and in the prestigious Ch'olan languages (Wald 1994, cited in Lacadena 1997: 185; Lacadena 1995: 310–312; 1997; Ciudad Ruiz y Lacadena 1999: 885; Vail 2015: 453). They were copying old manuscripts, even of Classic origin, but they must have also obtained coeval codices from the Maya area and from Highland Mexico, maybe exchanged as gifts among priests (Hernández and Vail 2010: 360). Gift-giving practices associated to noble marriages must have also been occasions in which codices crossed ethnic and linguistic boundaries all over Mesoamerica: the frequent intermarriages among Nahua, Mixtec, and Zapotec noble lines described by John Pohl are a good case in point (Pohl 2003a, 2004); a similar scenario has also been invoked to account for foreign presence in Postclassic Mayapan (Masson and Peraza Lope 2010: 102). In the opinion of Elizabeth Boone, the imperial expansion of the Triple Alliance could have further fostered the circulation of codices, carried by merchants, military chiefs, imperial officers, ambassadors and nobles marrying into foreign aristocratic lineages (Boone 2003: 207).

Such an intense circulation of manuscripts must have been embedded in wider, even pan-Mesoamerican intellectual flows of ritual, astronomical, and calendrical information (Smith 2003). The Mixtec, Cuicatec and Chocho elements identified by Élodie Dupey García and Jamie E. Forde in the repainted pages of Codex Vaticanus B are perhaps the fruit of similar interregional exchanges between the Eastern Nahua area and the Oaxaca region (Dupey García and Forde in prep.); similar phenomena seem to be witnessed by the “Mexican” stylistic traits of Codex Nuttall.

It is not surprising, then, that some of the most compelling evidences of Mexican-Maya scribal interactions come precisely from Postclassic Maya codices, as noticed long ago (Thomas 1884; Seler 1889, 1904). Foreign Mixtec and “Toltec” stylistic elements observed on the Grolier Codex testify that such interactions were already well in place in the Early Postclassic (Boone 2003: 220; Coe et al. 2015: 129) and probably much before than that. Unfortunately, no

earlier manuscripts were preserved, but calendric inscriptions on Terminal Classic Maya monuments witness the adoption of a Highland calendar system to record Venus' heliacal risings (Lacadena 2010: 384–390), a phenomenon related with the pan-Mesoamerican diffusion of the Venus/Quetzalcoatl cult (Ringle et al. 1998; López Austin and López Luján 1999); it is not surprising then that the Venus cycle is precisely the main topic of the extant fragment of the Grolier Codex. A few centuries later, probably at the mid of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Venus cycle was again an important concern for the scribes that traced the Venus Table of Codex Dresden, where they also phonetically recorded the Nahuatl names of Venus' manifestations (Whittaker 1986; Taube and Bade 1991).

As widely known, some of the stronger evidences of Nahuatl–Maya intellectual exchanges proceed precisely from the Madrid Codex, whose “Mexican” almanacs—that is, showing clear links with cognate almanacs of the Borgia Group codices—have been the object of extensive scholarship in the last decades (Just 2000, 2004; Boone 2003; Hernández 2004; Hernández and Bricker 2004; Pohl 2004; Boone 2005; Bricker 2010; Hernández and Vail 2010; Macri 2010; Vail and Hernández 2013; Vail 2015). Moreover, similar and previously unnoticed connections linking the Madrid Codex and the repainted pages of Codex Vaticanus B are currently being studied by Gabrielle Vail and Élodie Dupey García (Dupey García, personal communication, 2018).

Commenting on the correspondences between almanacs of the Borgia and Madrid codices, Christine Hernández and Victoria Bricker stated that “the correspondences between the Madrid and Borgia codices are too systematic and pervasive to be coincidental or to have arisen from some common Pan-Mesoamerican calendrical tradition. The evidence we have discovered suggests that some form of scribal translation took place, in which the author or authors of the Madrid Codex reconfigured the information on several pages of the Borgia Codex” (Hernández and Bricker 2004: 314). The specific modes of such a scribal translation are debated: some scholars stressed the importance of the circulation of portable objects, including codices (Macri 2010: 194, 207); others maintain that the artifacts alone were not enough to foster such an intense process of cultural translation. C. Hernández and V. Bricker, for example, not only proposed that

the scribes of the Madrid Codex could have owned a Central Mexican manuscript but they also suggested that Nahua scribes could have even personally contributed to the creation of some of its sections (Hernández and Bricker 2004: 314–315). According to C. Hernández and G. Vail, the intellectual exchange witnessed by Madrid Codex's almanacs happened “among scribes of similar standing, training, and talent” (Hernández and Vail 2010: 359). In the same vein, G. Vail spoke about “a close connection [...] between the scribes” that painted the cognate almanacs on codices Borgia and Madrid (Vail 2013).

Alfonso Lacadena raised a similar point in his analysis of the different waves of intellectual exchange between Central Mexico and the Maya area. Stressing the key role played by codices in such processes, he observed the use on Maya codices of iconographic traits typical of the Postclassic International style and of Highland Mexican manuscripts, such as the “lambda” position of human legs, flint blades, darts with feathered beds, water represented as a canal, floating images, etc. In Lacadena's view, such intense borrowing or foreign pictorial conventions could not have been brought about by “an inert object that travels and changes hand [...]. It must be accompanied by the human element, which provides meaning to it” (Lacadena 2010: 398). In agreement with V. Bricker, C. Hernández and G. Vail, Lacadena stated that the adoption of Highland Mexican iconographic traits by Maya artists “involved more than a casual meeting at a trading port or the acquisition of a foreign codex or a curious carved object. It was the result of a continuous intercommunication between literate people during long periods of time” (Lacadena 2010: 398).

In such an intellectually dynamic context, involving face-to-face interactions among scribes, one would expect an intense exchange of painting practices and technologies. To further explore this point, we can again look at the results of chemical analyses recently carried out on Central Mexican and Mixtec manuscripts. As previously mentioned, no two measured codices are alike but it is anyway possible to glimpse the existence of different technological groups, arguably reflecting different technological traditions: their detailed treatment is well beyond the scope of the present article, but a brief

description can be provided.<sup>5</sup> A first technological group, represented by Codex Borgia and Codex Cospi *recto* and maybe originated in the Tlaxcala-Northern Puebla area, is defined by the use of painting materials such as yellow, orange and brown hybrids (organic dyes + clay), paligorskite-based Maya Blue (mixed with sepiolite on Codex Borgia), and a green obtained by superimposing an indigo layer on top of a yellow hybrid. A second group is integrated by codices Laud and Fejérvary-Mayer that, according to Álvarez Icaza (2014), could have been painted in the Tehuacán region; in many ways similar to the previous one, it is mainly distinguished (perhaps as a late offshoot) by the use of gypsum (calcium sulphate dihydrate) + aragonite backgrounds and of arsenic trisulphide, or orpiment. A third group, originated in the Mixteca Alta, includes codices Bodley and Selden (the latter colonial in date but fully traditional in its palette), and is characterized by the employment of blue hybrids prepared with *Commelina* sp. dye and sepiolite clay (with no “proper”, indigo + paligorskite, Maya Blue save for minor, later repaintings on Codex Bodley).

The abovementioned technological groups are not tightly separated, since they share many common elements (calcium sulphate backgrounds, lakes prepared adding alum to cochineal or to yellow and orange dyes), some of them even of a pan-Mesoamerican kind (vegetal carbon black). Nevertheless, other manuscripts do show traits that seem to be the fruit of specific interregional interactions and technological exchanges. A first example of the interregional circulation of manuscripts is Codex Cospi: the entire surface of the manuscript was covered with a white layer of gypsum and its *recto* was painted (perhaps in the Tlaxcala-Northern Puebla area) using a palette in many ways similar to that employed on Codex Borgia, a manuscript that also shows clear stylistic affinities. Then, later on, the manuscript was probably transported to the region where codices Laud and Fejérvary-Mayer were produced; there, its still blank *verso* was painted by an artist employing a local palette including orpiment, as well as local visual resources such as the bar-and-dot-like arrangement of offerings. A slightly different case is perhaps that of

<sup>5</sup> The following synthesis is mostly based on the results of the non-invasive analyses so far carried out by our MOLAB project; see Miliani et al. 2012; Buti et al. 2014; Domenici et al. 2014, 2017, 2018, in press; Buti et al. 2018; Grazia et al. 2018.

Codex Nuttall: after that its pages were completely prepared with a gypsum white layer, its *verso* was painted with a palette including “proper” indigo + paligorskite Maya Blue, a trait that distinguishes it from other Mixtec codices such as Bodley and Selden, whose blue areas were painted with a *Commelinia* + sepiolite hybrid pigment; later on, Codex Nuttall’s *recto* was painted using not only “proper” Maya Blue, but also orpiment, employed both in yellow areas and as a component of a green color. Rather than a movement of the manuscript, these technological traits suggest that the Mixtec artists who created both sides of Codex Nuttall had some kind of connections with Eastern Nahua artists from the Southern Puebla area, where “proper” Maya Blue and orpiment were commonly employed; such interactions seem to be also witnessed by the “Mexican” stylistic traits that can be perceived in the codex’s imagery. Similar inter-ethnic interactions, maybe also involving a geographical displacement of the manuscript, are suggested by Codex Vaticanus B: the analyses recently performed on the manuscript revealed that the artists who painted its pages (both the original and the repainted ones) employed highly unusual palettes including sepiolite-based blue hybrids, suggesting some kind of interaction with the Mixtec technological tradition where sepiolite clay was widely employed; again, this “Oaxacan connection” seem to be confirmed by the abovementioned Mixtec iconographic elements recently identified by E. Dupey García and J.T. Forde on Codex Vaticanus B’s repainted pages. The scenario sketched so far, as provisional and tentative as it can be due to the very restricted number of extant manuscripts, is coherent with the existence of Central and Southwestern Mexican networks of interregional interaction that fostered the exchange of codices, painting materials, and technological knowledge.

If we try to add to this picture the Maya area, the result is at first sight disappointing, since the abundant iconographic, linguistic and calendric evidence of Nahua-Maya interactions seems not to be matched by evidence of equally intense technological exchanges. The still poorly known Maya technological tradition of codex painting, well represented by the Madrid Codex, is characterized by the use of very restricted palettes, strongly differing from the Central and Southwestern Mexican ones: according to currently available data, Postclassic Maya scribes favored the use calcium carbonate back-

grounds (vs. calcium sulphate ones), of mineral red pigments (vs. cochineal lakes) and of “proper” Maya Blue.<sup>6</sup> Again, the boundary between Maya and non-Maya technological traditions was not impassable: Codex Grolier, for example, employs an unusual calcium sulphate background (Ruvalcaba et al. 2008) similar to those used in Central and Southwestern Mexico and thus suggesting connections also witnessed by the Mixtec and “Toltec” traits of its iconography. More importantly, the widespread use of “proper” Maya Blue in Highland Mexico required paligorskite (or the Maya Blue pigment itself) to be imported from Northeastern Yucatan (Arnold 2005), as had been happening since Epiclassic times.

Nevertheless, despite these clear evidences of intellectual and commercial interactions, it is quite clear that Postclassic Maya scribes did not adopt the chromatic and technological complexity of Central and Southwestern Mexican palettes. Save for the indigo they employed to produce Maya Blue and for the use of cochineal (limited to the Grolier Codex), they almost completely ignored the wide chromatic range offered by those organic dyes so often used by Nahua and Mixtec scribes. Even if some of their choices could have been driven by geological and environmental reasons, it is quite clear that this was the result of a voluntary cultural selection, maybe related with the cultural prestige and symbolic value of the four/five basic colors, usually associated with cardinal directions and maize varieties (Houston et al. 2009). A similar process of cultural selection seems to be reflected by the parallel restriction of the palette employed in Maya mural paintings, where the complex polychromy displayed by Classic Maya mural art was completely abandoned in Postclassic times. Actually, the resemblance between the Madrid Codex palette and mural paintings such as those of the Postclassic Maya site of Rancho Ina is striking and obviously not incidental.

<sup>6</sup> At the moment of writing only the results of our analyses on the Madrid Codex, those performed by José Luis Ruvalcaba and colleagues on the Grolier Codex (Ruvalcaba et al. 2008), as well as the old ones carried out by Rudolph Schwede (1912) have been published; nevertheless, non-invasive analyses have been recently carried out also on the Paris Codex by Fabien Pottier and his French colleagues, while a second set of analyses was performed on the Grolier Codex (recently renamed as the “Maya Codex of Mexico”) by a Mexican team led by Gerardo Gutiérrez. These analyses will surely enrich our understanding of Postclassic Maya scribal palette, since the Paris Codex includes a yellowish color, absent on Madrid and Grolier codices; on the other hand, a previously unnoticed use of cochineal has been identified (beside hematite) on the Grolier (Gerardo Gutiérrez, personal communication, 2018).

The behavior of Postclassic Maya scribes, whose painting practices and choices of coloring materials were apparently driven by local cultural norms and values, is not unique. A comparative analysis of the technological changes affecting codex painting in early colonial Central Mexico suggested a similar process, since technological innovations seem to have been determined more by changes in the habits of the indigenous scribes (who started using local materials never used before in codex painting) than by the availability of new materials of European origin (Domenici et al. 2018).

## Conclusions

The material dimension of the Madrid Codex bespeaks of groups of Postclassic Maya scribes painting in a workshop-like setting where they shared common painting practices, including the use of quite standardized painting materials, probably produced and distributed through institutionalized commercial networks. Material and iconographic analogies between the Madrid Codex and some late mural paintings at Mayapan even suggests that the powerful Yucatec capital, where codices were painted and distributed according to Landa, could have been the very place where the Madrid Codex was produced in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Lacadena himself (2010: 398–399) stated that Mayapan must have provided the perfect political and institutional environment for the interregional scribal interactions that left their traces in the Madrid Codex. In fact, archaeological, iconographic and ethnohistorical data indicate that it was a cosmopolitan city, “at a crossroads of cultural contact between central Mexican and Maya areas of Late Postclassic Mesoamerica” (Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003a: 40).<sup>7</sup> Even in the final decades of Mayapan’s life, when “Mexicanized” murals were being painted on its buildings, Nahua traders and artists would have gone to the Yucatec center to meet their Canul partners and purchase exotic items, Maya Blue being probably one of the most coveted (Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003a: 30, 35). Their presence would have induced an intense exchange of reli-

<sup>7</sup> On Mayapan as a place of interregional interaction see Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003a, 2003b; Pohl 2004; Andrews 2010; Lacadena 2010; Masson and Peraza Lope 2010; Milbrath et al. 2010; Vail 2015.

gious, astronomical, calendrical and iconographic knowledge that the local Maya scribes learnt, translated, adapted and deployed in their own works. Multilingual and polyedric artists such as Madrid Codex's Scribe 4, masterfully described by Lacadena (2010: 401), must have consulted Nahua and Mixtec manuscripts, maybe even appreciated their rich polychromy, but they nevertheless decided not to widen the restricted, traditional palette they were using. It is difficult for us to adequately grasp the specific reasons behind their choice, perhaps due to specific symbolic tenets or ritual customs (cf. Pohl 2003b, 2004). At the very least, their behavior is a welcome warning against too mechanical, diffusionist-like views of scribal interaction, a phenomenon in which the "borrowers" were far from being passive actors: their choices either to adopt, adapt or refuse exogenous knowledge and technologies were clearly deliberate acts driven by local cultural norms and values.

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# Influencias de manuscritos de tradición Mixteca–Puebla en el Códice de Dresde

DIEGO RUIZ PÉREZ

Investigador independiente

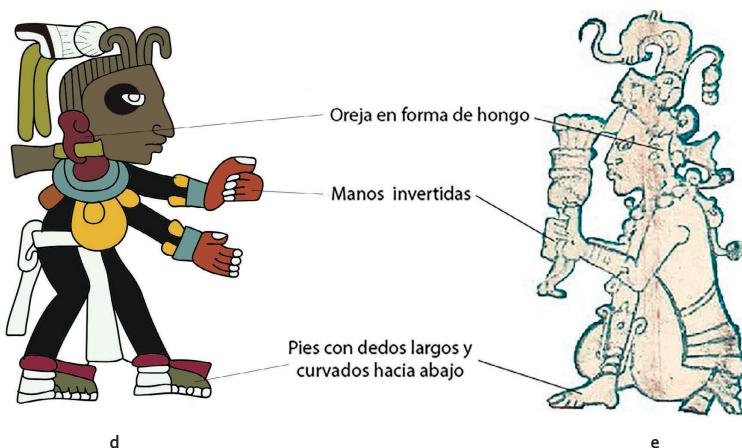
(d\_ruizperez@hotmail.com)

**Resumen:** Los cuatro códices mayas conservados presentan un estilo alejado de los cánones artísticos del período Clásico. Diversos investigadores han propuesto que se trata de un estilo propio. No obstante, en 2010, Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo planteó que los códices mayas recibieron influencias de manuscritos de tradición Mixteca–Puebla. Siguiendo su trabajo, en este artículo se analizan iconográficamente diversos elementos del Códice de Dresde para demostrar que tuvo influencias de los códices del Centro de México.

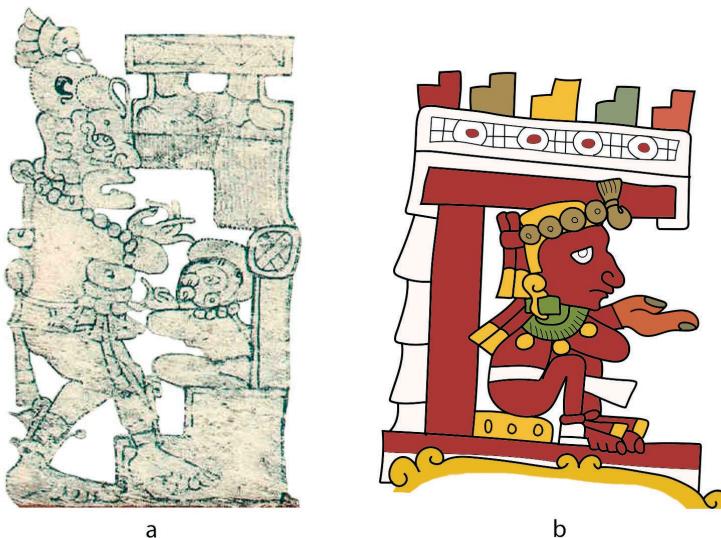
**Abstract:** The four preserved Maya codices present a style that is far from the artistic canons of the Classic period. Several researchers have proposed that it is a different style. However, in 2010, Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo proposed that the Maya codices were influenced by manuscripts of the Mixteca–Puebla tradition. Following his work, in this paper diverse elements of the Dresden Codex are analyzed iconographically to demonstrate that it was influenced by the codices of Central Mexico.

El presente artículo surgió en 2016 con motivo de la elaboración de un trabajo final para la asignatura *Introducción al Códice de Dresde*, impartida por el Dr. Erik Velásquez García en la UNAM. Hablando del tema con Alfonso, me sugirió aplicar su estudio *Highland Mexican and Maya Intellectual Exchange in the Late Postclassic* al Códice de Dresde con el objetivo de probar que este manuscrito maya tuvo una clara influencia de los códices mexicanos de tradición Mixteca–Puebla, así como buscar nuevos rasgos análogos. Por ello, creo que es el trabajo más indicado para formar parte de un volumen dedicado a mi maestro y amigo, puesto que, gracias a su idea, pudo desarrollarse.

Durante el Posclásico Temprano (950–1200 d.C.) surgió un nuevo estilo artístico conocido como “Mixteca–Puebla”. Este nombre fue acuñado por George Vaillant para definir un conjunto de rasgos iconográficos de la pintura y la escultura que aparecieron en el Centro de México —centro y sur del estado de Puebla, el actual estado de Tlaxcala, las Mixtecas y el valle de Oaxaca— (Vaillant 1938; Escalante Gonzalbo 2010: 37). Esta tradición artística, también conocida como “estilo Internacional Posclásico”, se extendió por gran parte de Mesoamérica llegando incluso hasta el área maya a



**Figura 1.** Comparación de la proporción de figuras humanas entre códices Posclásicos (1:3–1:4) y una pintura del Clásico (1:7–1:8): a) Códice Nuttall, página 1 (dibujo de Diego Ruiz Pérez), b) Códice de Dresde, D17a (cromolitografía de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA), c) Bonampak, Cuarto 1, Mural Este (dibujo de Diego Ruiz Pérez). Figuras antropomorfas con rasgos propios del estilo Internacional Posclásico: d) Códice Nuttall, página 1 (dibujo de Diego Ruiz Pérez), e) Códice de Dresde, D6b (cromolitografía de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA).



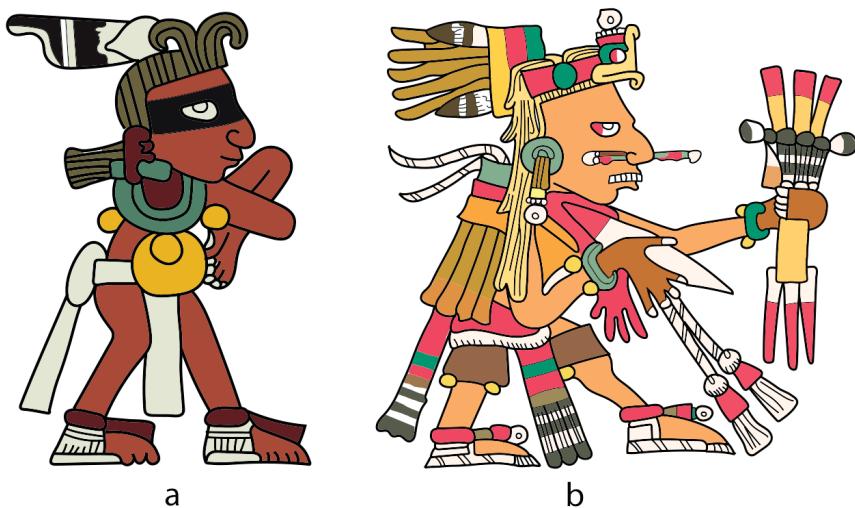
**Figura 2.** Templos escalados a un tamaño menor respecto a las figuras: *a)* Códice de Dresde, D8c (cromolitografía de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA), *b)* Códice Nuttall, página 9 (dibujo de Diego Ruiz Pérez).

través de las rutas comerciales reactivadas durante el Epiclásico y el Posclásico Temprano (Escalante Gonzo y Yanagisawa 2008: 61).

Algunos investigadores han propuesto que los códices mayas —Madrid, Dresde, París y el Códice Maya de México— no pertenecen a este estilo, englobándolos dentro de un género propio (Boone y Smith 2003: 187). No obstante, si se comparan los manuscritos mayas con los de tradición Mixteca-Puebla, se aprecian elementos con características muy similares entre ellos que refutan esta teoría.

El análisis iconográfico del Códice de Dresde permite observar muchos de los rasgos que caracterizan a los manuscritos de estilo Internacional Posclásico. En primer lugar, hay que destacar que las figuras representadas se encuentran delimitadas por una gruesa línea denominada línea-marco. El contorno de la misma no varía y su única utilidad es delimitar las áreas de color, las cuales carecen de sombreados (Escalante Gonzo 2010: 48).

La adopción de esta nueva expresión artística se distanció de los cánones del naturalismo iconográfico que imperaban en el período Clásico maya. Las figuras, mostradas de perfil, se pintaron más esquemáticas y dejaron de estar proporcionadas, perdiéndose la escala de los cuerpos, que se dibujaron pequeños en comparación con la



**Figura 3.** Piernas en posición “lambda” característica del estilo Internacional Posclásico: a) Códice Nuttall, página 1, b) Códice Borgia, página 23 (dibujos de Diego Ruiz Pérez).

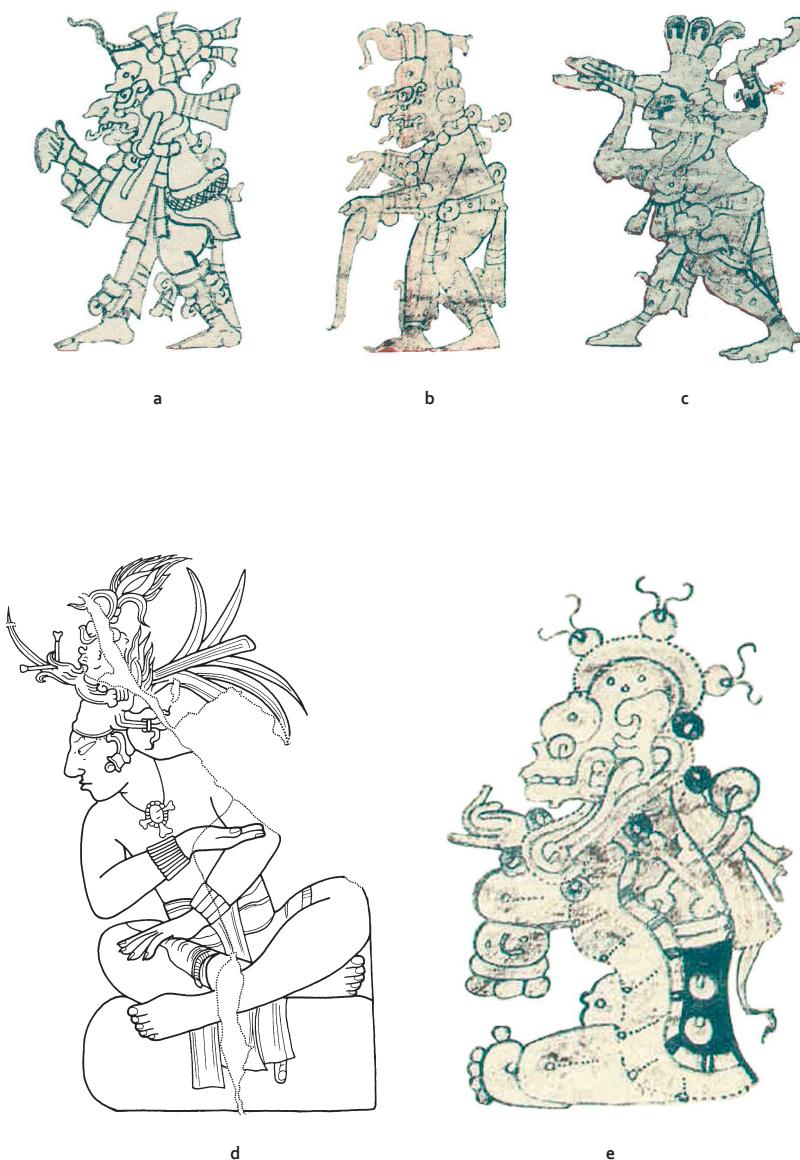
cabeza, manos y pies (Escalante Gonzalbo y Yanagisawa 2008: 63; Escalante Gonzalbo 2010: 39). Se dejaron de simbolizar escenas creíbles para el espectador y, en su lugar, se buscó enfatizar la acción de los individuos representados para centrar la atención en el mensaje a transmitir (Figura 1a-c)<sup>1</sup>.

Además, las figuras antropomorfas poseían una serie de rasgos iconográficos característicos de la tradición Mixteca-Puebla: oreja en forma de hongo, posición invertida de las manos, uñas muy visibles y dedos de los pies sobresaliendo de las sandalias y curvados hacia abajo (Escalante Gonzalbo 2010: 50) (Figura 1d-e).

Por otro lado, los elementos que conformaban una escena se representaron con diferentes escalas, sobre todo las construcciones arquitectónicas o los árboles (Figura 2), que adquirieron un tamaño menor al de los personajes (Escalante Gonzalbo 2010: 49).

Además de todas estas generalidades, en el Códice de Dresde se aprecian una serie de rasgos que también son característicos de la tradición Mixteca-Puebla, como la postura en “lambda” de las piernas de los individuos representados de pie, la forma de sentarse

<sup>1</sup> Las cromolitografías de Ernst Förstemann usadas en este trabajo están disponibles en FAMSI: [http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/dresden\\_fors\\_schele\\_all.pdf](http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/pdf/dresden_fors_schele_all.pdf).



**Figura 4.** Ejemplos de personajes con postura de piernas en "lambda" en el Códice de Dresde: a) D33a, b) D39b, c) D60a (cromolitografías de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA). Representaciones mayas de figuras humanas sentadas a la manera oriental: d) Bonampak, Panel 5 (dibujo de Alexander Safronov), e) Códice de Dresde, D12b (cromolitografía de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA).



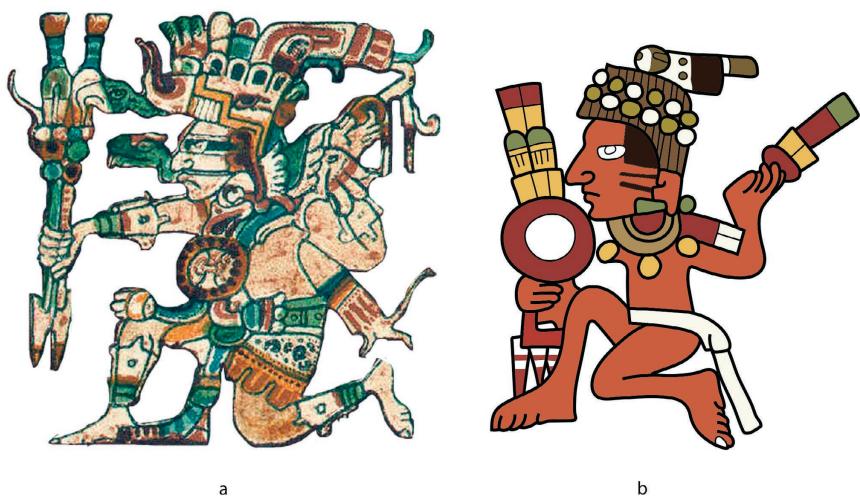
**Figura 5.** Figuras sentadas a la manera tradicional del estilo Mixteca–Puebla: a) Códice de Dresde, D2ob (cromolitografía de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA), b) Códice Nuttall, página 11 (dibujo de Diego Ruiz Pérez).

de algunos personajes o la postura de ataque de ciertas figuras beligerantes; así como determinados elementos como las lanzas de pedernal, el “árbol-ofidio”, las representaciones de determinados animales o los canales seccionados.

### Piernas en posición “lambda”

Uno de los rasgos característicos de los manuscritos de tradición Mixteca–Puebla es la posición de las piernas de los personajes que permanecen de pie y que Alfonso denominó “lambda” por su semejanza con la forma de la letra griega ( $\lambda$ ). Se trata de una postura en la que ambos pies se encuentran apoyados en el suelo, con una de las piernas adelantada y la otra flexionada hacia atrás (Lacadena García-Gallo 2010: 394) (Figura 3).

Esta pose parece ser desconocida en la plástica maya del período Clásico, puesto que no se utilizó en representaciones iconográficas. Sin embargo, en el Códice de Dresde se pintaron un total de 45 individuos de pie en esta posición (Figura 4a–c). Es interesante destacar que, de los seis escribas que pintaron el Dresde, el denominado



**Figura 6.** Figuras en actitud de ataque con una rodilla hincada en el suelo y la otra pierna flexionada: a) Códice de Dresde, D49b (cromolitografía de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Ángeles County Museum of Art, LACMA), b) Códice Nuttall, página 8 (dibujo de Diego Ruiz Pérez).

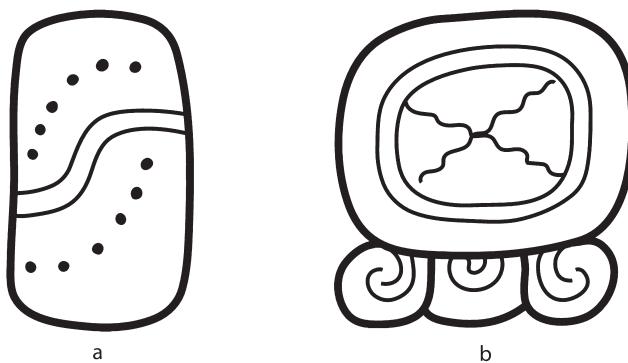
Escriba 6 (D42c–D45) fue el único que no pintó ninguna figura con las piernas en posición “lambda”.

### Forma de sentarse a la manera del estilo Mixteca-Puebla

Por lo general, durante el período Clásico los artistas mayas representaron a los diferentes personajes —tanto del ámbito terrenal como del sobrenatural— sentados a la manera oriental, también denominada “flor de loto”, que consistía en cruzar las piernas de manera horizontal (Figura 4d).

Esta forma de sentarse es la más representada en el Códice de Dresde (Figura 4e). Sin embargo, no es la única y, en ocasiones, algunos personajes sedentes aparecen con la postura característica del estilo Internacional Posclásico: el individuo se sienta con las rodillas flexionadas verticalmente y la planta de los pies apoyada en el suelo (Figura 5).

En el Códice de Dresde hay un total de 47 imágenes de personajes sentados a la manera de la tradición Mixteca-Puebla, en comparación con las 147 representaciones de individuos en postura de flor de loto. A diferencia de lo que pasa con otros rasgos y elementos anali-



**Figura 7.** a) Logograma **TOK'**, 'pedernal', b) Signo calendárico **ETZ'NAB'**, 'pedernal' (dibujos de Diego Ruiz Pérez).

zados en este artículo, todos los escribas pintaron figuras sentadas a la manera tradicional del Centro de México.

### **Postura de ataque propia del estilo Posclásico Internacional**

En el Códice de Dresde también se pintaron algunos personajes armados con escudos y lanzas en posición de ataque, actitud propia de los códices de estilo Internacional Posclásico (Erik Velásquez García, comunicación personal, 2016). Se trata de una postura donde una rodilla está hincada en el suelo mientras la otra pierna se flexiona, posando la planta del pie en el suelo (Figura 6).

Esta actitud de ataque tan particular de los códices centromexicanos se representa en el Dresde en tres ocasiones (D46b, D48b y D49b), todas ellas pintadas por el Escriba 3.

### **Lanzas de pedernal**

Como se acaba de comprobar, en los manuscritos mayas no es extraño encontrar personajes que portan lanzas en sus manos. Las puntas de las mismas son de pedernal, material que en la iconografía maya se representó de dos maneras: mediante una línea con forma de S rodeada por puntos, como se aprecia en el logograma **TOK'**, *tok'*, 'pedernal', o bien mediante dos líneas ondulantes cruzadas en diagonal, como fue el caso del signo **ETZ'NAB'** —día 'pedernal' del calendario maya— (Lacadena García-Gallo 2010: 391) (Figura 7).



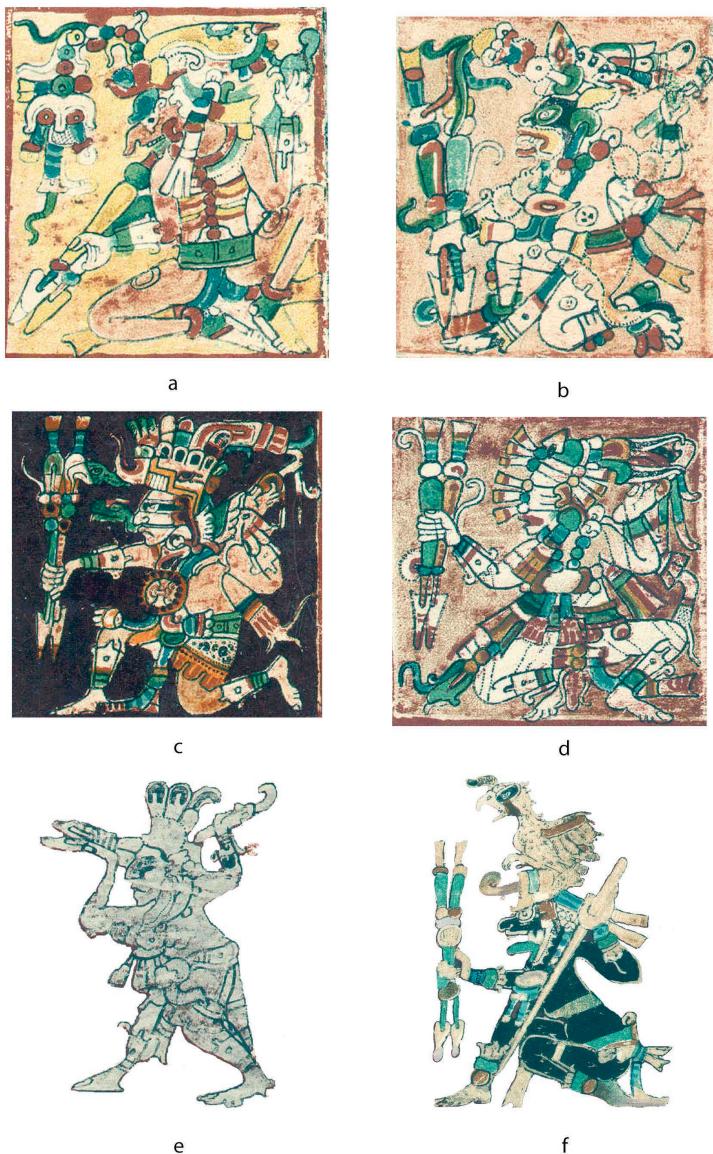
**Figura 8.** Ejemplos de lanzas de pedernal con motivo gráfico **ETZ'NAB'** en el Códice de Dresde: a) D67a, b) D69c (cromolitografías de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA).

Es de esta segunda forma como aparecen las lanzas representadas en las páginas D60, D66, D67 y D69 del Códice de Dresden (Figura 8). Asimismo, hay que reseñar que su filo tiene una forma redondeada similar a una almendra.

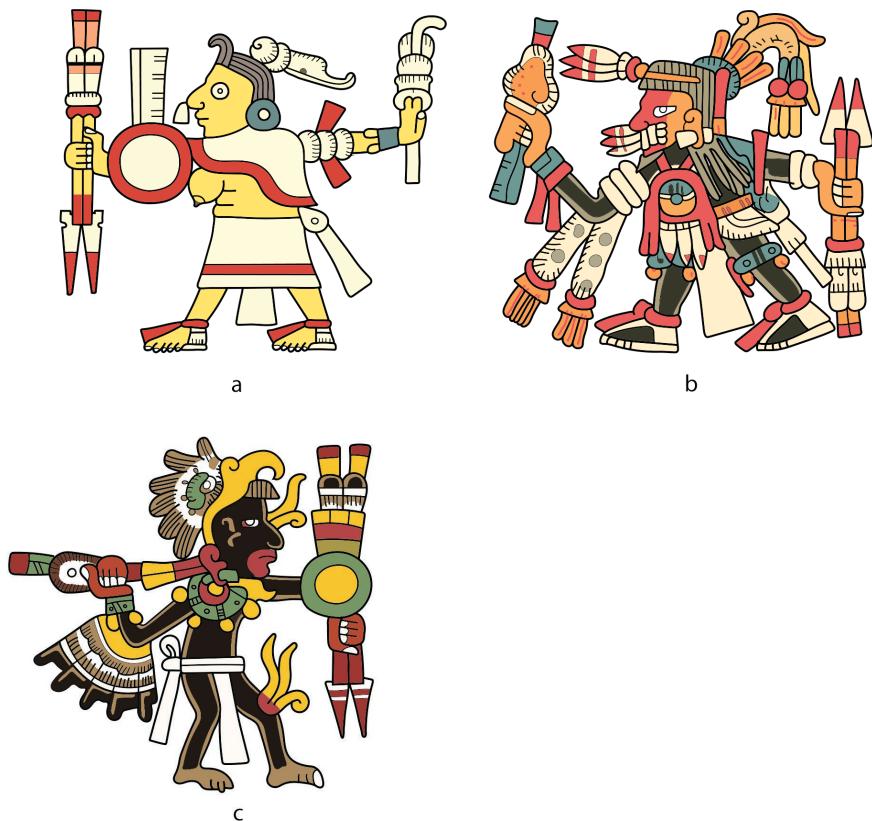
No obstante, en las páginas D47-D50, D60 y D74 del mismo manuscrito encontramos algo completamente distinto. En dichas páginas, aparecen “lanzas dobles” con puntas de forma triangular divididas en dos secciones (Figura 9), las cuales, en las páginas D48-D50, están pintadas de rojo y blanco, y seccionadas mediante una línea transversal (Lacadena García-Gallo 2010: 391).

Las “lanzas dobles” y la forma particular de pintar sus puntas de pedernal son características del armamento escenificado en los códices de tradición Mixteca-Puebla (Figura 10). De tal modo, se puede comprobar que en el Códice de Dresden convergen ambas tradiciones, pues se pintaron las lanzas tanto a la manera típicamente maya como siguiendo la tradición de los manuscritos del Centro de México.

Asimismo, hay que destacar el colorido de los personajes que sostienen estas “lanzas dobles” frente al monocromatismo de los



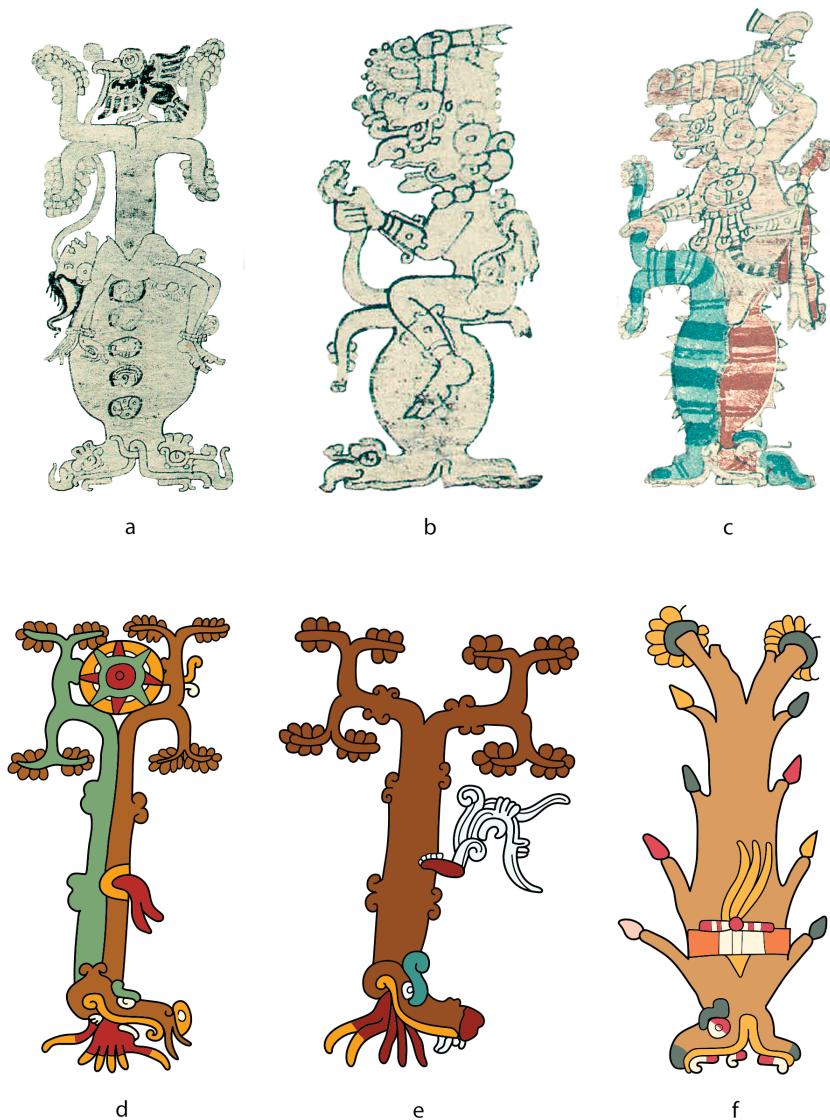
**Figura 9.** Ejemplos de lanzas de pedernal de estilo Internacional Posclásico en el Códice de Dresde: a) D47b, b) D48b, c) D49b, d) D50b, e) D60a, f) D74 (cromolitografías de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA).



**Figura 10.** Ejemplos de lanzas de pedernal de estilo Internacional Posclásico en manuscritos del Grupo Borgia y de tradición Mixteca-Puebla: a) Códice Laud, página 20, b) Códice Vaticano B, página 70, c) Códice Nuttall, página 10 (dibujos de Diego Ruiz Pérez).

individuos que sujetan lanzas de tradición maya; uno más de los rasgos particulares de los códices de estilo Internacional Posclásico.

En un primer momento, se podría pensar que estas dos formas tan distintas de representar una misma arma se deben a la presencia de dos o más escribas. No obstante, el estudio del Códice de Dresde realizado por Nikolai Grube (2012: 33) demuestra que todas estas páginas fueron pintadas por un mismo autor, el denominado Escriba 3.



**Figura 11.** Ejemplos del “árbol-ofidio” de estilo Internacional Posclásico: a) Códice de Dresde, 3a (cromolitografía de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA), b) Códice de Dresde, 40a (cromolitografía de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA), c) Códice de Dresde, 69a (cromolitografía de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA), d) Códice Nuttall, página 49 (dibujo de Diego Ruiz Pérez), e) Códice Nuttall, página 56 (dibujo de Diego Ruiz Pérez), f) Códice Borgia, página 14 (dibujo de Diego Ruiz Pérez).

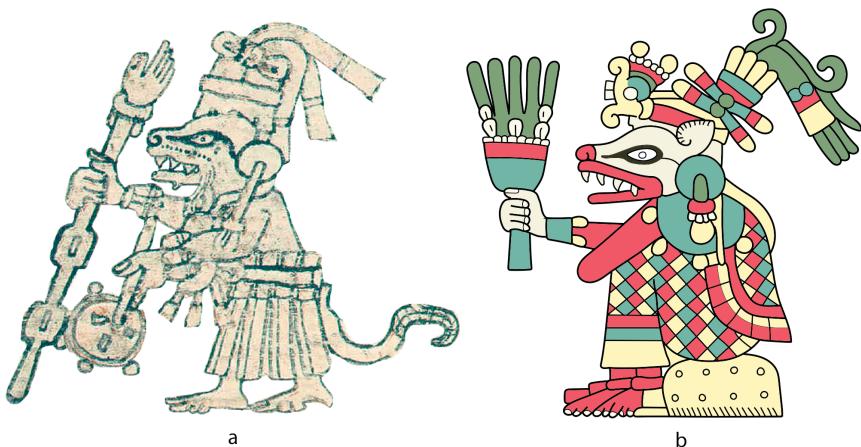


**Figura 12.** Representación de venados cazados en distintos códices: a) Códice de Dresde, página 47 (cromolitografía de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA), b) Códice Borgia, página 22 (dibujo de Diego Ruiz Pérez).

### “Árbol-ofidio”

Otro de los rasgos iconográficos que comparte el Códice de Dresde con aquellos de estilo Posclásico Internacional es un extraño elemento arbóreo denominado en este estudio como “árbol-ofidio”, el cual guarda cierto parecido con la ceiba-cocodrilo, como la que aparece en la Estela 25 de Izapa. Se trata de un árbol del que emergen dos ramas, las cuales se bifurcan en otras dos —una hacia arriba y otra hacia abajo— con pequeños círculos en sus extremos, a modo de hojas o pequeños frutos, y cuya característica más representativa es la forma de sus raíces, que emulan un rostro reptiliano con las fauces abiertas hacia el suelo. Asimismo, en algunos ejemplos, el tronco aparece dividido de manera vertical, estando pintada cada parte de un color distinto.

Esta extraña planta aparece en las páginas D3, D40 y D69 del Códice Dresde (Figura 11a-c), donde se pintó de manera muy similar a las representaciones del Códice Nuttall (2004), de estilo Mixteca-Puebla (Figura 11d-e). En el Códice Borgia también se distinguen varias formas arbóreas con rostro serpentino, pero se diferencian de las anteriores en la apariencia de sus ramas, aunque parecen proceder de un mismo complejo iconográfico (Figura 11f).



**Figura 13.** Representación de tlacuaches: a) Códice de Dresde, página 25a (cromolitografía de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Ángeles County Museum of Art, LACMA), b) Códice Fejérváry-Mayer, página 30 (dibujo de Diego Ruiz Pérez).

En este caso, el Escriba 3 también es autor de dos de estas representaciones (D40 y D69), sumándose a la utilización de este elemento de tradición Mixteca-Puebla el Amanuense 1.

## Animales

La manera de representar algunos animales en el Códice de Dresde refleja marcados rasgos iconográficos de los manuscritos de estilo Internacional Posclásico.

Entre las figuras de los animales destaca la representación del venado cazado de la página 47 del Dresde (Figura 12a). Parece que el Escriba 3 estaba influenciado por imágenes como la que aparece en la página 22 del Códice Borgia, donde se representó un venado atravesado por una lanza (Figura 12b). La figura del manuscrito maya no es exacta en la forma, pero sí en el tema: un venado tumbado con la boca abierta y atravesado por una lanza, cuya asta es similar a la del resto de lanzas de los manuscritos de tradición Mixteca-Puebla. Pudiera ser que el escriba adaptase a su propio estilo una imagen que ya conocía de otros códices “extranjeros”.

Asimismo, la figura de un tlacuache se representó de manera casi idéntica en las páginas D25-D28 del Códice Dresde (Figura 13a). Estas cuatro páginas fueron pintadas por el Escriba 4, las únicas en las que trabajó. Si se compara el rostro de la zarigüeya con el que aparece en



**Figura 14.** Formas de representar el agua como canales seccionados: a) Códice de Dresde, D34c (cromolitografía de Ernst Förstemann, cortesía de Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA), b) Códice Nuttall, página 9 (dibujo de Diego Ruiz Pérez).

la página 30 del Códice Fejérvary-Mayer, se comprueba que guarda un gran parecido, incluida la orejera (Figura 13b). Además, la postura de las patas de estos marsupiales posee la forma en “lambda” anteriormente mencionada. Por ello, se puede afirmar que el Escriba 4 también conocía perfectamente los patrones artísticos de las Tierras Altas y del Centro de México.

### Aguadas o canales de agua seccionados

Por último, la forma de representar aguadas o canales es otro de los rasgos que aparece en el Códice de Dresde y en los manuscritos de tradición Mixteca-Puebla (Lacadena García-Gallo 2010: 394).

En el Dresde existen cinco imágenes de canales de agua seccionados (D32c, D34c, D36c, D38c y D39c). Estos cuerpos de agua, de forma semicircular, fueron pintados en color azul y rodeados por una serie de elementos ovalados similares a pétalos de flores. Dichas representaciones guardan gran parecido con las que aparecen en otros códices de estilo Internacional Posclásico, aunque estas últimas

son algo más geométricas (Figura 14). De nuevo, todas estas formas de representar el agua corresponden exclusivamente al Escriba 3.

## Conclusión

El estudio de las imágenes del Códice de Dresde muestra una serie de rasgos iconográficos y elementos similares a los representados en manuscritos de tradición Mixteca-Puebla. Este hecho confirma, como apuntó Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo (2010), intercambios intelectuales entre el Centro y Tierras Altas mexicanas con el área maya, donde los territorios mexicanos actuarían como donantes de semejantes caracteres sobre las Tierras Bajas mayas.

Los rasgos característicos del estilo Internacional Posclásico —oreja en forma de hongo, posición de las manos invertida, dedos de los pies largos y curvados hacia abajo— fueron pintados en el Códice de Dresde por los seis escribas que trabajaron en él. Sin embargo, otros elementos como la representación de aguadas, las puntas de lanza o la pose de ataque de personajes en actitud beligerante corresponden exclusivamente al Escriba 3.

De los seis amanuenses que trabajaron en el Dresde, es en las páginas del Escriba 3 donde aparecen todos los elementos de tradición Mixteca-Puebla aquí analizados. No obstante, debe señalarse que es a él a quien se le atribuye la autoría del mayor número de páginas del códice (D24, D29-D44, D45-D74) (Grube 2012: 33), por lo que resulta más fácil encontrar algunos de estos rasgos en ellas.

Por otro lado, los amanuenses que estuvieron menos influenciados por los códices centromexicanos son los escribas 2, 5 y 6. Aunque en las páginas que pintaron aparecen rasgos generales del estilo Internacional Posclásico, se aprecia una clara ausencia de los elementos característicos de los manuscritos de tradición Mixteca-Puebla.

De todo ello se puede concluir que, a partir de la comparación de elementos entre manuscritos centromexicanos y el Códice de Dresde, éste último recibió claras influencias de los códices de tradición Mixteca-Puebla. No obstante, cabe señalar que todos los elementos anteriormente analizados son adaptaciones de ese estilo y que en el Códice de Dresde se presentan no sólo estas influencias, sino que también perduran muchos rasgos propios de la iconografía maya.



Figura 15. Alfonso y Diego en casa de Florencia Scandar el 12 de octubre de 2017 (fotografía de Laura Jack).

**Agradecimientos:** Este trabajo no podría ir dedicado a otra persona que no fuera Alfonso, gran maestro y amigo (Figura 15). Sigo fiel a tu filosofía de trabajar duro (“el día tiene 24 horas, con que duermas tres es suficiente”); “marcar la diferencia”; ser humilde y, sobre todo, “no ser sólo buen investigador, sino también buena persona”.

Alfonso, se te echa de menos.

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# **El significado de *mul tepal* y un recuerdo de Alfonso: Izamal, 2016**

TSUBASA OKOSHI HARADA

Universidad de Estudios Extranjeros de Kioto

(okoshi56@gmail.com)

**Resumen:** En memoria de mi querido y estimado amigo Alfonso Lacadena, analizo el significado del término maya *mul tepal*, el cual siempre se ha utilizado en el sentido de gobierno confederado para identificar la organización política de Mayapán. El examen minucioso de los documentos mayas coloniales en que aparece usada esta voz señala que se refiere a aquel grupo de los señores-gobernantes de Mayapán que se unieron bajo el liderazgo de los Xiu para eliminar a los Cocom de su poderío.

**Abstract:** In the memory of my dear friend Alfonso Lacadena, this essay briefly explores the meaning of the Yucatec Maya term *mul tepal* which has been interpreted as joint government or shared rule, and applied to describe the political organization of Mayapan. The philological analysis of the colonial Maya texts in which this word is employed indicates clearly that the term *mul tepal* refers to the group of rulers assembled under the Xiu putting an end to the Cocom supremacy.

“**T**subasa, tienes toda la razón respecto a tu interpretación del término *mul tepal*. En tu análisis se aprecia con claridad eso”, me dijo Alfonso Lacadena en la mesa de un restaurante de Izamal. Acabábamos de terminar nuestro simposio organizado dentro del marco del X Congreso Internacional de Mayistas en 2016, donde presenté una ponencia sobre la transformación de la organización política de Mayapán después de su caída ocurrida hacia 1450. En esa ponencia, discutí el significado del término maya *mul tepal* que comúnmente es utilizado en el sentido de “gobierno confederado”.

En el libro de *Chilam Balam de Chumayel* (Gordon 1913: 76) se lee el siguiente pasaje que habla de lo sucedido en el último momento de Mayapán<sup>1</sup>:

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. <i>Uaxac ahau</i>         | En el 8 Ahau                            |
| 2. <i>uchici puch' tun</i>   | sucedió apedreado                       |
| 3. <i>ych paa Mayapan</i>    | dentro de la muralla de Mayapán         |
| 4. <i>tumen u pach paa :</i> | por causa de las afueras de la muralla, |

---

<sup>1</sup> La división en verso es mía.

- |                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 5. <i>u paah tulum :</i>          | se quebró la cerca,           |
| 6. <i>tumen mul tepal</i>         | por causa de <i>mul tepal</i> |
| 7. <i>ych cah Mayapan lal lae</i> | en el pueblo de este Mayapán  |

Otro pasaje idéntico se lee en el f. 22r del libro de *Chilam Balam de Tizimín*<sup>2</sup> y en el *Códice Pérez* (Solís Alcalá 1949: 268) se aprecia una variante del mismo que dice:

- |                                |                                       |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Uac ahau</i>             | 6 <i>Ahau,</i>                        |
| 2. <i>can ahau</i>             | 4 <i>Ahau,</i>                        |
| 3. <i>cabil ahau</i>           | 2 <i>Ahau,</i>                        |
| 4. <i>oxlahun ahau</i>         | 13 <i>Ahau,</i>                       |
| 5. <i>buluc ahau</i>           | 11 <i>Ahau,</i>                       |
| 6. <i>chucuc u luumil</i>      | fue conquistada la tierra             |
| 7. <i>ich paa Mayapan</i>      | de dentro de la muralla de Mayapán,   |
| 8. <i>tumenel u pach tulum</i> | por causa de las afueras de la cerca, |
| 9. <i>tumenel mul tepal</i>    | por causa del <i>mul tepal</i> ,      |
| 10. <i>ich cah Mayapan</i>     | del pueblo de Mayapán                 |

Todos asientan que “por causa de las afueras de la cerca, por causa del *mul tepal*” fue destruida la ciudad amurallada de Mayapán. De acuerdo con las interpretaciones de numerosos etnohistoriadores y arqueólogos, esta voz maya *mul tepal* se refiere a la organización política del mencionado sitio<sup>3</sup>, última ciudad maya que ejercía su poder sobre una región extensa en las Tierras Bajas del norte, manteniendo estrechas relaciones con otras áreas mesoamericanas.

De ahí que surgen varias preguntas: ¿*mul tepal* realmente se refiere a la organización política de Mayapán? De acuerdo con el *Calepino maya de Motul* (Acuña 2001: 415) *mul* tiene el sentido de “hacer algo de comunidad o de mancomún entre muchos; aunque no sean más de dos. *Item*, en composición con nombre, cosa hecha así, o que es de comunidad o del común” y *tepal*, que es un préstamo mayanizado de

<sup>2</sup> Dice el texto: *uaxac ahau uch ci puch' tun ich paa Mayapan tumen u pach tulum tumen mul tepal ich cah Mayapan* (Mayer 1980: 24r). Cabe señalar que la foliación de Tizimín hecha por Mayer tiene repetidos los folios 16r-17v, por lo que f. 20r corresponde al 18r, y f. 20v es en realidad 18v, etc.

<sup>3</sup> “Joint government” (Roys 1933, 137; 1943: 12, 58, 175; 1957: 3). “Cocom supremacy in the confederacy” (Morley y Brainerd 1968: 91). “The chronicles suggests that Mayapan was governed by a multepal system of shared rule among several elite families or houses (Cocom most prominent, Xiu, Chel, Canul)” (Sharer y Traxler 2005: 601).

origen náhuatl, “reinar, mandar reinando, ser señor y señorear, y el mismo reino, mando y señorío” (Acuña 2001: 541). Asimismo, en otra entrada se lee *tepeual* y dice que es “reinar, vocablos son antiguos, *u tepeualil reino*” (Acuña 2001: 542)<sup>4</sup>. Por lo tanto, es comprensible que interpretara la voz *mul tepal* con la acepción de: “reinar o señorear de manera conjunta” y que los pasajes arriba citados parecieran referirse a la forma de gobierno de Mayapán: “*joint government*”.

No obstante, el análisis filológico de estos pasajes no apoya tal interpretación. En los dos ejemplos arriba citados se puede apreciar el manejo del paralelismo que consiste en los renglones en versos muy cercanos o contiguos, a saber: *tumen un pach paa* y *tumen mul tepal*. Ambos comienzan con la misma preposición *tumenel* obteniendo de tal manera el efecto de aliteración.

1. <i>Uaxac ahau</i>	En el 8 <i>Ahau</i>
2. <i>uchici puch' tun</i>	sucedió apedreado
3. <i>ych paa Mayapan</i>	dentro de la muralla de Mayapán
4. <b><i>tumen u pach paa :</i></b>	por causa de las afueras de la muralla,
5. <i>u paah tulum :</i>	se quebró la cerca,
6. <b><i>tumen mul tepal</i></b>	por causa del <i>mul tepal</i>
7. <i>ych cah Mayapan lal lae</i>	en el pueblo de este Mayapán
1. <i>Uac ahau</i>	6 <i>Ahau</i> ,
2. <i>can ahau</i>	4 <i>Ahau</i> ,
3. <i>cabil ahau</i>	2 <i>Ahau</i> ,
4. <i>oxlahun ahau</i>	13 <i>Ahau</i> ,
5. <i>buluc ahau</i>	11 <i>Ahau</i> ,
6. <i>chucuc u luumil</i>	fue conquistada la tierra
7. <i>ich paa Mayapan</i>	de dentro de la muralla de Mayapán,
8. <b><i>tumenel u pach tulum</i></b>	por causa de las afueras de la cerca,
9. <b><i>tumenel mul tepal</i></b>	por causa del <i>mul tepal</i> ,
10. <i>ich cah Mayapan</i>	del pueblo de Mayapán

En concreto, a través de estas expresiones paralelas se enfatiza su importancia dentro de este discurso y se explica la causa de la destrucción de Mayapán. El primer renglón de este recurso literario asienta que por causa de *u pach paa* (las afueras de la muralla)

<sup>4</sup> De hecho, en el *Vocabulario en lengua mexicana y castellana* del fray Alonso de Molina (1977: 102v) se leen las siguientes entradas, a saber: *tepeualiztli* “conquista o vencimiento de los enemigos”; *tepeualtiani* “provocador o principiador de bregas y contiendas”; *tepeuani* “conquistador, o vencedor de batalla.”

sucedió tal episodio y el segundo lo atribuye al problemático *mul tepal*. De acuerdo con William Hanks (2010: 160), la segunda parte de paralelismo es la que interpreta la primera, de manera que en este contexto esta voz maya (*mul tepal*) precisa y concretiza lo señalado en el primer renglón. Dicho de otra manera, la causa de la destrucción de Mayapán venía de *afuera* y de ninguna manera se trataba del problema de la forma de su gobierno *interno*.

Para poder interpretar cabalmente el término maya *mul tepal* ahora compararemos estos pasajes con aquel discurso recogido por fray Diego de Landa, quien afirmaba:

Que entre los sucesores de la casa Cocomina hubo uno muy orgulloso, imitador de Cocom, y que éste hizo otra liga con los de Tabasco, y que metió más mexicanos dentro de la ciudad, y que comenzó a tiranizar y hacer esclavos a la gente menuda y que por esto *se juntaron los señores a la parte de Tutuxiu*, el cual era gran republicano como sus antepasados, y que *concertaron de matar a Cocom*, y que así lo hicieron, matando también a todos sus hijos, sin dejar más que uno que estaba ausente [...]<sup>5</sup> (Landa 1938: 17)

El informante de Landa señala que hubo un complot en contra del gobernante Cocom en que “se juntaron” y “se concertaron” los demás señores bajo el liderazgo de un Xiu, quizás Ah Xupan (Quezada y Okoshi Harada 2001: 25–26), con la finalidad de matar a los miembros de la familia Cocom. Estos actos descritos en Landa nos hacen recordar el campo semántico de la voz *mul*: “hacer algo de comunidad o de mancomún entre muchos o cosa hecha así”. Es decir, considero que entre estos dos discursos de fuentes diferentes, el de los libros de *Chilam Balam* y el de Landa, existe una resonancia o nexo de origen común. Muy probablemente, su autor/informante fuera Gaspar Antonio Chi Xiu, y los testimonios fueran ofrecidos en dos formas distintas: una a manera más abstracta y básica apegada a las características discursivas mayas que se aprecian en los textos de la filiación prehispánica y la otra en forma más explicativa y concreta proveniente de la tradición oral, o bien de la “lectura” de lo anterior. En este orden de ideas, entonces, el término *tepal* se referiría a los “señoríos” cuyos gobernantes eran los participantes de esta revuelta, y la posible acepción de *mul tepal* sería: “los señoríos conjuntados” quedándose el sentido del paralelismo mencionado en

<sup>5</sup> Las cursivas son mías.

líneas arriba como: “por causa de las afueras de la cerca, por causa de los señoríos conjuntados”. En este contexto “las afueras” se refieren al lugar, extramuro de Mayapán, donde el complot se desarrolló clandestinamente bajo el liderazgo de los Xiu con la participación de diversos gobernantes de los señoríos subordinados al régimen de esta ciudad. Hacia el interior de la muralla, en el recinto de la ciudad estaban los mercenarios mexicanos introducidos por los Cocom (Landa 1938: 17) y, por ende, el complot así como el ataque mismo se habrían hecho desde afuera de este sitio.

Así, concluí que *mul tepal* no es la voz que se refiere al gobierno confe-derado, sino al conjunto de señoríos, cuyos gobernantes se unieron bajo el liderazgo de los Xiu para eliminar a los Cocom del poder. Alfonso estaba completamente de acuerdo con mi interpretación.

“Tsubasa, a ver cuándo nos visitas” me insistía Alfonso. Mi respuesta fue “cuando tú gustes.” Pero nunca se concretizó tal viaje a España. Ahora, en el mundo donde ya no se encuentra él, me viene a la mente el remordimiento de no haber hecho un esfuerzo para ir a visitarlo. Su repentino fallecimiento me dejó un hueco. En ese vacío, no obstante, siento su presencia, en especial al estar tra-bajando con los documentos mayas coloniales, algo que le interesaba en los últimos años de su vida. Es ahí donde se cruzan nuestras fascinaciones.

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# **Translator Acquisition Strategies in Spanish Military Campaigns: Indigenous Slave Interpreters in the Spanish Conquest of Yucatan, 1517–1542**

JOHN F. CHUCHIAK IV  
Missouri State University  
(johnchuchiak@missouristate.edu)

**Abstract:** From the earliest expeditions of Christopher Columbus, Hernán Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, Francisco de Montejo and other conquistadors, the central problem of verbal communication played a major role in hampering Spanish expeditions of conquest and colonization. Language barriers served as one of the most difficult obstacles for all of those Spaniards who embarked on any expedition of conquest. The theme of language and communication has remained central to scholarship on the history of the conquest and colonization of Latin America. The degree to which the communication transmitted through interpreters was meaningful is an important focus of analysis of this present study. As other scholars have shown, it is a fact that conquest would not have occurred without competent translator acquisition. Inter-cultural communication was an integral and indispensable part of conquest and depended on sophisticated translation capabilities. It is the purpose of this present article and a larger research project to rescue the lost histories of these significant indigenous actors in the conquest and colonization of the Americas.

**Resumen:** Desde las primeras expediciones de Cristóbal Colón, Hernán Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, Francisco de Montejo y otros conquistadores, el problema de la comunicación verbal jugó un papel importante en el devenir de las expediciones españolas de conquista y colonización. Las barreras lingüísticas fueron uno de los obstáculos más difíciles de abordar para todos aquellos españoles que se embarcaron en cualquier expedición de conquista. El tema de la lengua y la comunicación continúa siendo esencial en los estudios sobre la historia de la conquista y la colonización de América. En esta colaboración, el tema central de análisis es el grado de relevancia de la comunicación transmitida a través de los intérpretes. Como han demostrado otros eruditos, es un hecho que la conquista no habría tenido lugar sin la presencia de traductores e intérpretes competentes. La comunicación intercultural era una parte integral e indispensable de la conquista y dependía de una sofisticada capacidad de traducción e interpretación. El propósito de esta colaboración, y del proyecto de investigación más amplio en que está basada, se enfoca en rescatar las historias perdidas de estos importantes actores indígenas en la conquista y colonización de las Américas.

The Spanish conquistador Francisco de Montejo did not take with him an interpreter on his first *entrada* in Yucatan in 1527–1528. The chronicler Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, who himself interviewed various survivors of the first *entrada* of the Montejo expedition, stated that luckily for Montejo one of his soldiers, Pedro

de Añasco from Seville, stumbled across a means of learning the Maya language rather quickly (Oviedo y Valdés 1853: 226). One day while trying to speak with one of his young Maya servants, Pedro de Añasco had a linguistic revelation. Without understanding much of what the Maya boy said, Añasco saw that the Indian pointed to something and said in his language “*Maax u kaba*” (which means in the Maya language) “*What is this called?*”<sup>1</sup> As Pedro de Añasco did not understand the meaning of this phrase, he turned around and repeated the same phrase “*Maax u kaba*” pointing to something else and the young Maya boy responded with the name of the thing that he had signaled with hand gestures.<sup>2</sup> According to the historian Oviedo, by the simple means of learning this single phrase, Pedro de Añasco was “able to achieve an understanding of the entire language and by means of this type of learning he became an able interpreter” (Oviedo y Valdés 1853: 226).

Although it is doubtful that Pedro de Añasco came by any complex understanding of the native Maya language in such a rapid span of time, this story does illustrate what David Brooks recently described as one of the main means of translator acquisition: i.e. the process known as “*en route linguistic education*” (Brooks 2001: 32–35). Unfortunately for Francisco de Montejo, his able interpreter Pedro de Añasco lost heart with the harshness of the terrain and the lack of ready plunder during this first *entrada* and he did not re-join the Adelantado during his subsequent phases of the conquest.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence of this loss, and further failures in their conquest

<sup>1</sup> Oviedo y Valdés 1853: 226. The Spanish chronicler mentioned that he interviewed Pedro de Añasco himself upon his return to Seville after his participation in this *entrada* in the early 1530s. The chronicler, however, garbles the exact Maya phrase which has been corrected in the text above. Oviedo renders this phrase as “*Machucava*.”

<sup>2</sup> Recent scholars have begun to examine the significance and nature of the first contact attempts at intercultural communication by means of signs, hand gestures, and other non-verbal communication. See Wasserman Soler (2010: 491–502) as well as Bonvillian et al. (2009: 132–165). The early examples of these types of non-verbal interpretation actions in the Spanish Expansion into the Canary Islands can be found in Sarmiento Pérez (2011: 155–175).

<sup>3</sup> Pedro de Añasco, despairing of the lack of opportunity in the conquest of Yucatan later abandoned the Adelantado Montejo after his 1530 flight from Yucatan and eventually finds his way to the conquest of Perú. His exploits there would prove to be much better rewarded. See *Real Cédula de D. Carlos al capitán Benalcazar, recomendándole al capitán Pedro de Añasco, residente en la provincia de Quito y conquistador de aquella tierra, 1 de abril, 1539*, AGI, Audiencia de Lima, 565, Libro 3, folios 92v.

attempts, the Montejo clan's three separate military *entradas* that eventually led to the final conquest of the Maya of Yucatan became plagued by a constant lack of efficient interpreters.<sup>4</sup>

As many other examples illustrate, the central problem of verbal communication played a major role in hampering Spanish expeditions of conquest and colonization. Language barriers served as one of the most difficult obstacles for all of those Spaniards who embarked on any expedition of conquest.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, in few other conquests in the New World, did the issue of language barriers serve as more of an obstacle, than in the expeditions of the Adelantado Francisco de Montejo and his son and nephew of the same name which led to the ultimate Spanish conquest of Yucatan.

The theme of language and communication has remained central to scholarship on the history of the conquest and colonization of Latin America.<sup>6</sup> For the Montejos (father, son, and nephew) their conquest would quickly come to rely on captive and enslaved Maya interpreters.<sup>7</sup> The role of these “*lenguas forzadas*” in the conquest of Yucatan has been largely ignored by modern historians in spite of the fact that the contemporary conquistadors and chroniclers all considered them to have been essential participants in the momentous events that led to the final conquest of the Maya region. Though for more than two centuries most scholars have failed to acknowledge the influence and actions of these native intermediaries, the lost stories of these forced interpreters are reminiscent of the famous story of Doña Marina, Cortés' interpreter and concubine.<sup>8</sup> It is the purpose of

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the difficulties of the conquest and the obstacles facing the expeditions see Chuchiak (2014: 29–57) and Restall (2014: 93–116).

<sup>5</sup> David Brooks in his own work has made an excellent summary of these linguistic difficulties across all of the early expeditions of conquest in the New World. See the very useful charts and tables in his work (Brooks 2001), see especially tables E.1-E.9, pp. 593–650.

<sup>6</sup> A vast literature exists for the study of the role of language and attempts at first contact communications. Some of the more important works in this field include Roberto A. Valdeón's (2014) *Translation and the Spanish Empire in the Americas*, Frances E. Karttunen's (1994) *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors*, and more recently David Brooks' (2001) dissertation; and Francis Xavier Luca's (2004) *Re-'interpreting' the Conquest: European and Amerindian Translators and Go-Betweens in the Colonization of the Americas, 1492–1675*.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the various expeditions of conquest in Yucatan and the role of indigenous slaves and allies see Chuchiak (2007: 122–197).

<sup>8</sup> The most famous of all of the initial early conquest era forced translators, Doña Marina, or Malinche as she came to be known for the term that the natives used to describe Hernán

this present research, and the larger project upon which it is based, to rescue the lost histories of these significant indigenous actors in the conquest and colonization of Yucatan.

### **Translator acquisition strategies in conquest expeditions**

The degree to which the communication transmitted through native interpreters was meaningful is an important focus of analysis of this present study and the larger research project from which it derives. It is a fact that the conquest would not have occurred without competent translator acquisition.<sup>9</sup> Intercultural communication was an integral and indispensable part of conquest and depended on sophisticated translation capabilities of oftentimes enslaved or forced translations from captives, slaves, or prisoners of war. A few studies have examined how Hernán Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, and Hernando de Soto used a complex translator acquisition system that made it possible to conduct their own successful conquests.<sup>10</sup> Still, the techniques and strategies of the process of translator acquisition in the conquest of Yucatan has yet to be analyzed. To a significant extent, the military take over of the Maya was an outcome of linguistic and logistical conquest as much as it was a military conquest.

### **Tools and methods of interpreter acquisition: kidnapping and abduction**

The earliest Spanish explorers of the Yucatan peninsula captured and abducted the first Maya forced to serve as interpreters during the earliest forays into the region. As other scholars have pointed out, the custom of kidnapping a couple of indigenous people from regions soon to be colonized had become so standard a practice and preparation for new Spanish *entradas* that the “New Ordinances of Discovery and Population” codified this practice into law in 1573,

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Cortés, has been studied extensively in the historiography. For just a few of the major studies see Messinger (1991), and Townsend (2006).

<sup>9</sup> An excellent summary of the literature on translator acquisition strategies of Spanish conquest expeditions is reviewed in Brooks (2001: 3–12).

<sup>10</sup> For some examples of this literature see Young and Hoffman (1993) and Clayton et al. (1993). For the conquest of Peru, see Ramírez (1996), Guilmartin (1991), and Lockhart (1994).

which legally allowed explorers to take three of four Indians from new regions as interpreters (see Valero Garcés 2008: 31). Law 15 of these ordinances specifically outlines the importance and purpose for which native interpreters should be used:

Try to bring some Indians for interpreters to the places you go, where you think it will be the most fitting so that you can speak with those from the land, and have chats and conversations with them, trying to understand their customs, and quality and way of life of the people of that land, and disperse yourselves, informing yourselves about the religion they have [...] and in this way you will know if there is any type of stones, precious things like those which are esteemed in our kingdom. (Valero Garcés 2008: 31)

The Crown's guidance to its later conquistadors on the best methods to acquire translators and interpreters evolved from the experiences of the very first expeditions. In the early discovery and conquest of Yucatan, the Spanish leaders of the first expeditions routinely rounded up, captured in battle, or outright kidnapped local Maya people they encountered, forcing them into service as interpreters. The goal of these captivities focused on bringing the natives back to a Spanish colony to become acculturated and to learn the Spanish language sufficiently enough to return as competent interpreters in later expeditions. This is the process conducted by the Captain Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, who led the first major expedition of discovery to the Yucatan peninsula. Even with captive natives, the first encounters usually required types of non-verbal communication acts by the use of signs, gestures, pantomiming, or other performative physical actions or sign-type communication strategies. For instance, in one of the first contacts of these early encounters, eye-witnesses have described the types of signs and gestures used. As Bernal Diaz del Castillo noted of the first encounters in 1517:

They [the Indians] came close to our ships, and we made signs of peace to them, beckoning with our hands and waving our cloaks to induce them to come and speak to us, although at the time we had no interpreters who could speak the languages of Yucatan and Mexico. They approached quite fearlessly and more than thirty of them came on board the flagship, and we gave them each a present of a string of green beads, and they passed some time examining the ships. The chief man among them, who was a Cacique [chief or king], made signs to us that they wished to embark in their canoes and return to their town, and that they would come back again another day with more canoes in which we could go ashore. (Díaz del Castillo 1956: 15)

Evidently both the Spanish explorers and the Maya they encountered attempted to use manual signs or gestures to overcome issues of language barriers in this initial encounter. As Bonvillian et al. (2009: 134) note in their own work on the significance of signs and gestures in the conquest era, “despite the apparent importance of manual communication in these expeditions, historians rarely include a discussion of the use of manual signs in their accounts of the initial interactions between peoples from two such contrasting worlds.” On many occasions, however, either no interpreters were available, or those who were present did not know the language of a newly encountered people. In these situations, the Spaniards most frequently relied on manual signs, pantomime, or gestures to communicate with the natives. This reliance on manual signs and gestures to overcome speech communication barriers occurred repeatedly during the exploration of North America by Europeans (Mignolo 1994: 220–270). The ineffective nature of these first attempts at non-verbal communication led to the need to address the problems of a lack of linguistic knowledge of the local languages by the use of certain strategies for the acquisition of indigenous interpreters.

### **Problems and adaptations in intercultural communication and translator acquisition strategies in the early discovery and conquest of Yucatan**

As other scholars such as David Brooks have classified the various types of first contact translators and their acquisition, the typology of their studies is useful for our own analysis. There were, during these expeditions of conquest, two very different types of first contact indigenous translators. What David Brooks calls “serviceable translators” were those captive and forced natives who were required to translate on an expedition on which they were acquired (Brooks 2001: 13–15). They were often only able to communicate basic information, sometimes partially employing signs and symbols, as in the case of the early Maya interpreters who were captured by the Hernández de Córdoba and the Juan de Grijalva expeditions. For instance, in 1517 Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, seized two Maya youths at Cape Catoche and took them to Cuba where they were

taught Spanish. When the governor of Cuba, Diego de Velázquez, questioned the two captured Mayan men (whom the Spaniards baptized with the Christian names of Julian and Melchior) about the existence of previous metals like gold in their country, the two young Maya men answered “affirmatively through signs, adding that much gold could be found there” (Díaz del Castillo 1956: 32).

The following year, in 1518 near the Laguna de los Términos, the expedition of Juan de Grijalva encountered four Maya fishermen in a canoe, and they seized them and forced them to serve as interpreters. Many conquest expeditions quickly came to realize the complex and diverse nature of Mesoamerican languages and their linguistic differences while employing their “serviceable forced interpreters.” During Grijalva’s expedition’s advance along the gulf coast of Mexico, one of the Maya seized off the east coast of Cape Catoche, named Julian, was unable to understand the Chontal Maya of the region of Tabasco and the language problem there too was solved by using another native captured at Puerto Deseado (near Tixchel in Languna de los Términos), whom they baptized and christened Pedro Barba, who apparently understood both Yucatecan Maya and Chontal (see map of *lenguas forzadas* at the end of this chapter).<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, this type of translator, who due to various circumstances did not have enough contact with the target language of translation were often unable to convey more subtle meanings and interpretations for the conquerors.<sup>12</sup>

Then there were “fluent translators,” as Brooks (2001: 13–14) mentions, who were the type who became acculturated after some extended time by experiencing either prolonged contact and/or captivity with the Spanish conquerors, or by means of having been taken or having spent considerable time in a Spanish colony. It was these more rare types of translators that were capable of both complex and subtle translation. The distinction between these types of translators made all the difference in either the ultimate success or the failure of an expedition. In terms of the decades long conquest in Yucatan, ample time and experience in contact with captured

<sup>11</sup> See for more detailed descriptions of these events in Oviedo y Valdés 1853: Book 17, Chapter 13.

<sup>12</sup> Brooks (2001: 14) notes that a difference exists between simple translation and more complex interpretation, which he notes in his own study “must suggest some sense of cultural mediation.”

Maya slaves and servants, and even the taking of large numbers of them out of the region to Mexico City, Vera Cruz and the Caribbean, led to the creation of a larger corpus of capable and even fluent indigenous interpreters than was the case in many other contemporary conquest expeditions. No doubt, upon return to Mexico after the failure of his first *entrada*, the Adelantado Montejo would have discovered numerous Spaniards who held native Yucatecan Maya slaves that had been traded to them by Montejo's factor and agent from Cuba, Juan de Lerma, and at least some of them would have gained enough language ability in Spanish to serve the Adelantado during his second and third phases of the conquest.

### **Problems with relying on “serviceable translators”**

In the earlier *entradas*, however, the Montejo clan's reliance mainly on “serviceable translators” instead of “fluent translators” acquired by captivity during the initial *entrada* no doubt helped to play a major role in the ultimate failures of these early expeditions (see Chuchiak 2007: 190–210). Relying, like Juan de Grijalva and Francisco Hernández de Córdoba had done, on forced “*lenguas*” or forcibly captured reluctant interpreters hampered the first expedition's effective communication with the Maya they encountered.

In the case of the captured Maya interpreter Melchorejo, enslaved by the Grijalva expedition, not only did his reluctance shine through as evident in his interactions with the Maya he encountered, but he even later escaped and warned the natives of Tabasco during the subsequent Hernán Cortés expedition in 1519 to “war with the Spaniards night and day” (Díaz del Castillo 1956: 116). Indeed, much of the work of the early expeditions in the case of Yucatan was hampered by a lack of competent translators and the little trust they placed in the “*lenguas forzadas*” that they did acquire through capture and enslavement.

As the Spanish conquistador Bernal Diaz del Castillo noted in one earlier encounter in 1517, “during the skirmish we took two of the natives prisoners, who subsequently allowed themselves to be baptized and became Christians. One was named Melchior and the other Julian; both were tattooed about the eyes...” (Díaz del Castillo 1956: 18–19). Nevertheless, forced abductions became the most

common means in the early years of the conquest for the acquisition of interpreters. Often Francisco de Montejo would issue orders for his men to “take some prisoners, as guides and interpreters” because they were marching blindly through unknown territory in the eastern Yucatan peninsula during their first *entrada* on the east coast.<sup>13</sup>

The historian and Dominican Fray Bartolome de Las Casas, himself cast much doubt on the nature and competence of the quality of these “serviceable translators” gained through forced abductions. He criticized his contemporary historians who stated that complex negotiations could have been conducted through this type of translator who Las Casas stated “in reality could only communicate with no more than a few phrases like “Gimme bread, Gimme Food” “Take this, gimme that” and otherwise carry on with gestures (Las Casas 1971: 240–241).

Nevertheless, it was most certain that those few Spaniards who did acquire some rudimentary knowledge of Maya, served less competently than the Maya slaves who lived among them, gaining no more than a simplistic grasp of Maya, sufficient enough to demand food or tribute from the Maya and little more in the way of complex interactions or interpretation.

### **“En route” language education**

One of the most important yet one of the most understudied aspects of what scholars have called “en route linguistic education” involved the day to day interaction of conquistadors and their Maya slaves and porters. Each day in camp the indigenous slaves and *naborías* did the daily work for the Spaniards. It was these indigenous men

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, several of the eye-witness reports and testimonies of these actions and the captivity of natives to serve as guides and interpreters in the various Probanzas and relaciones de méritos y servicios of the Spanish conquistadores of Yucatán, including those of Sebastián Vázquez (1551, AGCA, Sección de Chiapas, Legajo 74, exp. 1); Francisco Niño de Villagómez (1546, AGI, Indiferente General, legajo 1209); Francisco de Montejo, hijo del adelantado don Francisco de Montejo (1547, AGI, Patronato, 65, no. 2, r. 1); Alonso Rosado (1564, AGI, Ramo de Patronato, legajo 66A, no. 1, r. 4); Gonzalo de Ovalle (1572, AGI, Ramo de Patronato, legajo 73, no. 1, r. 7); Pedro Galiano (1575, AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 103); Juan Gutiérrez Picón (1579, AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 913); Álvaro Osorio (1582, AGI, Ramo de Patronato, legajo 77, no. 1, r. 6); Isabel Ruiz de Arévalo, y su padre y marido (1582, AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 913); Juan López de Mena (1602, AGI, Patronato, legajo 79, no. 3, r. 4); Blas González (1602, AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 242A).

and women who at the campsites did the cooking, cleaning, maintenance of horses and weapons, gathering of firewood, and other necessary labors. It was also indigenous women who satisfied the sexual, logistical and other needs of the Spaniards for years on end. Such contact, so often absent in most of the contemporary sources, was truly an important avenue of communication training and in most cases during the long and arduous conquests of Yucatan it served as the most important source of en route education for both the Maya slaves and servants, as well as the Spaniards.

Most of these Maya slaves and servants who later became either their serviceable translators or fluent interpreters usually acquired language competency in Spanish by means of what Brooks (2001: 32–33) has called “en route education.” Like translator pre-acquisition through abduction or slave trading, en route education took two forms: the learning of Spanish by the indigenous slaves acquired by these two means, and the learning of indigenous languages by means of their Spanish captors (Brooks 2001: 32–33).

There is ample evidence of the mutual exchange of linguistic learning in the documentary evidence for Yucatan. Maya captives and Spaniards gradually learned each other’s languages during the long entradas. This was a typical outcome of the expeditions of the Pizarro’s which lasted no more than a year during their trek toward Cajamarca, and de Soto’s three year oddyssey through North America, no less can be expected of the close to 20 years of campaigning in Yucatan. Near-fluency, as Brooks noted “at least in terms of most day to day logistical matters, seems to have been attainable after approximately a year of intense “en route” education (Brooks 2001: 33).

Although the Spaniards acquired many slaves of both genders through captivity and as gifts from Maya leaders they encountered, a large majority of the forced interpreters appeared to be the young slave girls given to the Spaniards as customary gifts. Many of these young orphaned Maya slave girls are mentioned in the surviving Maya chronicles by Maya allied leaders who later chronicled their own participation in the conquest. For instance, according to Ah Macan Pech (Pedro Pech) in his *Crónica de Chicxulub*, “...My father gave them Ix Cakuk as the woman was named whom he gave them to work for them and feed them....” (Restall 1998: 111). The Maya lords

of Ceh Pech province gave gifts of certain Maya slaves to Montejo in 1532–1533. In the Maya town of Maxtunil, the local batab Ah Nachi May received Montejo the younger and housed him in his home for several months, giving him gifts of male and female slaves and also attempting to learn some of the Spanish language himself (see Restall 1998: 112). Pedro Pech later reported that by the decade of the 1540s, several Maya lords like Ah Nachi May had already learned at least some Spanish. He wrote:

The tribute carriers went by sea. I went there with my younger brother, Ixkil Itzam Pech, ruler of the cah of Conkal, and with Ah Dzulub Pech, of the district of Ixil. These were my companions when I went there for the tribute; they too saw it. Nachi May also accompanied us, because he knew their language, for they first stayed in his house when they came here, he and the Spaniards were together when there was a delivery by the captains. From them we had been given clothes—the coats and cloaks. (Restall 1998: 112–113)

By 1531–1533, these native slave interpreters became instrumental in not only translating for Montejo, but also for instructing him in the geography and population, and also concerning the political relationships between the various regions and kingdoms or cacicazgos. Montejo's second in command, Alonso Davila also had in his company “an Indian well versed in the native tongues of Yucatan and neighboring provinces” (Chamberlain 1966: 100). During Montejo the younger's period in Ciudad Real de Chichen Itza, he too utilized his Pech interpreters and servants as informants and from them he learned quite astutely much about the local politics and political divisions among the interior Maya provinces and kingdoms “...and his knowledge of the relationships among the several interior native provinces increased and he came to know more about the internal organization of each cacicazgo, he began to form alliances and counter-alliances” things he would not have been able to do without the able aid of his native servant interpreters (Chamberlain 1966: 136). Recognizing the significance of the bilingual native servants and interpreters of the Spaniards, when the Cupul Maya attacked the Spanish settlement of Chichen Itza, they made a special point of “slaughtering all the Indian slaves and other natives serving the Spaniards who fell into their hands...” (Chamberlain 1966: 144).

As Brooks and others point out in their own studies, “tutelage on the part of one party often resulted in language acquisition by

the teacher" (Brooks 2001: 33). For instance, even the Adelantado Montejo had his own linguistic encounters with his Maya slaves. Apparently, one of the young Maya male slaves once witnessed the Adelantado urinating and curiously asked, as had the Pedro de Añasco's slave, what it was that the Spaniard was doing. Gradually Montejo understood that the Maya boy had asked him for the Spanish word for his action. Apparently in this way the conquistador also gained some Maya language skills in a similar process as his worthy interpreter. As this story about Montejo above illustrates such language symbiosis enhanced the language and intercultural interpretive skills of both the Spaniard and their Maya servant. The most effective en route education occurred on the longer *entradas*, like those in Yucatan. This en route education of native interpreters was instrumental in every expedition of conquest throughout the Americas.

One prime example in Yucatan occurred with the conquistador Marcos de Ayala, who during the second *entrada*, as the records show, became adept at understanding Maya and he did so by teaching some of the younger Maya slaves they acquired to speak, read, and write in Spanish and then Ayala had them teach several of the others.<sup>14</sup>

### **Importance and uses of indigenous translators**

Either by abducting Maya captives or by trading or receiving Maya slaves as gifts, Montejo and his men acquired the logistical tools necessary for systematically acquiring and creating bilingual translators. This element was largely responsible for the seamless and effortless appearance of conquest communication. One of the most important items that a Maya noble or lord of a town could deliver and hand over to Montejo was a slave or merchant to serve as a guide for the expedition. It was mainly through this process that Montejo's various expeditions were able to acquire competent, and eventually loyal fluent translators.

In many cases, these male and female slaves handed over by the caciques of the various Maya provinces held no inherent loyalty to

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<sup>14</sup> *Información de los méritos y servicios de Marcos de Ayala, que sirvió muchos años en Italia, Hungría, y jornada de Viena. Después pasó a Nueva España y se halló en la conquista de Yucatán y Cozumel.* Mérida de Yucatán, 15 de septiembre de 1561, AGI, Patronato, 64, Ramo 7.

their towns or provinces. Moreover, the arduous nature of Maya slavery, and the fact that slaves could often be presented as offerings and victims for human sacrifice often meant that their forced service to the Spaniards actually offered them the chance of a better life (Chuchiak 2018). In most cases, as the Maya sources often reveal, these Maya youths handed over as slaves for the Spaniards were orphaned children with no familiar connections or protectors in their communities. They had little to lose in serving the Spaniards faithfully which they often did.

As an example, in 1541, at the town of Calkini, the lords of the town handed over to one of the Spanish captains, Gaspar Pacheco, a young slave girl named Ix Chen Uitzil. According to the Maya nobles in their own *Chronicle of Calkini*, “One slave girl, named Ix Chen Uitzil was delivered to him, and she had been bought in common by the cah and at the time that we delivered her, her value was two by two arm spans [of woven cotton]...” (Okoshi 2009: 29). In the same town, the Maya slaves “Ah Cot Mas and Ix Cahum Kuk” were slaves given to Montejo the younger (Okoshi 2009: 41).

Women in their domestic role provided the food and clothing used by the conquering Spaniards. Many of these Maya woman labored as involuntary servants captured from the Maya. Others were sold and given as gifts to the Spaniards. Often intimate relationships developed between the young Maya female slaves and interpreters and both the Spaniards and the Maya recognized the power of love, lust, and kin and family ties to keep and maintain the loyalty of a valuable interpreter. On some occasions, the Montejos encouraged their soldiers to take the young female Maya slaves and interpreters as their concubines, and in at least one documented case, at least one Spanish soldier, the Carpenter Ortiz Barquero took one of these young Maya women as a formal wife (Okoshi 2009: 13).

Some of the young female slaves thus acquired by the Spanish conquistadors often became more closely allied with the Spaniards through concubinage, and on the rare occasion even through marriage (as seen in the case of Ortiz Barquero in Calkini). As many of these Maya slaves had been orphans, they no doubt felt a closer identification with the Spaniards. These “lenguas forzadas” might have also realized that once they were identified with the Spaniards that they would not be welcomed back into their societies.

So much identified with the Spaniards, their native allies and servants were often targeted for murder and assassination by their Maya enemies. The Maya recognized the strategic value of these targets since they served the Spaniards as keys to their logistical, supply, and translation services. In several *relaciones de méritos* of surviving conquistadors of the second *entrada* in Yucatan, from 1530 to 1535, there are comments that on several occasions during the siege of the Villa Real de Chichen Itza, in and around the Spanish encampment, the Maya enemies targeted their native guides, and especially the few proficient native interpreters that they had with them in camp.<sup>15</sup>

Recognizing the significance of the bilingual native servants and interpreters of the Spaniards, when the Cupul Maya attacked the Spanish settlement of Chichen Itza, they made a special point of “slaughtering all the Indian slaves and other natives serving the Spaniards who fell into their hands...” (Chamberlain 1966: 144). Alonso de Arévalo, in his own *relación*, mentioned the fact that in the army’s flight from Chichen Itza towards the coast they lost most of their baggage train and especially most of their “*indios de servicio*”.<sup>16</sup> In his own *relación* the Captain General, Montejo el mozo, lamented the loss of several of their important interpreters on this flight.<sup>17</sup> The elder Montejo himself in another document referred to the same time and commented that afterward they “did not have even an Indian left to serve them a cup of water...” (Chamberlain 1966: 118–122).

Although in the earliest phase of the conquest of Yucatan, the majority of these Maya interpreters acquired their linguistic skills involuntarily, many of these captured and enslaved Maya quickly turned the tables on their “captors” by spreading fabulous fictions of riches that awaited them all the while secretly plotting their own escape and/or revenge. The Elder Montejo wrote to the crown

<sup>15</sup> For a few examples of the most important of these primary sources from the Conquistadors themselves consult the bibliography of this article.

<sup>16</sup> *Relación de méritos de Isabel Ruiz de Arévalo, y su padre y marido como Conquistadores de Yucatán*, 68 folios. 1582, AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 913.

<sup>17</sup> See *Información de los méritos y servicios de don Francisco de Montejo, hijo del adelantado don Francisco de Montejo, que se halló en la conquista de Nueva España, Higueras, Honduras y Yucatan*, 1563, AGI, Patronato, 65, no. 2, r. 1.

complaining about the duplicity of many of their early “serviceable translators” who served as their interpreters and guides writing:

There was not a single thing that I asked them if it existed in that land that they did not answer yes, and many times they did this only to have me leave there and go onward to another place...and I found in them and their answers no truth in much of what they said to me..." (Chamberlain 1966: 165)

Nevertheless, by the time of the second *entrada* in 1530, many of the young Maya slaves who were given to the Spaniards often sought active collaboration in order to receive the protection and prestige of working for powerful new patrons. Montejo and his men quickly realized that indigenous “youths” given to them as gifts from the local Maya caciques made the best interpreters, since they appeared to pick up foreign languages with greater ease than adults and were not so deeply connected to their native culture, nor powerful or old enough to successfully pursue flight or escape. In addition to the pragmatic service that these Indian slave interpreters provided as translators, they also became important as invaluable sources of information and intelligence.

### **Logistical supply and intelligence**

The logistical supply of an expedition of conquest was affected through the utilization of successful interpreters. Captive indigenous translators became almost exclusively responsible for the acquisition of military intelligence which led to repeated examples of ambush avoidance (as evidenced by the testimonies of dozens of Conquistadors of Yucatan, see for instance the *relaciones de méritos* [RDMs] of Esteban Oliva [1547], and several others cited in the bibliography).

Although their lives are necessarily difficult to document, historians should not underestimate the influence and impact of these “*lenguas forzadas*.” Throughout the long conquest of Yucatan, enslaved and captured Maya language interpreters used their linguistic and diplomatic skills, and their intimate knowledge of the “other” not simply to facilitate conquest but rather they transformed themselves from simple “forced” cultural brokers, into active “power brokers.” Many of the decisive events that shaped Spanish-Indigenous relations turned on the actions of these cultur-

ally ambiguous individuals, a fact that was occasionally acknowledged by the Spanish conquistadors who benefited from their skills. In a few rare cases, like that of Rodrigo Álvarez, the third entrada's chief secretary and scribe, a Spaniard did recognize one of these loyal Maya "lenguas forzadas." Maya observers recorded in the titles of Yaxkukul and Chicxulub the role that Álvarez and his own Maya slave interpreter:

Rodrigo Álvarez was notary during the year 1542. When the cahob were divided up among the conquistadors by the captains of the adelantado, the first Spaniards, and the notary Rodrigo Álvarez, wrote down the tribute evaluation pertaining to each of the cahob. And accordingly all my companions, those of my chibal (lineage) delivered sufficient tribute according to the division of tribute to the Spaniards made by the captains of the Adelantado and the notary Rodrigo Álvarez. (See the English translation of the *Títulos de Chicxulub* in Restall 1998: 113)

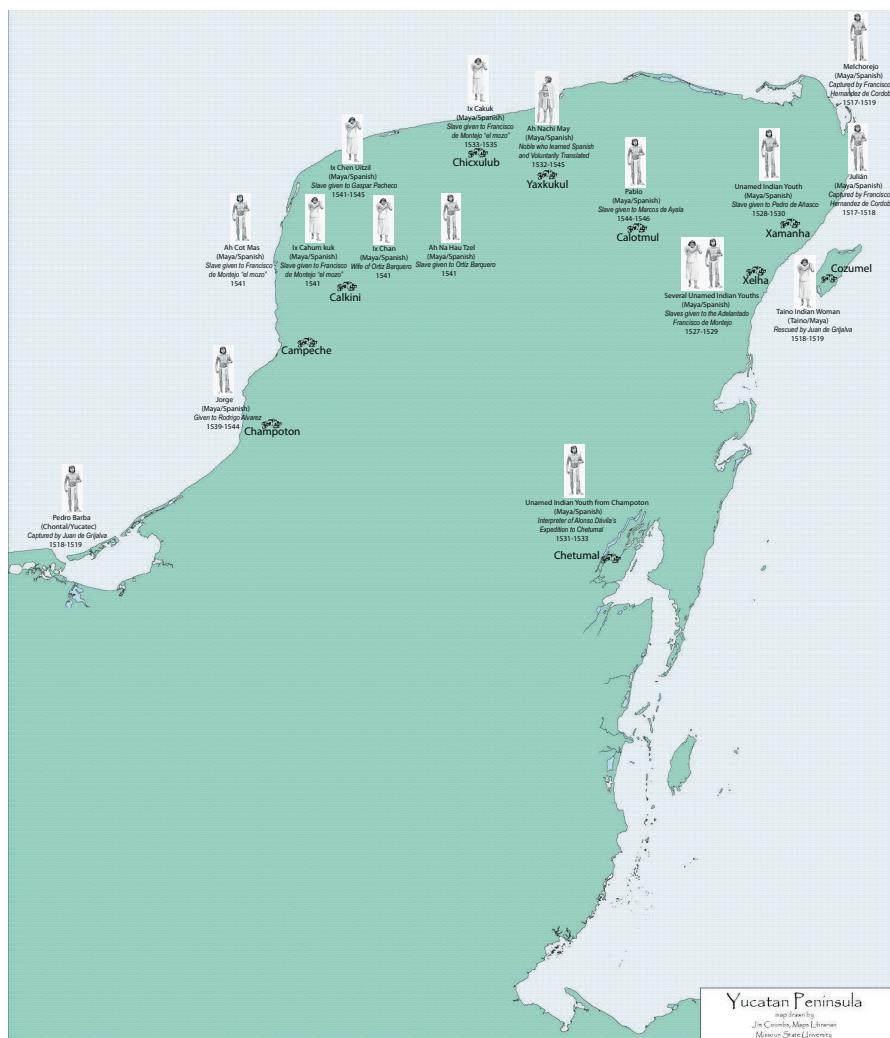
In the case of Álvarez, in his own *relación de méritos y servicios*, he duly acknowledged the significant role played by his Maya servant/interpreter, named Jorge whom he called "an Indian *muy ladino* who served as my loyal interpreter...".<sup>18</sup> Thus, while many of the self-aggrandizing conquistadors were reluctant to share the limelight with the indigenous men and more often than not indigenous women who served as their translators, other participants and chroniclers did mention the important role played by these *lenguas forzadas*.

The actions, successes and failures of the various *entradas* that led to the ultimate conquest of Yucatan leave little doubt as to how desperately Francisco de Montejo and his Spanish soldiers required and depended on the services of these individuals who are so often left out of the history of these early contact periods. Indeed, almost without exception, Montejo and his men regularly risked inciting ill-will and hostility by abducting indigenous Mayas in order to secure trustworthy translators.

## Concluding Remarks

Most of the thirty or so interpreters identified from historical sources were held captive in one way or another, and thus they

<sup>18</sup> See *Relación de los méritos y servicios de Juan Álvarez (hijo) y Rodrigo Álvarez (padre), Conquistadores de Yucatán*, 1630, AGI, Audiencia de México, 244, no.4.



**Figure 1.** Examples of documented early captive Maya forced translators (*lenguas forzadas*), 1517–1546.

had the opportunity to learn the Spanish language (see Figure 1). Their numbers included women at every stage: in most of the early stages of the conquest of Yucatan, the native Maya women and youths remained anonymous, much to our regret; and no doubt much of this has to do with the fact that most of the Spaniards and their few native servants perished during these early expeditions leaving behind few survivors who were left to comment on their experiences.

In the later and final phase of the conquest of Yucatan, we can identify specific individuals such as Jorge, the Maya slave interpreter of Secretary Rodrigo Álvarez; and Isabel, one of the young girls given to Montejo the younger by the Pech rulers of Yaxkukul; Maria Chan, the wife of the Spanish conquistador and carpenter, Ortiz Barquero; as well as several other Maya slaves, servants, and interpreters. It is clear that wherever interpreters were involved, agreements were reached and the conquest went ahead more rapidly than when only the language of violence was used. It is also clear that when the interpreters were not adequate to the task, the mission was considerably impaired or failed. Beyond mere knowledge of two languages, the interpreters' kinship or cultural proximity with the local natives played a key role in achieving the goals of the conquerors.

Undoubtedly, the number of interpreters must have been greater than those we have been able to identify in the historical records. Many were anonymous even in the documents of the day, especially those who were not involved on a regular basis. For example, despite the lack of information, we are inclined to think that the indigenous women who became wives or mistresses of the conquerors (such as in the case of Ortiz Barquero and his wife Ix Chan from Calkini) must have played an important role as interpreters, especially in everyday situations.

Anonymous or recorded, in the era of the conquest and colonization of the region of Yucatan, interpreters played an important role as a human means through which the forces of colonial power were imposed. The relative oblivion into which many of them have fallen is explained by a reluctance to admit to the presence of a third party that could cast a shadow on the importance of the powerful figures engaged in momentous negotiations. This reluctance may also be understandable given the low position most interpreters occupied in society as servants, slaves, members of inferior castes, and largely women (see Delisle and Woodsworth 1995: 244–245). As this article has attempted to briefly illustrate from 1527 and well into the decade of the later 1540s, forced Maya interpreters and cultural intermediaries played a crucial and often decisive role in determining the ultimate success or failure of many of the Spanish *entradas* and colonial ventures in the region of Yucatan. In conclusion, although pressured, pushed, and pulled by various contradictory constituencies, most of

these Maya “*lenguas forzadas*” were aware of the pivotal position that they held in cross-cultural negotiations and rarely did they remain passive pawns in the contests of domination and defense. Instead, these forced interpreters often used their linguistic and diplomatic skills and their acquired intimate knowledge of the “other” not simply to facilitate conquest, but also to transform themselves from simple slaves into active agents of empire.

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# **La metodología de Alfonso Lacadena para el análisis y traducción paleográfica de textos coloniales en maya yucateco**

MACARENA S. LÓPEZ OLIVA

Universidad Complutense de Madrid

(mahasoled@hotmail.com)

ZORAIDA RAIMÚNDEZ ARES

Posgrado en Estudios Mesoamericanos

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

(zraiares@hotmail.com)

ELENA SAN JOSÉ ORTIGOSA

Investigadora independiente

(helena\_sanjose@hotmail.com)

FLORENCIA SCANDAR

Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

(scandarflorencia@yahoo.com.ar)

MARÍA SOLER GÓMEZ

Universidad Complutense de Madrid

(masoler@ucm.es)

**Resumen:** Este artículo propone unificar y establecer una serie de normas, basadas en las ideas de Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, para aplicar en el análisis y traducción de textos coloniales en maya yucateco. Las normas propuestas se dividen en cinco pasos de análisis: 1) transliteración, 2) transcripción, 3) segmentación morfológica, 4) análisis morfosintáctico, y 5) traducción. La finalidad de esta metodología es ofrecer, tanto a los lectores en general como a los investigadores en particular, una traducción transparente y clara, donde los criterios de análisis y traducción tengan coherencia interna y sean consistentes en todos los pasos del trabajo paleográfico. Esto facilitará la comprensión de los textos y permitirá valorar y encarar las problemáticas, tanto de análisis como de traducción, con las que se enfrentan constantemente los investigadores de este tipo de textos.

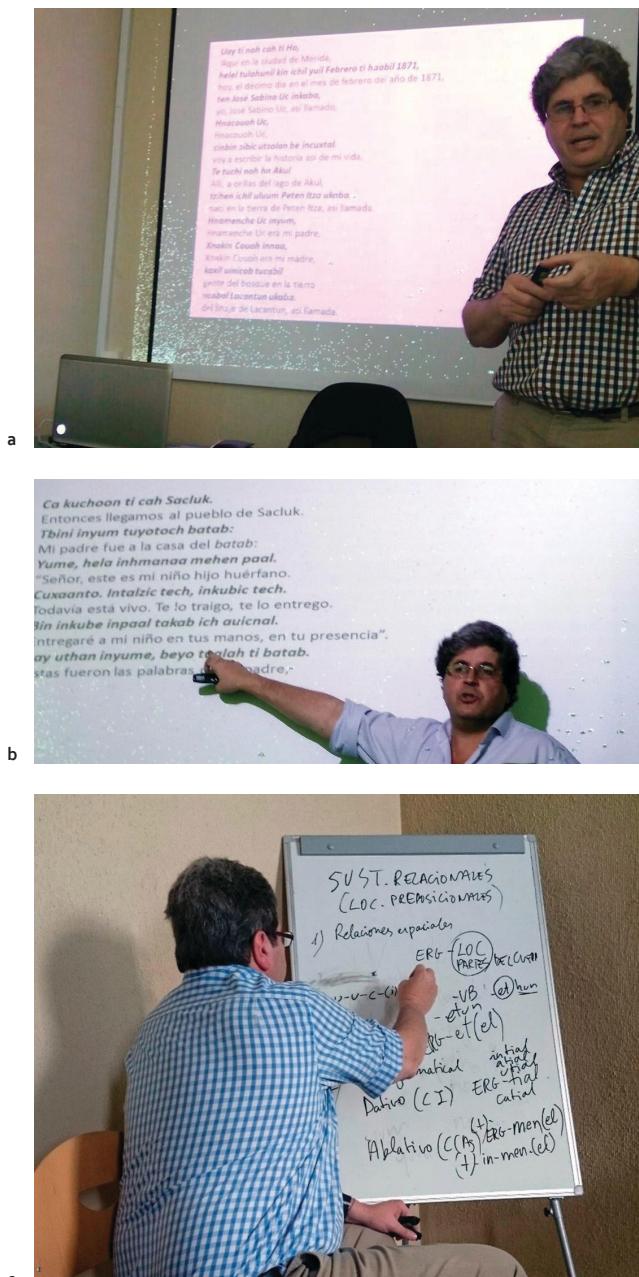
**Abstract:** This article proposes to unify and establish a series of rules, according to the ideas expressed by Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, for the analysis and translation of colonial texts written in Yucatec Maya. The suggested rules are divided into five analytic steps: 1) transliteration, 2) transcription, 3) morphological segmentation, 4) morphosyn-

tactic analysis, and 5) translation. The main goal of this methodology is to provide a transparent and clear translation for the general reader and scholars, where the analysis and translation criteria have internal coherence and are consistent in all steps of the paleographic work. This will facilitate the comprehension of the texts and allows to evaluate the problems of both analysis and translation, with which students of this type of texts are constantly confronted.

El presente artículo está encaminado a proponer y fijar una serie de normas para la traducción y análisis de textos escritos en maya yucateco colonial. Las normas aquí presentadas, y la misma idea de publicarlas, surgieron en el año 2015 durante el *Seminario de paleografía y gramática del maya yucateco colonial (siglos XVI-XVIII)*, impartido por Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid. En ese primer seminario, del que formábamos parte las autoras de este artículo, Alfonso propuso continuar con este método, ya que había comenzado a trabajar individualmente con algunas de nosotras en nuestras tesis (Scandar 2010, 2017; Raimúndez 2015).

Los seminarios de maya yucateco (Figura 1) fueron un espacio excepcional creado por Alfonso en el que todos, pero especialmente nosotras, aprendimos mucho sobre la lengua maya del período colonial. Este aprendizaje se lo debemos a la sabiduría y a la dedicación de nuestro maestro, pero también a las apasionadas discusiones sobre diversos temas que él fomentó. Alfonso decía, en realidad con orgullo, que nosotras éramos demasiado críticas y detallistas. Por eso nos llamaba el “Tendido 7”, en referencia al grupo de crítica taurina.

Durante las largas sesiones del seminario, discutimos la mejor manera de realizar las traducciones, teniendo siempre presente el objetivo de ofrecer al resto de la comunidad académica textos transparentes con los que trabajar y traducciones apegadas al original. Como explica Esteban Torre Serrano (2001: 14), en traducción hay dos extremos de lo que consideramos en realidad un *continuum*: por un lado, la traducción que respeta el sentido del texto original, la cual está especialmente preocupada por la naturalidad del texto en la lengua receptora, y, por otro, aquella que se adhiere “fielmente”, en la medida de lo posible, al original, segmento por segmento, palabra por palabra. Dependiendo del objetivo último de una traducción, el lugar más recomendado de ese *continuum* puede variar. Las autoras de este artículo pensamos que, para la utilización de traducciones



**Figura 1.** a) Alfonso Lacadena en el Seminario de paleografía y gramática del maya yucateco colonial (siglos XVI-XVIII), impartido en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 23 de febrero de 2016 (fotografía del "Tendido 7"), b) Alfonso explicando textos coloniales, 1 de marzo de 2016 (fotografía de Florencia Scandar), c) Alfonso explicando análisis morfosintáctico, 15 de abril de 2015 (fotografía de María Soler Gómez).

del maya con fines de investigación académica, a veces es necesario ceder un poco en la naturalidad del texto para así respetar, de la manera más fiel posible, la esencia y la intención del texto maya original.

Es así como, en el año 2015, se redactó una primera versión de estas normas, la cual quedó inconclusa, y ahora la retomamos para homenajear a nuestro querido maestro y amigo. Este método es, sin duda, de Alfonso, siendo nuestro aporte simplemente la matización de ciertos detalles que quedaron sin establecer durante el seminario, además de reflejar por escrito sus enseñanzas.

De este modo, aquí presentamos las normas para la transliteración, la transcripción, la segmentación, el análisis y la traducción de textos escritos en maya yucateco colonial. En primer lugar, se presentan una serie de normas generales, seguidas de los cinco pasos propuestos y sus respectivas características. Finalmente, a modo de ejemplo, presentamos un texto que trabajamos con Alfonso en el seminario, y que se ha revisado para esta publicación: una carta de pago escrita el 24 de septiembre de 1667, en Ystapilla (Tabasco), la cual fue firmada por diversas autoridades del lugar.

## **Normas Generales**

A continuación, se plantean los cinco pasos a realizar en el análisis de los textos coloniales en maya yucateco: 1) Transliteración, 2) Transcripción, 3) Segmentación morfológica, 4) Análisis morfosintáctico y, 5) Traducción. Si bien cada uno tiene una función concreta, es posible modificar o eliminar alguno de ellos, según la finalidad del estudio que se vaya a realizar. Antes de detallar dichos pasos, se indican las cuatro reglas comunes que aplican en todos ellos:

- I. Se mantienen las líneas originales del documento, marcando el inicio de cada frase con un número en superíndice y una barra oblicua, por ejemplo <sup>1/</sup>. Esto se realiza tanto en el documento original, como en la transliteración realizada por el paleógrafo. Dicha numeración aparecerá únicamente en el primer paso, salvo que alguno de ellos se presente de forma independiente o se modifique el orden de las líneas originales.

- II. Si en los márgenes del documento se realizaron notas, cualquiera sea su naturaleza u origen, se transliterarán con una numeración independiente a la del documento y se indicará su posición original en el texto.
- III. No se traducirán antropónimos, teónimos, topónimos, cargos ni títulos; los tres primeros se dejarán en letra normal y los dos últimos en cursiva.
- IV. Todas las aclaraciones, decisiones de traducción y otros criterios no incluidos en el texto se señalarán con notas al pie, en el paso que corresponda.

### Paso 1: Transliteración

La finalidad de la transliteración es mostrar el documento en su forma original, es decir, con las menores modificaciones posibles. En caso de que éstas sean necesarias, se indicarán con notas al pie o mediante las normas paleográficas tradicionales utilizadas para los manuscritos del Viejo Mundo (Riesco 2004).

- a. Se utilizará la fuente en formato **negrita**.
- b. Se mantendrán todos los elementos del documento, incluidos símbolos, abreviaturas, errores e hipercorrecciones.
- c. Se utilizarán símbolos especiales<sup>1</sup>, en la medida de lo posible, pero siempre respetando el documento original.
- d. Cualquier indicación referente a desperfectos y otros elementos de interés del documento se marcarán entre corchetes ([ ]), utilizando las normas paleográficas tradicionales (roto, ilegible, tachado, etc.), sin modificar nada. No obstante, cuando aparezcan elementos no estandarizados se explicará su significado en una nota al pie.
- e. Se podrá realizar la transliteración arreglando las líneas conforme a la disposición del texto, evitando los cortes de pala-

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<sup>1</sup> Con esta denominación se hace referencia a aquellos elementos del documento que, por sus características, no se pueden encuadrar dentro de un símbolo estandarizado dentro del procesador de texto.

bras y/o favoreciendo su lectura y análisis. Cuando se produzca un cambio de folio se marcará con una doble barra oblicua (//).

## Paso 2: Transcripción

El objetivo principal de este paso es el de presentar el texto completamente legible y ortográficamente unificado.

- a. Se utilizará la fuente en formato **cursiva negrita**.
- b. Se separarán o unirán las palabras, según corresponda, sin considerar la disposición de éstas en el texto.
- c. Se corregirán las mayúsculas y minúsculas ortográficas.
- d. Se corregirán errores ortográficos, hipercorrecciones, uso incorrecto de letras, duplicaciones, etc.
- e. Se añadirán los signos de puntuación que se requieran<sup>2</sup>.
- f. Se desarrollarán las abreviaturas entre corchetes ([ ]).
- g. Se señalarán los símbolos que puedan aparecer en el documento.

Ejemplo:

Transliteración

Paso 1. †

Transcripción

Paso 2. [cruz]

- h. El resto de los elementos se mantendrán como en la transliteración.
- i. Si se moderniza la grafía, se marcará por medio de barras que delimiten el texto (//) y se eliminará la **negrita**, dejando únicamente el texto en *cursiva*.

Ejemplo:

Transliteración

Paso 1. ***yan tu caanil kin***

Transcripción

Paso 2. /y[à]an tu['] ka[']anil k[']in/

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<sup>2</sup> Debido a que la puntuación en este tipo de manuscritos suele estar ausente, o aparece de forma no reglada, tendrá que establecerse al realizar el paso de traducción; sólo después de esto podrá introducirse en la transcripción.

### **Paso 3: Segmentación morfológica**

Presenta los diferentes morfemas que conforman las palabras, los cuales se analizan en el siguiente paso.

- a. Se realizará en formato *cursiva*.
- b. Se separarán los distintos elementos morfológicos mediante guiones cortos (-).
- c. Desaparecerán los corchetes reconstruidos ([ ]) de las abreviaturas presentes en el paso 2.
- d. Los fonemas que deban restituirse, basados en argumentos internos, paleográficos o históricos, se representarán entre paréntesis [( )].

Ejemplo:

Transcripción

Paso 2. **talob**

Segmentación

Paso 3. *tal-(i)-ob*

### **Paso 4: Análisis morfosintáctico**

En este paso se describen gramaticalmente los distintos elementos previamente segmentados.

- a. Se empleará la fuente normal.
- b. Se clasificarán los morfemas segmentados en el paso previo identificando el significado de los lexemas, en minúsculas, e indicando la función o categoría de los gramemas, en mayúsculas y con abreviaturas<sup>3</sup>.

Ejemplo:

Segmentación      Paso 3. *tal-(i)-ob*

Análisis            Paso 4. venir-COM-3pA

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<sup>3</sup> Véase Glosario de Abreviaturas.

## Paso 5: Traducción

Se presenta una traducción lo más fiel posible al texto original teniendo en cuenta las diferencias entre la lengua de salida y la de llegada.

- a. Se utilizará la fuente normal entre comillas francesas (“”).
- b. Los paréntesis [( )] se emplearán para restituir aquellos elementos que no aparezcan en el texto original en maya yucateco, pero que sean necesarios para la comprensión del texto en la lengua de salida.

## Aplicación de la metodología: ejemplo de análisis

A continuación se analiza un documento correspondiente a una carta de pago realizada el 24 de septiembre de 1667, en Ystapilla (Tabasco), que fue firmada por diversas autoridades de la zona (Figuras 2 y 3). Se trata de un documento realizado en papel europeo, tamaño *in folio*, escrito en ambas caras (recto y verso), y con número de folio 603. El recto presenta un breve texto escrito en maya yucateco; sin embargo, el verso fue redactado en castellano, en la parte superior derecha, a modo de resumen. El estado de conservación del papel, así como la legibilidad del texto son buenos<sup>4</sup>.

(Recto)

<sup>1</sup> /ystapilla	†	603
Ystapilla	[cruz]	603
‘Ystapilla’	[cruz]	603

<sup>4</sup> La elección de este texto se debe a razones tanto académicas como personales; de hecho, no solo fue el primer texto que analizamos con Alfonso, sino que él lo escogió como portada para el material que nos dio en el *Seminario de paleografía y gramática del maya yucateco colonial (siglos XVI–XVIII)*. Además, por su extensión y datación resulta muy adecuado para ejemplificar el método de análisis y traducción propuesto en el presente artículo. Debido a las circunstancias que rodean la obtención de este documento, es decir, como material de enseñanza sin intención concreta de publicación, ni Alfonso ni nosotras reparamos, en su momento, en la procedencia exacta de este manuscrito, no obstante, él nos mencionó que pertenecía a la colección del Archivo General de Indias (AGI). Pese a este dato y a la intensa búsqueda que hemos estado realizando, tanto en el AGI como en el Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), para conseguir la ubicación precisa de este documento —antes de la publicación de este artículo—, hasta la fecha no hemos tenido éxito. Sin embargo, continuamos con su búsqueda. Al parecer, esta carta forma parte de un legajo con otros cuatro documentos, también escritos en yucateco colonial, elaborados entre los meses de septiembre y octubre del año 1667.

**<sup>2</sup>/ ton con uchuntan liqui caliiqui****Ton, con uchunt[*h*]an, lici<sup>5</sup> calici**T-on, c-on u-chunthan<sup>6</sup>, lici c-al-ic-i-ØPREP-1pA, -1pA<sup>7</sup> 3sE-principal, PART.ASP.INC 1pE-decir-INC.REF-?<sup>8</sup>-3sA  
'Nosotros, que somos los principales, decimos'**<sup>3</sup>/u ha hil caa tan ma nan u paxton****uhahil cat[*h*]an: manan upax ton**u-hah-il ca-than: manan<sup>9</sup> u-pax t(i)<sup>10</sup>-on3sE-verdad-INAL<sup>11</sup> 1pE-palabra: no hay 3sE-deuda PREP-1pA  
'la verdad de nuestras palabras: no tiene deudas con nosotros'

<sup>5</sup> Si bien los grafemas para el yucateco colonial no estuvieron fijados, el fonema /k/ fue expresado generalmente con la letra *c*, motivo por el cual se han sustituido los grafemas *qu* del texto por la letra *c* en el paso de la transcripción.

<sup>6</sup> En este caso *chunthan* funciona como una palabra completa (Alfonso Lacadena, comunicación personal, 2015). Se ha optado por la traducción que ofrece la entrada del *Diccionario Maya Cordemex*, para (ah) *chun t'an*: "el principal del pueblo o que lo es en algún negocio" (Barrera 1980: 116). Sin embargo, puede realizarse un análisis etimológico de la expresión, lo que muestra su formación por medio de la unión de la palabra *chun* ('origen') y *than* ('palabra'). El análisis etimológico de los nombres de autoridades sólo será necesario en los casos donde la traducción no sea clara.

<sup>7</sup> Aunque podría interpretarse como el pronombre independiente de la primera persona del plural *ton*, 'nosotros', seguido del vocablo *con*, se trata de una fórmula compuesta por PREP-A *c*-A, y utilizada a modo de presentación, por ejemplo, *ten cen*, 'yo, que soy', o como en este caso, *ton con*, 'nosotros, que somos' (Alfonso Lacadena, comunicación personal, 29 de enero de 2015). Sin embargo, desconocemos la función gramatical de *c*-, que precede al pronombre absolutivo.

<sup>8</sup> La función gramatical del morfema *-i* es confusa; podría tratarse de la marca de aspecto completivo de los verbos transitivos raíces monosílabicos (E-RAIZ-(i)c-i-A, véase Lacadena 2015–2016). No obstante, dada la presencia de la marca aspectual *lici* antes del verbo, identificamos *calici* como un verbo en aspecto incompletivo. Otra opción posible es considerar el morfema *-i* como una vocal de apoyo, lo que es usual en las palabras presentes a final de oración; sin embargo, *calici* no está al final de la oración. Por esta razón, no podemos determinar la función y la traducción exacta del morfema *-i*.

<sup>9</sup> Consideraremos que *manan*, 'no hay', es un vocablo lexicalizado compuesto por la negación *ma'* y el verbo *yaan*, 'haber, existir'. Las evidencias de la lexicalización se encuentran en el *Diccionario de la lengua maya* de Juan Pío Pérez (1877: 215), donde aparece la entrada *mananil*, "escasez, falta, penuria", es decir, se trata de un sustantivo derivado del vocablo *manan* a través del abstractivizador *-il*.

<sup>10</sup> La función de la *t*- junto con el plural absolutivo de primera persona *-on* es complicada de analizar. En este caso nos parece coherente que pueda ser una contracción de la preposición *ti* con el mencionado pronombre. De hecho, en el Calepino de Motul (Arzápalo 1995, I: 591) hay una entrada para *ton* en la que aparece como "con nosotros". No obstante, podría tratarse de un simple pronombre independiente de la primera persona del plural, 'nosotros', omitiéndose la preposición, como sucede en muchas ocasiones en la lengua maya yucateca. Para el uso de la preposición *ti* en maya yucateco colonial véase Macarena López Oliva (2012).

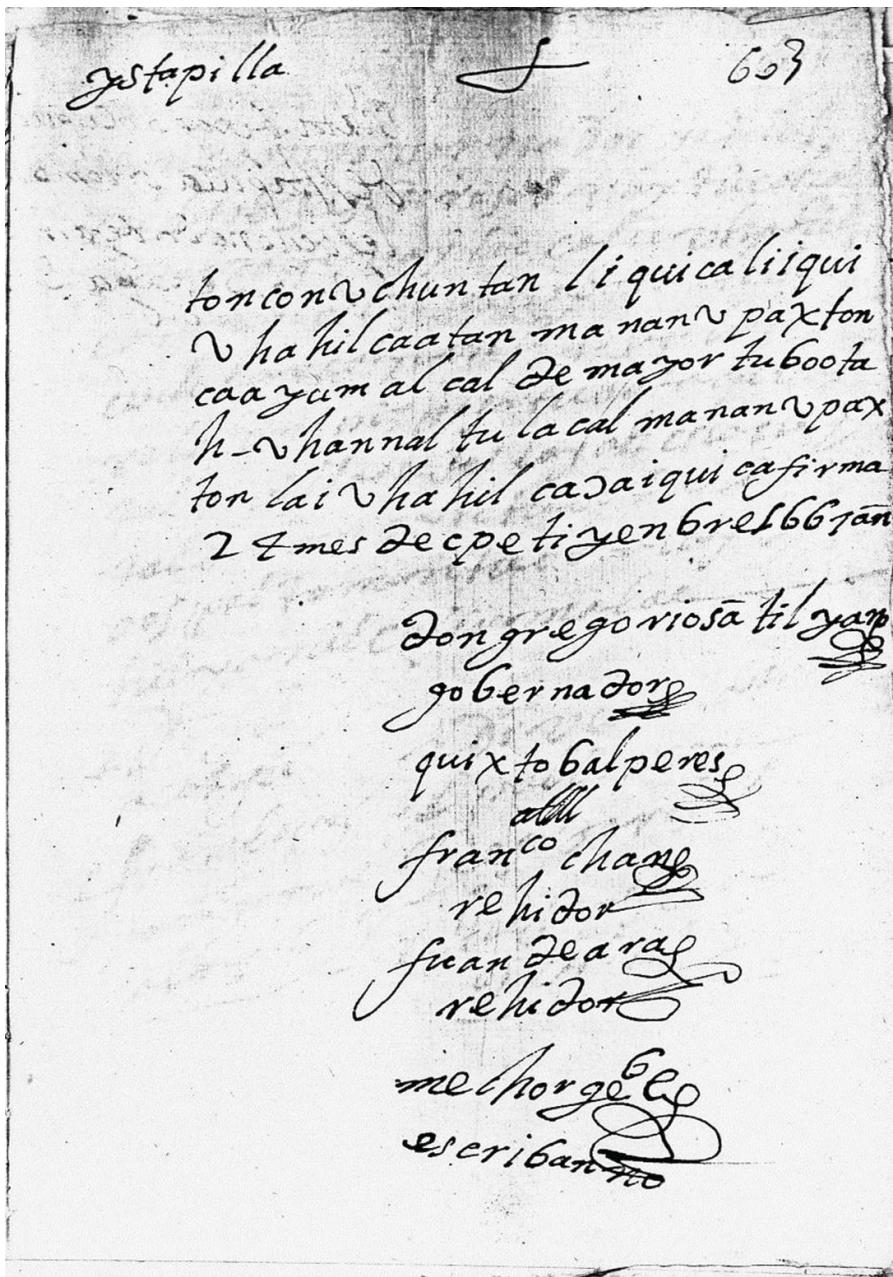


Figura 2. Carta de pago de Ystapilla (Tabasco). Recto.

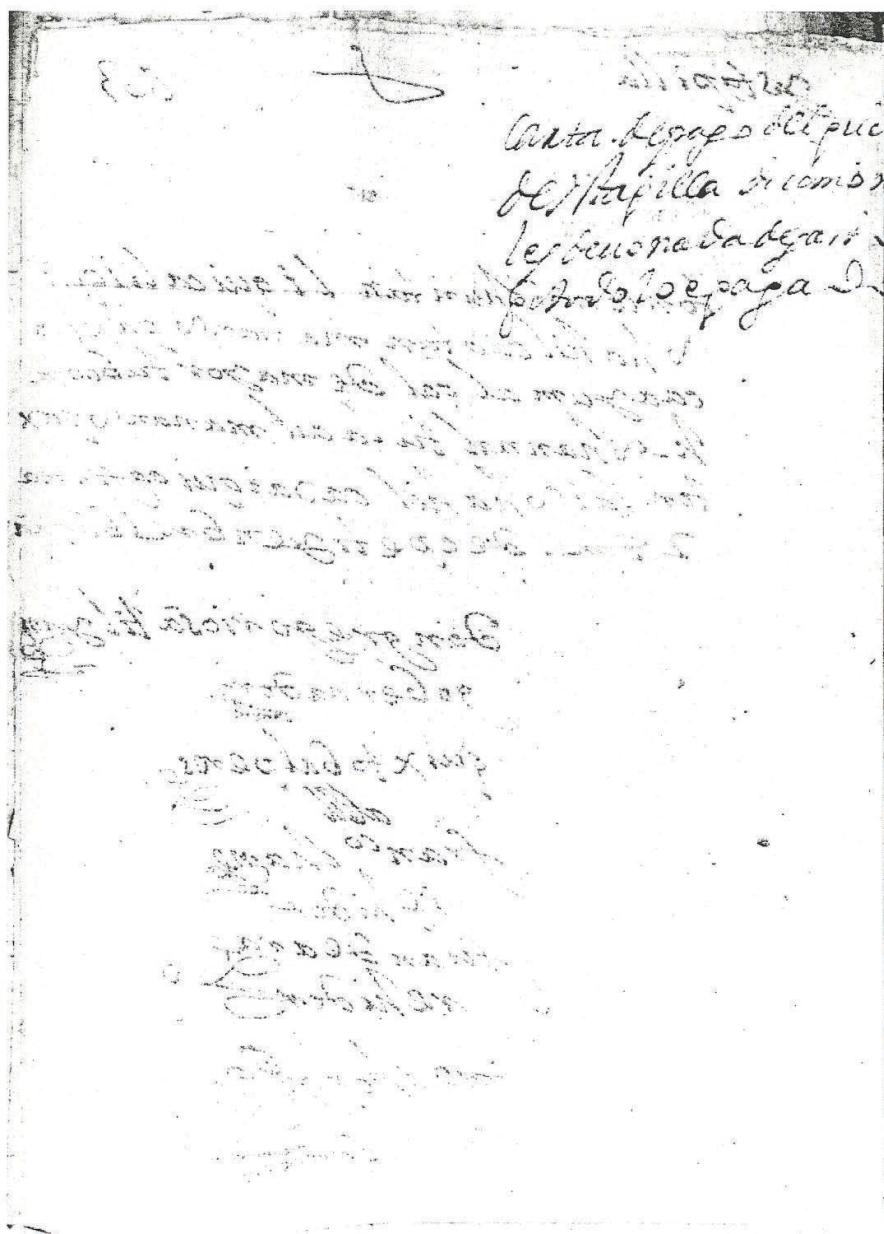


Figura 3. Carta de pago de Ystapilla (Tabasco). Verso.

<sup>4</sup>/caa yum al cal de mayor tuboata <sup>5</sup>/h

**cayum, alcalde mayor, tuboatah**

*ca-yum, alcalde mayor, t-u-boo(l)-t-ah-Ø*

1pE-señor, alcalde mayor, COM<sup>12</sup>-3sE-pagar-TRANS-COM-3sA

‘nuestro señor, el alcalde mayor, pagó hace tiempo’

<sup>5</sup>/uhannal tu lacal manan upax

**uhanal tulacal, manan upax**

*u-hanal t-u-lacal, manan u-pax*

3sE-comida ?-3sE-todo<sup>13</sup> no hay 3sE-deuda

‘toda su comida, no tiene deudas’

<sup>6</sup>/ton lai u ha hil caøaiqui cafirma

**ton. Lay uhahil. Caøaici cafirma**

*t-on. Lay u-hah-il. Ca-øa-ic-i-Ø ca-firma*

PREP-1pA.DEM 3sE-verdad-ABST<sup>14</sup>. 1pE-dar-COM.REF-3sA 1pE-firma

‘con nosotros. Esta es la verdad. Dimos nuestras firmas’

<sup>7</sup>/24 mes de cpetiyembre1667 ān

**24 mes de C[e]petiyembre 1667 an[nos].**

‘(a) 24 (del) mes de Septiembre (del) año 1667.’

<sup>11</sup> El sufijo inalienable *-il* marca la relación íntima entre la verdad y la declaración (Alfonso Lacadena, comunicación personal, 2015). Sobre inalienabilidad véase Lucero Meléndez (2007); para una discusión y un análisis lingüístico respecto a relación íntima e inalienabilidad enfocada entre seres sobrenaturales y humanos véase López Oliva (2018).

<sup>12</sup> El morfema *t-* es una marca de aspecto completivo que siempre aparece en los verbos transitivos raíces monosilábicos en modo referencial: t-E-RAIZ-(i)c-i-A (Lacadena 2015-2016); sin embargo, el verbo *tuboatah* está en modo declarativo. Como apunta Ortwin Smailus (1989: 41), en ocasiones, los verbos transitivos en aspecto declarativo presentan el prefijo *t-* para indicar que la acción ocurrió “en un tiempo ‘más en el pasado’ en comparación con la forma sin este elemento”.

<sup>13</sup> El análisis de la expresión *tulacal* es complejo y cuenta con varias interpretaciones. En opinión de Otto Schumann (1971: 52), *tulacal* es un atributivo que significa ‘todo’. Si bien ésta es la traducción correcta de *tulacal*, en el presente análisis la consideramos como una expresión compuesta por t-3sE-lacal, puesto que puede ser conjugada con otros pronomombres ergativos, por ejemplo, *ozobnacon tac lacal*: “probemos todos” (Arzápalo 1995, III: 1992), aunque no podemos determinar la función de *t-* (Alfonso Lacadena, comunicación personal, 2015). Según Victoria Bricker (1986: 38), *tulacal* es un sustantivo relacional formado por t-3sE-lac-al, siendo *t-* una preposición y *-al* un sufijo relacional que funciona como el adjetivo ‘todo’. No obstante, Bricker no proporciona una traducción para *lac*, término que no hemos podido encontrar en los diccionarios. Asimismo, dado que en ocasiones la preposición *ti* precede a la expresión *tulacal* (véase Ruz 1846: 227), consideramos que la *t-* quizás no es una preposición.

<sup>14</sup> En este caso no se puede analizar el sufijo *-il* como inalienable, ya que falta el poseedor de esa relación íntima, por lo que lo analizamos como un sufijo abstractivizador. En castellano no se puede traducir este sufijo, ya que ‘verdad’ es un sustantivo abstracto en sí mismo.

<sup>8</sup>/don gregoriosā tilyan [rúbrica]

**Don Gregorio Sa[n]tilyan [rúbrica]**

‘Don Gregorio Santillán [rúbrica]’

<sup>9</sup>/gobernador [rúbrica]

**gobernador [rúbrica]**

‘gobernador’

<sup>10</sup>/quixto bal peres

**Quixtobal Peres**

‘Cristóbal Pérez’

<sup>11</sup>/alll [rúbrica]

**al[ca]ll[de] [rúbrica]**

‘alcalde [rúbrica]’

<sup>12</sup>/fran<sup>co</sup> chan

**Fran[cis]co Chan**

‘Francisco Chan’

<sup>13</sup>/rehidor [rúbrica]

**rehidor [rúbrica]**

‘regidor [rúbrica]’

<sup>14</sup>/juan de ara

**Juan de Ara**

‘Juan de Ara’

<sup>15</sup>/rehidor [rúbrica]

**rehidor [rúbrica]**

‘regidor [rúbrica]’

<sup>16</sup>/mechor ge<sup>b</sup>e

**Me[l]chor Gebe**

‘Melchor Gebe’

<sup>17</sup>/escribanno [rúbrica]

**escribano [rúbrica]**

‘escribano [rúbrica]’

### (Verso)

<sup>1</sup>/Carta depago del pue

Carta de pago del pue[blo]

‘Carta de pago del pueblo’

<sup>2</sup>/de Ystapilla de como n

de Ystapilla de como n[o]

‘de Ystapilla de como no’

<sup>3</sup>/les devo nada de pa[ilegible]

les debo nada de pa[gar]

'les debo nada de pagar'

<sup>4</sup>/y todo lo e pagado.

y todo lo [h]e pagado.

'y todo lo he pagado.'

## Traducción completa

### (Recto)

'Nosotros, que somos los principales, decimos la verdad de nuestras palabras<sup>15</sup>: nuestro señor, el alcalde mayor, no tiene deudas con nosotros. Pagó hace tiempo toda su comida, no tiene deudas con nosotros. Esta es la verdad. Dimos nuestras firmas (a) 24 (del) mes de Septiembre (del) año 1667.

Don Gregorio Santillán [rúbrica]

gobernador

Cristóbal Pérez

alcalde [rúbrica]

Francisco Chan

regidor [rúbrica]

Juan de Ara

regidor [rúbrica]

Melchor Gebe

escribano [rúbrica].'

### (Verso)

'Carta de pago del pueblo de Ystapilla de como no les debo nada de pagar y todo lo he pagado.'

## Conclusiones

Las normas presentadas en este artículo se basan en las aportaciones y enseñanzas que Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo realizó a lo largo de

<sup>15</sup> Una traducción más fiel al castellano es 'la verdad de nuestra declaración'.

su carrera. Su sistematización se originó a raíz de los debates mantenidos durante el *Seminario de paleografía y gramática del maya yuqueño colonial (siglos XVI-XVIII)* (entre los años 2015–2016), y su finalidad fue establecer un punto de partida para los investigadores que actualmente dedican sus esfuerzos a este campo de estudio.

El objetivo de esta iniciativa es contribuir a homogeneizar la metodología empleada en las traducciones que se realizan de este tipo de documentos, de una forma similar a lo que está sucediendo en el campo de la epigrafía maya. Las ediciones críticas de los textos, al igual que el análisis morfosintáctico a través de glosas, son necesarios para el avance y la construcción de un conocimiento científico común y estandarizado. Para ello se propone una metodología que hace transparente todo el proceso de traducción y que fue ejemplificada a través de la carta de pago de Ystapilla, presentada al final de este artículo, así como también se aporta un glosario inicial de abreviaturas que esperamos aumente progresivamente con el avance de las investigaciones, tanto nuestras como de otros colegas.

Pensamos que Alfonso, debido a la visión que tenía sobre la investigación y el conocimiento, estaría de acuerdo en hacer partícipes a todos aquellos interesados, de los avances y las propuestas que se han presentado a partir de su proyecto original.

## Glosario de Abreviaturas

A continuación, se señalan las abreviaturas usadas en este análisis, además de otras generales desarrolladas a lo largo del seminario y de los trabajos de algunas de las autoras (Scandar 2010, 2017; Raimúndez 2015).

Estas abreviaturas, ciertamente, deberán ampliarse a medida que se trabaje y avance en el análisis de este tipo de documentos coloniales.

1/2/3	=	primera, segunda o tercera persona
Ø	=	pronombre absolutivo de tercera persona singular
s/p	=	singular, plural
A	=	Absolutivo
ABST	=	Abstractivizador
ADJ	=	Adjetivo/ Adjetivador
AG	=	Agentivo
APAS	=	Antipasiva

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CLAS	=	Clasificador numeral
CLIT	=	Clítico
COL	=	Colectivo
COM	=	Completivo
DEC	=	Declarativo
DEM	=	Pronombre demostrativo
E	=	Ergativo
FOC	=	Focalizador
FUT	=	Futuro
I	=	Pronombre independiente
INAL	=	Sufijo inalienable
INC	=	Incompletivo
INCO	=	Incoativo
INT	=	Interrogativo
MPAS	=	Mediopasiva
NEG	=	Negación
PART	=	Partícula
PART.ASP	=	Partícula aspectual
PAS	=	Pasiva
PL	=	Plural
PERF	=	Perfecto
PPO	=	Participio
PREP	=	Preposición
PRON	=	Pronombre
REC	=	Recíproco
REF	=	Referencial
REFL	=	Reflexivo
REL	=	Relacional
SUB	=	Subjuntivo
TRANS	=	Transitivizador

**Agradecimientos:** Queremos agradecer a los editores por invitarnos a participar en este tomo conmemorativo en honor a Alfonso Lacadena. También queremos agradecer, especialmente, a Laura Jack, la esposa de Alfonso, por autorizarnos a utilizar y citar el trabajo inédito de Alfonso, y sobre todo por su apoyo y ayuda constante. Finalmente, y lo más importante, queremos agradecer a nuestro querido maestro y amigo, Alfonso Lacadena, ya que sin él este artículo no sería posible. Gracias por todos estos años inolvidables de constante y vertiginoso aprendizaje, por tu apoyo, aliento y cariño incondicional. Tu partida nos ha dejado un gran vacío irrecuperable. Siempre estarás con nosotras.

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# **Fire Symbolism in Ritual Practices and in Ritual Speech: Continuity and Change in Yucatec Maya (Con-)Texts**

BODIL LILJEFORS PERSSON  
Malmö University  
(bodil.liljefors@mau.se)

**Abstract:** This article focuses on ritual practices and ritual speech connected with fire that can be traced back in a long-term perspective and have had a lasting impact on Yucatec Maya life. Early Colonial sources, such as Yucatec Maya texts and ethnohistoric sources, provide us with a vehicle to chart the use of fire in these (con-)texts. Yucatec Maya religious ritual dialogue is explored through time and in texts and speech that include fire either as part of ritual practice or as expressed in ritual discourse. Fire, smoke and ashes may function as a vehicle that not only transforms ritual into action, but also creates symbolic messages that link ritual participants to ancestor spirits and gods. Modern ethnographic research that reiterates practices narrated in the Books of Chilam Balam highlights (con-) texts that suggest the continuity of ritual practices. Ritual Studies and the theoretical perspectives of Comparative Religion are employed in this study. The various sources illustrate persistence in ritual practices and speech performances that contain intricate fire and similar symbolism. This is also seen in the vivid spirituality found in contemporary Yucatec Maya religious landscapes.

**Resumen:** Este artículo se enfoca en las prácticas rituales y en el discurso religioso que se relacionan con el fuego, los cuales se pueden describir a lo largo de los siglos, ya que han tenido un fuerte y duradero impacto en la vida maya yucateca. Las fuentes históricas del periodo Colonial temprano, así como aquellas escritas en maya yucateco y fuentes etno-historicas, proporcionan evidencias para reconstruir el uso del fuego en varios (con)textos rituales. Se analiza el diálogo religioso maya yucateco a lo largo del tiempo, partiendo de los textos y alocuciones que abarcan el fuego como parte de la práctica o como tema discursivo. Fuego, humo o ceniza parecen funcionar no sólo como medios que transforman el ritual en acción, sino también para crear un mensaje simbólico que vincula los participantes con los espíritus de los antepasados y con las deidades. La investigación etnográfica moderna, que reitera prácticas narradas en los libros de Chilam Balam, enfatiza (con)textos que sugieren una continuidad ritual. En este estudio se emplean los marcos teóricos de los estudios de la ritualidad y del estudio comparativo de las religiones. Las distintas fuentes muestran una clara persistencia en las prácticas rituales y en la representación del discurso que contiene un complejo simbolismo de fuego y de elementos similares. Esto, asimismo, se ve en la espiritualidad hallada en los paisajes religiosos mayas contemporáneos.

This article is dedicated with warmth to Alfonso Lacadena, a dear friend and colleague, whom I got to know through the work we carried out together within the Administrative Council of Wayeb, The European Association of Mayanists. We first met at the Euro-

pean Maya Conference in Copenhagen in 1999 and often talked with each other, not only about Wayeb-related things and ongoing Maya research, but also on a more personal level about our children who are about the same age. Alfonso was a wonderful person and a great teacher, colleague and scholar. I will always remember Alfonso with warmth and joy! Thank you for our friendship, Alfonso.

This study focuses on ritual practices and ritual speech connected with fire that can be traced back in a long-term perspective and have had a lasting impact among the Yucatec Maya. The main purpose in this study is to grasp various examples of rituals and ritual speech found in Yucatec Maya Religion over time that include fire as part of the ritual practice, or as expressed in ritual speech discourses. Questions that I have asked myself when embarking on this journey of exploring ritual practices of fire among the Yucatec Maya in the long term are, for instance: Is it possible to map various rituals, as calendar rituals and agrarian rituals, from the ethnographical sources and from the Books of Chilam Balam? May we find (con-) texts that can be analysed as continuities of ritual practices? These are some questions that will be highlighted in this study.

Many ritual practices are often connected to certain natural and cultural places in Yucatec Maya (con-)texts and in this study the main goal is to focus on rituals where representations of fire somehow are seen as an important part. Also, fire symbolism will be commented on, as well as possible references to examples of fire symbolism in religions from other parts of the world. Hopefully, a comparative perspective will inspire or enhance our understanding of spirituality in Yucatec Maya (con-)texts over the long-term.

## Aim and methods

The aim of this article is to explore the relation between cosmology and rituals through some examples of rituals that contain fire, or various forms of fire, in Yucatec Maya religious discourse and found in various (con-)texts. This will be based on a close reading of the Books of Chilam Balam and other Early Colonial texts, as they are constructed and created out of the impact of Colonialism, Christianity and the Western world since the time of the Conquest (Tozzer 1941; Jakeman 1952; de la Garza and Izquierdo 1980; Jiménez

Villalba 1988). The method of using analogy as a method will also be employed as an example of contextualization where ethnographic and anthropological information and data will be related to archaeological results (Brady and Colas 2005: 165). Thus, aided by a contextual approach and a close reading with theoretical perspectives from Post-Colonialism the striving is to let the Yucatec Maya voice speak through these texts (Hall 1992; Pratt 1992; Loomba 2005). Also, I use the term (con-)texts as a special term that encompasses both contextualization, implying to synthesise information and research results from various disciplines and textual studies, meaning that both a close reading and text analysis, such as critical discourse analysis, is employed as a method to arrive at new understanding and new interpretations of Maya religion found in various kinds of texts and manuscripts.

## Sources

The Books of Chilam Balam are a group of manuscripts that have been named after Chilam Balam, the Jaguar prophet, who lived in Yucatan during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the manuscripts also had the name of the town or village where they were found added to the title, such as The Book of Chilam Balam from Chumayel. This means that we have manuscripts ascribed to the Yucatecan towns of Chumayel, Mani/Codice Perez, Tizimin, Kaua, Nah, Tuzik, Tekax, Chan Cah, and Ixil, and today we find copies of these in libraries both in Mexico and in the USA (see for instance Roys 1967; Craine and Reindorp 1979; Edmonson 1981; Miram 1988; Gubler and Bolles 2000; Bricker and Miram 2002). These manuscripts are extremely heterogeneous in their content and we find texts telling the reader of myths, rituals, historical events, astrological information, medicinal information as well as finding texts that are clearly influenced by Christianity, Biblical allusions and other texts of European origin. They date from early colonial times onwards and are commonly considered to be valuable sources to Yucatec Maya religion and history, although they are very enigmatic to understand with their sometimes esoteric language and content. Even in present day ceremonies in the Yucatan peninsula, the Books of Chilam Balam are still read aloud by the *h-menoob*, religious specialists/shamans, literally “the doers”, found in many of the villages in Yucatan (Hanks 1986;

Gubler and Hostettler 1994). Today copies of nine manuscripts are known and kept in archives in both the Americas and Europe (Gibson and Glass 1975; Edmonson and Bricker 1985; Gubler and Bolles 2000).

These texts are used in order to try to give the Yucatec Maya a voice from the Early Colonial times. And when we read them and compare them with other sources from the same time period we may reach new insights into the Yucatec Maya religion from a more emic point of view. This is further strengthened by Post-Colonial theory building that allows the Maya to speak for themselves when there is opportunity to do so. Thus, using the Books of Chilam Balam enable the Yucatec Maya, or some Yucatec Maya people, from Early Colonial times to speak through these sources. Also, some examples of Classic Maya iconography will be analysed to grasp the intricate patterns of cosmology and ritual in Maya Religion. Diego de Landa's *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* will be used as an ethnographically important source from Early Colonial times (Tozzer 1941).

The manuscript Ritual of the Bacabs (Roys 1965; Arzápalo 1987) that contains medical remedies and rituals for healing from the Early Colonial times and onwards will be referred to occasionally in this article. Nature is central in Yucatec Maya religiosity as seen in Yucatec Maya texts, in iconography as well as in ritual practices where not least herbal curing is an essential part still today. We can read many texts about the importance of using herbs and parts of insects, flowers and fauna in medical treatises. These medical, or healing, rituals are performed by a *hmen*, or *xmen*, who recite or chant a text that has been transmitted orally, but some of them are encapsulated in time in, e.g., the Book of Chilam Balam from Kaua (Bricker and Miram 2002) or in *Ritual of the Bacabs* (Roys 1965). This manuscript contains numerous medicinal texts used by *hmenoob* in traditional medicine practices all over Yucatan still today (see for instance Roys 1965; Arzápalo 1987; Hultkrantz 1995; Gubler 1985, 2000; Bricker and Miram 2002).

### **Yucatec Maya cosmology—being at the centre of the world...**

The Yucatec Maya situated themselves at the heart of the universe just as many other people in historical cultures as well as in contemporary religions have done. The ways in which they have tried to

make place use of space by cultivating the landscape were, and are, nearly universal in strategy. Seen in a comparative perspective, strong similarities with this pattern are found in many of the historical world religions throughout the world, i.e., in Mesopotamia, Ancient Greece, and in the Old Norse religion. We see the quadripartite pattern mirrored in settlements, in caves, in pyramids, as well as in texts, as for instance in the *Myth of Creation* or in the *Ritual of the four world quarters* in the Book of Chilam Balam from Chumayel (Roys 1967: 98–113 and 63–66, respectively). If we then focus specifically on fire in the rituals we may compare with for instance the old Fire rituals of Agni and Homa in Vedic religion and in Hindu sacrifice rituals, in which the fire symbolizes various things, such as destruction and death but also resurrection, cleansing, and just purity (Nielsen 1993).

In Yucatec Maya (con-)texts rituals of place are strongly connected to their cosmological pattern where the four so-called cardinal directions are the most important. At the centre of this we find a fifth central axis. In several of the texts of the Books of Chilam Balam we find parts that describe how the east is the first and central direction and the place where everything begins. We find this pattern in the *Myth of Creation* in CB-Chumayel and in CB-Tizimin, and also, for example, in the text called *The creation of the Uinal*, the time, in CB-from Chumayel and Mani. Both these examples of texts will be presented in a little more detail below. In this pattern with the emphasis on the ritual place, in this case the east, we also find texts that narrate events connected to the encounter with the Spaniards, and when the *dzuloob*, the Conquistadors/Spaniards, arrive—they also arrive from the east. It is very clear that the east is the place from where everything starts. In the *Popol Vuh*, the Quiché Maya *Myth of Creation* from Guatemala, we find that the east is central. It is from the east that the first light is seen, and this is found also in the CB-Chumayel where we are told in the *Myth of Creation* that the first dawn is visible from the east—and this emphasis of the ritual place in the east marks the beginning of the present creation (Turner 1967: 50; Gossen 1999: 90; Liljefors Persson 1999, 2000, 2009, 2011b, 2012, 2013; Christenson 2004; Williams-Beck et al. 2012). Thus, these cardinal directions are strongly connected to the process of ritualisation, of creating a ritual place as distinct from other space

that is not considered as ritual or associated with special meaning or power.

Also, in the Books of Chilam Balam from Chumayel, Ixil, and Kaua we find examples of *katun* wheels with this quadripartite pattern and according to which the various *katunoob* are ascribed to, or seated in, the cardinal directions (Roys 1967: 132; Taube 1988; Bricker and Miram 2002: 77, 103). We also find other narratives focusing on special places that are rooted in rituals, such as in the text called “the building of the mounds”, and several shorter narratives about migrations and pilgrimages from, i.e., the Book of Chilam Balam from Chumayel, Mani, and Tizimin (Roys 1967: 79–80; Craine and Reindorp 1979; Edmonson 1981).

### **... and some comparative examples with other historical religions in the world**

In these examples of texts from the Books of Chilam Balam we find that it seems important to “make place out of space”, to create a microcosmos within the larger macrocosmos. This is a theme, or pattern, which is found important in many of the ancient historical religions as well as among the contemporary indigenous religions of the world. This we can compare with, for instance, the Temple of Apollo in Delphi where the prophetess Pythia is sitting on a tripod over the crack in the rock floor, being the centre of the world, beside the *omphalos* the navel of the world, in the Classic Greek Religion. Pythia is then performing her ritual speech acts, her prophecies, being under heavy influence of the smoke that rises from the underworld through the inside of the mountain and then affecting her to give her these visions. Her ritual performance takes place while she is in a religious trance, be it caused by hallucinogenic drugs, or by wild rhythmic dancing, or just being in a religious trance. We can also compare this microcosmos, as being a place of power, with the Sumerian *Ziqqurat*, the temple with the stairway that reaches to the top of the temple pyramid, as being at the centre of the world, called *Etemenanki*, the stairway to heaven and the gods. A third example is found in the Old Norse worldview according to which the great ash tree, the *Yggdrasil*, being the *Axis Mundi*, forms the pillar or centre of the world (Nielsen et al. 1993). We find this same striving among

the Yucatec Maya, both according to the Early colonial traditions as we find them for instance in the Books of Chilam Balam and in agricultural rituals in present time—a desire to create the centre of the universe, the microcosmos, right here on earth where the ritual is performed. We see this in their representations of the quincunx pattern in myths as well as rituals and in structuring their sacred landscape according to this cosmovision (Liljefors Persson 2011b, 2013).

In this myth of creation, from the Book of Chilam Balam from Chumayel, we understand that the world has four directions each associated with a special colour, red in the east, white in the north, black in the west, yellow in the south and green in the centre of the world. This is a pattern that we see in several of the Books of Chilam Balam and also in connection to other rituals as well.

The Yucatec Maya cosmovision, as presented in this myth of creation, is composed by the so-called quincunx layout of the cosmos in combination with a three-layered horizontal division of the world, where we find *Bolontiku*, the nine gods of the underworld and the earth, often described in the Books of Chilam Balam, as *Itzam-cab-ain*, a crocodile, or a turtle sometimes, and the third, upper layer called *Oxlahuntiku*, the thirteen gods of the sky (Roys 1967: 98–113).

The myth of creation as it is described in the Book of Chilam Balam from Chumayel has been analysed as being a model for the agrarian rituals performed by the Yucatec Maya and still carried out today. Without going into too much detail, we might say that the myth of creation describes the world as being created at least three times according to this text and each time it has been destroyed because of some natural disaster, such as flooding, earthquake, fire, and hurricanes. Also, we are told that during the creations a number of plates of food are prepared and bowls of drinks are set up in a special order. The sequence of these various creations can be analysed as being parts of preparation for certain rituals still performed in Yucatan, in which a table is prepared and encircled with branches in each cardinal direction and set with drinking vessels and plates of food, such as tamales with herbs, in order to use them as offerings to the gods and also groups of candles are lit during the ceremonies. Following the description from Redfield and

Villa Rojas from 1934 and later descriptions from Chan Kom, we find that the number of plates prepared in a *Cha Chaac* ceremony is still the same when preparing these altars (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1962; Love 1986; Liljefors Persson 2000, 2011a, 2011b; Gubler 2008). Furthermore, for instance, Diego de Landa describes the food offerings at the Wayeb rituals and they are described in similar terms as in, i.e. the Myth of Creation from Chumayel and Mani (Tozzer 1941: 141–142). The Wayeb rituals were celebrated in connection with the New Year's ritual and Landa describes both rituals and Allen Christenson stresses that these rituals are undoubtedly a reenactment of the Maya concept of the creation and that new fire is the symbol of the three heartstones that symbolise the initiation of life itself (Christenson 2016: 51).

So, the Myth of Creation may well be analysed as a model myth and as a written model for how to prepare and perform Yucatec Maya agrarian rituals such as *Tup kak* and *Cha chaak*.

In part three, chapter five in *Popol Vuh* we can also read about the importance of fire and of how Balam Quitzé and Balam Acab found the fire already burning when they needed it. The god Tohil gave them the necessary fire in order to keep wild animals away but foremost to give them warmth against the cold. The people got the fire but with the agreement that they in turn shall make offerings to Tohil. They shall give him their “waist and their armpits” and also that they should let Tohil embrace them and that they shall embrace Tohil. This can be interpreted as if Tohil gave them fire if they in return initiated the cultural life with ritual offerings to Tohil (such as bloodletting and the heart sacrifice) (Recinos et al 1950).

This might well be compared with the old Greek myth about Prometheus who gave the people fire as a gift. So, there is a difference in the principles for getting the fire. In *Popol Vuh* and Maya tradition there was an agreement between Tohil, the god, and the leaders of the people. This differs from the Greek tradition where the people got the fire just as a gift. But, on the other hand, later on they should conduct and perform their religion. Prometheus is described in comparative religion and in terms of the phenomenology of religion so that Prometheus is a culture hero, but in Maya religious discourse the people only get the fire if they in return promise to make ritual offerings to Tohil. We cannot say that Tohil is a simple

culture hero, because he demands something in return for his gift. He does not only give the people the fire. In this (con-)text fire may be seen as the prime motor of establishing a culture and a society. Thus, in the Maya tradition, or religious discourse, the point is that there is a mutual dependence at stake between the god Tohil and the human beings, the Maya people.

In the ritual enactment of agricultural rituals, the ritual specialists, the *hmenoob*, or the village shamans, are actually ritually creating a microcosm and also creating a ritual place out of space when they perform rituals. Even today these ritual performances may be in the fields or in the forest—or in a cave or close to a well, but they are ritually encircled by branches with leaves to mirror the cardinal directions, the quincunx with the four directions surrounding the centre (Liljefors Persson 2005). The whole process might be seen as a process of ritualization. It is an active process of making the ritual as a symbolic centre for being in the world.

### **Yucatec Maya Rituals with Fire symbolism according to Landa**

In Early colonial texts, such as in Landa's *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*, we find many references to Maya cosmology and ritual practices connected with both the creation and with the striving to re-enact the balance between the Maya people and the transcendental world with the multitude of gods. One quote in Landa that illustrates this and sort of confirms the text called the Myth of Creation found in the Book of Chilam Balam from Chumayel, mentions the four *Bacabs* who are described as the gods that at the time of the creation escaped when the world was destroyed by a flood. Thereafter they were connected with the four world directions that hold up the sky, as described by Landa:

Among the multitudes of gods which these nations worshipped they worshipped four, each of them called Bacab. They said they were four brothers whom God placed, when he created the world, at the four points of it, holding up the sky so that it should not fall. They also said of these Bacabs that they escaped when the world was destroyed by the deluge. (Tozzer 1941: 135–136)

This is exactly what we are told in the already mentioned *Myth of Creation* from The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel. Despite the fact if this manuscript from Chumayel is dated to the latter part

of the seventeenth century, here we find a striking parallel with Landa's descriptions written no later than 1566 indicating that the tradition of describing the creation of the world like this, has been in existence since at least the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

For instance, the Yucatec New Year ceremonies were celebrated by everyone. They renewed everything they used in the house, such as plates, tools, bowls, mats and old clothing. They swept out their houses. They fasted and abstained from relations with their wives, they did not eat salt and pepper. They prepared a large number of balls of fresh incense and then they burned the incense in front of their idols/gods. They all assembled bearing gifts, lots of food and drink. Then they wanted to drive out the devil and evil spirits from the courtyard and began to pray and the so-called assistants, the chacs, kindled the new fire and the priest lit the brazier. Then they burned incense to the devil again (the devil according to Landa) they burned incense to their god(s)) and they continued throwing incense into the brazier and waited until it all had been burnt.

In this ritual (con-)text the new fire is really in focus, just as in many other New Year rituals in Mesoamerica. The New Fire symbolises purity and power to heal and burn the old, and bad things that should be destructed—and then they burned the incense and the New Fire was lit which symbolizes the new and clean and somehow resurrected new life that should govern and rule for the coming year. In the Madrid Codex on page 51a we find two gods sitting together and the one to the right is lighting the fire.

Also, there is a strong connection between the ritual practices and the natural and cultural landscape in Maya religion. Mountains, water/cenotes, and caves for instance are seen as the embodiment of the power of the earth and caves are associated with the centre so that the four cardinal directions actually emanate from these places, or centres. Thus, caves are used for centring, which results in caves as symbols connoting power, prestige, fertility, sacredness and validity (Prufer and Brady 2005). Caves, or stone houses, are also used for sweatbaths and connected with the earth and thus fertility, sexuality and creation. Caves are also seen as "hot" in the system of cold and hot in Yucatan. This also builds a reference for attributing heat and warmth with fire, as there often are ashes of charcoal or black, burned walls within the caves indicating that a lot of copal has been



**Figure 1.** View over Tulum, from Prince Wilhelm's expedition in 1920 (Wilhelm 1920a).

burnt most likely during ritual performances. This is clearly visible in caves, as evidence indicating that fire rituals have been performed over the long-term in caves (Martin and Grube 2000; Brady and Colas 2005; Moreheart 2005; Prufer and Brady 2005). This is also confirmed by the description by the Swedish Prince Wilhelm when he visited temples in Tulum in 1920 (Prins Wilhelm 1920b; Peissel 1964).

Quote from Prince Wilhelm:

Vid foten av den södra trappan (i stora kastellet) ligger ett litet väl bibehållt adoratorio, en enkel stenbyggnad, innehållande en enda fyrkantig kammare med altare. Här hittades kol och aska på de brända stenarna, vika sågo ut att nyligen ha varit tagna i bruk. Detta tyder på att indianerna ännu i denna dag använda platsen till mystiska offer åt förfädernas andar, något som ännu ingen vit man varit i tillfälle att konstatera. (Prins Wilhelm 1920b: 132)

At the bottom of the south stairs (in the castillo) we find a small but well kept adoratorio, a simple building of stone, containing only one room with an altar. Here we found carbon and ashes on the burnt stones, which clearly had very recently been in use. This indicates that the Indians in these days still use this place to make mysterious offerings to the spirits of their ancestors, something

no white man has yet been able to verify. (Prins Wilhelm 1920b: 132, my translation from Swedish to English)

This indicates that burning copal (*pom*) and lighting candles during rituals in caves as well as in temples, as witnessed here by Prince Wilhelm from the temple in Tulum in 1920. This therefore strengthened the pattern that fire in the form of burning copal and lightening candles was used in rituals as found throughout Yucatan and most probably this is a long-term tradition.

There are also similarities with cargo-rituals as they are performed in, e.g. San Bernardo where I in March 2005 observed a cuch-ritual. This is also strengthened by descriptions of the cuch ritual and other cargo rituals (as described, e.g. by Dapuez 2011 and Pohl 1981).

### **Ritual speech as part of ritual practices**

In Early colonial time we see in the various Books of Chilam Balam that there is a special rhetoric and almost ritualized formal speech, also in the *katun* prophecies. Accordingly, in the various *katun* prophecies we often read that in the beginning of each *katun* the *katun* is seated at a certain place, and that there the drum and rattle of the *katun* shall resound. Maybe this is a symbolism where the sound of the *katun*, and the words from the *chilam* maybe, seem visible as if rising up to the sky to the gods, and they communicate with the words that can seem like smoke rising up to the sky. Smoke could be symbolizing words in this particular *katun* ritual, and thus one example of ritual speech.

Buluc Ahau u hedz katun Ichcaanzihoo. Yax-haal Chac u uich. Emom canal ual, emom canal udzub. Pecnom u pax, pecnom u zoot. Ah Bolon-yocte. Tu kin yan yax cutz; Tu kin yan Zulim Chan; tu kin Chakanputun. Uilnom che; uilnom tunich; ah zati uiil ichil Ah Buluc Katun lae. (CB-Chumayel, ms page 73)

Katun 11 Ahau is established at Ichcaanzihoo. Yax-haal Chac is its face. The heavenly fan, the heavenly bouquet shall descend. The drum and rattle of Ah Bolon-yocte shall resound. At that time there shall be the green turkey; at that time there shall be Zulim Chan; at that time there shall be Chakanputun. They shall find their food among the trees; they shall find their food among the rocks, those who have lost their crops in Katun 11 Ahau. (Roys 1967: 133)



Figure 2. Murals from Santa Rita (Gann 1900).

This may be interpreted as in each *katun* a special place will hold the political power and there the official ceremonies will be held during this particular *katun 11 ahau*.

So, the various so-called *katun* prophecies, that I view as ritual practices, were performed as rituals in the beginning of a new *katun*, and with certain ritual speech acts performed with a similar rhetoric and in a repetitive pattern. These text sequences inform the reader, e.g. about when fire is needed for the burning of the field and other text sequences where it seems apparent that the fire symbolism is connected to fertility and about giving new life. We also find parts in these *katun* prophecies that use a special rhetoric when delivering the prophecies about the new God, the father, that speaks as below in the *katun 11 ahau*:

It shall burn on earth, there shall be a white circle in the sky, in that *katun* in time to come. It is the true word from the mouth of God the Father. Alas, very heavy is the burden of the *katun* that shall be established in Christianity. (Roys 1967: 149)

So, words from the new Gods shall burn—and here the symbolism of fire may also be related to power, and that the word of God is mighty and powerful when he wants to introduce Christianity. In another katun 10 ahau from the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel we find that the *katun* prophecy contains many sentences and expressions that suggest that many things shall burn—and here the reader may associate the burning again to things that will be destroyed because this is a *katun* with a lot of struggles and problems or so it seems from reading the text (Roys 1967: 144–163).

### **From Maya medicine to Maya eco-wellness and healing in Yucatan**

Maya medicine is based on cosmovision and spirituality—and during the latest two decades or so concepts that includes a holistic view of the body, with balance between mind and body, energy meridians and bio-dynamic therapies, have increased. The natural medicinal traditions have gained more confidence and are now promoted for tourists as well as for local visitors, according to the homepages of some of the Spa-institutions in certain places in Yucatan today.

The view that is promoted is that nature is within human beings and that it determines people's health and the processes of illness. Local medicinal knowledge considers human beings as an integral and interactive part of the cosmos and society. Changes in climate and nature may affect people and cause health or illness. So that if health is the result of living according to the laws of nature and society, then illness is the result of a transgression of those laws.

### **Concluding remarks**

To conclude, we might begin with the question asked in the beginning of this study and that have been directing this chapter: Which processes of change and patterns of continuity are negotiated in the Yucatec Maya (con-)text of fire symbolism found in ritual practices and ritual speech? As has been shown here we find, e.g. agrarian rituals and historical power rituals such as the “seating of the *katun*” ceremonies found in the so called *katun* prophecies, and as well in the rituals of the *hmen* and *xmen* such as the medicinal and healing practices.

To summarize this presentation, we find that fire symbolism is really present in Yucatec Maya (con-)texts over the long term. I have found the following seven results of this attempt to obtain an overview of these kinds of rituals:

(1) The Myth of Creation has been analysed as a model for all agrarian rituals, e.g., *Tup kak* and *Cha chaac*. And we find that fire is more prevalent in certain rituals, but that fire symbolism is found in the preparing of food, cooking over an open fire, or in a *pib na*, e.g. baked/cooked in an earth oven in the ground. (2) Also, that candles are always in use and lit during ritual practice. (3) This might also be compared with Popol Vuh where the Maya people get the fire for the first time through a deal with the god Tohil and according to which he gives them the fire and they promise to make offerings in return. (4) We find that some of the agrarian rituals are still performed in a similar way as they used to be as described in Early Colonial sources, such as The Books of Chilam Balam and Diego de Landa's ethnographic description. As examples we have the rituals labelled *Tup kak* and *Cha chaac*. (5) The New Year ceremonies were intimately connected with fire rituals in many ways. In Mesoamerica, e.g. among the Aztec we find that the fire symbolism focuses on power and renewal but also that it has the power to drive away evil spirits and fire also cleans things. The Wayeb rituals also have similar purposes and similar symbolism. (6) The hydrasystem with "hot" and "cold" food on Yucatan—where fire is related to the heat that also connects to the earth and the female and caves is another example. In cave rituals we find many indications of fire rituals in connection with a great variety of rituals. (7) Today in Yucatan we find many examples of new rituals, especially in connection with wellness, health, and eco-tourism. Fire is seen as one of the four elements that needs to be in balance. Here the fire symbolism is part of several rituals and the healers and shamans speak in a language that connects the present Maya eco-tourism not only with the earlier times, but also to the global scene of today with new religious movements and New Age.

Today we find more emphasis on creating ecological balance, with the focus on harmony and life quality—but maybe it was not so different in earlier times. People were looking for a life in balance with the natural forces, cosmos and everyday life—and now—the goal is the same, by connecting the new rituals, the spa-rituals, to

rituals performed as far back as to Precolombian time—legitimizes the authenticity and the long tradition of these rituals. This knowledge draws on local epistemologies and knowledge traditions found in places where everyday life is lived close to the biophysical world. And this knowledge of the local Maya epistemology is found also in the Early Colonial documents and Maya manuscripts as I hope has been illustrated in this presentation.

There are many similarities with worldviews found in other religions in the world that are intimately connected to kinship, spiritual places and sites in the sacred and natural landscape—as shown here also from Yucatec Maya sources (Basso 1988, 1996; Crumley 1994; Landis Barnhill and Gottlieb 2001: 39).

In this study the ambition has been to employ a close reading of the texts and a contextual approach in order to highlight (con-)texts where we find representations of fire symbolism in rituals and in ritual speech acts. We can see that Yucatec Maya Cosmovision, Spirituality and Ritual Practices are excellent examples of how we find threads of meaning from past traditions that still carry meaning and that also might be given new meaning today. Yucatec Maya Spirituality and ritual practices are indeed dynamic and even if we find patterns of strong continuity, we also find changes in the practices that clearly show the ability to be creative and innovative in these processes of change.

Some of these sacred places are bearers of meaning that communicate spirituality and ritual power still today, but with a twist that turns Classic Maya religion and Early Colonial Maya religion into the global scene of New Age spirituality—but, to speak in line with perspectives from Post-Colonial Theories, who are we as researchers to be the ones that construct the headlines and categories of a religious practice? For the Maya men and women who carry out these contemporary rituals—they express that they are practicing old traditions and that this is their way of practicing their old traditions today—and thus this forms a natural continuity of a Yucatec Maya religious discourse viewed over the long-term.

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# **Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid: Primer enclave de derechos indígenas en el Nuevo Mundo**

ANA LUISA IZQUIERDO Y DE LA CUEVA  
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México  
(analuisaizq@gmail.com)

MANUEL GONZÁLEZ OROPEZA  
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México  
(oropeza1953@gmail.com)

**Resumen:** Con el descubrimiento de América, Castilla se enfrentó a un dilema de cómo tratar a los naturales del Nuevo Mundo. La reina Isabel conoció de la condición de explotación que Cristóbal Colón y los conquistadores perpetraba contra los indígenas y, en 1503, la reina redactó un codicilo a su testamento en el que instruyó las reglas de protección a los indígenas de América y, en consecuencia, los frailes dominicos de La Española comenzaron a exigir a través de sus sermones el cumplimiento de los principios éticos que derivaban de la última voluntad de Isabel. De tal manera una reunión de especialistas por orden de Fernando de Aragón redactaron las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid que contienen los primeros derechos humanos en América (1512–1513).

**Abstract:** After the discovery of America, Castilla faced a dilemma of how to treat the natives of the New World. Queen Isabel knew of the exploitative condition that Christopher Columbus and the conquerors perpetrated among the Indians. In 1503 the Queen wrote a codicil to her testament in which she instructed the rules of protection for the indigenous peoples of America and, consequently, the Dominican friars of Hispaniola began to demand through their sermons the fulfillment of the ethical principles derived from the last will of Isabel. In such a way a meeting of specialists by order of Fernando de Aragón drafted the Laws of Burgos-Valladolid that contain the first prescriptions of human rights in America (1512–1513).

*Para Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo hombre renacentista  
que engrandeció el lustre de su prestigiosa estirpe*

**P**ara los españoles, el descubrimiento del Nuevo Mundo, además de una proeza geográfica significó la experiencia de otros seres, desde el principio llamados “gentes”, por tanto ellos los concibieron como humanos, pero de una naturaleza tan distinta que conceptualizarlos como semejantes a los conquistadores fue una historia larga de avances y retrocesos.

El primer actor en esta experiencia de definir a las “gentes” del Nuevo Mundo fue Cristóbal Colón. Él iba en busca de las “tierras de la especiería”, un fin comercial en sí mismo, aunque desde su partida había cubierto sus intenciones con los afanes del buen cristiano de convertir a los nativos al cristianismo, y hacerlos súbditos de la Corona. Pero en todos sus escritos no deja de lado la adquisición de riquezas y oro. Escribe Colón: “Creo que si comienzan [Vuestras Altezas], en poco tiempo acabarán de los haber convertido a nuestra Santa Fe multidumbre de pueblos de España, porque sin duda es en estas tierras grandísima suma de oro” (Todorov 1987: 52).

Las vivencias de Colón en las Antillas fueron transformando su pensamiento porque, a falta de encontrar la abundancia del oro prometido a los recientes colonizadores y a la Corona, decidió esclavizar a los indígenas; los barcos vinieron de Europa cargados de animales y los regresaron cargados de seres humanos ya con la calidad de esclavos. Queda la idea de que eran “gentes” pero se puso en tela de juicio su “racionalidad” (Todorov 1987: 52), por tanto se afirmó la inferioridad de los indios y fueron objeto de cautiverio; efectivamente para Colón fue la riqueza más conspicua del momento. El descubridor tomó esta opción ante el descontento de la soldadesca de encontrarse en tierras ignotas donde no veía abundancia de oro.

La mayoría de los autores atribuyen las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid (1512-1513) a la reacción del rey Fernando —de Castilla y Aragón en ese momento— ante el incendiario sermón de fray Antonio de Montesinos de 1511, pero tuvieron una larga formación de cerca de 10 años. El nombre que llevaron en ese momento era “Ordenanzas para el tratamiento de los indios” (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 83).

Frente a la mezquindad de Colón, se encontró la grandeza de la Reina Isabel I de Castilla, quien dio sus primeros ejemplos de la posición que tomaría con respecto a los indígenas del Nuevo Mundo con fuerza jurídica después que Colón llegó de su primer viaje y le llevó a presentar siete indígenas taínos. Fue en su interacción con ellos —fueron bautizados en su presencia— cuando posiblemente distinguió a los indígenas como seres humanos con derecho a ser libres y no esclavos. Pero es hasta 1500 cuando expide la primera cédula liberando a los indios cautivos vendidos en Andalucía y exigiendo su retorno. Aunque se los hubieran comprado al Almirante Colón la dicha cédula tipifica el delito de tenencia de esclavos indios como

“secuestro”, aunque no configura la pena, sino solo como la pérdida del bien poseído (Benito 2004: 413). Por ello esta norma jurídica fue el inicio del programa legislativo y de acciones obligatorias concretas de las Coronas de Castilla y Aragón en beneficio de los aborígenes. La clasificación de la pena por vender indios esclavos en España quedó en la cédula real de diciembre de 1501 con la que tomarían prisionero al navegante Cristóbal Guerra, le quitarían el dinero y lo pondrían en la cárcel (Benito 2004: 413).

## Origen

Con mayor precisión y amplitud de obligatoriedad, en relación a los derechos de los indígenas, fueron las Instrucciones giradas en Granada en 1501 y las de Zaragoza en marzo de 1503 dirigidas a Nicolás de Ovando para el ejercicio del gobierno de La Española. En ellas se mostró la política que él debería observar cuando llegara a tomar el gobierno de la isla (Hanke 1949: 334). Prescribió la fundación de pueblos indígenas en libertad, que éstos solo trabajarían para los españoles con jornal justo, se impartiría la catequesis, así como servicios religiosos de misa y sacramentos. Pero se le dio potestad a Ovando para disponer “las penas que viéredes se menester” (Benito 2004: 413).

Estas instrucciones prefiguraron las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid donde se tipificaba el delito de esclavizar a los indígenas, ya que prescribía normas para la relación de los españoles con los indígenas con base en el concepto de que “son libres y no serviles” (Benito 2004: 406–407). Asimismo pide a Ovando hacer obligatorio el buen tratamiento de los indios, debiéndole pedir a sus caciques seguir esta línea de conducta. Prescribe que los españoles devolvieran todo lo tomado por ellos en contra de su voluntad y piden que los indios trabajen con un salario justo, paguen sus impuestos como súbditos de la Corona y también prohíben a los indígenas comprar armas ofensivas y defensivas (Benito 2004: 406–407).

Sin embargo, aunque las Instrucciones tenían el carácter de normas de derecho público, eran individuales, temporales y locales, solo durante el ejercicio del nombramiento y para la persona a quien habían asignado en el puesto.

Isabel mostró su anhelo de hacer permanentes sus ideas y en su lecho de muerte redactó su testamento el 12 de octubre y un codicilo

el 23 de noviembre de 1504. Este último documento fue dedicado particularmente a los indígenas, expresando como última voluntad el tratarlos como “personas libres” destinadas a convertirse en cristianos. Suplica a Fernando II y encarga a su hija (Juana), así como a su esposo (Felipe) que:

no consentan ni den lugar a que los indios vecinos y moradores de dichas islas y tierra firme (del Nuevo Mundo), ganados y por ganar, reciban agravio alguno en sus personas y bienes: más manden que sean bien y justamente tratados, y si algún agravio han recibido, lo remedien y provean de manera que no se exceda cosa alguna, lo que por las letras apostólicas de la dicha concesión nos es inyungido (impuesto) y mandado (Alcalá-Zamora 1980: 40).

También se debe a la Reina Isabel la formación de una comisión que debería compilar en un digesto las leyes y pragmáticas, preocupación que unió al cuidado de los indios del Nuevo Mundo. Fernando de Aragón su esposo, no cumplió de inmediato el legado de Isabel, ya que en 1506 se retiró de Castilla a Aragón y de regreso se involucró en cuestiones de Navarra y de Italia, pero el cardenal Cisneros convocó a Fernando para dar cumplimiento del testamento de la reina Isabel, ya que él era el albacea (Prescott 1967: 243; Altuve-Febres 2004: 379).

Pero la explotación de los taínos continuó en La Española durante el gobierno de Nicolás de Ovando y de Diego Colón, a tal grado que vieron la esclavitud indígena como un medio no solo de sobrevivencia sino de enriquecimiento, aunque no fuera lícita y originara la gran baja demográfica.

Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas describe que los indios del Nuevo Mundo encontraron en Isabel una protectora y amiga pero, con su fallecimiento, quedaron a merced de las ideas de Cristóbal Colón y de Oviedo que los esclavizaban a través de los “repartimientos” (Prescott 1967: 292).

Siete años después del fallecimiento de Isabel (1511) y ya descubiertas otras islas como la de Cuba y la Tierra Firme las redadas para capturar indios fueron continuas. En la práctica, los abusos hacia los nativos de América se hicieron públicos a través de la retórica de fray Antonio de Montesinos en 1511, fraile dominico que con los hermanos de su orden destacados en La Española habían fraguado un plan para frenar la explotación de los indígenas, entre ello impartir un sermón el cuarto domingo de Adviento (21 de diciembre de 1511). En esta homilía, glosada por Las Casas, se acusa de “pecado mortal” a

los colonos por la tiranía y crueldad con que trataban a los indígenas (Las Casas 1992: 440–141).

Esta voz [os dice] que todos estáis en pecado mortal y en él vivís y morís. Por la crueldad y tiranía que usáis con estas inocentes gentes. Decid ¿con qué derecho y con qué justicia tenéis en tan cruel y horrible servidumbre a estos indios? ¿Con qué autoridad habéis hecho tan detestables guerras a estas gentes que estaban en sus tierras mansas y pacíficas, donde tan infinitas de ellas, con muertes y estragos nunca oídos habéis consumido? ¿Cómo los tenéis tan opresos y fatigados, sin dalles de comer ni curallos en sus enfermedades [en] que, de los excesivos trabajos que les dais, incurren y se os mueren y, por mejor decir, los matáis por sacar y adquirir oro cada día? [...] (Las Casas 1992: 441–442).

Anticipando la Bula de Paulo III (1537), Montesinos parte de la verdad incontrovertible que los indígenas son seres humanos y que, por lo tanto, no pueden ser sometidos a ninguna servidumbre, la cual es contraria a los principios éticos de la religión católica (Zavala 1935: 423).

El sermón causó gran revuelo y quejas de los colonos de La Española al prior fray Antonio de Córdoba, quien prometió otra homilía para el domingo siguiente, y cuál sería la sorpresa de los españoles, que en ella el mismo Montesinos predicó la suspensión de los sacramentos al que siguiera una conducta explotadora contra los indígenas (Las Casas 1992: 445). En marzo de 1512 llegó a oídos del Rey, quien también escuchó al mismo Montesinos, que de plano entró subrepticiamente a la corte. Ello fue el detonador para que el rey Fernando, en ese momento, iniciara el cumplimiento de la voluntad de la reina Isabel (León 2012: 55–59).

Como había prescrito su esposa en su testamento, Fernando formó una Junta de teólogos y abogados convocada en Burgos en 1512. Fue presidida por Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, a quien atribuyen un papel fundamental, y se desarrolló en el convento de San Pablo de Valladolid. Se expresaron y defendieron dos formas de pensamiento: la primera encabezada por el jurista López de Palacios Rubios donde, basado en la Bulas del papa Alejandro VI, los españoles podían aplicar con los indígenas los métodos que les parecieran pertinentes para cristianizarlos. Por otro lado estaba fray Matías de la Paz que defiende que el indio era un ser humano con plenitud de derechos<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> En quince días Matías de la Paz escribe un tratado “Concerniente a las reglas del rey de España sobre las Indias” (1512) donde con la aplicación de principios aristotélicos expresa

Pero lucha porque al menos se informe a los indígenas la causa de hacerles la guerra, por medio de un “requerimiento” (León 2012: 57).

Después del debate ideológico se determinaron las disposiciones legales para subsanar los abusos cometidos durante la gestión de Colón, al momento en que su hijo, Diego, fungía como gobernador (1508 a 1515), con el predominio del pensamiento de Matías de la Paz.

Las “Ordenanzas para el tratamiento de los indios” (Leyes de Burgos) fueron redactadas por el Real Consejo del rey Fernando y firmadas el 27 de diciembre de 1512 (Sagarra 2012: 16) aunque los tiempos en que se dictaron no eran los mejores, no sólo por el gobernador Colón, sino porque al dictarlas el soberano, es claro que el rey no veía con la misma perspectiva a los indios de las tierras recién descubiertas que Isabel la Católica (Downey 2015: 428).

Las objeciones a estas normas de los frailes Montesinos y Córdova lograron que las Leyes de Burgos fueran enmendadas en Valladolid con una “Aclaración de las Leyes de Indias” el 28 de julio de 1513, ampliando la protección de las indígenas y los niños.

Hemos analizado las medidas protectoras de los indios obligatorias a los españoles conquistadores y colonos, y el reconocimiento de sus derechos como súbditos libres de la Corona española porque pensamos la Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid deben ser consideradas como una aportación valiosa y trascendente en la historia del Derecho, tanto castellano como del Nuevo Mundo.

## **Contenido**

El eje principal de las ideas de las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid fue la libertad de los indios, el mandato del papa de la evangelización y la soberanía de la Corona sobre las Indias, aunque parte de la idea prejuiciosa de que los aborígenes “son inclinados a la ociosidad y malos vicios” (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 83). Asimismo éstas son leyes novedosas en el derecho castellano, aunque entendemos que las circunstancias les obligaron a adoptar normas legislativas que nunca antes habían pensado, ya que el descubrimiento detonó el desarrollo del derecho español.

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que, a diferencia de otros infieles, los indios no han tenido la oportunidad de conocer al dios de los cristianos, como los musulmanes (Hanke 1949: 28).

Este código no fue impreso en su tiempo, sino que se hicieron copias que se encuentran dos en el Archivo General de Indias (Justicia, legajo 299, fols. 604 y 625) y una en el Archivo General de Simancas (Registro General del Sello, leg. Diciembre de 1512)<sup>2</sup>.

No hablaremos de la reducción de indios en pueblos, ni de la encomienda, instituciones ya ampliamente analizadas, entre otros, por don Silvio Zavala (1938), sino de la aportación valiosa y trascendente de las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid a la historia del Derecho. Para ello pretendemos analizar las medidas protectoras de los indios obligatorias para los españoles colonizadores, ya que estamos ante el primer código sobre el tratamiento de los naturales y el reconocimiento de sus derechos como súbditos libres de la Corona española, aprobadas en medio de múltiples intrigas internacionales por la sucesión en el poder en que se vio envuelto Fernando de Aragón. Las medidas en beneficio de los derechos de los indios fueron las primeras en la tierra que se conocería como América<sup>3</sup> pretendiendo formar un código, según los deseos de la reina. Sin embargo, como comentábamos anteriormente, se parte de la idea prejuiciosa de que los indios “son inclinados a la ociosidad y malos vicios” (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 83)

En la exposición de motivos el rey Fernando alude a la reina Isabel y a su afán de protección a los indígenas, pero explica el deber de evangelizar de la Corona y argumenta en favor de la reducción de los pueblos junto a los españoles, para facilitar su compromiso de cumplir con las enseñanzas de la fe y hacer que los naturales cumplan con los sacramentos (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 84). Las leyes fueron dirigidas al virrey gobernador de La Española Diego Colón, pero también a la isla de San Juan que después sabrían que

<sup>2</sup> Por cuestiones prácticas hemos citado las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid con la versión paleográfica de M<sup>a</sup> Luisa Martínez de Salinas (2012) porque tuvo a la vista la copia de los tres trasladados que existen en los archivos españoles. Estas leyes nunca fueron impresas, aunque se hicieron cincuenta copias de ellas.

<sup>3</sup> Américo Vespucio (1451-1512) navegó principalmente la porción de Sudamérica en sus expediciones entre 1497 y 1508 y Martin Waldseemüller, con la ayuda de Matías Ringman, publicó la Carta Marina, o de marear, en 1507, habiendo una edición de 1516, con el nombre de “América” desplegado en la parte sur del Continente, en honor del florentino que había explorado Sudamérica, descubriendo islas y tierras no conocidas hasta entonces. El mérito de ambos fue el consolidar la versión de que América estaba dividida por dos porciones y constituyan un continente separado de Asia. Hacia 1538, el mapa de Gerardo Mercator confirmaba no una América sino dos: América del Norte y América del Sur (Briesemeister 2009: 25 y 26).

era tierra firme (Puerto Rico), pero preveía el futuro añadiendo que eran vigentes en todas las tierras por descubrir. En la “Aclaración” de 1513, las leyes se dirigieron al alcalde y a los alguaciles mayores de la isla de San Juan o “cualesquier justicias e oficiales della, ansy a los que agora son como a los que serán de aquí adelante” (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 101).

La primera norma de la congregación de indios cerca de los españoles, llevaba como obligación de éstos construirles a los naturales “bohíos” o sea casas nativas y darles tierra para hacer “montones”, es decir cultivar yuca, ajes (boniato o batata) y ají (chile), así como algodón<sup>4</sup>. Los encomenderos debían entregar a cada habitante del lugar 12 gallinas y un gallo para su aprovechamiento (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 84).

Al encomendero correspondería enseñarles a los naturales las llamadas “oraciones básicas del cristiano” (debían memorizar hacer la señal de la Cruz, el Ave María, el Padre Nuestro, el Credo y La Salve) y a confesarse una vez al año. Los mandamientos, los pecados capitales y los artículos de fe se enseñarían solamente a las personas que tuvieran capacidad para el aprendizaje. Asimismo los colonos estaban obligados a vigilar la impartición de los sacramentos a los habitantes de estas tierras (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 86).

Los indígenas debían descansar diariamente antes de ir a la iglesia a memorizar dichas oraciones básicas y eran obligados a oír misa los domingos, las pascuas y las fiestas de guardar. Por su parte al encomendero correspondía, en esas ocasiones, mejorarles la comida a los naturales dándoles carne guisada (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 87).

En el renglón de la educación, por un lado, el español estaba comprometido a escoger uno o dos muchachos hábiles para alfabetizarlos y enseñarles la doctrina cristiana. Y por el otro debían mandar a los hijos de los caciques a los conventos franciscanos donde debían aprender a leer y a escribir durante cuatro años, para después volver a sus comunidades a extender sus conocimientos (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 91). Se debía convertir a las élites indí-

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<sup>4</sup> Al parecer este código es la primera legislación castellana en que aparecen palabras indígenas, en este caso es el taíno, aunque aparecieron en el lenguaje castellano desde el primer viaje de Colón (Soler 1993: 151–154), en el que consta, entre otras la de “cacique” que fue la más ampliamente difundida.

genas en los multiplicadores de la evangelización y de los modos de vida españoles.

Las Leyes de Burgos prohibieron hacer cargadores a los indios, solo podrían llevar a cuestas sus propios bienes (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 89), evitando así su asimilación a los animales de carga.

El encomendero estaba encargado de enterrar cristianamente a los indios muertos de su estancia en la iglesia, o si morían en un camino en ese mismo paraje (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 88).

Para los indios que trabajaban en las minas y fundiciones se dictó un régimen especial: prescribieron que todos debían descansar juntos cuarenta días por cada cinco meses de trabajo, cuando se aprovecharía para adoctrinarlos (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 89). En esos días solo indios esclavos podrían laborar en las minas. Los nativos empleados en la minería, también lograron una alimentación especial, quizá porque ya para ese tiempo se notaban los estragos causados por la presencia española en la población por las nuevas enfermedades y la explotación laboral. Los empleadores españoles debía abastecerlos de pan, ajes y axi y una libra de carne al día, de pescado o sardinas, dejándoles ir a las aldeas nativas durante sus etapas de descanso (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 90).

Se permitiría a los nativos que siguieran haciendo sus areitos (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 90), que para los pueblos taínos de las Antillas eran rituales, sin embargo en un principio los españoles no lo entendieron así, acostumbrados a los ritos cristianos de oraciones y cantos con tránsitos pasivos.

Algo que queremos enfatizar son las normas para el tratamiento de las mujeres, que fueron una novedad en la legislación castellana. Las Leyes de Toro y las Siete Partidas regulan el trabajo femenino enfocado solamente en el ámbito doméstico y del pequeño comercio, al que las mujeres estaban destinadas. En cambio las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid prescriben que después de cuatro meses de embarazo no se les envíe a las minas “ni a hazer montones” (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 91), es decir a trabajar en la agricultura de tubérculos con la productiva técnica taína, sino que se les dedicaran al servicios dentro de las casas. Este impedimento de trabajos duros se debe prolongar durante los tres primeros años del hijo para que el niño no tenga prejuicio alguno, es decir, durante toda la lactancia. Con este derecho protegían a las mujeres y a los niños.

Los dominicos insistieron en que se protegiera a las esposas y las jóvenes en las “Aclaraciones” de 1513. Así las indias no serían llevadas a trabajar con sus maridos a las minas ni a otra parte, sin su voluntad o la de sus maridos, ellas podrían trabajar en sus propias haciendas o la de los españoles, pagándoles jornales convenidos entre ellas o con sus maridos (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 102). Así esta ordenanza reconoce en los indígenas la capacidad para negociar el salario. En la “Aclaración” se precisa el castigo que el encomendero tendría por incumplir esta norma: perder esa familia y entregarla a otro español (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 101).

También en 1513 suman los derechos de protección a la infancia prohibiendo el trabajo de niños menores de 14 años, excepto ayudando en las “haciendas” de sus padres. Además prescribe la tutoría paterna hasta la mayoría de edad (20 años) o el matrimonio, y regula la tutela de los huérfanos con personas designadas por oficiales reales o con personas que les paguen su jornal y que los evangelicen (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 102). Después de los 14 años a los varones se les otorgaría cierta personalidad jurídica, ya que podían acordar su salario. Ello lo vemos como atisbos de conservar la unión familiar.

Las indias solteras siempre tenían que estar tuteladas por los padres y se prohibió la vagancia de mujeres permitiendo el trabajo de ellas en sus propias “haciendas” o en las de otros nativos (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 102).

Asimismo prescriben que los españoles deben darles a los indios hamacas donde dormir y evitar que pernocten en el suelo, pero se les da un periodo de 12 meses para cumplir con la norma (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 102), cuestión que limita notoriamente la regla.

Los encomenderos eran responsables de darles a los naturales vestidos por el valor de un peso de oro para que cambiaron su manera de cubrirse, de ello se restaría un real para proveer al cacique para que vistiera con la categoría de su rango (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 102). Para los castellanos la ropa era el símbolo por antonomasia de civilización, aun cuando estas islas gozaban y gozan de un clima cálido donde los jubones y las calzas sobrarían, indumentaria que los indígenas —obviamente— rechazaron.

Desde lo relativo al vestido se le dio un trato especial a los caciques, política esta que se conservó durante la época colonial. Se les

dotó a los principales de personal de servicio con un leve esfuerzo por conservar la unión familiar, ya que se pide que fueran hombre, mujer e hijo. Asimismo estipula para los caciques el buen tratamiento de sus servidores y su buena alimentación (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 93).

Las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid reconocen la capacidad indígena para autogobernarse con una ley a futuro:

Que andando el tyempo, con la doctrina y la conversación de los cristianos, se hagan los indios tan capazes y tan aparejados a ser cristianos y sean tan políticos y entendidos que sy sepan regirse y tomen la manera de la vida que allá viben los cristianos, declaramos y mandamos y fezimos que es nuestra voluntad que los que ansy se hizieren áviles para poder vivir por sy y regirse y arbitro de nuestros juezes [...] que les den facultad que viban por sy [...] (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 103).

Esta prescripción constituye la simiente del autogobierno indígena que desembocará en la creación de la República de indios. Después de que se disputara arduamente si los nativos contaban con la capacidad y el derecho de autogobernarse, en 1549 por medio de una real cédula de la Corona se ordenó crear los puestos del cabildo indígena (Menegus 1999: 600–617).

Otra novedad interesante en el derecho castellano fue el establecimiento de un registro de nacimientos y muertes de los indios por los encomenderos para dar cuenta a los visitadores, en un plazo de diez días de ocurrido, y se pide se registren en un libro a los naturales con sus nombres. Pero el registro en las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid se originó como una función secular, cuando en España todavía en los reinos bajo el régimen de los Reyes Católicos, hasta 1498 se reguló la tarea en manos de los párrocos. De acuerdo a esta primera legislación se estableció un registro “civil” o secular ante la ausencia de una iglesia organizada en el Nuevo Mundo, que resultó de avanzada en el mundo hispano y que solo se da hasta los gobiernos liberales del siglo XIX.

El buen cumplimiento de la ley sería revisado por visitadores nombrados por el Almirante, los jueces o los oficiales reales, que estarían en las encomiendas dos veces al año debiendo reportar el incumplimiento de las normas. También los visitadores debían rendir cuentas cada dos años en que se les pasará un juicio de residencia donde reportarían el número de muertes y nacimientos para

que sean registrados en España (Martínez de Salinas 2012: 95). En la línea de pensamiento y comportamiento de los europeos, la principal riqueza con la que contaban era la fuerza humana y veían con preocupación cómo se iban diezmado.

Las Leyes de Burgos fijaron los estándares humanitarios que caracterizan al Derecho Internacional moderno y que en España continuaron durante los siguientes años, aunque partieron de la prejuiciosa concepción de que los indios eran “perezosos y viciosos”; de cualquier manera, las disposiciones contenían prohibiciones a los abusos por parte de los colonos españoles.

### **Consecuencias de las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid**

Las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid desencadenaron la reflexión y el debate en torno al posicionamiento doctrinario de la Corona frente a los indígenas: su obra evangelizadora, conquistadora y colonizadora. Sin embargo los principios éticos y normativos inspirados por la reina Isabel son los que van a predominar en las instituciones y en las Leyes de Indias que se fueron gestando con los avances de la ocupación.

Las bases doctrinarias de las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid fueron desarrolladas filosóficamente por Francisco de Vitoria. En su clásica obra *De Indis recenter inventis* (1532) resume los siguientes principios:

1. Los indios tienen en propiedad el Nuevo Mundo y la llegada de los españoles no cambia su régimen jurídico.
2. El Emperador (Carlos I) no es dueño de todo el mundo, por lo que no tiene la posibilidad de apropiarse de las tierras de los indios.
3. Tampoco el papa es Señor de todo el mundo, por lo que no tiene poder sobre los bienes de los infieles y, por lo tanto, no puede otorgárselos a los príncipes seglares. La evangelización es el propósito de su exploración en el Nuevo Mundo, pero no pueden obligar a los naturales a creer en la religión católica a través de la guerra y menos a beneficiarse de sus bienes, como producto de ella.

4. Los españoles tienen derecho a comerciar con los indios, sin hacerles ningún daño, sin que los nativos se los impidan. Sólo en caso de agresión por parte de los indios, los españoles estarían justificados para hacerles guerra y, sólo en ese supuesto, les pueden despojar de sus bienes y reducirlos a la esclavitud.
5. La evangelización no puede ser pretexto para hacer la guerra con los indios (Simpson 1950: 127–128).

Consideramos que éstos son los originarios principios del Derecho Internacional que Vitoria avizoró, con genialidad, en el tratamiento entre España (y el mundo occidental) con América. Todos ellos estuvieron contra la encomienda que comenzaba a hacer daño en esta relación. Enfatiza que la conquista en el Nuevo Mundo no sólo fue un combate de armas, sino también un combate ideológico<sup>5</sup>.

Diez años después a los conceptos explicados por Vitoria, las Leyes Nuevas (1542) repiten estos principios. Resulta fundamental el previsto en el artículo 10 de dichas leyes: “Los indios son personas libres y vasallos de la Corona”, complementado con disposiciones como la de fijar como obligación de las Audiencias el investigar y castigar los excesos infringidos a los indios (Artículo 24), prohibiendo terminantemente la esclavitud a los naturales (Artículo 26), desapareciendo la encomienda a título particular y transfiriendo a los indios bajo ese sistema a la potestad de la Corona (Artículo 31) y, finalmente, declarando que los nativos deberían ser bien tratados como vasallos libres, sometiendo a penalidad a aquellos españoles que no lo hicieran (Artículo 50) (Simpson 1950: 127–128).

Todos los avances procurados por Isabel quedaron aparentemente desvanecidos en 1550–1551 por los debates que propició Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, quien embozado bajo una particular interpretación de

<sup>5</sup> Varios años después de la expedición de las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid, el papa Paulo III expidió la bula *Sublimus Dei* en 1537, la cual confirmó el carácter de seres humanos para los indios de América y por lo tanto, la prohibición para esclavizarlos y despojarlos de sus posesiones. Este documento eclesiástico reiteró el noble contenido de las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid, pero además el papa acompañó a la bula un *Pastorale officium* que pretendió excomulgar a quien infringiera la libertad de los nativos americanos, este documento no tuvo gran implementación por la oposición de algunos españoles.

teorías aristotélicas, pretendió eliminar la libertad reconocida para justificar la esclavitud indígena (Hanke 1949: 11)<sup>6</sup>.

La posición opuesta la sostuvo Las Casas, ya como obispo de Chiapas y prestigioso defensor de los indios, primero en la arena del debate académico mediante tratados y, después, ante jueces expertos en teología y derecho sosteniendo la íntegra racionalidad del indio, con capacidad para gobernarse en libertad, y que los deberes evangelizadores de los españoles debían cumplirse por la paz, principios doctrinarios sostenidos por las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid (Simpson 1950: 151). No hay duda de que el pensamiento de Las Casas prevaleció a pesar de no haber un veredicto inmediatamente posterior al debate. Sin embargo, al mismo tiempo del debate, Tomás López Medel oidor de la Audiencia de los Confines (Santiago de los Caballeros y Mérida) coincidió a través de sus cartas con los postulados de Las Casas en las cartas a la Corona del 9 de junio de 1550 y del 25 de marzo de 1551 (Pérez-Prendes 1992: 26).

En cualquier sentido, el episodio de las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid (1512) y las Leyes Nuevas (1542) muestran un gran cuidado por establecer las relaciones entre europeos y americanos en un plano de igualdad y justicia, como ninguna otra nación había ensayado (Hanke 1949: 1).

Los principios éticos que se derivan de las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid en el tratamiento de los indígenas de parte de los españoles, si bien enraizados en los valores cristianos difundidos en la evangelización del Nuevo Mundo, contienen la simiente de una doctrina de derechos humanos que construye una empatía entre los españoles y los americanos.

Están basados en la igualdad del indio y del español y reconocen garantías para el trabajo del hombre y la mujer por igual, así como la condición de los niños. Nunca antes de las Leyes de Burgos-Valladolid se habían dado esas garantías, ni en Castilla, ni en las Indias, por lo que esta legislación abre curso y pone la semilla a una nueva etapa a principios del siglo XVI de lo que serían, cuatro siglos después, los derechos del hombre.

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<sup>6</sup> Los excesos de esta tendencia llegaron al extremo de equiparar a los indios con “bestias”, según Fray Domingo de Betanzos en 1549, quien después repudió tan aberrante afirmación poco antes de morir. También Antonio de Villasante cayó en ese prejuicio, por lo que sugirió que los indios fuesen “hombres siervos” más que “bestias libres” (Hanke 1949: 12 y 44).

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# **Visiting the Land of Fray Jacobo Daciano: An Essay in Honor of Alfonso Lacadena**

JESPER NIELSEN  
University of Copenhagen  
(jnielsen@hum.ku.dk)

**Abstract:** In 1542 the first Dane arrived in the “New World”. A Franciscan of alleged royal birth, Fray Jacobo Daciano (1484–1566) fled his native Scandinavia after the Reformation and traveled to the western frontier of New Spain where he founded churches and monasteries in the state of Michoacán. A true revolutionary of his time, Jacobo fought to allow the Tarascans to enter the Catholic priesthood. In this brief essay, I describe a journey through Michoacán in the footsteps of Fray Jacobo, ending in the small Purépecha village of Tarécuato, where the Danish friar is regarded as a saint. In Tarécuato the author also learned a lesson of what it takes to be remembered.

**Resumen:** En el año 1542, el primer danés llegó al Nuevo Mundo. Fray Jacobo Daciano (1484–1566), un franciscano de presunto nacimiento real, huyó de Escandinavia, su tierra natal después de la Reforma y viajó a la frontera oeste de la Nueva España, donde construyó iglesias y monasterios en el Estado de Michoacán. Revolucionario de su tiempo, luchó por la inclusión de los tarascos en el sacerdocio católico. En este breve ensayo, describo un viaje reciente por Michoacán, siguiendo las huellas de Fray Jacobo, hasta llegar a un pequeño pueblo purépecha, llamado Tarécuato, donde el fraile fue considerado un santo. En Tarécuato, el autor de este ensayo aprendió una lección sobre lo que se necesita para ser recordado.

The first time I met Alfonso must have been in 1998 at the European Maya Conference (EMC) in Hamburg, but it was the year after, when we organized the EMC in Copenhagen, that I first really got to know him, and began to appreciate his many extraordinary qualities as a scholar and a human being. Over the past twenty years, I have been fortunate to learn from Alfonso’s lucid presentations, receive his insightful comments on manuscripts and, not least, experience his enthusiasm, generosity, and openness to new ideas. Alfonso was also a whole lot of fun to be around, unpretentious as he was. I will always remember the festive traditional Christmas lunch in which the speakers of the 16<sup>th</sup> EMC celebrated in Copenhagen in December 2011. The restaurant was full of guests, some having brought copies of traditional Christmas songs. Soon our large group—mostly non-Danish—were all equipped with some of the most popular Danish Christmas songs. The beer and schnapps

had loosened up everybody's tongues, but no one sang as loud, and as expressively, as Alfonso...in his very unique Spanish-Danish pronunciation.

Choosing a topic for a paper in honor of Alfonso is not easy. His interests were so diverse, and in many ways so are mine. I initially considered something on central Mexican writing systems, or perhaps a paper on Olmec iconography, but finally decided to contribute with a small essay which Alfonso would hopefully have found interesting and entertaining to read, and which brings in an area of Mesoamerica that he himself did not do research in—Late Postclassic and Early Colonial Michoacán. Of course, Alfonso was deeply engaged in the study of Post-conquest Nahuatl sources from central Mexico. I imagine that the little-known story of a Danish Franciscan of royal descent who fled Europe—by way of Spain—and ended up in Michoacán, where he became an expert in the Purépecha language (Tarascan), founded monasteries and churches, and struggled to convince his superiors to let the Indians enter the Catholic priesthood would have fascinated him. To come to terms with the fact that the field of Mesoamerican research has lost such a brilliant scholar, to realize that there will be no more words, spoken or written, from Alfonso seems almost impossible. All we can do is to try to follow his example and further his legacy.

## A State of Fear and Beauty

Today the Mexican state of Michoacán seems to be a place that fewer foreigners choose to visit voluntarily: for years, a continuous flow of horrifying stories of extreme violence has dominated media portrayals of the state. The violence and war-like conditions are related to the Mexican government's war on drugs and the internal fighting between powerful and ruthless drug cartels, such as *La Familia Michoacana* and the *Caballeros Templarios*. There are assassinations of politicians and policemen, beheadings, and mutilated corpses dumped in public spaces, with spiteful messages of warning attached to those bodies. Armed local paramilitary groups try to defend their communities, often ineffectually. It is a state swamped by corruption, with a questionable reputation nationally and internationally, which is only made stronger by popular TV-series like *El*

*Chapo* and *Narcos*, and the recent announcement by the U.S. Department of State that Americans are advised not to travel in Michoacán (along with a couple of other states, including Sinaloa, Guerrero, and Tamaulipas). It is no wonder that foreign tourists tend to avoid this large state to the west of Mexico City.

So, admittedly, it was with a slight feeling of anxiety when we (my good colleague from ENAH, Hugo García Capistrán and I), in early 2018, headed towards “Place of the Fishermen,” the meaning of Michoacán in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs who had named the region after the fishermen of the big lakes that characterizes the eastern part of the state. I had previously visited Michoacán, but that was more than a decade ago, at a time when drug violence had yet to spread across the state. But there were several good reasons to return. I had long wished to see the monarch butterfly sanctuaries in the southern part of the state, where billions of butterflies overwinter in fir trees high in the mountains. The butterflies return each autumn, coming from the US and Canada. My own interest in this spectacular natural phenomenon was linked to a growing realization of the symbolic role of butterflies, their bodily transformations, and the migration pattern of monarchs in the pre-Columbian religions and mythology of Mesoamerica. Another reason for my visit was to give talks at the Museo Regional in the wonderful colonial gem of Morelia, rightfully on the UNESCO world heritage list, and at the Colegio de Michoacán in the less impressive but still charming and bustling city of La Piedad. It lies further to the north, near the border with the states of Jalisco and Guanajuato and in the heart of the region’s pig farm industry. A third reason was to visit the small Purépecha (or Tarascan) village of Tarécuato some 80 km to the southwest of La Piedad. Although unknown to most people in Denmark, Tarécuato holds a unique place in Danish history: the village church and monastery was founded by a Dane, very likely the first Dane in the New World, Fray Jacobo Daciano.

### Fray Jacobo Daciano: From Denmark to Mexico

I had known about the Danish-born Franciscan since the early 1990s, when Danish author Henrik Stangerup (1937–1998) published his novel *Broder Jacob* ('Brother Jacob') (Figure 1). The novel was later translated into Spanish, English, French, and German. At its release

JØRGEN NYBO RASMUSSEN

# Broder Jakob den Danske



ODENSE UNIVERSITETSFORLAG

**Figure 1.** Jørgen Nybo Rasmussen's book *Broder Jakob den Danske* (1986) has another portrait of Jacobo on its cover. The sculpture is dated to c. 1630 (unknown artist), and is currently in the Catholic diocese of Copenhagen (photograph by Jesper Nielsen).

# Henrik Stangerup

## Broder Jacob

### Roman

»Et stort stof, en stor fortælling,  
har fundet sin forfatter.«

- Ib Michael, Weekendavisen



**Figure 2.** The novel *Broder Jacob*, by Henrik Stangerup, was first published in 1991. The front cover shows a detail from the altarpiece in Odense Cathedral (by Claus Berg, c. 1515–1525), ordered by Queen Christina, and which may be the most precise portrait of Fray Jacobo that we have today (photograph by Jesper Nielsen).

in Denmark, it caused a sensation, because it so effectively popularized the findings and convincing hypothesis of the Danish historian Jørgen Nybo Rasmussen (1929–), that Fray Jacobo was the third-born son of the Danish King Hans (or John). Nybo Rasmussen's academic publications, and especially the monograph *Broder Jakob den Danske* (Nybo Rasmussen 1986, published in Spanish in 2002), intrigued historians working with the history and genealogy of the Danish royal house, if with less of an impact on the Danish public (Figure 2). I was learning Nahuatl when I first read the novel and recall being particularly fascinated by Stangerup's descriptions of Fray Jacob's meeting with a group of prominent Franciscans, all studying and documenting the language and culture of the Aztec in the Colegio de Santa Cruz Tlatelolco. This took place in the newly founded colonial city of Mexico City in the 1530s, built on, and from, the ruins of the Aztec imperial capital of Tenochtitlan. It was only years later that I came to appreciate Stangerup's literary style and the dramatic narrative, which he so ingeniously built up on Nybo Rasmussen's thorough (and, for a reader, tedious) library and archival research.

Jacobus Daciano or Fray Jacobo Daciano was born around 1484. According to Nybo Rasmussen his father was King Hans (1455–1513) and his mother Queen Christina of Saxony (1461–1521), who already had two older sons (Christian II and Prince Frans). With no apparent likelihood of acceding the throne, Jacob decided (or was encouraged) to enter the Order of the Franciscans at some point in the beginning of the new century. It is exceedingly difficult to track him in the two first decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but we know that from 1528–1530 he served as custodian ('guardian' in Spanish) of the Franciscan monastery in the town of Malmö (Sweden), then still part of the Danish kingdom. He planned and wrote parts of the so-called *Chronicle of Expulsion* in the early 1530s, when the Franciscans struggled to regain control over their monasteries in the years prior to the Protestant Reformation, which would reach Denmark in 1536. The year after, 1537, Jacobo was appointed Provincial Minister of the province of Dacia (which included the Scandinavian countries and more than 40 monasteries), but the Franciscan Order in Denmark came to an end the very same year: The mendicant orders were officially prohibited in Denmark, and the friars either had to leave the country, convert or face trials. Jacobo chose the first and walked south. For a while he

sought exile in what is now Germany, but continued through France, arriving in Catholic Spain where he was welcomed at the royal court by Emperor Charles V, defender of the Catholic faith—and also the cousin of Jacobo. The exiled Franciscan soon declared his wish to travel to the New World where he might take part in the spiritual conquest of the Emperor's new domains. He was granted permission by the Emperor himself, who even wrote Jacobo a letter of recommendation to Antonio de Mendoza, his Viceroy in New Spain.

Fray Jacobo arrived at the port of Veracruz on the Gulf Coast in the sweltering humidity of the rainy season of 1542. Presumably, he was the first Dane ever to set foot in the “New World”—or at least the first since Scandinavian Vikings had settled briefly and unsuccessfully in Newfoundland, Canada. After the journey across the Sierra Madre mountain range, eventually reaching the populous central Mexican basin, Jacobo entered a city undergoing a complete transformation: Pre-Columbian Tenochtitlan was being replaced by the emerging Mexico City. The lake was still there, endless numbers of *chinampa* fields surrounded the city, traditional one-story houses still dominated the cityscape, but in the center of Mexico-Tenochtitlan a colonial, Spanish-style capital was rapidly consuming and covering its Aztec predecessor. Administrative buildings, public plazas, churches, and monasteries were being built at great speed, as workers leveled temples, ballcourts, and palaces. Jacobo settled at the Franciscan Colegio de Santa Cruz Tlatelolco, where the intellectual circle around extraordinary personages like Andrés de Olmos and Bernardino de Sahagún were teaching the noble sons of the Aztec elite, while they themselves studied Nahuatl, and collected knowledge about religion, myths, crafts, trade, flora, and fauna. Indeed, any aspect of the indigenous civilization and the new land interested them. Jacobo already knew Danish, Swedish, German, and French, as well as Latin, Greek and Hebrew and he quickly learned Nahuatl. While Jacobo continued his studies of native culture and languages, he also heard the story of the famous “first twelve”—the group of Franciscan apostles who had arrived in Mexico in 1524. One of them was Fray Martín de la Coruña, who had set out years ago for a region to the west of the Valley of Mexico. His goal: to evangelize among the Tarascans, the old archenemies of the Aztecs. The land, known as Michoacán to the Aztecs, was said to be rich, and there



**Figure 3.** The old olive trees in the atrium of the monastery in Tzintzuntzan (Michoacán) is said to have been planted by Bishop Quiroga, making them almost 500 years old (photograph by Mette Haakonsen).

were many people and souls to guard and save. At that time, it was still a region on the wild frontier of the Spanish colonial empire, and there was, to the imperial administrators, a desperate need for more friars, especially those with a good ear for native languages. Soon, Fray Jacobo was back on the road, now headed for the far west.

My own trip to Michoacán, some 480 years later, took me past several of the big, shimmering lakes of the basin, first Patzcuaro, then passing the ruins of the old Tarascan capital of Tzintzuntzan. Here, for centuries, the Tarascans had effectively resisted the Aztec's attempts to conquer and fold them into their tribute empire. After the Spanish conquest, Tzintzuntzan became the seat of the Franciscans' missionary efforts in the region, and a large church and monastery were later erected here. The leading figure in the early evangelization was Bishop Vasco de Quiroga. A cleric and professor of law, Quiroga established Christian model-villages based on Thomas More's utopian ideas, and he was to become an important figure in the life of Fray Jacobo when the latter arrived there in the

mid-1540s. And so, Jacobo first took residence at Tzintzuntzan and soon became the custodian (as he had been in Malmö) of the monumental and massive monastery, built from stones quarried out of the old Tarascan *yacata*-temples and royal palaces. Today, the arched entrance to the church is embellished with small winged angels and shells symbolizing St. James. To the Tarascans, the angels must have resembled the winged, supernatural beings in their own myths, whereas the shells were an ancient Mesoamerican symbol of power and wealth and one of the most prestigious trade goods from distant oceans. Double meanings, mis- and reinterpretations were unavoidable in the meetings of indigenous religion and Catholicism.

In front of the church and monastery is a spacious walled atrium courtyard. This is where the Franciscans once gathered crowds of Tarascans for open-air sermons, a friar preaching from a so-called “open-air” chapel, the church being too small for the multitude of natives. In the center of the atrium courtyard stands a beautifully carved stone cross. Around it, the atrium is dotted with centuries-old, gnarly and partly withered olive trees, allegedly planted by bishop Quiroga himself (Figure 3). In Christian tradition, the olive trees represent prosperity, beauty, and religious privilege, but they also provided the friars with olive oil, an ingredient unknown in the Pre-Columbian cuisine but fundamental to Mediterranean cooking. Jacobo immediately set out to learn the Purépecha language, although it is completely unrelated to Nahuatl, and eventually he mastered its intricacies. In fact, he would later be asked to approve the catechisms and *doctrinas* written in Tarascan by other friars, but sadly he never left his own description of the Tarascans and their language. A couple of years prior to Jacobo’s arrival, one of his fellow Franciscans, Jerónimo de Alcalá, had completed his account of Michoacán, known as the *Relación de Michoacán*. Alcalá had interviewed the old priests and Tarascans of noble birth, recording their knowledge about the mythology, history, and religion of the Tarascans before the arrival of the Spaniards. The *Relación* is comparable to Sahagún’s famous 12-book encyclopedia on the Aztecs, the *Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España*, and, like Sahagún’s volumes, it is illustrated, with more than 40 colored drawings made by Alcalá’s native collaborators. The illustrations provide a unique glimpse into the world of the Tarascans, which, in comparison to the enormous

amount of ancient images left from the Aztec, Maya, and other Meso-American peoples, created very little in terms of representative art. Although a few examples of Spanish and Christian influence can be detected in the images, the illustrations illuminate a culture about which relatively little is known. Only in the first and last image of the *Relación* are Spaniards present. The first, a kind of visual dedication, shows Alcalá handing over the book to Mendoza, the Viceroy of New Spain, while the final illustration depicts Lake Patzcuaro, caravans of bearers among agave plants, and the ruler, the *cazonci*, standing in his palace, wearing a beautiful cape, a feather headdress, and a necklace of jade or greenstone beads. He has a bow in hand and quiver on his back as he receives news from his messengers about the approach of the Spaniards. The black-bearded foreigners can be seen on the road leading to the town, riding their horses in full gallop, wearing broad hats or helmets and with their long spears raised. It is an ominous scene, foreshadowing the eventual demise of Tarascan culture. Perhaps Fray Jacobo felt that it would be a waste of time to surpass Alcalá's detailed account. It may have been more important for him to improve conditions for Indians than to spend more time with pen and paper.

### **A Utopia in the West: Tarécuato**

Leaving Tzintzuntzan behind we continued towards the state capital of Morelia, crossing Lake Cuitzeo on the way. Cattail reeds grew along the lakeside, and ducks, geese, and herons, even pelicans, were seen in flocks all around, giving us a unique impression of how Lake Texcoco—now almost completely drained away, and where Tenochtitlan once raised its temple roofs above the island capital—must once have looked like. After a few days in tranquil Morelia, we headed further northwest, still in the footsteps of Fray Jacobo. As we approached the city of La Piedad, the landscape got drier and less welcoming, low shrubland and small, barren-looking hills. Fray Jacobo would have walked, of course, as he had done all the way from Veracruz to Mexico City, following the well-trodden paths used by local traders and professional merchants, the *pochteca*, who would lead large caravans of men carrying valuable goods from one part of Mesoamerica to the other. It must have been in the late 1540s



**Figure 4.** The church and monastery in Tarécuato (Michoacán), founded by Fray Jacobo Daciano in the late 1540s (photograph by Jesper Nielsen).

when Jacobo set out from Tzintzuntzan, accompanied by another Franciscan, to establish a new missionary outpost, a church, and monastery at the small settlement of Tarécuato. This was to become one of the westernmost of the Franciscan missions, the frontier of the Catholic faith. Truly, reaching Tarécuato is even today like reaching the Garden of Eden after having wandered in the desert. Perhaps Fray Jacobo and his comrade felt something similar. After crossing a ridge of low hills, we noted an arid landscape transformed into a lush valley, small friendly-looking, tree-clad mountains, and, today, one shady avocado grove after the other (Michoacán being the number one avocado-producing state in Mexico). The contrast with La Piedad is stark. From the dusty, hectic mestizo town with all its cars and trucks, we drove into a small Purépecha village: it had low houses, many with clay tiles, and the air filled with the smoke from firewood. At small food-stalls, women were using the mano and metate while preparing maize for hand-made tortillas, and clay pots were on the stove, beans, and stews sizzling. Purépecha women, with jet-black hair and huipiles in different blue hues and patterns,



**Figure 5.** The carved cross in the atrium at Tarécuato with symbols referring to the Stations of the Cross (photograph by Jesper Nielsen).

were gathering at the small market in the town plaza and in front of the church. The sense was like being transported to one of the small Maya villages in the highlands of Chiapas or Guatemala. The squat church and ex-monastery dominate the center of the village square, and both have a rustic, rural, almost Alpine look to them, with local, brownish basalt and heavy, roughly hewn planks (Figure 4). In the large atrium, tall fir trees only add to the highland feel, and in the

center stands a cross with carved motifs referring to the Passion of Christ (Figure 5). The whole layout thus follows the pattern that Jacobo had seen witnessed at Tzintzuntzan and in other Franciscan monasteries. From the walled atrium a large, broad stair leads up to the church entrance, the risers embellished with flower rosettes and so-called *pomas* or Isabelline pearl beadings. They are also reminiscent of the concentric circles and spirals that are common in Tarascan Pre-Columbian petroglyphs. We know that drawing on local traditions, Mesoamerican peoples often reinterpreted the Christian iconography they saw in churches and monasteries, and integrated them into their own “Indianized” form of Catholicism. This may well have happened in Michoacán as well. Some Franciscans were deeply appalled by such syncretic innovations, while others accepted them, as long as this creative mixing kept their native charges attracted to Christianity and to the church. Close to the entrance stands an old olive tree, almost dead it seems, and we wondered whether it had been brought all the way from Tzintzuntzan—a branch of Quiroga’s vision planted here by Jacobo. The church interior is simple. There is an old baptismal font placed in an unusual sunken square, but apparently, there are no surviving murals here. Many survive in other 16<sup>th</sup> century Franciscan churches and monasteries, where colorful scenes served didactic ends by introducing the native population to the main themes of Christianity and the life of Christ.

We continued into the cloister garden, where a single orange tree blossomed. Local legends say that this is the walking stick of Jacobo, which miraculously began to grow when it was planted here after his death. Women who eat the fruits or leaves are said to produce more milk for their babies. A heavy, securely locked door prevented us from entering the former chapter room, now dedicated as a shrine to Jacobo. A peek through the opening allowed us to see a copy of his portrait, the original of which is now in Zamora, some 20 km from Tarécuato. In both Zamora and the village of Zacapu—where Jacobo founded a church in 1548—private schools also bear his name, and it was thus quite clear that Fray Jacobo meant, and still means, a great deal to people in this part of Michoacán. In Tarécuato and Zacapu he is remembered as a saintly figure who cared about the Indians and wished to protect and help them. Many Franciscans (and Dominicans) played such a role in the first decades after the Spanish

conquest, trying to prevent the conquistadors and *encomenderos* from enslaving and exploiting indigenous populations. However, they themselves often mistreated the Indians, forcing them to live in villages near the churches, or using torture to induce confessions about their assumed pagan rituals.

What really sets Fray Jacobo apart is that he was a strong advocate for permitting the Purépecha to receive *all* the sacraments. He was the first to allow them to receive communion, and he also argued that the priesthood should be opened to them. To that end, he wrote a treatise between 1550–1553 called *Declamación del Pueblo Bárbaro de los Indios que habiendo recibido el Bautismo desean recibir los demás Sacramentos*. As Robert Ricard stated in his classic book *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico* (first published in French in 1933), Jacobo: “attempted, with astonishing clear-sightedness, to demonstrate that the Mexican Church had not been properly founded, because it did not include native priests. Although a few had dreamed of training them, up to that time no one had dared clearly to state such a revolutionary thesis—revolutionary for the time and place” (Ricard 1966: 229). There was, however, fierce opposition to his ideas among most Franciscans, who remained highly skeptical as to whether the Indians could be trusted to administer sacraments, and were probably equally anxious about their own reduced influence and power in New Spain. Jacobo’s insistence that Indians be fully accepted into the Catholic Church eventually became a problem for the Franciscan Order, leading to a dispute between Jacobo and Fray Juan de Gaona in 1553. After losing the debate, a disappointed and aging Jacobo appeared to have withdrawn himself from the world outside Tarécuato and Zacapu, concentrating on his work in the small village and in surrounding hamlets.

Fray Jacobo died in Tarécuato in 1566 and is said to have been buried in the church, but rumors have it that his remains were moved somewhere else by villagers. Attempts have been made to have him canonized, and among the claims for his miracles (which are necessary for the Vatican to grant sainthood) is that he made a spring appear by hitting the ground three times with his walking stick, and that he predicted the death of his cousin, Charles V. With no time to wait for the Vatican’s approval, the peoples of Tarécuato

and Zacapu have gone ahead anyway and regard the Danish friar as a true saint.

### The Queen's Pilgrimage and How to Be Remembered

In 2008, the Danish Queen Margrethe II traveled to Mexico on an official state visit. Trained as an archaeologist—and a visitor to Mexico in 1966—the Queen had always shown a great interest in the Pre-Columbian past, and on her itinerary were iconic Maya sites such as Yaxchilan and Bonampak. However, the most surprising activity on her trip was arguably her visit to Tarécuato. Far from the beaten track, a trip to this part of Michoacán for a Queen and her staff was no simple operation and involved security personnel and even the army's presence. The Queen and her consort, along with their host, Mexican president Felipe Calderón, were flown into the village by helicopter. Accompanying the Queen was Nybo Rasmussen, and it is hard not to see the visit as an official, blue-blooded recognition that Nybo Rasmussen was right in his hypothesis. And so, Margrethe II paid a visit to her long-lost relative who had fled the Reformation and ended up in the far west of New Spain, symbolically re-establishing a link between Jacobo and his family. It happened that I too was part of the Danish delegation to Mexico, although I did not go to Michoacán. Instead, I was, for some rather unclear reason, asked to give a talk in Oaxaca, which was not even on the Queen's itinerary. I did, however, attend the state banquet at the Chapultepec Castle, and, in their speeches, the Queen, as well as the Mexican president mentioned Fray Jacobo—and Danish Maya archaeologist Frans Blom (1893–1963) who became a Mexican citizen in his deathbed—as the two most important historical figures in fostering bonds between Mexico and Denmark. Eight years later, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto visited Denmark, and, at the official dinner at Fredensborg Castle, Jacobo and Blom were once again mentioned in speeches by the Queen and the President. The name of Fray Jacobo, prince of Denmark, is thus now inscribed in the official history of the Danish monarchy and in Danish-Mexican relations, regardless of the doubts raised by some renowned Danish historians.

To me personally, it matters less whether Jacobo was indeed the son of a Danish king or not. If true, it certainly makes his life trajectory more spectacular, but his possible royal pedigree did in no way play



**Figure 6.** Poster produced for the yearly celebration of Fray Jacobo on October 29, the date of his death, proclaiming the royal descent of Tarécuato's local saint (photograph by Jesper Nielsen).

a role in his work in Michoacán, it did not matter much to his fellow Franciscans, and it did not matter to the Tarascans who knew him. Today, obviously, things have changed. The plausible royal descent of Jacobo has added a new dimension to this legendary figure. When we visited Tarécuato, large banners on a building near the church proudly proclaimed, leaving no room for scholarly doubts: "Fray Jacobo Daciano—Hijo de Reyes de Dinamarca" (Figure 6).



**Figure 7.** Sculpture of Fray Jacobo in the patio garden adjacent to the monastery in Tarécuato (photograph by Jesper Nielsen).

Having seen the modern sculpture of Fray Jacobo in the quiet garden next to the monastery (Figure 7), we wanted to have a final look inside the church. Who knew when we would come back to this remote place? We were met by a small group of very inquisitive Purépecha women. They wanted to know where we came from and the reason for our visit. Hearing that I had come from the land of Fray Jacobo, they turned their attention towards me, apparently finding my two good colleagues, Hugo García Capistrán and Joshua Englehardt, from Mexico City and the US, respectively, rather less exotic and interesting. A series of questions followed: “Was the Presidenta (that is, the Queen) still alive?” “Would they soon receive what they had been promised?” The church and monastery had been renovated before the Queen’s visit, but the old ladies did not seem to be quite satisfied with that gesture. “A lot of military showed up,” one lady grunted. “A lot of military showed up, that’s it.” Clearly enough, from a visit, a royal visit even, something else is expected in the minds of these Purépecha women. While it is difficult to imagine the Queen officially promising any direct, financial

support, there seemed little doubt that, in their minds, the brief visit to her ancestor's shrine—and their local saint—must be followed by something more than speeches and an escort of soldiers. “What have you brought for us?” was the next question, and I was dumbfounded, having nothing to offer, except the promise to bring something if I should return sometime in the future. “If you don’t bring a present, how should we remember you?” the self-confident lady concluded with a little smile, before leaving the church, heading for the market with her friends. And so I learned a lesson about proper visiting, gift-giving and the foundation of memories in Purépecha thought. Here in Tarécuato you will be recalled if you bring something with you, be it material presents or your aid, attention, and time. Fray Jacobo did just that, as the celebratory posters also emphasized (see Figure 6), and he will forever be remembered here it seems. On the other hand, there is little chance that my companions and I will become part of Tarécuato’s collective memory.

We left Tarécuato that afternoon, and, on the way back to La Piedad, there was time for reflection about my visit to Michoacán. It would seem impossible to deny that Michoacán, like several other states in Mexico, has enormous problems with the drug trade, violence, and corruption. References to murders and the cartels’ activities regularly pop up in conversations, leaving the clear impression that there is a dark, parallel reality in Michoacán that is impossible to ignore or forget. Yet the fact is that I had had no bad experiences during my entire trip, but met friendly, hospitable, and very generous people. And there is so much to see and learn in this amazingly diverse state, both in terms of nature, culture, and history: Well-preserved and stunning colonial towns, breathtaking landscapes, little-known Pre-Columbian sites, an exquisite local cuisine and, of course, the billions of monarchs, the winged souls of the deceased, in the high mountain forests. Indeed, Michoacán, “The Place of the Fishermen”, Fray Jacobo’s beloved land, is a strange, fascinating paradox, a place of fear and beauty.

The words of the elderly woman in Tarécuato have stayed with me since that day in January, and as I conclude this essay, I realize that Alfonso will be remembered exactly because of what he brought to us, what he gave. His presents to us were his research and his way of treating students and colleagues.

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# The External Relations of Xinkan

FRAUKE SACHSE

University of Bonn

(xinka@gmx.net)

**Abstract:** Xinkan is an isolate family of closely-related languages that was spoken in south-eastern Guatemala and is today all but extinct. The origin of this group and time-depth of Xinka presence in Mesoamerica has been a subject of speculation since the late 19th century. This contribution revisits the external relations of Xinkan that has borrowed heavily from Mayan but also includes loanwords from other surrounding languages. The cultural relationship between the Xinka and their Mayan and Nahuan neighbours can also be read through the Spanish loans found in eighteenth-century Xinkan.

**Resumen:** El xinka es una familia lingüística aislada en el sureste de Guatemala que está constituida por varias lenguas de relación genética cercana que hoy en día están casi extintas. El origen del grupo y el tiempo de su estancia en Mesoamérica ha sido un tema de discusión desde finales del siglo XIX. La presente contribución repasa las relaciones externas de la familia xinka que ha tomado prestados muchos términos de las lenguas mayas además de incluir préstamos de otras lenguas vecinas. La relación cultural entre los xinka y sus vecinos mayas y nahuanas se puede reconstruir también a través los préstamos españoles en el xinka del siglo XVIII.

Alfonso was always interested in historical linguistics and in particular in language contact. His work on external influences and substrata of other Mesoamerican languages in the Classic Mayan script was opening up new avenues of thinking about the origin of Maya writing and the relationship between the Maya and Mixe-Zoquean-speaking groups. He presented these ideas in papers and workshops he gave at several European Maya Conferences, including publications in proceedings volumes (Lacadena 2010). When I had finished my doctoral dissertation on Xinkan in 2010, Alfonso was one of the first people who was genuinely interested in the results. I brought a copy with me to the EMC in Madrid in October 2010. In the midst of whirling around, trying to handle the madness of what it means to be the host and main organiser of the EMC, he immediately started reading and came back to me with comments and ideas. He was quite intrigued and drew some connections between Xinka nouns and Maya syllabic signs, contemplating whether these might be an indication for a Xinka substratum in the glyphs. Whether he was really on to something here, I leave for the writing

experts to judge. But our short exchange on this topic made me decide to summarise what is known about the external relations of the Xinkan languages, repackaging the information that I compiled for my doctoral dissertation and dedicating it to the memory of a good colleague and friend.

## Xinkan languages

Xinkan is family of closely related languages that were once spoken in southeastern Guatemala in the area between the Río Michatoya and the Río Paz and the adjacent highlands, which encompasses the present-day department of Santa Rosa as well as large parts of Jutiapa and southern Jalapa. Linguistic data have been documented in the towns of Guazacapán, Chiquimulilla, Sinacantán, and Jumaytepeque in the department of Santa Rosa and Yupiltepeque and Jutiapa in the department of Jutiapa.

Xinkan was generally believed to be extinct at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Suárez 1983: xvii), although in the early 2000s I could still locate and work with a handful of elderly and very advanced semi-speakers in Guazacapán, who had preserved some fragmented knowledge of the language of their parents and grandparents. Systematic language transmission to the younger generation ceased in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and by the 1980s functional speech communities had disappeared with less than ten fully competent speakers per town (Campbell and Muntzel 1989: 182).

The former geographical distribution of Xinkan can be reconstructed primarily on the basis of historical evidence. The term *xinca* ['ʃinka], or *sinca* ['sinka], does not appear in written documents before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when it is used to refer to the speakers of the indigenous languages spoken in the departments of Santa Rosa and Jutiapa (Crespo 1740; Cortés y Larraz 1768–1770; Maldonado de Matos ~1772). The etymology of the name is unclear, though it has been suggested that it is an abbreviation of the Nahua toponym Sinacantán—a village just outside of present-day Chiquimulilla that was allegedly a preconquest political centre (cf. Schumann 1967: 13; Pineda Pivaral 1969: 132–134, 484). The language of the area was often referred to as Populuca (Calderón 1908, 1939) and Pipil (Pineda Pivaral 1969). None of the other languages in Middle America desig-



Figure 1. Xinka language area (illustration by Frauke Sachse and Christian Klingler).

nated by the derogatory Nahuatl term *popoloca* ‘to speak barbaric language’ shows any relation to Xinkan. It is unclear whether all references to Popoluca in eastern Guatemala regard Xinkan languages. Campbell suggested that the undocumented Popoluca de Conguaco spoken east of the Xinka core area in Jutiapa may also have been a variety of Xinkan (1979: 947, 954). Xinkan speakers are historically identified in various towns of Santa Rosa and Jutiapa (Cortés y Larráz 1958: 217–236; Solano 1974: 235–236) (Figure 1). Linguistic surveys from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century suggest that Xinkan was also spoken in the southern part of the department Jalapa (Calderón 1908: 6; Lehmann 1920: 731; Campbell 1978a: 36) and in parts of the department Escuintla (Solano 1974: 184).

Xinka toponyms are found beyond this core area in the north and the east which indicates that the language family may have had a wider distribution in precontact times (Fernández 1938: 84; Campbell 1978a: 36–37). Campbell identified place names with the locative prefixes *ay-* (e.g. Ayarza), *al-* (e.g. Alzata), *san-* (e.g. Sansare)

Year	Author	Source	Origin	Type*
~1772	Maldonado de Matos	Arte de la lengua szinca	X <sub>M</sub>	Gr, V
1812	Morales	Idioma Zeeje...	X <sub>Ch</sub>	T
1868	Gavarrete/Valdéz	in Berendt 1875: Vocabularios de la lengua xinca	X <sub>S</sub> /X <sub>V</sub> /X <sub>Jut</sub>	V
1908	Calderón	Estudios lingüísticos	X <sub>V</sub> /X <sub>Ch</sub>	V, Gr
1911	Sapper	Ms. by Lehmann	X <sub>V</sub> /X <sub>Ch</sub>	V
1938	Fernández	Diccionario del sinca	X <sub>Ch</sub>	V
1948	McQuown	Vocabulario Xinca	X <sub>Ch</sub>	V
1966	McArthur	Xinca	X <sub>Ch</sub> /X <sub>G</sub>	V
1966	Schumann	Fonemica del dialecto xinca de Chiquimulilla	X <sub>Ch</sub>	V
1967	Schumann	Xinca de Guazacapán	X <sub>G</sub>	Gr, V
1970–79	Campbell/Kaufman	Field Data	X <sub>Ch</sub> /X <sub>G</sub> /X <sub>J</sub>	V, Gr, T
2000–03	Sachse	Field Data	X <sub>G</sub>	V, Gr
2007–10	Rogers	Field Data	X <sub>G</sub> , X <sub>J</sub>	V, Gr

\* Gr = grammatical information, V = vocabulary, T = textual information.

**Table 1.** Sources of original data on Xinkan languages.

or the suffix -šawa ‘settlement’ (e.g. Anchagua) as Xinkan (1978a: 36–37). These toponyms are found in areas today settled by speakers of Mayan languages.

The linguistic documentation of Xinkan languages starts in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century with the compilation of a grammar and vocabulary by the priest Manuel Maldonado de Matos (see Sachse 2010). The only written text that has survived is a proclamation against Napoleon from 1812 that was translated into the Xinka of Chiquimulilla. The language materials documented in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century includes mostly vocabularies and word lists from Chiquimulilla, Guazacapán, Yupiltepeque as well as Sinacantán and Jutiapa. There is a short grammatical sketch from Chiquimulilla and Yupiltepeque by Eustorgio Calderón (1908). The first phonemic data were documented by Norman McQuown in Chiquimulilla in 1948. The first grammatical description of the Xinka of Guazacapán was produced by Otto Schumann as part of an ethnographic study (1967). In the 1970s, Lyle Campbell and Terrence Kaufman undertook linguistic research on the Xinka of Guazacapán, Chiquimulilla, and Jumaytepeque and published some of their results on phonology, loanwords, and some typological traits (Campbell 1971, 1972, 1978a, 1997b; Kaufman 1977; Campbell et al. 1986). Their extensive field data remained unpublished until databased at the University of Utah and

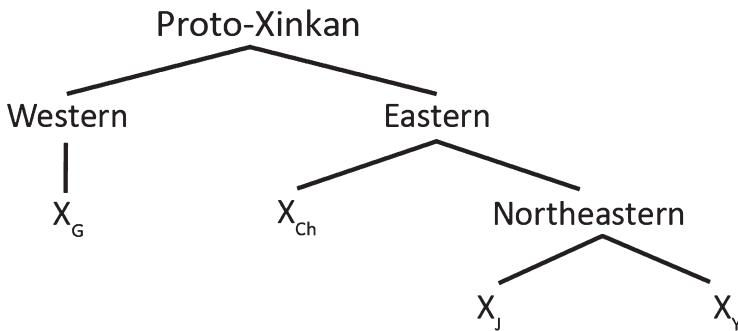
made available through the Archive for the Indigenous Languages of Latin America (AILLA) in Spring 2008. Systematic descriptions of the morphosyntax and typology were only recently produced by myself (Sachse 2010) and Chris Rogers (2010, 2014, 2016). Although both studies include field work with the last speakers from Guazacapán, I largely focused on the colonial data from Maldonado de Matos ( $X_M$ ), while Rogers' analysis is based on the field data documented by Campbell and Kaufman in the 1970s.

Four Xinkan languages have been identified: Xinka of Guazacapán ( $X_G$ ), Chiquimulilla ( $X_{Ch}$ ), Jumaytepeque ( $X_J$ ) and Yupiltepeque ( $X_Y$ ) (Campbell 1972: 187). However, the picture seems to be more complex, as two substantially different varieties were spoken in the indigenous barrios of Chiquimulilla (McQuown 1977[1948]) and a short list of lexical items from the village of Sinacantán, just outside of Chiquimulilla, suggests the existence of yet another variety ( $X_S$ ) that was distinct from both  $X_{Ch}$  and  $X_G$ . The short list of lexical items from Jutiapa identifies the language of that town clearly as  $X_Y$ .

The internal classification of the language family is not straightforward. Chris Rogers suggests a division into a Western and an Eastern branch (see Figure 2). For the detailed argument, I refer the reader to Rogers (2010). It needs to be noted that  $X_G$ , the two varieties of  $X_{Ch}$  and the unclassified  $X_S$  were all spoken within less than 5 km distance from each other. This concentration of different languages in a relatively small geographical area is most likely caused by migration, although it remains unresolved whether these population shifts occurred in preconquest times or may even result from the resettlement policies in the colonial era.

## **Genetic affiliation and origin**

The external relations of Xinkan are closely tied to the question of genetic classification. Xinkan is an isolate with no clear affiliation within or beyond the Mesoamerican linguistic area. The isolate status of Xinkan was first pointed out by Brinton (1885: 97) and confirmed by most subsequent studies (Stoll 1886: 304; 1958: 247–48; Lehmann 1920: 731; Fernández 1938: 85; Schumann 1967: 8; Campbell and Kaufman 1980: 854; Suárez 1983: xiv–xvii; Greenberg 1987: 382; Olson 1991: 404). Those attempts that have been made to determine an external genetic relationship are not entirely persuasive,



**Figure 2.** Xinkan Language Family (illustration by Frauke Sachse; published in Rogers 2016: 206).

with most proposals mingling diffusional and genetic similarities as the main source of error. Suggestions ranged from Mixe-Zoquean (Calderón 1908: 56; Lehmann 1915: 12; 1920: 725; Fernández 1938: 85; Stoll 1958: 247; Solano 1974: 234), Otomanguean (Lehmann 1920: 725) and other Mesoamerican isolates such as Cuitlatec (Hendrichs Pérez 1947, cited in Campbell 1997a: 166) to the Californian languages Seri, Chumash-Salinan, Hokan (Lehmann 1920: 725) and further south to Chibchan (Voegelin and Voegelin 1977: 112; Greenberg 1987: 106) and Arawakan (Lothrop 1939). Xinkan language data were also included in the reconstructive attempts of distant genetic relationships including the hypothetical constructs of the phylae Penutian (Sapir 1949: 177; Dixon 1969) and Macro-Mayan (Swadesh 1967: 85)—all shared similarities have subsequently been attributed to diffusion (Campbell 1978b: 598).

The proposal that gained most prominence grouped Xinkan with neighbouring Lenkan in Honduras and El Salvador. The idea of a “Xinka-Lenka hypothesis” goes back to Brinton (1885: 96) and was taken up by Lehmann (1920: 727) who compared varieties of the two language families, which was later misunderstood as an attempt to define Xinkan and Lenkan as a common linguistic branch (cf. Longacre 1967: 120–121; Schumann 1967: 8). Dubbed as the “Xi-Le family”, the proposal gained further acceptance when Swadesh presented lexicostatistic evidence for his classification of Mesoamerican languages (1967: 98). Campbell (1978a: 43; 1978b: 600–604;

1979: 961) rejected the hypothesis, arguing that the distance of 45 m.c. that Swadesh had calculated for Xinka and Chilanga-Lenka basically corresponds to the distance suggested for Lenka and Nahua (45 m.c.) and for Lenka and K'iche' (47 m.c.) (cf. Swadesh 1967: 90). Campbell furthermore identified lexical, typological, and phonological similarities between both families to be the result of diffusion or onomatopoetic forms (Campbell 1978a: 43; 1978b: 600–604; 1979: 961). While a direct genetic relationship cannot be proven, existing grammatical and lexical similarities between Xinkan and Lenkan are most convincingly explained as the result of diffusion (Kaufman 1977: 67; Campbell 1978b: 603; Campbell and Kaufman 1980: 855). Campbell, Kaufman and Smith-Stark (1986) have shown that Xinkan shares several of the traits that they identified as indicative of the Mesoamerican linguistic area.

The isolate status of Xinkan, along with a certain cultural distinctiveness and physiognomy (see Calderón 1908: 4–5; Termer 1944: 106), has led to speculations about the origin of the group. The Guatemalan *oriente* was culturally diverse as a result of various waves of migrations, including Nahuan (Pipil) speakers who had settled along the Pacific Coast. The Pipil territory stretched from Escuintla into El Salvador and the Upper Motagua-Valley. The Postclassic expansion of the K'iche' and the other Maya groups pushed the Pipil out again, and they had to give up large parts of the area (Orellana 1995: 26). Which other groups were involved in these population shifts remains unclear, but it appears that the origin and external relations of Xinkan have particular relevance for the reconstruction of the cultural development in this region.

There has been some speculation about the geographic origin of Xinkan. The earliest theory is that the Xinka are an archaic local culture that inhabited Guatemala before Mayan and Nahuan speakers moved into the territory and pushed them towards the Pacific coast (cf. Lehmann 1910: 692–693; 1920: 723; Lothrop 1939: 42; Termer 1944: 102; 1948: 83; see also Calderón 1908). Others have suggested that they are Postclassic immigrants to Guatemala who first displaced the local Pipil population and were then pushed out themselves by Highland Maya expansion (Fernández 1938: 84; Campbell 1978a: 35–36).

Archaeological horizons in the area range from the Postclassic back into the Early Preclassic period (cf. Estrada Belli et al. 1996: 113; 1998: 55). Until the Postclassic, the archaeological finds from the southeast show the same characteristics and typical patterns of the Preclassic and Classic cultural horizons of the Pacific coast area (Estrada Belli et al. 1998: 55–58). The Postclassic settlement patterns and ceramic complexes however deviate significantly from the earlier horizons (Estrada Belli and Kosakowsky 1996: 24). Just like in the highlands, the Postclassic sites are located in strategically easy to defend locations, at the slopes of the volcanos (e.g. Sinacantán, Taxisco and Guazacapán). These sites exhibit a characteristic settlement pattern (see Estrada Belli et al. 1996: 113; Estrada Belli and Kosakowsky 1996: 6; Ichon and Grignon 1998: 335), which is also found at sites where there was Xinka population during the colonial era (see Feldman and Walters 1980; Estrada Belli and Kosakowsky 1996: 7; Ichon and Grignon 1998: 335). Local ceramic types are homogeneous throughout all horizons and do not reflect any cultural disruption (Estrada Belli et al. 1996: 114; Estrada Belli and Kosakowsky 1996: 24).

Although it seems likely to associate the precolonial Xinka with the Postclassic settlement pattern found in the region (Ichon and Grignon 1998), we have no definite proof that the Xinkan-speaking population that settled at these sites in colonial times (e.g. at Atiquipaque) were also the builders of the characteristic platform architecture (Schumann 1967: 15, 17; Feldman and Walters 1980). It is unclear whether the colonial settlement patterns actually reflect the preconquest situation, i.e. whether the Xinka had founded their own centres, had settled at already established sites or cohabited with the other groups, in particular the Pipil.

Researchers have speculated about an origin of the Xinka outside of Guatemala. Termer (1944: 106) suggested an immigration from the north, based on the report that Chontal speakers from Oaxaca in Mexico could converse with Xinka speakers from Chiquimulilla when they met as pilgrims at Esquipulas. However, there is no concrete linguistic evidence that would substantiate this hypothesis. Xinkan activists have also advocated an Andean origin, based on the similar sound of “Xinka” and “Inka”—again, there is no linguistic basis for such claims. More recently, Matthias Pache has identified

some lexical parallels between Xinkan and Proto-Southern Jê (Pache 2018), which might suggest an Amazonian connection. However, the number of potential cognates is small and it still remains to be clarified whether they are the result of ancient linguistic diffusion or genetic relationship. In any case, the immigration of Xinkan speakers into Central America that is suggested by these lexical parallels was certainly not recent and does not contradict the idea that Xinkan speakers were present in Mesoamerica at the time of the Early Classic (see below).

### Cultural contacts

The time-depth of Xinka presence in southeastern Guatemala can also be analysed through the evidence for language contact. The high number of loanwords in Xinkan suggests intense culture contacts between the Xinka and their neighbours. Xinkan has borrowed rather extensively from Mayan and Mixe-Zoquean (MZ), with many MZ loans diffused through Mayan. In addition, vocabulary was borrowed from other Central American languages as well as Nahuan. The close relationship between the Xinka and neighbouring Maya groups is also indicated by a number of Spanish loanwords that were borrowed into Xinkan through Mayan. From this it can be concluded that there must have been a high degree of bilingualism in Xinka society throughout time, which has been interpreted as a sign of their cultural inferiority and domination by other groups (Campbell 1977: 112; 1978a: 46).

Most insights regarding Xinka-Mayan interaction were published by Lyle Campbell in his pioneering studies on Mayan loanwords in Xinkan languages (1971, 1972, 1978a). Campbell and Terrence Kaufman also identified a significant number of Mixe-Zoquean loans in Xinkan (see Campbell and Kaufman 1976). These MZ loans are most probably the result of general diffusion within the Mesoamerican linguistic area and occur together with a number of widely diffused terms with other Central American languages including Lenka and Cacaopera (Campbell 1975, 1976; Campbell et al. 1986). The Nahuan and Spanish loans were first analysed in my dissertation (Sachse 2010).

The results from the studies by Campbell and Kaufman suggest a chronology of contact. The large number of loanwords from Western

Mayan and Mixe-Zoquean, which include terms that must have been borrowed into Xinkan before certain sound changes occurred in WM (see below), suggests a Xinka presence in a Maya contact zone that goes back to the Early Classic. However, this does not imply that the territory of this interaction was identical with the known geographical distribution of Xinkan languages in colonial times. The fact that several terms characteristic for the environment of the coastal and piedmont area were borrowed from Eastern Mayan languages and from Nahuan has been interpreted as an indication that the Xinka may only have moved into this area at a later stage, and possibly posterior to the Pipil (cf. Campbell 1976: 21; Orellana 1995: 35). This scenario would be consistent with the oddly high concentration of different Xinkan languages in southeast Guatemala (see above).

The following sections give an overview on the terms Xinkan languages have borrowed from neighbouring languages and discuss the respective cultural implications of the loans. If not specified otherwise, the Xinkan terms are taken from Maldonado de Matos' *Arte de la lengua szinca* ( $X_M$ ).

## **Mayan loans**

The majority of loanwords in Xinkan are from Mayan languages. Mayan loans fall into the semantic domains of material culture, crops, agriculture, flora/fauna, trade, religion, and politics (Campbell 1971: 335; 1972a: 190; 1978a: 39). The large number of loans from these domains suggests intensive cultural contacts that were hierarchical and dominated by Mayan speakers, involving the agriculturalisation of the Xinka, trade relations and the adaptation of ritual practice and other cultural knowledge. Borrowing was unidirectional and the number of potential Xinkan loans in Mayan languages is very small.

There are loans from both Western Maya (WM) and Eastern Maya (EM) in Xinkan. WM loans mostly come from Ch'olan, while EM loans are from K'iche'an languages, most likely from Kaqchikel and from Poqom. For a number of loans that have identical cognates in both branches, the exact donor language cannot be determined. We can identify lexical items in specific domains that have been borrowed from a particular subgroup or language and therefore provide indi-

cations about the relative chronology and quality of contacts. The loans from WM and the ones that are attested in both branches seem to be earlier and not contemporaneous with the more recent EM loans.

The standard source for citation of reconstructed loanwords is Kaufman's Preliminary Mayan Etymological Dictionary (Kaufman 2003 [K-03]). Dienhart's comparative Mayan languages database (Dienhart 1997 [D-97]) has been used as a technical device in the search for borrowed items in Xinkan; all entries have been checked against Kaufman's reconstruction and other dictionaries. Most Mayan loans have been identified by Campbell and Kaufman and are cited accordingly; etymons not previously attested are cited by their source of reference.<sup>1</sup> All orthographies have been phonemicised. The nomenclature of Mayan languages, subgroups and branches follows Kaufman (2003).<sup>2</sup>

Xinkan borrowed most of its vocabulary relating to agricultural subsistence and food preparation from both WM and EM, which suggests that Xinka turned into an agricultural society under the influence of Maya culture (see Campbell 1971: 335; 1972a: 190; 1978a: 39). Nearly all terms that relate to maize production and processing have come from Mayan, many of which are ultimately from MZ languages (see *waya?* 'milpa', *?iwa* 'to form tortillas', *pae'i* 'to grind corn', *?ue'i* 'nixtamal').

<sup>1</sup> BV-91 = Barrera Vásquez 1991; C-71 = Campbell 1971; C-72 = Campbell 1972; C-77 = Campbell 1977; C-78 = Campbell 1978a; C&K-76 = Campbell and Kaufman 1976; CH-99 = Christensen 1999; D-97 = Dienhart 1997 (= Dienhart's Comparative Mayan Languages Database); H-05 = Hull 2005; K-72 = Kaufman 1972; K-03 = Kaufman 2003 (= Preliminary Mayan Etymological Dictionary); S-73 = Schumann 1973; W-95 = Wichmann 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Chik = Chicomuseltek; Chl = Ch'ol'; Chr = Ch'orti'; CM = Central Mayan: WM + EM; EM = Eastern Mayan: Greater Mam + Greater K'iche'an; GK = Greater K'iche'an: Uspantek-K'iche'an + Proto Q'anjob'al; GLL = Greater Lowland: Yukatekan + Greater Tzeltalan; GQ = Greater Q'anjob'alan: Chujean + Qanjobal + Kotoke; GTz = Greater Tzeltalan: Ch'olan + Tzeltalan; Ixl = Ixil; Kaq = Kaqchikel; Kch = K'iche'; Lak = Lakantun; LL (Lowland) = Yukatekan + Ch'olan; Mam = Mam; pCh = proto-Ch'olan; Pch = Poqomchi'; pCM = proto Central Mayan; pK = proto-K'iche'an; pM = proto-Mayan; Pop = Popti'; Poq = Poqom; Poqomchi' + Poqomam; pQ = proto-Q'anjob'al; Pqm = Poqomam; pTzp = proto-Tzeltalan Proper; pY = proto-Yukatekan; Qan = Q'anjob'al; Qeq = Q'eqchi'; Toj = Tojolab'al; Tuz = Tuzantec; Tze = Tzeltal; Tzo = Tzotzil; Tzu = Tz'uutuijl; Was = Wastek; WM = Western Mayan: GTz + GQ; Yuk = Yukatek.

## **Maize production**

?a?u ‘corn kernel’	CM *? <i>aw</i> ‘to sow’ [C-71, K-03]
?aw-lak ‘comal = maize-plate’	CM *? <i>aw</i> ‘maize’ + pM * <i>laq</i> ‘plate’ [K-03]
?ayma ‘ear of corn’	pM *? <i>ə?m</i> ‘maize’ [C&K-76] (diffused)
hoko-wáɬ ‘corn husk’	GLL * <i>xoč</i> ‘to harvest, break’ [K-03]
?iwa ‘tortilla dough’	EM * <i>wah</i> ‘food’ [K-03] < pMZ
pa <sup>č</sup> i, pa:ši ‘to grind corn’	GTz * <i>pač</i> ‘tamal’; Kch <i>pa?</i> č [C-77], [K-03] < pMZ
č’íwi ‘fresh corn tortilla’	GK * <i>čih</i> ‘nixtamal’
?uč'i ‘nixtamal’	Poq ?uč ‘cooked corn’ [K-03] < pMZ
waya? ‘maizefield, milpa’	EM * <i>wah</i> ‘food’ [K-03]

## **Agriculture**

hačt ‘pick up, gather’	EM * <i>xa?</i> č ‘harvest’ [K-03]
hač'i ‘scrape, scratch’	pCM * <i>xoč</i> ‘scratch’ [K-03]
č’imi ‘to pour water, irrigate’	pM * <i>tyem</i> ‘pour’; Kch čemow [K-03]
čiri ‘to cut’	CM * <i>tyur</i> ‘cut fruit’ [K-03]; Chr šuri ‘cut’ [H-05]

Besides the maize domain, we find a significant number of terms denoting cultigens and fruit crops that were borrowed from Mayan. Of particular interest is the Xinka term *šinak* ‘bean’ which clearly derives from WM *čenaq* (Campbell 1972). The term *šina?* ‘urine, urinate’ seems to be etymologically related, given that in several EM languages the term \**kinaq* refers to ‘bean’ as well as to ‘kidney’ (Kaufman 2003). The same concept occurs in Amuzgo-Mixtecan languages and in Chinantecan (see Kaufman 1990: 102, cited in Brown 2006: 512). Brown suggests that the original meaning of the Amuzgo-Mixtecan and Chinantecan term was ‘kidney’ rather than ‘bean’ (2006: 512), but the borrowing of the WM term \**čenaq* into Xinkan may indicate the opposite direction of semantic extension.

## **Cultigens and fruits**

k’eweša ‘anona’	pCh * <i>k’eweš</i> ‘anona’ [C-71], [K-03]
mapi ‘coyol palm’	pM * <i>map</i> ‘coyol palm’ [C-71]
muyi ‘sapodilla’	pM * <i>mu:y</i> ‘chicle tree’ [C-72]
nak'i ‘chilli’	EM/pK * <i>naq</i> ‘seed, pit’ [C-71], [K-03]
pak'a ‘fruit’	GK * <i>pak</i> ‘anona, cherimoya’ [K-03]
pak'i ‘cypress nut’	WM * <i>paxk</i> ‘pineapple’ [K-03]
parwa ‘cacaotree’	Kch <i>par</i> ‘small palm tree’ [E-65]
sikar ‘tobacco’	pCM * <i>si:k</i> ‘tobacco’ [C-71], [K-03]

šinak ‘bean’	WM *čenaq’ ‘beans’ [C-71]
ta:pa ‘nance (fruit)’	EM *ta?p; pK tapa?l ‘nance’ [C-77], [K-03]
?učun ‘papaya’	WM *?uhčun ‘papaya’ [C-77], pMZ ?ožo ‘papaya’ [C&K-76]
yima ‘hog plum (fruit)’	WM *yum ‘jocote’ [C-77]

Along with the agricultural vocabulary, Xinka has borrowed terms for food consumption and taste from Mayan languages (e.g. *nima* ‘to eat’, *šaya* ‘bitter’, *č’ami* ‘sour’, *č’ayá* ‘wet’, *čáma* ‘good’, *?išiši?* ‘delicious’, *kič’i*, *k’iši* ‘to fry’; *maši*, *mač’i* ‘to fry’, *łokama* ‘to boil (water)’, *?urk’u* ‘to drink’, *nima* ‘to eat’).

#### Food consumption/production

šaya ‘bitter’	pCh *č’ah ‘bitter’ [K-03]
č’ami ‘sour, bitter’, hamí ‘acidic’	EM *č’am ‘sour, acidic’; Mam č’am [K-03]
č’ayá ‘wet’	pM *č’ax ‘to soak’; Chr č’ā(x) [K-03]
čáma ‘good’	Tze, Chl *č’am ‘good’ [C-71], [K-03] < pMZ ča:m ‘ripe, good’ [C&K-76]
?išiši? ‘delicious’	pM *?uč ‘bueno’ [K-03]
kič’i, k’iši ‘to fry’;	pCh *č’il ‘to toast, fry’ [K-03]
maši, mač’i ‘to fry’	
łokama ‘to boil (water)’	pCh *łok ‘boiling, froth’; Mam logan ‘it boiled’ [K-03], cf. pMZ *hokos-ni:? ‘tepid water’ [W-95]
?urk’u ‘to drink’	pM *?uk’ ‘to drink’; Chl ?uč [K-03]
nima ‘to eat’	Kp *nuhm ‘hunger’ [K-03]

A small number of Mayan loans in the domain of trade and commerce (e.g. *kunu* ‘to buy’, *kayi* ‘to sell’) were most likely borrowed from WM languages (Campbell 1972a: 190). Campbell points out that the loan *kunu* ‘to buy’ preserves an initial *k*, which suggests that it was borrowed prior to the Ch’olan shift *k* > č. WM cognates of ‘to buy’ all have initial č (e.g. Chr čon [C-71], [K-03]). The shift is attested in Classic Mayan, which would imply that Xinkan presence in the area goes back to at least 500 CE. (cf. Campbell 1972: 189; 1977; Kaufman and Norman 1984: 118). The same seems to apply to the term *kači* ‘smoke’ which survives in Tzeltal as čahil and may therefore have been borrowed before the sound change occurred.

### Trade/commerce

kayi ‘sell’	pM k'a:y ‘to sell’ [C-72]
kunu ‘buy’	WM *koŋ [C-71]; pY *kon
k'íwi ‘courtyard’	GLL+ *k'iwik ‘market, courtyard’ [K-03]
kiꝝ'u ‘to exchange’	pM *k'eš ‘change’ [K-03]; Chl kuy [D-97] cf. pMi *kek ‘change’ [W-95]

Xinka also seems to have borrowed terms from WM that may have been used to describe the state and quality of crops or trade goods (e.g. *č'ama* ‘good’, *čiy* ‘little, few’), although some of these forms seem to be more widely diffused within Central America.

### Quality

č'iki ‘mid-, piece’	pCh *č'ok ‘break’ [K-03] (?)
čiy ‘little, few’	pM *ty'i:n ‘small’; Chr č'i(x),
čiriki ‘small’	Kch č'uti'n ‘small’ [K-03] (diffused)

Terms from the domain of material culture have been taken from both, EM as well as WM languages. Reference terms for dishes and containers, which are related to the domain of food production and may have served as trade goods, may come from EM alone (e.g. *ʔawłak* ‘tortilla griddle’, *kułku* ‘pot, bowl’, *suk'sin* ‘gourd’, *č'imá* ‘calabash’). EM loans for clothing are probably rather recent (e.g. *pote* ‘huipil, cloth’, *sak'alawiš* ‘white trousers’, *tuti* ‘palm-leaf rain cape’).

### Material culture

kułku ‘bowl, plate’	Pqm kulk ‘frying pan’ [C-77]
pišik ‘calabash cup’	Qan, Pop pečan ‘cup, dish’ [D-97]
suk'sin ‘jug, pitcher’	pM *čuhh; Poq suh ‘gourd’ [C-71]
šu:nik ‘instrument for ? = pot’	Poq šun ‘pot’ [C-72]
*č'imaha ‘=(makers of) guacales/ pottery = toponym for Guazacapán’	pM *čimah(?) Kch čimah, Chr čimax ‘jug’ [K-03] < pMZ *čimah? [C&K-76]
pati ‘cloth, blanket’, pote ‘blouse (huipil)’	GK po?ot ‘cloth’ [K-03], pQ *po?t ‘cloth’ [C-72]
šakal-awiš ‘white pants’	GK *saqal ‘whiteness’, we:š ‘trousers’ [K-03]
tuti ‘palm leaf rain cape’	EM *tut ‘suyacal’ [K-03]
pak'a ‘to nail’	GLL *pahk’ ~ *pak’ [K-03], [C-77]
pak'i ‘wall’	Tze pahk’, Yuk pak'(il) ‘wall’ [K-03]
pupúk ‘mat’	pM *pohp ‘mat’ [C-71], [C-72]

č'imi tik'i 'rope'	pY *sum 'lasso, rope' [K-03]
koka 'backrack'	Kch ko?k 'woodbox for backpacking' [CH-99]
tunati 'play an instrument'	Kch tuna:x 'play an instrument' < Pip tuntun 'shell' [C-85]

Xinka has borrowed a significant number of terms referring to the environment including local flora.

### Environment and flora

?amuł 'nettles'	Kaq amulahy 'nettle' [K-03]
k'unu 'cloud, shade'	Chl kun 'fog, vapor' [C-77]
kaļi 'smoke'	pTzp č'ahil 'smoke' [K-72]
karawa 'bush, wild'	Yuk, Lak k'a?aš, Kp k'ačela:x 'bushland' [D-97]
pahi 'ravine'	EM *paš-, pK *paš- 'split, break' [K-03]
šiha 'sand'	GTz *hi?; Chr xi?, Tzo, Tze hi? 'sand' [K-03]
šu:ni 'star'	EM *č'umi:l, Kaq č'umil 'star' [K-03]
sururu 'southwind'	Kch šururem 'whistle, cold' [E-65]
tawu 'wind, breeze'	EM *te?w 'cold' [C-71]
wina 'holiday, sky'	Tzo winahel 'heaven, sky' [C-77]

The borrowing of animal names is not uncommon in Mesoamerica, e.g. in several Mayan languages the Nahuatl term *masatl* has replaced the Mayan term for 'deer'. Xinka shares a few animal names with other Central American languages (see below), but many terms also seem to be genuinely Xinka (e.g. *tuma* 'deer').

### Fauna

?amu 'spider'	pM *?am 'spider' [C-71], [K-03]; from pMZ *?amu [C-72]; pZ *?amu [W-95]
howa 'puma'	WM *how; Tuz how 'coyote' [K-03]
pokoko 'raccoon'	Tze pokok; Pop ponkon 'toad' [D-97]
pese 'lizard'	GK *?iš-pa?ač 'lizard', from pMZ *pači [K-03]
?ušu 'fly'	pM *?us 'fly, mosquito' [C-71]; from pMZ *?usu [C&K-76], ?u:suk [W-95]
šušumi 'coati'	WM *č'uč'um 'coati' [C-71] (not pY)

wiłay ‘jaguar’	Mp wič, wiš ‘cat’ [K-03]; Lak we?ran k'a ‘ocelot’ [D-97]
šuni ‘snails, sea shell, crayfish’	Chl šun ‘crayfish’ [D-97]
ε'ina?na ‘scorpion’	pM *si:na?ŋ ‘scorpion’ [C-72]; pCh *sina(m) [C-71]

Particularly striking is the number of Mayan bird names that Xinkan borrowed from Mayan. While this may indicate that the Xinka traded feathers with the Maya, the terms borrowed do not refer to birds that were hunted particularly for their feathers. Instead, several of these birds are known in the highlands to the present-day as messengers of omen, which may suggest that these bird names were borrowed in the context of religious practice rather than trade.

### Fauna—birds

?alu? ‘macaw’	?Yuk lo? ‘macaw’ [BV-91]
čehče ‘woodpecker’	pM *čexe ‘woodpecker’ [K-03] < pMZ *čehe ‘woodpecker’ [W-95]
kukuwał ‘turtledove’	LL+WM *kul(ax)te ‘dove’ [K-03]; [C-71] cf. pOM *ku:k ‘turtledove’ [W-95]
pošo ‘partridge’	WM *peč ‘partridge’ [K-03]
ši:k'a ‘hawk’	pM *sihk ‘hawk’ [C-71, 72]
šok'oy ‘owl’	pM *šo:č ‘owl’ [K-03]; Pqm soko'y ‘owl’ [C-77]
toktok ‘mocking bird’	Pqm tuqtuq ‘mockingbird’ [S-73]; Kch tuktuk ‘woodpecker’ [E65]
ε'oko ‘grackle’	pM *ty'ok ‘grackle’ [C-71], [C-72]; Pqm ε'ok [K-03]

That Mayan speakers influenced Xinkan religion is reflected in the borrowing of terms relating to ritual practice, such as *pumu* ‘copal’, *miša* ‘to bury’ or *yołe* ‘to scatter (flowers)’.

### Ritual

?ayapa ‘year’	pM *ha?b’ ‘year’ [K-03]
miša, mič'a ‘bury’	pM *muq; Ixl muxa ‘to bury’ [K-03]
pumu ‘incense, copal’	pM *po:m ‘incense’ from pMZ *po:mv [C-71], *po:m(o) [W-95]
winak’ ‘witch’	EM *winaq ‘person, people’ [C-72]

Borrowed terms for diseases and body parts may indicate that Xinka healing practices could have been influenced by Maya culture as well. Mayan loans in this domain are attested in WM and EM alike.

### Diseases

koso ‘smallpox’	GK *kohs ‘tired’; Kch kosik ‘get tired’ [K-03]
meme ‘crazy’	CM *me:m ‘mute’ [C-71], [K-03], pM *me:m [C-72]
?oho ‘cough’	pCh *?oxob; Kch ?oxob’ ‘cough’[diffused, onom.] [K-03]
pohmo ‘blind’	pCM *mo:y ‘blind’ [K-03]
-tili “*ache, suffering’	pM *til, pCh *til, Kch til ‘burn’ [K-03]

### Human body

?ełaha ‘tongue’	pM *leq ‘lick’; Was lek’ab ‘tongue’ [K-03]
hu:ši ‘head’	?GLL *xo?l; Yuk xol; Chl xol, Chr xor’ head’ [K-03]
mašira ‘roots, veins, nerves’	GK *ra:b’ ~ *ra:? ‘root’ [K-03]; Yuk moč ‘roots, nervs’ [BV-91]
mušta ‘belly’	pM *mus(u?)s ‘navel’ [C-72] cf. Len (Hon) musu ‘liver’ [C-78]
počpoč ‘lungs’	Kch, Kaq pospo?y Zoq pukpuk ‘lungs’ [C-77]
šina ‘urinate’	EM *kenaq’; Tek če:naq’, Mam činaq’ ‘kidney’ [K-03]
te ‘female genitals’	Kaq, Tzu te? ‘mother’ [D-97]

Mostly from WM are verbal loans referring to conflict, destruction or oppression. Some of these terms may refer to hunting as much as to combat. The loans suggest that Xinkan-speakers were involved in Maya fighting/hunting activities (e.g. as vassals or slaves). It seems noteworthy that the terms listed below seem to be rather early, as they are attested in WM or pM.

### Conflict/war/hierarchy

piłta ‘wound/kill with an arrow’	pY *pul ‘shoot’ [K-03]; Toj pulte ‘bow’ [D-97]
tułtu ‘to pierce, prick, puncture, punch’	WM *tuhk’ ‘shoot firearm’ [K-03] < pZoq *tuxkuy?; pMZ *tuh ‘hunt’ [W-95]
tak’ani ‘to impute’	pM *taq; pCh taq, Kp taq ‘order, obligate’ [K-03]

Intensive cultural contact with WM speakers is also suggested by the fact that Xinkan has borrowed various reference terms for persons and age groups from WM. Of particular interest is the term *šakiłumu* for ‘server, conscript’, which combines the loan *šakił* from K’iche’an *saqil* ‘whiteness’ and the Xinka term *humu* ‘man’, possibly alluding to the K’iche’ metaphor *saqil k’ajol* ‘white(ness)-son’ which refers to ‘vassals’ and ‘subjects’.

### Persons

?one ‘baby, tender, unripe’	LL+WM *?une [K-03]; Chr ?unen ‘child, son/daughter’ [H-05]
pele? ‘single man’	< pMZ *?unak, pZoq *?une ‘child’ [C&K-76]
šakił-umu ‘good man’	Yuk pal ‘bachelor’ [D-97]
yu: ‘man (as exclamation)’	Kch *saqil ‘whiteness’ [E-65], Xnk humu ‘man’
turi ‘child’	Chr yum ‘father’, Chl yum ‘grandfather, owner’, cf. Len <i>yu</i> „male“ [C-78]; Zoq *yu:m [diffused] [K-03]
?ušti ‘mother-in-law’	GK *-tošl ‘shoot, offspring’; Kch u-tuš [K-03]; Chik tušti ?iniq ‘child’ [D-97]
	pM *?iš ‘woman’; Was, Chik ?ušum [K-03], [D-97]

In addition to terms that fall into clear semantic domains, Xinkan has also borrowed a range of different verbs, including motion verbs. The presence of Mayan verbs in Xinkan indicates that there was intense language contact in the past.

### Verbs

?aku ‘go, walk’	Chl ku ‘go’; ko?o ‘gone’ [D-97]
pe? ‘come’	Kp *peht ‘come’; Kaq pe [K-03]
ta? ‘go, come, pass by’	pM *tal ‘come’ [C-71]
?aya ‘be (in a place)’	pM *?yar ‘be, exist’; Chr ?ay [K-03]; pCh *?ayan ‘there is’; Cht ?aya(n) ‘be (in a place), exist’ [K-03]
hapa ‘to wait’	pY *pak- ‘wait’ [K-03]
huta ‘blow’	pM *?uč; pYu ?ust ‘to blow’ [K-03]
kama ‘embrace, carry, be godfather’	pM *k’am ‘to receive’ [K-03]
k’ā:ta ‘lie down’	GK *koč ‘lie down’ [K-03]
k’awi, X <sub>Ch</sub> k’ani- ‘catch with lasso’	Kaq k’an; pYu *k’ahn ‘rope’ [K-03]

k'olo 'to flay, strip'	pM *qol „to peel, moult“ [K-03]
piša 'stink, annoy'	Lak p'uʔ-p'uʔs, p'uʔs 'stinking' [D-97] < pMZ *pu:q̥ 'to rot' [W-95]
pok'o 'to break, split'	GK *paq' 'split, cut'; GK *poq' 'burst, break' [K-03]
porana 'to burst'	GQ *pox 'break'; GK *poq' 'burst, break' [K-03]
poq'a, poša 'to wash'	GTz *pok 'to wash' [K-03]; Chr poxč'i 'wash laundry' [H-05] from pMZ *puh 'to wash' [W-95]
puriya 'kindle the fire'	Kp *poro; Chr puruy 'burn' [K-03]; Xnk -ya 'transitiviser'
šaksi 'to bleach, strain'	pM *saq 'white' [K-03]
suk'u 'to tie, lash, fasten'	pM *čuq 'to tie up'; Chr čuk [K-03]; cf. pMZ *soč 'to tie up' [W-95]
tała 'to burn, light, set on fire'	pM *til 'burn' [K-03]; Was t'a:i:l; t'a:iya:l 'burn' [D-97]
tutu 'to breastfeed'	EM *tu? 'breastfeed' [diff.] [K-03]
č'uma 'to kiss'	Kp č'u:m 'tit'; Kch č'umanik 'suck, breast-feed' [K-03]
ʔušaki 'to smoke tobacco'	pM *ʔuč' [K-03]; GLL *k'uhč 'smoke' [K-03]
ʔušumu 'to smell, stink'	pCh *ʔuhč'i 'smell'; CM *muh 'tasty' [K-03]
waka, wała 'go away'	Chl wa'wa'nya; Toj waj 'to walk' [D-97]
weseke 'throw away'	pCh *weč' 'throw (away)' [K-03]
yołe 'to spill, scatter'	LL *yal 'to spill, throw' [K-03] cf. pMZ *yos 'make an offering' [W-95]
yułu 'to smooth'	pM *yul ~ *yol 'smooth'; Qeq yolyol 'slipperiness' [K-03]
yikiša 'to shake'	pM *yuk 'to shake' [K-03]; cf. pZ *yíʔk 'to shake' [W-95]

There are a few adjectives referring to conditions that have been borrowed from Mayan.

### Adjectives

čawi; šawi 'hard, stiff'
hururu? 'warm, hot'
simp simp 'tense, strained'

WM *čaw 'hard, stiff' [C-71]
Kch xururux 'very bright' [E-65]
pM *šim 'to tie up' [K-03]; cf. pZ *siʔn 'to tie' [W-95]

As for the time-depth of this Xinka–WM interaction, the phonological evidence of WM and pM loans presented by Campbell suggests that it could reach back as far as the Early Classic and beyond. The precise contact region is still a subject of debate. While the distribution of toponyms suggests that Xinka speakers originally settled further northward in the WM region (Campbell 1978a), Ch'olan-Tzeltalan speakers may have been present in the Highlands and on the Pacific coast before the Postclassic expansion of K'iche'an groups (Mora-Marín 2005). Both ideas do not necessarily contradict each other. Campbell argues that the borrowing of terms referring to coastal flora may point towards a late arrival of the Xinkan speakers in the piedmont area (1978a: 46). He reconstructs that intruding Poqom-Maya may have pushed the Xinka further southwards into the territory of the Pacific corridor where they were settling at the time of the conquest.

A hierarchical and antagonistic relationship between the Xinka and their Highland Maya neighbours is indicated by a few ‘derogatory loans’, including the K'iche'an terms *ači* ‘man’ and *winaq* ‘human, person’ that have been semantically redefined in Xinkan as *ači* ‘foreigner’ and *winak* ‘witch’ (see Campbell 1972: 188). This and the significant number of loans from Kaqchikel may indicate that the Xinka were dominated by the Kaqchikel in Postclassic times. This may be supported by the fact that there is historic evidence that the Kaqchikel controlled the cacao plantations on the Pacific coast in Late Postclassic/early colonial times (Orellana 1973).

Most sound changes that Mayan loans underwent upon being borrowed into Xinkan were described by Campbell (1972). The phonological similarities between Xinkan and Mayan indicate intense contact between both language groups. Maya CVC roots aggregated a final vowel, assimilating to the polysyllabic CVCV root pattern in Xinkan (e.g. *mapi* ‘coyol palm’ < pM \**map* ‘coyol palm’ [C-72]). In many cases the final vowel is harmonic to the root vowel, e.g. *?ušu* ‘fly’ < pM \**?us* ‘fly’ (Campbell 1972: 188–189).

Sounds that are marked in Mayan are simplified upon borrowing into Xinkan. Glottalisation in Maya stops is often lost, such as in the term *kayi* ‘to sell’ that was borrowed from pM \**k'ay* ‘to sell’ (Campbell 1972). Although there are instances where loans from Mayan preserve *k'* (e.g. *pak'i* ‘cypress nut’ < WM \**paxk'* ‘pineapple’ [K-03]),

the frequent change into *k* suggests that the glottalised contrast may not have been a regular feature in the Xinkan phonemic system before contact with Mayan. As Xinkan does not include uvular stops, EM *q* and *q'* change into velar stop *k* upon borrowing (e.g. *winak* ‘witch’ < pM, EM \**winaq* ‘man, person’ [C-72]).

There is a general pattern of deaffrication that occurs in Mayan loans upon borrowing into Xinkan, with *č* > *s* (e.g. *šušumi* ‘coati’ < WM \**č'uε'um* ‘coati’ [C-72]), *č* > *t* (e.g. *X<sub>Ch</sub> koto?* ‘molar’ < pM \**q'o?č'* ‘cheek’ [K-03]) and *č* > *s* (e.g. *šuni* ‘star’ < EM \**č'umi:l* ‘star’ [K-03]) or *k* (*hok'o-wa-t* ‘corn husk’ < GLL \**xoč* ‘to break, harvest’ [K-03]). Campbell (1972: 189) points out that *č* is preserved in many cases but that these are rather recent loans (e.g. *čawi* ‘hard thing’ < WM *čawi* ‘hard, stiff’ [C-72]).

The reverse process, affrication, is also attested. Since the Xinka phonemic system does not include an unglottalised alveo-dental affricate, Mayan *č* > *č'* upon being borrowed into Xinkan (see Campbell 1972a: 189) (e.g. *č'imaṭa* ‘potter’ < pM \**čima(?)* ‘gourd, jug’ [K-03]; *kič'u* ‘to exchange’ < pM \**k'eš* ‘change’ [K-03]). In the same way, *s* > *č'* if the root vowel is followed by a glottal stop, e.g. *č'ina?na* ‘scorpion’ < pM \**si:na?ŋ* ‘scorpion’ (Campbell 1972a: 188). Another process of affrication involves the change from *s* > *č*, e.g. *X<sub>Ch</sub> puču* ‘hunchback’ < GLL \**p'u:s* ‘hunchback’ [K-03].

Maya initial *r* > *y* in Xinkan, as *r* does not occur in Xinkan in initial other than in *X<sub>Ch</sub>*, which is the result of a more recent sound change, e.g. *yima* ‘hog plum’ < WM \**yum* ‘jocote’ [C-77]; CM \**rum* [K-03]. There are several changes involving fricative sounds. The Mayan velar *x* changes into *h* or *š* in Xinkan, e.g. *X<sub>Ch</sub> hoha* ‘heron’ < pM \**xo:x* ‘crow’ [C-72]; *X<sub>Ch</sub> haro* ‘breadnut tree’ (Ch-P) < pM \**?axš ~ ?oxš* ‘breadnut’ [K-03]; *pisha* ‘smelly’ < pM \**pahar* ‘skunk’; Poq *pahar* [C-72]; *šiha* ‘sand’ < GTz \**hi?* ‘sand’ [K-03]. However, the opposite process of Maya *š* being rendered as *h* or *y* is also found; e.g. *pahi* ‘ravine’ < pK \**paš-* ‘to split, break’ [K-03].

Mayan *o* > *a*, *u* or *i* in Xinkan (e.g. *pati* ‘cloth’ < pK \**po?t* ‘cloth’ [C-72]; *pupuk* ‘mat’ < pM \**pohp* ‘mat’ [C-72]; *X<sub>G</sub> tiriri?* ‘round’ < EM \**toli* ‘round’; Ixl *t'oro?š* [K-03]) and vice versa, Mayan *u* and *a* > *o* in Xinkan (e.g. *toktok* ‘mockingbird’ < Pqm *tuqtuq* ‘mockingbird’ [S-73]; *poko* ‘break’ < pM \**pak* ‘to break, split’ [K-03]).

## Mixe-Zoquean loans

In their contribution about the language of the Olmecs, Campbell and Kaufman (1976) identified several Mixe-Zoquean (MZ) loanwords in Xinkan. Most MZ loans have been borrowed through Mayan languages (Campbell and Kaufman 1976; cf. pMZ etymons in Jicaque and Paya, see Suárez 1983: 156). However, a few MZ loans in Xinkan may have been borrowed through other Mesoamerican and Central American languages and seem to be the result of a general diffusion of MZ terms throughout Meso- and Central America (Campbell and Kaufman 1976).

Forms are cited from Campbell and Kaufman (1976 [C&K-76]) and Wichmann (1995 [W-95]).<sup>3</sup> Nomenclature of proto languages and language branches follows Campbell and Kaufman (1976); Kaufman (2003) and Wichmann (1995).<sup>4</sup> Most proto-Mixe-Zoquean loans have been borrowed into Xinkan from Western Mayan languages and are therefore also listed in the preceding section of Mayan loans.

MZ-loans fall in the semantic domains of maize production and preparation, cultigen/crops, fauna, designations for humans, and ritual, but there is also a variety of other terms that have been borrowed including function words.

Most Xinka terms related to maize production and consumption derive from MZ, although it cannot be determined whether they entered the language through direct contact or whether they have been borrowed via Mayan or other languages. For example, the Xinka term *ʔue'i*, *hue'i* 'nixtamal' preserves the affricate sound *ɛ* of pMZ \**hiɛ* 'to grind (nixtamal)' which suggests that this may be either a direct loan, or a very early loan from Mayan before *ɛ* > *č*. However, it needs to be noted that the Xinka phonemic inventory does not originally include *č* which allows also for a scenario in which pMZ *ɛ* > Mayan *č* > Xinkan *ɛ*.

### Maize complex

ʔiwa 'to make tortillas'

pMZ \**way* [C&K-76]; \**way-e* 'to grind corn'  
[W-95]

pa:ši, paɛ'i 'to grind corn'

pMZ \**piɛi* 'nixtamal' [W-95]

<sup>3</sup> Note that Wichmann's grapheme *c* is rendered here as *ɛ*.

<sup>4</sup> pMi = proto-Mixe; pMZ = proto-Mixe-Zoquean; pOM = proto-Oaxaca-Mixe; pZ = proto-Zoquean; Zoq = Zoque.

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?u <sup>g</sup> i 'nixtamal'	pMZ hə <sup>g</sup> 'to grind' [C&K-76], [W-95]
k'awu 'to cook'	pMz *kiw? 'to cook' [W-95]

Xinka seems to have borrowed only a few MZ terms for cultigens via Mayan. In this context it is interesting to note that Xinka has genuine terms for some of the cultigens for which other Mesoamerican languages use MZ terms (e.g. *tuwa* 'cacao'; *?iti* 'tomate'; *huwa* 'zapote').

### Cultigens

mu?, mu <sup>l</sup> 'white'	pMZ *mənE 'sweet potato' [C&K-76]
ɬiw <sup>i</sup> 'squash'	pMZ *ɬi?wa 'squash' [C&K-76]; pMi *ɬi?wa 'calabash' [W-95]
šapu 'chayote'	pMZ *ɛəpə 'green' [C&K-76]
ɛ'imá 'potter'	pMZ *ɛima 'gourd' [C&K-76]
?učun 'papaya'	pMZ ?oəo 'papaya' [C&K-76]
?ohote 'rope of tree bark'	?pZ *?oho 'maguey' [W-95] + ?pM *te? 'tree' [K-03]

There are several terms of referring to the local fauna that have diffused into Xinkan from MZ. Whether the Xinkan term for 'earth' is a direct loan from MZ is unclear, though the lexical parallelism is striking.

### Fauna and environment

?amu 'spider'	pMZ *?amu 'spider' [C-72]; pZ *?amu [W-95]
šé?e 'opossum'	pMZ *ɬi? 'opossum' [C&K-76]; pZ *ɬihi [W-95]
?usu 'fly'	pMZ ?u:suk 'fly' [W-95]
muš(i) 'hair, feathers'	pMi *mu?ši 'bird' [W-95]
naru 'earth'	pMZ *na:s 'earth, ground, terrain' [W-95]

The MZ word for infant has diffused into other Mesoamerican languages. In Classic Maya we find the form *?unen* which may also be the source of the loan found in Xinkan.

### People

?one 'tender, infant'	pZ *?une; pMI *?unak 'child' [C&K-76]
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The term of incense ultimately derives from pMZ. It is not entirely clear, whether this is a direct loan—or generally diffused form—or whether the term was borrowed through Mayan.

### Ritual

pumu ‘incense, copal’	from pMZ *po:mv [C-71], *po:m(o) ‘incense’ [W-95]
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Campbell and Kaufman identified the term for ‘ripe, good’ to have been borrowed into Xinkan from pMZ. There are other verbs and a few function words that show lexical parallels in MZ, suggesting that these forms have been borrowed into Xinkan.

### Various terms

ꝑáma ‘good’	from pMZ ꝑa:m ‘ripe, good’ [C&K-76], [K-03], [W-95]
tułtu ‘to pierce, prick’	from pZ *tuxkuy?; pMZ *tuh ‘hunt’ [W-95]
wí:ri ‘to wrap, roll up’	pZ *woy ‘wrap’ [W-95]
?ahi ‘yes’	pMZ *hi? ‘yes’ [W-95] ~ Kch xe? ‘yes’
?aši, ?ahi? ‘demonstrative’	pMZ *yi? ‘this’ [W-95]
?ampi ‘now’	pMZ ?amV? ‘just now’ [W-95]

## Diffused forms in Central American languages

Xinkan has some lexical correspondences with other Mesoamerican and Central American languages. Some of these terms can be shown to be ultimately derived from proto Mixe-Zoquean. Mayan and Mixe-Zoquean loans are also attested in other Central American languages such as Lenka, Jicaque, Matagalpa, Sumu, Miskito, Cacaopera.<sup>5</sup> With such widely diffused terms, the exact donor language from which Mayan and MZ language loans have been borrowed into Xinkan can often not be determined. This is even more so, as Xinkan can be shown to have been part of a wider Central American language area. Xinkan shares a number of terms that are widely diffused in

<sup>5</sup> Most references are from Campbell 1975 [C-75], 1976 [C-76], and 1978b [C-78]. The abbreviations used include CAC = Cacaopera; CHN = Chontal; LEN = Lenka; MAT = Matagalpa; SUM = Sumu.

the in the aforementioned Central American languages, including animal and environmental terms (e.g. *weren* ‘frog’, *šurułi* ‘squirrel’, *punpun* *tiwi* ‘owl’ etc.). The direction of borrowing is mostly unclear and a precise source of origin cannot be identified.

Walter Lehmann identified some terms Xinkan shares with Lenkan. As mentioned above, Campbell rejected any genetic relation between Xinkan and Lenkan given that most of the terms identified by Lehmann were widely diffused throughout the entire area. For transparency, it is useful to add Lehmann’s original list of “cognates” here. While numerals indeed constitute no good argument for establishing a genetic relationship, the lexical parallels between both neighbouring languages are nevertheless striking.

“one”	XIN ical	~ LEN etta, itta
“two”	XIN bi-al, pi-ar, pi	~ LEN pe
“three”	XIN vuaal-al, hual-ar	~ LEN laagua, lagua
“four”	XIN iri-ar	~ LEN heria, erio
“water”	XIN uy	~ LEN cuy,
“night”	XIN suma	~ LEN ts’ub
“dark, black”	XIN ts’ama	~ LEN ts’ana-uamba
“shade”	XIN ti-tzuma	~ LEN saba
“dog”	XIN xusu	~ LEN shushu
“cough”	XIN ojo	~ LEN hoo
“maize”	XIN au, aimá	~ LEN ama, aimá
“bean”	XIN xinak	~ LEN shinag

(from Lehmann 1920)

The terms for maize and squash, cultigens that were planted by agricultural societies in Mesoamerica, have diffused from pMZ into several Central American languages, not only into Xinkan.

### Cultigens

?ayma ‘ear of corn’	pM *?ə?m ‘maize’ [C&K-76]; Len ?ima, ?ema, ?ama; Cac ?ayma, Mat ?ayma, Sum ?ama [diffused] [C&K-76]
tiwi ‘squash’	pMZ *či?wa ‘squash’ [C&K-76]; pMi *či?wa ‘calabash’ [W-95]; Len č’iwaŋ [C-76]; Cac ?iwa [C-75]

Xinkan shares a number of terms of local fauna and flora with other Central American languages, which suggests that Xinkan was in close contact with languages in this area.

### **Flora and Fauna**

?ampuki ‘snake’	Len (Sal) amap ‘snake’ [C-78]
weren ‘frog’	Cac wari ‘frog’ [C-75]
šurul ‘squirrel’	Len šurih [C-76], Cac susu ‘squirrel’ [C-75]
punpun kiwi ‘owl’	Cac paylanpuk ‘owl’ [C-75]
ti:mał ‘louse’	Len (Sal) tem ‘louse’ [C-78]
šawan ‘laurel tree’	Len (Sal) šuman ‘laurel (tree)’ [C-78]
turuy ‘guave’	Len (Sal) tororo ‘guave’ [C-78]

Besides the lexical similarity of the term for ‘water’ in Xinkan and Lenkan, both language families also share an etymon for the ‘sea’.

### **Environment**

šaru ‘sea, ocean’	Len (Sal) say ‘sea’ [C-78]
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As Campbell pointed out, there are other terms that show a wide diffusion in Central America, among which are the Xinkan adjective for ‘small’ and a vocative form for ‘man’.

### **Other**

čiriki ‘small’	Len (Sal) č'iris ‘small’ [C-78]
yú ‘man!’	Len (Sal) yu ‘male’ [C-78]; Z *yu:m; Chr yum ‘father’; Chl yum ‘grandfather, owner’

### **Nahuuan loans**

Given that the Pipil were neighbours of the Xinka in the Pacific Coast area, it is rather surprising that the number of loans of Nahuuan origin is comparably small and does not suggest intense cultural contact between both language groups. While the majority of Nahuuan loans seem to come from Pipil, there are also terms that are widespread in the highland Mayan languages and can be regarded the result of Post-classic and colonial diffusion, when Nahuatl functioned as a *lingua franca*.

*franca* (see Suárez 1983: 164–165). There are indications that some of these terms entered Xinkan through Mayan contact languages (i.e. Kaqchikel, Poqom). The term *tunati* ‘to play an instrument’ was borrowed from a K’iche’an language which have derived the verb *tuna:x* ‘to play music, beat drum’ from the term *tun* “tambor” that is borrowed from Pipil *tuntun* “concha (de mar)” (Campbell 1985). Kaufman remarks that this term has diffused throughout the region. The same seems to hold true for the term *masa* ‘pineapple’ that must have been borrowed from K’iche’an *masati*. If this was a direct loan, Xinka would probably have preserved the *ɛ* in *maɛahtli*.

tunati ‘to play an instrument’	Kch <i>tuna:x</i> ‘play instr.’ < Pip <i>tuntun</i> ‘shell’ [C-85]
masa ‘pineapple’	Kch <i>masati</i> ‘pineapple’, Nah <i>maɛahtli</i> ‘pineapple’ [K-92]

Lexemes ending in *-t* and *-š* are characteristic for loans from Nahuatl (see Schumann 1967: 25), see e.g. *čukulat* ‘chocolate’ < Nah *čokolatl* [K-92], *?altepet* ‘village, town’ < Nah *altepetl* [K-92]; *teneš* ‘lime’ < Pip *teneš* [C-85]. Furthermore, we can identify those lexemes as Nahuatl which end in the syllable *-me* that derives from Nahuatl *-mitl*; e.g. X<sub>s</sub> *činame* ‘town’ < Nah *činamitl* ‘enclosure’ [K-92]. Most forms borrowed into Xinkan from Nahuatl languages preserve their phonotactic patterns as well as the affricate sounds *č* and *ɛ*. Phonetic adaptations include the voicing of voiceless stops after nasals and the simplification of consonantal clusters that do not regularly occur in Xinka, e.g. *tiši* ‘lazy person’ < Pip *tiškwit* = *tiš* ‘corn dough’; *kwit* ‘to grab’ [C-85]. In some loans *ɛ* > *s*; e.g. *sompe* ‘pine nut’ < Nah *ɛompamitl* ‘coral tree’ [K-92: 316].

As mentioned above, there are Pipil and Nahuatl loans in Xinkan. It is not entirely clear whether the presence of the suffix *-t* / *-ti* in a Nahuatl loan can be regarded as an indication for its Pipil origin—where *-t(i)* marks the absolute in nouns (Campbell 1985: 39–40)—or whether it is simply the result of phonological assimilation of the Nahuatl form *-tl(i)* to Xinkan. The limited number of Nahuatl loans does not permit the definition of regular rules of phonological assimilation.

The semantic domains from which Nahuatl loans have been borrowed are mainly environmental terms (fauna, flora), food prod-

ucts, political and administrative terms, material culture, colour terms and terms of diseases and human conditions.<sup>6</sup>

### **Fauna**

mistun ‘cat’	Pip mistun ‘cat’ [C-85]
šuti ‘freshwater snail’	Pip šuti ‘freshwater snail’ [C-85]
tonton ‘turtle’	Pip tu:ntu:n ‘sea shell (turtle shell)’ [C-85]
waksi ‘buzzardlike bird’	Nah wakčin ‘large bird with a distinctive call’ [K-92]

### **Flora**

čukulat ‘cacao’	Pip čukulat ‘chocolate’ [C-85]
k’eneya ‘plantain’	Pip kiniya(h) ‘banana’ [C-85]
k(,)osme ‘water hyacinth’	Nah kos- ‘sth. yellow’; mekatl ‘rope’ [K-92]
siwapati ‘ciguapati’	Nah siwapahtli ‘medicinal plant’ [K-92]
sompe ‘pinion, pine nut’	Nah čompamitl ‘coral tree’ [K-92]

The Xinkan term *pipi* ‘to fill’ likely derives from the Pipil term *pupu:sah* referring to tortillas filled with beans. Whether the term for lime, which is needed in maize preparation, was indeed borrowed in the context of food production or rather falls into the domain of material culture, in particular house construction, is unclear.

### **Food production**

pipi ‘to fill’	Pip pupu:sah ‘filled corn dough’ [C-85]
teneš ‘lime’	Pip teneš ‘lime’ [C-85]

There are two terms from Nahuatl found in Xinkan that refer to units of Postclassic political organization. The presence of both terms in Xinkan suggests that the Xinka did not stand outside the political sphere and adopted these terms either through their Pipil neighbours or even directly from K’iche’an, given the political and social hierarchy between K’iche’an and Xinkan that has been mentioned above.

<sup>6</sup> Loans are glossed with the abbreviations Nah (= Nahuatl) and Pip (= Pipil). All Pipil loans are attested in Campbell 1985 [C-85], while all Nahuatl loans are cited from Karttunen 1992 [K-92].

**Political/administrative**

ʔaɬtepetl ‘town, village’

Nah altepetl ‘village, town’ [K-92]

X<sub>s</sub> činame ‘town’

Nah činamitl ‘enclosure’ [K-92]

Xinkan has borrowed the colour terms for black and yellow from Pipil. It is unclear whether these are general loans or semantically restricted contexts, in which these loans were used.

**Colour terms**

tiɬtik ‘black’

Pip tiltik ‘black (man)’; ti:l ‘charcoal’ [C-85]

tolo ‘yellow’

Pip tultik ‘yellow’ [C-85]

There are a number of other terms in Xinkan that seem to have been borrowed from Pipil. It also seems likely that the Xinkan term šipi ‘strike, cut’ is derived from Nahuan.

**Other terms**

tiši ‘idler, lazy person’

Pip tiškwit = tiš ‘corn dough’;  
kwit ‘grab’ [C-85]

č'ue'u pari ‘wound-heat’ = measles

Pip tsu:tsu ‘wound’ [C-85]

šipi ‘strike, cut’

Nah Šipewa ‘to flay’ [K-92]

**Spanish loans**

The *Arte de la lengua szinca* includes a significant number of Spanish loans that reflect the strong influence colonial Spanish had on Xinkan. Spanish loans underwent regular phonological assimilation and grammatical integration into Xinka language structure.

Characteristic of Spanish loans are vowel clusters (e.g. *io*) and consonant clusters (e.g. *pl*, *gr*) in either initial or middle position where they are not the result of vowel deletion. In most Mesoamerican languages, presence of the phonemes *b*, *d*, *g*, *f*, *x*, *ñ*, *l*, *s* and *r* is generally taken as indicative of Spanish loans (Suárez 1983: 41).

The Spanish mid vowels *e* and *o* (Xinka vowel set 2) are generally not preserved but change into high vowels *i* and *u* (Xinka vowel set 1); e.g. *kapiltu* ‘council’ < Sp. *cabildo*; *kawayu* ‘horse’ < Sp. *caballo*;

šinula ‘lady’ < Sp. *señora*; pułpu ‘dust’ < Sp. *pollo*; mačiti ‘machete’ < Sp. *machete*.

Consonant clusters are usually simplified in Xinkan, e.g. *laws* ‘nail’ < Sp. *clavo*; *pale* ‘father’ < Sp. *padre*. Spanish voiced stops and laterals underwent desonorisation; e.g. X<sub>Ch</sub> ?intyułi ‘Indians’ < Sp. *indios*, X<sub>Ch</sub> ?akura ‘needle’ < Sp. *aguja*. The alveolar sibilant [s] is palatalised and changes into š or t̪; *kuštarika* ‘rich coast = type of cacao’ < Sp. *costa rica*; ?andamałta ‘let’s go’ < Sp. *andamos*. In the majority of examples, Spanish [x] is correlated in Xinkan with the postalveolar sibilant š; e.g. *kaša* ‘chest, box’ < Sp. *caja* [kaxa]; šapun ‘soap’ < Sp. *jabón* [xabon], preserving the sibilant from early colonial Spanish which changed into a velar only in the 17th century (see Penny 1991: 86–90). In a few examples, Spanish [x] becomes r in Xinka; *moro* ‘to soak, make wet’ < Sp. *mojar*, X<sub>Ch</sub> ?akura ‘needle’ < Sp. *aguja*. The process according to which l becomes r between high vowels in Xinka is attested in reverse way in that Spanish loans change [r] into l between vowels of set 2; e.g. *pe:lo?* ‘dog’ < Sp. *perro*. The term [pe:lɔ?] also exhibits a stress shift from Spanish ['pero] that cannot be explained as assimilation to the Xinkan stress rule.

Further processes of assimilation regard simplification of marked sounds specific to Spanish. The Spanish lateral [ɬ] (<ll>) becomes a voiced simple lateral l in Xinka, while Spanish [n] > [n]; e.g. *lawi* ‘key’ < Sp. *llave*; šinula ‘lady’ < Sp. *señora*. Voiced bilabial stops change into bilabial glides [b] > w; e.g. *kawayu* ‘horse’ < Sp. *caballo*.

Spanish loans fall into the semantic domains referring to the cultural innovations that are connected with colonialism. This includes first and foremost terms referencing items in the domain of material culture, including primarily metal tools, furniture, clothes items and other new items such as candles, soap or paper.

### Material culture

?ača ‘axe’	Sp. <i>hacha</i>
?akuša ‘needle’	Sp. <i>aguja</i>
?anila ‘ring’	Sp. <i>anillo</i>
?asero ‘metal, steel’	Sp. <i>acero</i>
kapisayo ‘jacket’	Sp. <i>capisayo</i>
kaša ‘chest, box’	Sp. <i>caja</i>
kapuš ‘(candle) stub’	Sp. <i>cabo</i>

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kučila ‘knife’	Sp. cuchillo
laws ‘nail’	Sp. clavo
lawi ‘key’	Sp. llave
mačiti ‘machete’	Sp. machete
meša ‘table’	Sp. mesa
nawaku ‘petticoat’	Sp. naguas
paña ‘bundle of straw’	Sp. paja
papuk ‘paper’	Sp. papel
šapun ‘soap’	Sp. jabón
šaru ‘pitcher’	Sp. jarro
šila ‘seat’	Sp. silla
tašelaš ‘scissors’	Sp. tijeras

Loans also include colonial imports of foods, crops and domesticated animals that were brought to the Americas from Europe.

#### Foods, crops, animals

?aranšaš ‘orange’	Sp. naranja
?asukar ‘sugar’	Sp. azucar
kašik ‘reed’	Sp. castilla
kaštila mapi ‘Spanish tortilla = bread’	Sp. castilla
kaštilan ‘Spanish = chicken’	Sp. castillan(o)
kawayu ‘horse’	Sp. caballo
kuštarica ‘costarica = type of cacao’	Sp. costa rica
la:muniš ‘lemon’	Sp. limon
palu:maš ‘Castilian pigeon, dove’	Sp. paloma
pe:lo? ‘dog’	Sp. perro
salvia ‘medicinal herb’	Sp. salvia
wakaš ‘cow’	Sp. vaca
ye:waš ‘mare’	Sp. yegua

The vocabulary that we find in the *Arte de la lengua szinca* was compiled for the purpose of conversion and parroquial administration. Accordingly, we find a large number of Spanish loanwords that were introduced as neologisms referring to concepts of the Christian faith.

### **Christianity**

?anima 'heart, soul'	Sp. ánima
?animaš 'hour of prayer'	Sp. ánimas
?ayuna 'fasting, lent'	Sp. ayuno
kantoreče 'singers'	Sp. cantores, Xnk -če (plural)
kapun 'castrate, capon'	Sp. capon
ko:ra 'row, line, tier'	Sp. cola
krišma 'christening, baptism'	Sp. cristianar
kumbišyon 'confession'	Sp. confesión
miša 'mass'	Sp. misa
?oro:ka 'chime the bells'	Sp. oro, Xnk -ka (causative)
pa:le 'father = priest, monk'	Sp. padre
prima 'dawn'	Lat <i>prima</i> 'beginning'
pułpu 'dust'	Sp. polvo (= 'dust' in a biblical context)
selika 'administer/take communion'	Sp. celico, -a
tyux 'god'	Sp. dios

The missionary grammar also includes Spanish loans that were introduced as references to institutions, authorities and social status groups within the colonial system.

### **Colonial terminology**

?ałkalti 'mayor'	Sp. alcalde
kapiltu 'council'	Sp. cabildo
kaštiyanu 'Spanish, Spaniard'	Sp. castellano
papa 'uncle'	Sp. papa
śinula 'lady'	Sp. señora
śułtera 'single, unmarried woman'	Sp. soltera
śułteru 'single, unmarried man'	Sp. soltero

Furthermore, there were new terms in the domain of trade and commerce, including in particular terms for different coins of the new monetary system as well as concepts of measures. Again, the assimilation patterns of the terms show that these were term that had been integrated into the Xinka lexicon well before the *Arte de la lengua szinca* was written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Trade and commerce**

atmul 'unit for dry capacity'	Sp. almud
merio 'half a real (Spanish coin)'	Sp. medio real
pahata 'to pay'	Sp. pagar
tumin 'tomín (Spanish coin)'	Sp. tomín
tuštun 'tostón (Spanish coin)'	Sp. tostón

Like other indigenous languages, Xinkan has borrowed a number of conjunctions and adverbs from Spanish. Whether these were replacing former Xinkan function words is unclear, although it seems more likely that these words were adopted to fill a functional gap.

**Function words**

maka 'and'	Sp. más que
małka 'although'	Sp. más que
?oro 'only'	Sp. solo
paraki 'by, because'	Sp. para que
pore 'but'	Sp. pero

Finally, we can also identify a few Spanish verbs in Xinkan that seem to have been borrowed in the early stage of contact between both languages.

**Verbs**

?anta 'let's go!'	Sp. ¡anda!
?apala 'to open'	Sp. abrir
ku:ru? 'to flee'	Sp. correr
mo:ro 'to make wet, soak'	Sp. mojo
pelo 'to peel, shell'	Sp. pelar (?Ch'ol pa:l 'to peel')

Some Spanish loans reveal details about the colonial interaction between the Xinka and their Mayan neighbours. Spanish loanwords ending in -š suggest that they were borrowed into Xinkan through a K'iche'an language (Table 2). In Mesoamerica, Spanish loans have often become diffused through other indigenous languages (Suárez 1983: 156). As mentioned above, Xinkan forms regularly end in vowels, which is why a final vowel is added to Mayan CVC-roots

	Xinkan	K'iche'an	Spanish
cow	wakaš	< Poq/KAQ, CHR wakaš	< Sp. vaca
dove	palumaš	< KCH/KAQ palomaš	< Sp. paloma
orange	aranšaš	< KCH/Poq aranšeš	< Sp. naranja
lemon	lamuniš	< Poq lamuniš	< Sp. limón
duck	patuš	< Poq patušk, KAQ patš	< Sp. pato
scissors	tašelaš	< KCH tišeraš	< Sp. tijeras
nail	lawš	< KCH lawuš	< Sp. clavo
mare	yewaš	-	< Sp. yegua

Table 2. Spanish loans ending in -š.

1. door: mouth of house	šaha: door = mouth	<szaja> "puerta de casa"
2. finger: child of hand	naʔu-puʔ: child of hand	<naupu> "dedos"
3. boa constrictor: deer-snake	tuma-ʔampuki: deer-snake	<tuma ambuqui> "masacúa"
4. moon: grandmother	?awa: moon, month, grandmother	<agua> "luna, més, abuela"
5. cramp: associated with deer	peko-tuma: ?-deer = cramp	<pecotúma> "calambre"
6. twenty: man	hurak: man	[comparative data]
7. to marry: to join, find	pu:riki: to respond = get married	<púriqui> "casarse"
8. coral snake: mother of driver ant	?uta-kotoro: mother of flying ant	<utackotoro> "culebra coral"
9. edge: mouth	šaha: cutting edge = mouth	<szaja> "filo de todo fierro cortante"
10. soot: nose/mucus of fire	nari ?uray: nose of fire	<nari uray> "tizon"
11. alive: awake	?iši-y(a): be alive, awake	<isziy> "estar despierto, vivo"
12. feather: fur	muši: hair, beard = feather	<muszi> "barbas, pelos"

Table 3. Semantic calques in Xinkan.

upon borrowing (see above). As the relevant Spanish forms all end in vowels, there would be no need to add a final fricative -š when borrowing the term directly. In addition, the alveo-palatal fricative š is not regularly attested in Xinka as a final consonant and occurs in that position only with Spanish and Mayan loans. In K'iche'an languages, early Spanish loans are likewise attested as ending in -š. These borrowed forms preserve the Spanish plural marker -s, which is changed into -š (Campbell 1977).

## Semantic calques

Xinka shares certain calques, or loan translations, which are widely attested in Mesoamerican languages and have been treated as a defining feature of Mesoamerica as a linguistic area (Campbell et al. 1986). Table 3 lists the calques that occur in  $X_M$ .

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# **Ulama: El juego de pelota prehispánico que todavía vive**

MANUEL AGUILAR-MORENO

Universidad Estatal de California en Los Ángeles  
(MAguila2@exchange.calstatela.edu)

**Resumen:** El juego de pelota mesoamericano tiene una historia de aproximadamente 3 500 años. El juego era parte integral de la sociedad como lo atestiguan las cerca de 2 000 canchas que se han encontrado en el territorio que se extiende entre el Suroeste de Estados Unidos y El Salvador. La compleja estructura del juego obedecía a aspectos socio-políticos y religiosos y conllevaba una serie de significados y funciones, tales como portal al inframundo, escenario para la representación de batallas cósmicas entre los diversos cuerpos celestes, rituales de fertilidad, ceremonias de guerra, ceremonias políticas y religiosas, ejecución de sacrificios humanos, etc. La importancia de este juego se aprecia, además de la cantidad de canchas existentes, en la profusión de representaciones en el arte de los olmecas, zapotecas, teotihuacanos, mayas, toltecas y aztecas, lo cual indica que el juego era una actividad perteneciente a una cosmovisión pan-mesoamericana.

Los españoles se dieron cuenta que el juego no era solo una actividad recreativa, sino que tenía profundas raíces religiosas y como parte de su programa de evangelización, lo suprimieron sistemáticamente en toda Mesoamérica. Sin embargo, hubo una forma del juego que sobrevivió a la conquista hispánica y que se llama Ulama. En la actualidad solo se juega en unas cuantas comunidades rurales del estado de Sinaloa.

Entre 2003 y 2013 establecí y dirigí el *Proyecto Ulama*, que consistió en una investigación interdisciplinaria sobre un tipo del juego que se llama *Ulama de cadera* y que está en riesgo de extinción. En este proyecto participaron ocho estudiantes de California State University, Los Angeles y nos enfocamos principalmente a documentar la historia, el folklore, el significado social y el contexto cultural del juego. El libro sobre los hallazgos del *Proyecto Ulama* está en preparación en este momento, pero en este artículo se presentan algunos de los resultados de la investigación.

**Abstract:** The Mesoamerican ballgame has a history dating back 3 500 years. The game was such an integral part of the society, that nearly 2 000 ballcourts have been reported in the territory extending from the American Southwest to El Salvador. The institution was complex and carried diverse meanings and functions, such as: portal to the Underworld, the setting for reenactments of cosmic battles between celestial bodies, fertility rituals, warfare ceremonies, political affirmation of kingship, setting for human sacrifices, etc. The central importance of the ballgame is attested by the fact that it is clearly portrayed in the art of the Olmec, Zapotec, Maya, Toltec, and Aztec and was an important element in a pan-Mesoamerican cosmovision.

The Spanish immediately recognized that the ballgame was a great deal—more significant than merely recreation—and so vigorously suppressed its playing. Interestingly, a modern form of the ancient game, known as Ulama, has survived in a small number of remote communities outside of the city of Mazatlan in the state of Sinaloa, Mexico.

Between 2003 and 2013, I led a multi-disciplinary investigation about Ulama that involved eight California State L.A. students and is called *Proyecto Ulama*. Our study focused on the history, folklore, and the social significance and cultural context of the game. A book about the finding of *Proyecto Ulama* is in preparation, but in this article I present some of the results of our research project.



*In Memoriam*  
Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo

Querido amigo y colega Alfonso, gracias por todas tus enseñanzas y los gratos momentos de convivencia que tuvimos en Austin, Madrid, Guatemala y México. Cómo olvidar nuestros viajes por Segovia, Burgos y tantos pueblos de Castilla que recorrimos en el verano de 2009. No es un adiós, sino un hasta luego, pues más fuerte que la Muerte es el Recuerdo. Nos volveremos a encontrar en el mejor lugar la próxima vez.



Figura 1. La cancha de juego de pelota de Xochicalco (fotografía de Luis Ramírez).

## Introducción

El 12 de octubre de 1968, primer día de las Olimpiadas en la ciudad de México, miles de sorprendidos espectadores del mundo entero vieron una exhibición singular: el juego de pelota llamado Ulama. Este juego, donde se golpea la pelota con la cadera, es una supervivencia del *Ullamaliztli* prehispánico, juego popular entre aztecas y mayas. Hoy día, el ulama, en su modalidad de cadera, está en peligro de extinción ya que sólo se practica en cuatro pueblos de Sinaloa (La Sávila, La Mora Escarbada, Los Llanitos y Escuinapa).

El juego de pelota tiene una antigüedad aproximada de 3 500 años, si consideramos el reciente descubrimiento de una cancha de juego de pelota del periodo Preclásico en Paso de la Amada, Chiapas y, por el momento, se han encontrado más de dos mil canchas a lo largo y ancho de Mesoamérica (Figura 1). Los investigadores le han asignado diversas funciones y significados al juego: como portal hacia el inframundo, como espacio para recrear las batallas cósmicas entre cuerpos celestes, como rituales de fertilidad, como ceremonias guerreras, como afirmación política de los gobernantes, como escenario para los sacrificios y otros más. Tras analizar las similitudes en diversos patrones constructivos y estilos en las canchas de juegos de pelota, puede afirmarse que fue una actividad pan-mesoamericana, vinculada a una cosmología compartida por todos los pueblos antiguos que vivieron en esta región.



a



b

**Figura 2.** a) Equipo del Proyecto Ulama en la ciudad de El Quelite, Sinaloa, durante la temporada 2006 (María Ramos, Javier Cerdón, Dianna Santillano, Luis Ramírez y Dr. Manuel Aguilar-Moreno). b) Dulce Villa jugando ulama de antebrazo (fotografía de Mario Davila, Ulama Project).



**Figura 3.** Pelota de hule para jugar ulama hecha con técnica tradicional prehispánica (fotografía de Manuel Aguilar-Moreno).

### Investigando el ulama actual

En 1978, el antropólogo Ted Leyenaar (1978) advirtió sobre el peligro de extinción del ulama de cadera. Tuve claro que, de desaparecer el ulama, perderíamos el deporte más antiguo del planeta. Así pues, con el apoyo de la Sociedad Histórica de Mazatlán y una beca de la Universidad estatal de California, sede Los Ángeles, emprendí el Proyecto Ulama 2003–2013, programa de investigación interdisciplinaria que incluyó a ocho estudiantes de esta universidad para que diagnosticaran el estado del ulama en el momento actual (Figura 2a).

Entre los temas que estudiamos se encontraban la filosofía y el simbolismo del juego mesoamericano de pelota; el redescubrimiento del juego de pelota de hule en el siglo XX; la historia del juego desde los olmecas hasta nuestros días; los términos lingüísticos asociados al ulama; las reglas, la manera de contar los puntos y el papel del *taste* (*cancha de pelota*, del azteca *tlachtli*) en el contexto social de las poblaciones; los problemas para la producción de las pelotas de hule; el significado del atuendo de los jugadores mesoamericanos a través de la historia; los “dueños” del juego; el papel de las mujeres

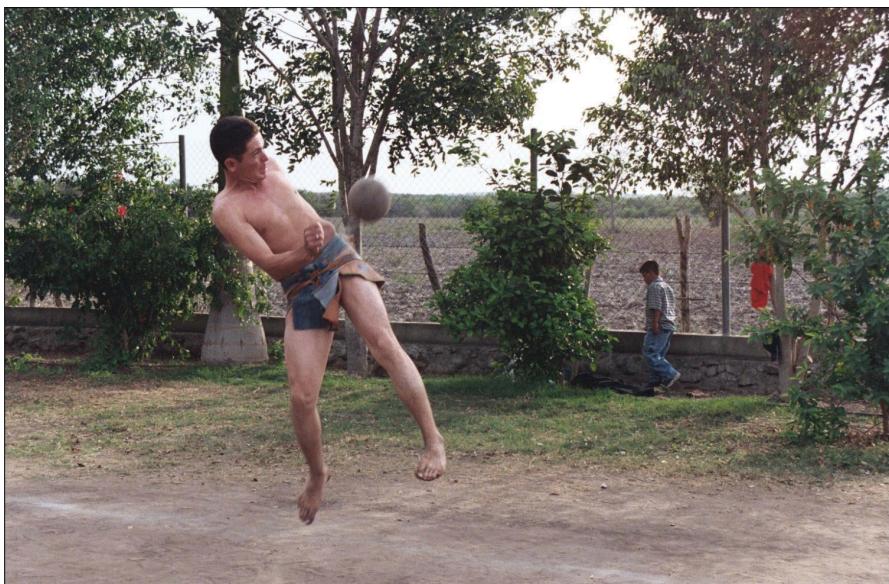


Figura 4. Ulama de cadera (fotografía de Mario Davila, Ulama Project).

en él y el estudio y recopilación de las diversas fuentes primarias documentales.

Tuvimos que elegir entre los tres tipos juegos de pelota que aún existían en Sinaloa: ulama de palo, ulama de antebrazo y ulama de cadera. El ulama de palo, jugado con un mazo pesado, no fue considerado como objeto de estudio porque se había extinguido desde la década de los 50 y no fue recuperado hasta los años 80. El ulama de brazo, jugado con una pelota que pesa aproximadamente medio kilo y que se golpea con el antebrazo por abajo del codo, es el más frecuente en las comunidades del norte del estado de Sinaloa y aún cuenta con un buen número de jugadores (Figura 2b). El ulama de cadera se juega con una bola que pesa entre tres y medio y cuatro kilos (Figura 3), se golpea con la cadera o parte superior del muslo (Figura 4) y se practica en el sur del estado. Elegimos el ulama de cadera que se juega en el área cercana a Mazatlán porque, además de estar en peligro de extinción, parece ser el más semejante a las descripciones etnohistóricas del juego azteca *Ullamaliztli*.

Con frecuencia se adjudican connotaciones rituales o religiosas al antiguo juego mesoamericano. En nuestras investigaciones etnográficas recolectamos material suficiente que muestra la sobrevivencia



a



b



c

**Figura 5.** a) Antonio Velarde, alias El Gallo, quien participó en el juego de exhibición del ulama en la Olimpiada de 1968, mostrando su equipo de ulama. b) Las cuatro piezas del fajado (fotografía de Manuel Aguilar-Moreno). c) Jugadores de juego de pelota llevados a Europa por Hernán Cortés (Weiditz 1927[1533-1540]).

de dichos patrones religiosos, y nos permite afirmar que dichos rituales se transfirieron a la celebración de los santos cristianos y se mantuvieron vigentes hasta hace poco tiempo.

El ulama se jugaba hasta épocas recientes durante la mañana de los días de fiesta en Los Llanitos. Fito Páez nos contó que cuando era adolescente, a finales de los sesenta y principios de los setentas, solía jugar cada vez que había fiesta. Antonio Velarde “El Gallo” (que participó en el memorable juego de exhibición de las Olimpiadas de 1968) (Figura 5a) nos dice: “Cada 24 de junio, día de San Juan Bautista, santo patrón de Villa Unión, hacían fiestas; el juego era parte de las celebraciones. Igual en otros pueblos, cada vez que festejaban a sus santos patrones, hacían el juego”. Isabel Kelly (1943: 170–171) apunta que en Acaponeta, Nayarit, en la década de los treinta, “el juego era absolutamente secular, pero se preferían los días de fiesta para jugarlo”.

Si bien coincidimos con Kelly en que el juego de ulama conserva pocos rasgos religiosos, por la forma en que llegó al siglo XX podría creerse que alguna vez estuvo vinculado a creencias religiosas. Uno de esos rasgos es la abstinencia sexual que antecede a los acontecimientos religiosos o semireligiosos. Con frecuencia dicha práctica se usa al inicio de un proceso de separación por género anterior a la siembra o en rituales practicados en las cuevas. Kelly anota que la prohibición de relaciones sexuales antes de los juegos existía en la década de los treinta (1943: 171). Nuestro informante más viejo, Rafael Cázares “El Huilo,” también mencionó la práctica; nos dice: “Los jugadores no podían estar con sus mujeres porque es malo. Te desgastas y la vista se puede empezar a acabar y eso no es bueno para el juego. Pero cuando termina el juego, uno puede estar con su mujer y ¡con mucho gusto! Ahora no es como antes, los jugadores sólo se cuidan si hay un amarre (apuesta) de dinero”.

## **Características del ulama**

La similitud entre el juego moderno y su contraparte antigua resulta evidente de inmediato en el atuendo de los jugadores. El traje (Figura 5b), que se llama *fajado*, consta de tres piezas, la primera, la *gamuza*, es un trozo de cuero o de tela usado como taparrabos y es semejante a la prenda antigua que se ve en la pintura de Weiditz



a



b

**Figura 6.** a) Fajado completo mostrado por un jugador (fotografía de Manuel Aguilar-Moreno).  
b) Taste durante un juego en La Mora Escarbada (fotografía de David Mallin).



Figura 7. Equipo de Los Llanitos vestido con sus fajados (fotografía de Manuel Aguilar-Moreno).

de 1529 (1927[1533–1540]: 10–11) (Figura 5c), que representa a los jugadores de pelota aztecas llevados por Hernán Cortés a Europa. En Los Llanitos, se supone que la gamuza debería de ser de venado. Como hoy en día se prohíbe cazar venados, el cuero es de chivo o de vaca. La segunda pieza del fajado es el *chimali* o *chimale*, cinturón de cuero de aproximadamente cinco centímetros de ancho que se amarra en la cintura y pasa por debajo de las nalgas para mantenerlas compactas e impedir lesiones (Figura 6a). Aparentemente el nombre deriva del náhuatl *chimalli* que significa “escudo” o “protección”. Kelly dice que en los treintas, en Nayarit, el *chimali* estaba hecho de la parte exterior de la raíz de un árbol. La tercera parte, la faja de algodón, sostiene la gamuza y aprieta la zona del estómago, dando más protección. Kelly (1943: 165) dice que los jugadores se envolvían en trozos de llanta de automóvil bajo el *chimali* para protegerse todavía más. La cuarta pieza, llamada *bota* es una tira de cuero que usan algunos jugadores debajo de la gamuza para amortiguar el impacto. Cuando no se usa, el fajado se envuelve con cuidado y se cuelga de las vigas de la casa, tal y como hacían los aztecas según



a



b

**Figura 8.** a) Lichi Lizárraga devolviendo un male por arriba (fotografía de David Mallin). b) Jugador de La Sávila devolviendo un male por abajo (fotografía de Manuel Aguilar-Moreno).

descripción de fray Diego Durán en su *Historia de las Indias* del siglo XVI, o como hacían los héroes gemelos del *Popol Vuh*.

El ulama se juega en un campo llamado *taste*, de aproximadamente 60 m de largo y cuatro de ancho (Figura 6b). El *taste* se divide en dos mitades por una línea llamada *analco*, término que aparece desde las crónicas coloniales. En Los Llanitos la línea se marca con dos piedras colocadas en cada lado del *taste*. Líneas paralelas que corren a lo largo del *taste* marcan los límites laterales. Finalmente, las líneas de atrás se conocen como *chichis*. El número de participantes de cada equipo puede variar, pero generalmente juegan de tres a seis personas (Figura 7).

## El desarrollo del juego

El juego comienza cuando un equipo lanza un saque elevado a través del analco (*male* por arriba) (Figura 8a) o haciendo rodar la bola hacia el frente (*male* por abajo) (Figura 8b). Este tipo de saque cambia de acuerdo al puntaje. Se anotan puntos o *rayas* cuando el equipo no puede regresar la bola a través del analco o cuando cae más atrás de la línea final de la cancha del oponente. Gana el primer equipo que anote ocho rayas.

Las reglas del ulama son complicadas y nos llevó un buen tiempo entenderlas. Nos dimos cuenta de que la lógica del juego no es “occidental” pues estamos acostumbrados a marcadores acumulativos en nuestros juegos, donde existe el empate y una vez que se ha anotado un punto, ya no se pierde. En el ulama la marcación no es lineal, sino oscilatoria, funciona como un subibaja donde los puntos (las rayas) aumentan o disminuyen. La fase *urria* (U) que ocurre entre 2 y 3 y entre 6 y 7 es el paso de transición que determina el ascenso o el descenso del marcador.

Ese comportamiento en la marcación de puntajes coincide con la ideología mesoamericana, pues el juego fue originalmente una práctica ritual donde se escenificaba la dinámica del cosmos y el movimiento de los cuerpos celestes. Los mesoamericanos creían que la vida en el universo se mantenía en equilibrio por la acción de fuerzas contrarias y complementarias en movimiento perpetuo. La oscilación en el marcador del ulama simboliza dicha dualidad entre fuerzas



a



b

**Figura 9.** a) Los veedores arbitrando un juego en La Mora Escarbada (fotografía de David Mallin). b) Discusión de Fito Lizárraga y Chuy Paez de Los Llanitos con Modesto Huaira de Escuinapa (fotografía de Manuel Aguilar-Moreno).

contrarias y complementarias como luz–obscuridad, día–noche, alto–bajo, calor–frío, vida–muerte, fertilidad–sequía, etcétera.

En este breve esbozo no se plasma en su totalidad la complejidad del juego. La mayoría de los jugadores no conoce todas las reglas, algunos jugadores nos dijeron que las reglas son tan complicadas que se tenía que jugar el ulama muchos años para entenderlas. Como dichas reglas no han sido formalizadas hay muchas opiniones, y a menudo las diferencias obedecen a la edad de los participantes, tal y como vimos en las discusiones que se suscitaron en un juego en Los Llanitos. En nuestras investigaciones vimos diferencias intergeneracionales en la forma de entender las reglas. Al parecer, también hay diferencias regionales: en un juego de exhibición al que asistimos, hubo un pleito acerca de cómo debía ser el primer saque entre los equipos de Los Llanitos y Escuinapa.

Como no todos los jugadores dominan las reglas, resulta importante el papel del juez o *veedor* (Figura 9a). El veedor es por lo general algún jugador veterano, ya sea en activo o retirado; como árbitro tiene la última palabra y todos los jugadores lo acatan. En juegos entre distintas comunidades debe haber un veedor por cada equipo, y sólo intervienen activamente cuando los equipos tienen diferencias sobre alguna jugada o algún punto. Al parecer existen protocolos acordados para presentar las diferencias ante un veedor. Un jugador de Escuinapa pidió la intervención del veedor en un juego entre Los Llanitos y Escuinapa que presenciamos. Mientras aún se discutía si había sido legítimo o no un punto, un segundo jugador del mismo equipo hizo un comentario al veedor. El veedor regañó al segundo jugador diciéndole que sólo se podía presentar un asunto a la vez y descalificó la reclamación de Escuinapa. Esta regla impide que el veedor sea rodeado o abrumado por varios jugadores descontentos.

La edad parece ser otro elemento importante en las disputas (Figura 9b). En otro desacuerdo entre los mismos equipos, un jugador veterano de Escuinapa tomó el rol de veedor, puesto que el equipo no había llevado uno. Aunque era jugador, tenía preeminencia sobre el veedor de Los Llanitos por ser mayor. El equipo de Los Llanitos intentó a su vez que zanjara la querella un antiguo jugador de La Sávila de 94 años. Entonces, el jugador de Escuinapa sacó a colación su experiencia, diciéndole al nonagenario: “Serás más viejo que yo,



Figura 10. El equipo de La Sávila (fotografía de Manuel Aguilar-Moreno).

pero yo llevo más tiempo jugando que tú". Edad y experiencia son dos elementos que pueden confrontarse en el juego.

En el pasado, los veedores posiblemente ejercían más control sobre estas circunstancias. Tanto Kelly como nuestro anciano informante de 94 años confirman que las competencias entre comunidades con frecuencia se prestaban a la manipulación de los organizadores, que apoyaban y supervisaban las prácticas. Kelly (1943: 171) comenta que los patrocinadores tenían permiso para castigar a los jugadores que no mostraran la capacidad requerida. Estos individuos, conocidos como los "dueños del juego" podían ser también veedores y tenían más poder que en la actualidad.

Las diferencias en las reglas pueden ser un grave problema para quienes tratan de homologar el juego para promover el desarrollo regional. Creemos que cada una de las pequeñas comunidades ha desarrollado reglas diferentes a lo largo del tiempo y por ello es interesante ver la tenacidad con la cual defienden los jugadores sus reglas particulares. Al someterse a las reglas, los jugadores se conectan voluntariamente a una añeja tradición comunitaria. En la disputa con Escuinapa, Chuy Páez, de Los Llanitos repitió varias veces: "Debemos jugar obedeciendo las reglas, debemos respetar las

reglas". Los jugadores de Escuinapa, por su parte, afirmaban exactamente lo mismo.

Otro elemento evidente en las disputas era la ambigua noción de que el *taste* estaba enmarcado simplemente por líneas y rodeado por una cerca. Cuando el equipo de Los Llanitos aceptó comenzar el juego con el *male* por arriba, la acción se hizo lenta porque ningún equipo podía mantener la pelota en los límites previstos. Varios de los organizadores de este juego de exhibición pidieron a los jugadores que regresaran al *male* por abajo para hacer el juego más emocionante. Los jugadores ignoraron la petición y jugaron inflexiblemente con sus reglas, sin importarles como percibía la audiencia el espectáculo. Como respuesta a la petición de uno de los jugadores, el veedor empezó su explicación diciendo: "Dentro de esta cerca y en este *taste*..." para enfatizar que el *taste* era un espacio único con su propio conjunto de reglas que gobernaban la conducta ahí. Los jugadores ciertamente reflejaban el hecho de que viniendo al *taste* vestidos con sus fajados (Figura 10), habían entrado a un universo social cuyas raíces estaban ancladas en un mundo distinto.

### **Perspectivas de futuro del ulama**

Uno de los aspectos cruciales del ulama de cadera actualmente, es qué perspectiva tienen para el futuro. Puesto que hay solamente cuatro comunidades donde se sigue jugando esta variante, y como sólo hay entre 25 y 30 jugadores activos, está claro que el juego está en peligro de extinción.

Varias son la razones de esta crisis: actualmente, pocos padres enseñan el juego a sus hijos; el juego es considerado por algunos jóvenes como violento y peligroso. Además, el juego no produce beneficios económicos cuando se compara con otros deportes profesionales como el béisbol o el futbol. El apoyo gubernamental ha sido esporádico y lo más importante, tal vez, sea la dificultad de conseguir las pelotas de hule. Los árboles de hule no solamente han desaparecido en Sinaloa casi por completo sino que es muy difícil el acceso a los lugares donde aún existen. Una cubeta de látex que alcanza para hacer una o dos pelotas cuesta aproximadamente mil dólares. Hay plantaciones de látex en el sureste de México, pero



a



b

**Figura 11.** a) Fabricando una pelota de hule de ulama con métodos modernos. b) El Dr. Manuel Aguilar-Moreno y Roberto Rochín enseñando a los jugadores de La Sávila cómo hacer pelotas de ulama con técnicas antiguas (fotografías de Manuel Aguilar-Moreno).



**Figura 12.** Fito Lizárraga jugando ulama de cadera en Los Llanitos (2003) (fotografía de Karla López).



a



b

**Figura 13.** a) Niños jugando ulama en Los Llanitos (fotografía de Luis Ramírez). b) Jugadores de ulama en Xcaret, Quintana Roo, disfrazados como mayas antiguos (fotografía de Manuel Aguilar-Moreno).



**Figura 14.** Los jugadores más jóvenes con el más mayor, mirando hacia el futuro del ulama en el taste de Los Llanitos (2003) (fotografía de Manuel Aguilar-Moreno).

como los jugadores de pelota tienen recursos reducidos, el costo lo hace prohibitivo.

Otro problema es que muy pocas personas de Sinaloa conocen la antigua técnica para hacer las pelotas, mezclando el látex con la raíz de *machacuana*. En nuestro afán por conservar el juego, el Proyecto Ulama experimentó haciendo pelotas con látex industrial y un catalizador químico, pues era una alternativa más barata que la técnica prehispánica. Tras once intentos fallidos, por fin logramos hacer una pelota adecuada, que reunía los requerimientos de peso, textura y flexibilidad necesarios (Figura 11a). Documentamos este complejo proceso y en 2013 el director de cine Roberto Rochin y yo organizamos (Figura 11b) un taller para enseñar a los jóvenes jugadores de La Sávila y La Mora Escarbada la técnica más eficiente; de esta manera los jugadores pueden producir sus propias pelotas.

Aunque la existencia misma del ulama de cadera está amenazada, varios acontecimientos milagrosos le han permitido sobrevivir. Los hermanos Páez y su tío, Fito Lizárraga (Figura 12), han motivado a

la gente de Los Llanitos para que inculque a sus hijos la práctica del ulama (Figura 13a) y han conservado con gran celo su única pelota y el magnífico taste que tienen. Los primos de los Páez, que viven en El Chamizal, pueblo vecino, también formaron su equipo y juegan los fines de semana contra el equipo de Los Llanitos.

En La Sávila, don Manuel Lizárraga enseñó a sus ocho hijos, una mujer incluida, a jugar ulama; luego ellos “exportaron” el juego al parque temático de Xcaret, cerca de Cancún, en Quintana Roo. El parque de Xcaret, en su propósito de impresionar a los turistas, construyó una cancha y un espectáculo de “Juego de pelota maya.” Como ya no hay jugadores en la península de Yucatán, el parque contrató a jugadores de La Sávila, los vistió de mayas y los puso a jugar (Figura 13b). Así, los jugadores sinaloenses en un acto de magia, se convirtieron en “mayas”, con penachos y taparrabos, y el ulama se transformó en una atracción comercial y “exótica” para divertir a turistas nacionales y extranjeros. Esta ocupación, sin embargo, permite beneficios económicos a los jugadores. Si bien sus salarios no pueden compararse con los de los deportistas profesionales, sí mejoran de alguna manera la condición económica de sus familias. Varios se han casado con mujeres mayas y se han quedado en aquella región, enseñando el juego de pelota a jóvenes mayas que más tarde podrán tener trabajo en Xcaret.

Esta “internacionalización” del ulama en la Riviera Maya (Xcaret), aunada a los esfuerzos por promover el juego como atractivo turístico hechos por del Dr. Marcos Osuna en El Quelite y La Sávila, han creado fuentes de trabajo para la gente de la zona sur de Sinaloa y ha permitido la sobrevivencia del juego.

Si bien el ulama de cadera ha estado al borde de la extinción durante mucho tiempo, ha logrado reinventarse y sigue demostrando que es capaz de sobrevivir, al menos hasta ahora (Figura 14). Debemos continuar con nuestro apoyo a esta tradición milenaria que, como ave fénix, se levanta de sus propias cenizas. Si el ulama de cadera muere, terminará lo que posiblemente es el deporte de equipos más antiguo de la humanidad, y así, una parte de nosotros mismos morirá con él.

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## **Parte 3**

### **RECUERDOS Y ANÉCDOTAS JUNTO A ALFONSO**



## **“Linguistic Encounters” with Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo**

JOHN F. CHUCHIAK IV  
Missouri State University  
(johnchuchiak@missouristate.edu)

For close to twenty years, Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo and I were friends and colleagues, and our mutual friendship brought us together many times on several continents (Figure 1). Whether it was in Mexico City, Mérida, Izamal, or in Madrid, Alfonso and I often spoke at great length about the initial linguistic encounters between Mayas and Spaniards in the early contact period. An avid collector of documents and materials about the early contact and colonial period, over the years we shared volumes of archival sources and massive amounts of digital files of colonial documents.

It is for this reason that I have chosen to select a brief unpublished piece I have been working on about which Alfonso and I spoke on numerous occasions: i.e. the initial linguistic encounters and the translator acquisition strategy of the Spanish conquistadors in the Maya region (see “Translator Acquisition Strategies in Spanish Military Campaigns...”, p. 915).

All of this reminds me of one of my more personal moments that Alfonso and I shared which dealt with our mutual interest in Maya linguistics. Many of those who are reading this volume will know immediately about the story I will relate, as Alfonso was fond of telling everyone about this event, among many others, we shared together.

This vignette involves Alfonso, myself and Rogelio Valencia in 2003 at the 8<sup>th</sup> European Maya Conference in Madrid. Alfonso had done a massive amount of labor with his numerous students from the *Complutense* in Madrid, and on the evening before the final day of the symposium presentations, Alfonso and his crew joined everyone for a very late night “on the town” in Madrid.

Both Rogelio Valencia and I can attest to the fact that Madrid’s nightlife never ends. Unlike the rest of our colleagues who went back to their hotels sometime after 2:00 am, Rogelio and I continued our ritual libations until the sun came up. We eventually found our



**Figure 1.** Dr. Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo†, Dr. Harvey Brickert and myself experiencing the “confusion of tongues” at the Dresden Codex Symposium organized by Dr. Nikolai Grube in Dresden, Germany, September 2012. Both of these good friends “entered the road” within a year of each other, and I dedicate this chapter to them both.

way to a café on the *Gran Via*, not too far from my hotel and had breakfast. By the time we were finished we only had an hour or so before the Symposium began. I decided to try to sleep a bit, and so did Rogelio. After a brief nap, I woke to discover that I was very hung-over, and had lost my voice. Unlucky for me I had yet to give my presentation that morning on the Madrid Codex and its colonial discovery and confiscation. Not only was my head pounding, but by the time I arrived I was a bit late.

Alfonso, as usual, was looking around the *Museo de las Américas* frantically for both myself and Rogelio. When he found me and heard my scratchy voice he asked rather concerned, “*¿Oye Juanito, como te sientes?*” With my head pounding, a scratchy voice and an upset stomach I replied, “Alfonso my friend... I feel like a Glottal Stop!”

With this Alfonso broke out into an uncontrolled laughter and could not contain himself blurting out in English “...just hanging in mid-air!” and we both laughed.

Many of you no doubt have heard this story from Alfonso himself, and I think that it is a fitting accompaniment to the piece I want to include in his memory in this volume in honor of our friend and as a tribute to his good humor and collegiality.

## **Sketches on a Napkin**

ELIZABETH GRAHAM  
University College London  
(e.graham@ucl.ac.uk)

I came to know Alfonso in Hamburg at the 6<sup>th</sup> European Maya Conference in 2001. It was my first EMC meeting, and I was thrilled to be in the company of eminent epigraphers and linguists, as well as archaeologists. As I remember it, both Friday and Saturday we partied till dawn (apparently de rigueur at the EMCs), in the Reeperbahn district. Alfonso was welcoming, gracious, funny, and the best of company. I didn't know many of the Wayebros then, but he made me feel perfectly at home. After a few hours of beer-drinking, I remember being introduced to absinthe by him and Christophe (Helmke). (Rumour has it, however, that Harri [Kettunen] is to be blamed for passing the custom of flaming absinthe shots on to Alfonso!) At one point on the Friday night the entire group broke into a corny song, none other than 'Country Road' by John Denver. We danced and danced, amidst much laughter. Christophe reminded me that Alfonso had put his glasses in his shirt pocket, only to find them—as the result of much jumping about—smashed to bits by the end of the night!

Since that first encounter with Alfonso and his intellect, I always treasured his Wayeb presentations. Some grasp of linguistics is of course critical to understanding Mayan languages and text, but I have always found it hard going. I was very grateful that Alfonso made genuine and heartfelt efforts to explain complex ideas and the impact of the ideas on our understanding of Maya epigraphy and Mayan languages. And his wonderful sense of humour enhanced all his other admirable qualities.

More recently in my research on trade, commerce, and communication, I have benefitted from his ideas on Late Postclassic intellectual interaction, particularly his chapter in Gaby Vail and Christine Hernández's volume on the Madrid Codex (Lacadena 2010), in which he emphasises that objects such as codices don't move or transmit information on their own. The humans who read or used or carried such objects interacted, and Alfonso argues that people living in the

Maya area and Highland Mexico had intense and constant intellectual interaction over centuries. He then argues against the model of neutral commercial networks most often accepted by scholars to propose that trade activities were a major mechanism for interaction, whether intellectual, commercial, or political. One of my favourite quotations I have lifted from Alfonso, which is that “commerce is always accompanied by politics” (Lacadena 2010: 400). His ideas have hugely informed my own work on trade and exchange at Lamanai and Ambergris Caye, in Belize, by expanding my vision of how “interaction” can play out in the real world. With his expertise in linguistics and his knowledge of epigraphy, he never lost track of what enables people to interact in the first place: language.

That Friday night back in Hamburg in 2001, when I was lucky enough to dine in the company of the finest of Maya epigraphers and linguists, I sat back, listened, and watched the individuals in the group scribble various glyphs and notations on a napkin that was passed back and forth between them. Alfonso sketched an entire tomb. I still have the napkin; Alfonso will always remain in my memory, but the little bit of paper is a more tangible reminder of the wonderful friend we have lost.

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# Yo tenía un camarada

SVEN GRONEMEYER

University of Bonn

La Trobe University, Melbourne

(sgronemeyer@uni-bonn.de)

A PLAY IN MANY A SCENE—TOLD IN EPISODES OF LOOSE CONNECTION

*Any conference venue. Enter ALFONSO, SVEN, embracing, many more attendees.*

SVEN: “Alfonso, good to see ye, mate!”

ALFONSO: “Sven, hullo, how are you?”

You may remember such scenery, a dialogue similar to this experienced in many a year; hoping for many a more... As always, I was expecting to meet you at another conference. And now, Alfonso, you are gone! So premature, too soon! You are gone, leaving us behind. Now, scenes of reunion are left to the imagination. But apart from such views of the inner eye: what led to such expectations? How were they forged, and what remains, more as a legacy?

I was thinking for quite a while what I might contribute in the present *Gedenkschrift*. I certainly had some notes and ideas on a variety of topics you also worked on. Work that was an inspiration to me and that I took as a starting point for my own, further research. I eventually decided to take a more personal approach, as not only your research had a substantial influence on me. And your passing, the ultimate milestone in life, created an important one in my own. So, I would like to tell you some things I think I haven’t done in the past, and memories from here and there.

The first time we met was at the 5<sup>th</sup> European Maya Conference (EMC) in December 2000 in Bonn, my first ever Maya conference, where I forged many friendships. I was still a young student of 22 years, in my fourth semester at university. Being a bit shy, but seeking network opportunities, I remember with great pleasure of

how welcoming you were. And how passionate you talked about your work on Maya epigraphy.

At the time, you were fellow epigrapher of the *Proyecto de Restauración Arquitectónica Ek' Balam*, and you brought along that massive roll of paper with the drawing of the so-called “Mural of the 96 Glyphs”. I was delighted that you shared it with us so easily. Memorable is also the anecdote you told me one evening with a loud laugh: how you took one of the drinking vessels freshly excavated from the tomb of *Ukit Kan Lek Tok'*, put it onto your lips to feel like him drinking cacao from one of his pots. This resulted in infected, swollen lips the next day. And all you thought was that this was definitely worth the experience!

Actually, you were always full of *joie de vivre* and expressed this in a wonderful sense of humour. Your vibrancy was also a motor of motivation for colleagues and students alike, your open and positive nature invited everyone to participate in personal conversations not only about the Maya, or the many workshops you taught. The passion for everything that you did was also expressed in Wayeb, the European Association of Mayanists, of which you were a founding member. In the 15 years I served Wayeb as an active, statutory member, you always concentrated at the General Assemblies on those who would be the future of the field and the association: students and young academics. To integrate them into the community, invite them to collaborate in Wayeb and let them have the best possible experience at any event was always key in your understanding as a senior.

We continued to see each other almost every year at conferences in Europe and overseas, even when I moved to Australia, the far side of the world, in 2011. My PhD thesis topic “The Orthographic Conventions of Maya Writing” touched one of your very own research interests. I realised that there was virtually no aspect of Maya writing and linguistics you have not touched, often together with your good friend Søren Wichmann. During the time I was writing my thesis, we had some good discussions about a variety of aspects of Maya writing. We certainly did not always agree in our discussions, but we always had good arguments going back and forth, like on disharmony (in Maya writing only!), passive and antipassive morphology, or clause structures.

It was also during my time in Melbourne when you, with your always nonchalant humour, gave me my “Maya name”. You remember, it was on the first day of the 18<sup>th</sup> EMC in Brussels. I just went over from my hotel to the venue of the introductory lecture, shortly before it started. Although it was late October, I came in this “I-don’t-care-about-winter” Aussie attitude, sun-burnt from earlier holidays in tropical Queensland, in just a polo (no shorts, though) and the shark tooth necklace I bought a few weeks before in a surfer shop down the Great Ocean Road. You were standing outside, smoking. After a variation of the above scene, I joined you and you looked at the tooth pendant around my neck. Then you said that I look like a Crocodile Dundee of Maya studies and gave me my Maya name, partially translated, partially phonologically adapted: *Ahiin Tahn Te'*. Apart from the humorous ring to it, its translation “Crocodile amidst Trees” was also a good description of the habitat of the “Saltie” in the mangroves along the northern coast of Australia.

But it was not all joy and fun and discussions about hieroglyphs or linguistics. The 13<sup>th</sup> EMC 2008 in Paris took place under grievous circumstances. A little over three months earlier, our dear friend and colleague Pierre Robert Colas was murdered in his home in Nashville. The sorrow of this loss lay latent like a veil over the entire conference. One evening, when many participants had gathered at the Bombardier Pub opposite the Pantheon, we were talking about your visit to the crypt of Napoleon Bonaparte in the Dôme des Invalides. We somehow came to speak of Robby and I briefly mentioned that when I received the sad news, in all the turbulence in my mind the second verse of the traditional lament “Der gute Kamerad” (The Good Comrade) somehow came into my mind: “A bullet came a-flying, Is it my turn or is it yours? He was swept away, He lies at my feet, Like if he were a part of me.” You knew the Spanish version of the song—“Yo tenía un camarada” and you decided to gather around people for a sing-along. With beers in our hands, about two or three dozens of us cheered to our dear Robby and sang, in German, English, and Spanish; some with tears in their eyes. You united friends and colleagues to remember one of us in a very personal way.

Now it is up to us to honour a good friend and colleague and remember you. Each one of us will do so in her or his own way. Now

I have to utter this stanza of grief in your remembrance: ¡Yo tenía un camarada!

You fought a battle against cancer for slightly more than a year. The message of your passing reached me the day after. It is hard to describe what I felt, a big disturbance, a dark emptiness, a bitter grief, simply numb. I wept. After I read the email, in these moments of mental retreat, I also took another, almost immediate decision: to quit smoking! I have seen many good people, friends and colleagues, taken away by all sorts of cancer in the past few years. It is possibly one of the worst diseases to suffer from. And all of a sudden it became so crystal-clear that I must avoid all risks of possibly getting it myself. Now, as I write these lines, it will be almost half a year since I quit.

The last time we saw each other was at the 20<sup>th</sup> EMC in Bonn in 2015. I, unfortunately, couldn't make it to Moscow the following year, sadly also the last conference for the late Erik Boot to attend. At the 22<sup>nd</sup> EMC in Malmö, you were already too weak to travel. You were deeply missed in Sweden and will be forever. I thought we would meet again for the EMC in Valencia.

You are gone, my dear Alfonso. And you will be with us, at any conference where one of your friends and colleagues is, in our minds, in our hearts. You will always be part of the academic community, whenever we cite some of your distinguished works. You were a giant, and it is not only I who will continue to sit on your shoulders.

¡Adios, mi querido amigo!  
Goodbye, my dear friend!

*Exit ALFONSO.*

SVEN: “The rest is silence.”

(William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act V, Scene II)

# **Alfonso, el compañero profesor**

EUGENIA GUTIÉRREZ

Centro de Estudios Interdisciplinarios de las Culturas Mesoamericanas

Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia

(eugenia\_megg@yahoo.com.mx)

**E**n la formalidad distante de un mundo académico competitivo, su presencia lo acercaba todo. ¿Quién que lo conoció podría olvidar su tibieza, su alegría, su inabarcable gusto por la vida? Convivir con el Dr. Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo en el espacio académico era un desafío al trabajo neuronal, a la utilización rigurosa y ética del método científico, a la capacidad para retener datos, citas, aportes y autorías. Era un reto a cualquier horario razonable de investigación, imaginación y producción. Pero el desafío más contundente se daba siempre en el plano de las emociones humanas. Si las normas de la profesión docente tenían huecos a nivel humanista, él los llenaba. Si tenían fallas, las reparaba. Si la tradición de las élites universitarias conducía al *ego* formal, Alfonso, el compañero-profesor, la reescribía con una autocomplacencia encantadora. Arrancaba entonces el desafío. Si alguien que había hecho tantos aportes al estudio de las antiguas culturas mesoamericanas era capaz de compartir tanto, disfrutándolo tanto y sin cortapisas, ¿bajo qué argumento no compartiríamos también?

Si se nos pidiera encontrar palabras para describirlo, ¿quién que lo conoció no lo llamaría “un buen hombre”? Dentro del ámbito de la investigación y la docencia relacionadas con la Mesoamérica prehistórica y colonial, pocas personas se han atrevido a proponer caminos tan originales y novedosos como los que trazó Alfonso. En cualquier publicación académica reciente sobre temas de epigrafía maya, por ejemplo, recurrir a sus propuestas de método y análisis se ha vuelto indispensable. Es así que sus méritos académicos son ampliamente conocidos. Pero el gran aporte del español que se enamoró de la América indígena no se encuentra sólo en ello. Su otro gran aporte, el más profundo e inolvidable, radica en el goce con que absorbía, generaba y transmitía el conocimiento. Quienes tuvimos la fortuna de asistir a sus cursos de epigrafía, a sus ponencias y a sus pláticas, o bien, quienes tuvimos el privilegio de que asesorara y dirigiera



**Figura 1.** Alfonso Lacadena en Xochicalco y junto al busto de Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Museo Palacio de Cortés, Cuernavaca, Morelos, enero de 2013 (fotografías de Eugenia Gutiérrez).

nuestros estudios, sabemos que Alfonso es irremplazable. Y no lo es sólo por su erudición sino por su grandeza humana. Sin importar la circunstancia ni el lugar, Alfonso siempre te hacía sentir una mejor persona, en mi caso, una mejor persona de lo que en realidad soy.



**Figura 2.** Alfonso Lacadena con Eugenia Gutiérrez y Violeta Vázquez en el 10.<sup>o</sup> Congreso Internacional de Mayistas, Izamal, Yucatán, junio de 2016 (fotografía tomada de la página Facebook de Violeta Vázquez) y con Rogelio Valencia en una celebración en casa de Alejandra Martínez de Velasco, Ciudad de México, enero de 2012 (fotografía de Eugenia Gutiérrez).

¿Quién que lo conoció no se sintió mejor persona a su lado? Invencible en la parranda, orgulloso padre y esposo, hijo y hermano satisfecho, pleno de vivencias, ¿quién podría emular la intensidad de su narrativa anecdótica? Ya fuera en directo o por correo electrónico, ¿cómo distraerse y perder el hilo de sus historias noveladas con maestría, a veces propias, a veces ajenas pero siempre fascinantes?

Cantador, bailador y locuaz. Departir con él en una taquiza, una cheleada o una visita al ya legendario Bar de Lily era arriesgarse, como mínimo, a un dolor de estómago de tanto reír. Luego venía la gana incontenible de ir al baño, el peligro de desarrollar más arrugas faciales. Pero siempre valía la pena partir con Alfonso en la tranquilidad del ambiente fraternal, inteligente y respetuoso que él nos creaba.

Ante todo era un caballero, nunca dejó de agradecer la entrega de sus profesoras, de sus maestros. No escatimó al reconocer los méritos de cada colega. Siempre aseguró que “caminamos sobre hombros de gigantes”. No se cansó nunca de discutir apasionadamente cada pequeño detalle de un posible desciframiento jeroglífico. En el sitio arqueológico, nuestro guía insuperable. En la Ciudad de México, el Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas de la UNAM atestiguó la presentación de algunos de sus más sesudos estudios. Las lecturas epigráficas de Ek' Balam, con su análisis minucioso de las bóvedas donde flota el dios K'awiil. Su interés desbordado por las

fuentes coloniales. Sus propuestas para investigar de manera formal la jeroglífica náhuatl. Su insistencia en la importancia de trabajar la escritura como eso, escritura. Su pasión por desvelar los misterios y darles su lugar a las figuras retóricas ancestrales de los pueblos originarios. Su romance con los antiguos códices indígenas. Amante de la poesía y la literatura de cualquier época, de cualquier lugar, las suyas fueron, literalmente, conferencias magistrales. No es que nos haya presentado alguna vez su silabario de signos nahuas. Es que nos inundó el auditorio de flor y canto.

¿Cómo no reconocer en su voz tan sólida los mismos retruécanos y paralelismos que lo seducían, las mismas metáforas que lo intrigaban, todas las aliteraciones rítmicas que lo constituyan? Ya fuera en nuestra América o en su Europa, mientras estuvo aquí, Alfonso fue tan grande como su corazón. Ahora que se ha marchado, el compañero, profesor y amigo será tan grande en nuestra memoria como la dignidad que otorguemos a su legado. El académico, sí, pero sobre todo el humano.

¿Quién que lo conoció no querría estar con él por lo menos un día más?

*Ajtz'ib', ch'aho'm, k'ihnich ajaw:*

Que no se extinga del todo tu aliento blanco.

Que tu camino al agua sea tan luminoso como tú.

# **Alfonso y el neo-Chilam Balam de Bolonchén**

PATRICIA HORCAJADA CAMPOS

Universidad de Valencia

(patricia.horcajada@uv.es)

FLORENCIA SCANDAR

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

(scandarflorencia@yahoo.com.ar)

EDUARDO SALVADOR

Proyecto Palenque

(eduardqueo.logia@gmail.com)

**Resumen:** El siguiente artículo narra una anécdota compartida por los tres autores y cuyo protagonista fue Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, más concretamente una fotografía suya hallada en el altar de un *jmen* de la localidad de Bolonchén (Campeche, México). En este sentido, no es un texto académico, sino que se trata de un relato en el que se reconstruye cómo llegó la fotografía a este lugar y el curioso modo en que Alfonso se enteró de ello.

**Abstract:** This paper tells an anecdote shared by the three authors, whose protagonist was Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo and, more specifically, a photograph of him found on the altar of a *jmen* in Bolonchén (Campeche, Mexico). Thus, it is not an academic text, but rather a story that reconstructs how the photograph came to be in this place and the curious circumstances under which Alfonso found out about it.

Una mañana de junio de 2017, un estudiante del programa de doctorado en Estudios Mesoamericanos de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) que responde a las iniciales de M. H. S., llegó al Laboratorio de Arqueología de la Universidad Autónoma de Campeche (UAC) para realizar una consulta sobre un aspecto concreto de la investigación que estaba llevando a cabo relacionada con su tesis doctoral. El chico procedía de un ámbito ajeno a la arqueología y necesitaba la colaboración de una persona familiarizada con la cultura material maya para saber si los objetos que había documentado en los altares de varios *jmeno'ob* de la región de Campeche eran de cronología antigua, o si por el contrario se trataba de piezas de manufactura reciente. Le habían facilitado el nombre de una especialista en cerámica maya de la UAC, María Rosario Domínguez Carrasco, pero ella asistía a una reunión cuando el estudiante

llegó. En ese momento se encontraba en el laboratorio Patricia Horcajada, que en esas fechas disfrutaba de una beca postdoctoral en esta universidad. El estudiante le comentó a Patricia que entre los objetos que había documentado en los altares también se encontraban figurillas realizadas en arcilla<sup>1</sup> y le mostró, a través de la pantalla de su ordenador, numerosas fotografías, vistas generales de algunos altares y algunas de detalle de los objetos presentes en estos.

Después de visualizar varias fotografías, hubo una que de inmediato llamó enormemente la atención de Patricia<sup>2</sup>. En ella se observaba a un *jmen* de mediana edad frente a una mesa-altar. Este dirigía la mirada hacia su mano izquierda, la cual estaba ligeramente levantada, con la palma hacia arriba, y sostenía cuatro *sáastuno'ob* “piedras de luz o brillo”, piedras transparentes de forma esférica empleadas como instrumento de adivinación por los *jmeno'ob*. El altar estaba cubierto por un mantel de plástico con motivos navaideños y sobre este había numerosos elementos, pudiéndose distinguir varios santos vestidos, un jarrón con diferentes plantas y flores, lo que parecía ser un pequeño cuchillo de obsidiana, dos veladoras apagadas, una de color blanco y otra negra, y un grupo formado por cuatro o cinco figurillas de barro. Flanqueado por las dos velas, los santos y las figurillas cerámicas, en el centro del altar se encontraba abierto un descuajeringado cuaderno en el que se podía apreciar que a sus páginas manuscritas se le habían añadido otras hojas y documentos, incluyendo fotografías. Sobre la página reversa del cuaderno, es decir, la página del lado izquierdo, había una fotografía de una persona cuyos rasgos físicos le resultaron muy familiares a Patricia, por lo que le pidió al chico que realizara un zum de la parte en la que se encontraba la fotografía. “¡Parece Alfonso!” exclamó sorprendida Patricia. Inmediatamente le preguntó al estudiante si conocía a Alfonso Lacadena, a lo que él le respondió que sabía que era epigrafista, pero que desconocía cuál era su aspecto físico, porque nunca lo había visto. Patricia quería saber si realmente el de la fotografía era Alfonso y, de ser así, cómo y porqué había una fotografía de él sobre un altar. Sin embargo, la única respuesta que recibió fue

<sup>1</sup> Las figurillas cerámicas mayas son la principal línea de investigación de Patricia Horcajada.

<sup>2</sup> Lamentablemente no ha sido posible incluir la fotografía porque su autor, el estudiante de doctorado mencionado al inicio del relato, denegó el permiso de uso de la misma para esta publicación.

que se trataba de un *jmen* de la localidad de Bolonchén, en el estado de Campeche, que le mostró su altar y le permitió fotografiarlo. Patricia le solicitó permiso para capturar con su teléfono móvil una instantánea de la pantalla del ordenador en la que estaban visualizando la fotografía, a lo que el estudiante accedió amablemente. Posteriormente, él continuó mostrando más fotos, pero Patricia no lograba salir de su asombro. Cuando el chico se retiró, ella le mandó a Alfonso la foto que había tomado con su celular, acompañándola de un texto contándole lo que acababa de suceder. El hecho despertó mucho la curiosidad de Alfonso, quien también quiso encontrar la respuesta de cómo había llegado una foto suya al altar de un *jmen* de Bolonchén.

Al día siguiente, Alfonso escribió a Florencia Scandar este mensaje: “Un misterio: ¿tú o Edu dejasteis una foto mía y encargasteis a un *jmen* de Bolonchén que rezara por mí o algo así? Ayer Patri, que está en Campeche, me envió este comentario y esta foto.” Y, a continuación, reproducía el mensaje de Patricia que contaba lo acontecido y de cómo le había parecido a ella que el de la fotografía era él y, tras enviarle la imagen a Florencia, Alfonso exclamó: “Esa foto sobre el neo-Chilam Balam abierto (habría que hacerse con una copia falso-milar de los textos) ¡soy yo!”

Florencia se quedó helada al reconocer claramente la foto que unos meses atrás había impreso y llevado a Bolonchén, junto con Eduardo Salvador, tras enterarse de la enfermedad de Alfonso. En ese entonces, Eduardo se encontraba trabajando como arqueólogo en Dzehkabtun y Florencia había ido a pasar unos días con él. Eduardo había tenido la idea de visitar al *jmen* cuando asistió al ritual que este realiza en el mencionado sitio arqueológico antes de iniciar cada temporada de excavación<sup>3</sup>. La intención era que Alfonso tuviera su ritual maya, teniendo en cuenta lo importante que esta cultura era para él, pero, también, estaba presente el hecho de que varias personas que sentían un gran aprecio por Alfonso le habían expresado a Florencia que les aportaría tranquilidad espiritual saber que se estaba haciendo todo lo posible en todos los frentes.

<sup>3</sup> Cada año, la directora del Proyecto Dzehkabtun, Iken Paap, contacta con este *jmen* para que haga un ritual con el fin de pedir permiso al sitio antes de comenzar los trabajos de campo. Agradecemos a la Dra. Paap las gestiones que hizo para que pudiéramos visitar al *jmen*.

Aquel día, Eduardo y Florencia habían ido a visitar al *jmen* a su lugar de consulta, una típica construcción de adobe y bajareque en el pueblo de Bolonchén. Mientras esperaban a ser atendidos, pasaron el rato observando cómo iba y venía una familia de cerdos y oyendo desde fuera los rezos en maya del *jmen*. Cuando finalmente los hicieron pasar, observaron en el interior de la casa, a un costado, un altar con numerosas figurillas, así como velas y otros elementos y, tras tomar asiento, le contaron al *jmen* por qué estaban allí y le entregaron la fotografía de Alfonso. El *jmen* les preguntó el nombre del paciente y dónde vivía y lo escribió en el reverso de la fotografía. A continuación, hizo unos rezos delante de su altar, consultó unos libros de pequeño formato, más bien como pequeñas revistas, deteniéndose en una página que tenía una imagen de un pulmón. Finalmente, dijo que había que hacer un tratamiento que implicaba que alguien le llevara unos preparados de hierbas cada dos meses a Alfonso. Eduardo y Florencia le explicaron que era complicado porque el paciente se encontraba en España, ante lo que el *jmen* dijo que volvieran si encontraban la manera de hacérselas llegar y que, de todos modos, rezaría por él, para lo cual pidió quedarse con la fotografía. Florencia y Eduardo se la dieron pensando que jamás volverían a saber de ella.

Al enterarse de esto, Alfonso quedó encantado. Les agradeció a Florencia y a Eduardo el gesto que tuvieron, expresó su sorpresa de que el *jmen* guardara su fotografía y sobre todo manifestó su fascinación por la manera en que nos habíamos enterado de que él es ahora parte de lo que él mismo denominó el neo-Chilam Balam de Bolonchén.

# **Flashbacks: Un breve ensayo referente a la cuestión de la memoria y del olvido**

MIGUEL PIMENTA-SILVA

Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa  
(jpimenta@ucm.es)

**Resumen:** En este breve ensayo pretendo compartir algunos de los recuerdos que tengo de Alfonso. Al mismo tiempo, aspiro llamar la atención de los riesgos de la dialéctica entre memoria y olvido, tomando como ejemplo la figura de Francisco Corroy.

**Abstract:** In this brief essay I intend to share some of the memories I have of Alfonso. At the same time, I aspire to call attention to the risks of the dialectic between memory and oblivion, taking as an example the figure of Francisco Corroy.

## **Madrid, 30 de noviembre de 2010**

Hacía frío. El cielo estaba desplegado de nubes. A cada paso el edificio del Museo de América se hacía cada vez mayor delante de mis ojos. Reconocí la figura de un hombre. A paso largo me dirigí hasta esa silueta. Era un hombre de mediana edad, de forma de vestir sencilla, sonrisa fácil y mirada cautivante. Sin más demoras me extendió la mano, “Mi nombre es Erik, mucho gusto”, cambiamos un par de palabras, conversación de circunstancias, tiempo, futbol y mayas. Una pesada puerta de metal y vidrio se abre vigorosamente y de ella sale un “caballero que ya pintaba algunas canas”. Sí, efectivamente era Alfonso, y así fue como lo conocí. Lo conocí como Alfonso, no el Dr. Lacadena, o Alfonso Lacadena el ganador del premio... Lo conocí como Alfonso el ser humano, el amigo. Solamente un par de horas más tarde reconocí que Alfonso, ese ser sencillo, era la mente brillante que ya tanto admiraba.

## **Villahermosa, Tabasco, México, 15 de mayo de 1832**

Un enfermo llega al hospital, se queja de un dolor intenso de estómago. Un hombre de bata blanca se acerca al paciente, le pone la mano en el hombro y le cuestiona en un tono fuerte y asertivo “¿Ya se siente mejor después de haber tomado la medicina?”. El paciente hace un gesto con la cabeza en señal de afirmación. En no más que un par de horas siente en su rostro la fuerza ardiente del sol. En su

bolsillo carga una nota firmada por el doctor, en la cual figura la prescripción de unas vacunas que son distribuidas en varios distritos de forma gratuita.

### **Copenhague, 5 de diciembre de 2011**

Alumnos, voluntarios y maestros cruzan caminos como parejas de tango en una noche de verano en un café bohemio de Buenos Aires, a inicios del siglo XXI. “Puede hacer aquí su registro, y muchas gracias por venir al Wayeb”, esas fueron las palabras de una joven olvidada, pero con unos verdes ojos de color Usumacinta inolvidables. Ahí estaba yo, un año más en esa búsqueda incesante que solamente quien la vive es capaz de entender. No era un taller más: era El Taller. Alfonso Lacadena, el amigo y ahora maestro, impartía por primera vez el taller de escritura jeroglífica nahuatl, juntamente con su buen amigo Søren Wichmann. El taller fue lo que siempre era, oro puro, pues Alfonso tenía ese toque de Midas.

### **Nueva York, 25 de octubre de 1834**

Con cuidado y delicadeza una señorita joven coloca su taza de té sobre una toalla bordada por arrugadas manos. Un periódico abandonado sobre un sofá llama la atención de esa mente atrapada en un cuerpo de pequeña dimensión. Uno, dos, cinco pasos, y agarra el periódico como Eva agarró la manzana, mirando primero alrededor. “Fa-Faa-Fa Family Magazine, or Weekly Abstract of General Knowledge” leyó el título del periódico en voz baja. Buscaba algo en especial, quería saber si existían novedades de México en relación a las ruinas de Palenque. En su habitación guardaba en una cajita de madera los recortes acerca de ese lugar mágico. Pero hoy tenía poca suerte, pues no figuraba nada en esas páginas con olor aún a tinta fresca. “Empiezo a estar preocupada por Mr. Waldeck, será que está bien, o fue comido por una serpiente gigante. Dios mío, por favor protege a Mr. Waldeck”.

### **Helsinki, 14 de diciembre de 2012**

Nunca pensé en estar adentro de una pelota de nieve, hasta llegar a esta maravillosa capital europea. Un año más, una oportunidad más

para aprender. En esta ocasión, no tuve posibilidad de estar cerca de Alfonso, más allá de un par de conversaciones. En ese año estuve en el taller de Erik Boot y de Alex Safronov. De alguna forma fueron mis primeros pasos solo, fuera de la protección del maestro Alfonso. A cada año que pasaba sentía un orgullo creciente pero silencioso por Alfonso en relación a mi decisión de año tras año de frecuentar el Wayeb. Ese mérito tenía mucho más de su mano que de la mía. Alfonso fue mi primer maestro de epigrafía, pero al mismo tiempo fue una materialización de San Antonio, haciendo que me enamorara loca y eternamente de las escrituras jeroglíficas mesoamericanas.

### **Paris, 7 de noviembre de 1834**

A las dos de la tarde en punto las puertas se cerraron. El presidente de la mesa miró para la izquierda y después para la derecha, para confirmar que todos en la mesa estaban listos, tomó en sus manos el protocolario discurso y viendo la oportunidad de saltarse el protocolo, se levantó colocando las manos en alto, y tan rápido como las había levantado, las bajó descansándolas en la mesa diciendo: “¡Aquí señores! Aquí tenemos historia. Las generaciones futuras van a acordarse de nuestros nombres. De todos y cada uno de ustedes. Aquí estimables señores, aquí están las más recientes novedades llegadas de México...”. Al final del discurso, el repleto salón no tuvo otra alternativa que ponerse en pie y aplaudir con entusiasmo. No era la primera vez que esto ocurría, y pasaba a ser más bien una tradición. En cada carta que llegaba desde Tabasco o Chiapas, había siempre la certeza de algo glorioso.

### **Madrid, 22 de Julio de 2013**

Cuando llegué a Madrid para hacer una pasantía en el antiguo Departamento de Historia de América II (Antropología de América), lo primero que intenté hacer fue buscar a Alfonso. Estaba emocionado de poder estar más cerca del maestro y del amigo. Al entrar en su despacho, repleto de libros y envases de café vacíos,ivamente me empezó a mostrar con orgullo su biblioteca privada. “¡Si necesitas lo que sea, avísame!” esas fueron algunas de sus primeras palabras. Un hombre bueno con un corazón puro. Esos momentos en Madrid estarán siempre entre los más felices. Asistía a sus clases

no importando si ya conocía o no la materia. Tampoco debía estar en ellas, no era estudiante en esos tiempos. Pero cómo perderme sus clases, si siempre existía algo novedoso. Él siempre repasaba la materia antes de entrar en clase y nunca hacia dos clases iguales. Aprendí mucho con Alfonso en esos tiempos. Primero como pasante y después como alumno de doctorado. Quizá las mayores lecciones del maestro fueron dadas fuera de las clases. Con él aprendí que nadie puede trabajar aislado, que tenemos que creer en nosotros mismos, que uno debe ayudar a los demás, y que se deben compartir los buenos y malos momentos. Aprendí también que nuestro sacrificio de hoy es el triunfo de las generaciones futuras. Gracias a Alfonso gané una nueva familia.

### **Chiapas, 28 de noviembre de 1834**

La lluvia invade la calma tarde de sábado. Un hombre camina arriesgadamente entre las gotas. Tiene prisa. Debajo de su brazo derecho lleva dos bultos, dentro de ellos, papel, pinceles y tinta. Logra alcanzar la tienda aún abierta. Entra. Sacude el agua de sus cabellos y pide hablar con el responsable. Un hombre robusto, con un abundante bigote, contesta desde la otra habitación “¡Aquí estoy!” Decididamente era robusto, o más bien, lo había sido en sus tiempos. “Vengo a buscar una encomienda que llegó hoy para mí” dijo en tono asertivo, del que no espera nada más, solamente lo que es suyo por derecho. La siguiente parada fue una casa a la salida de la población. Ahí preguntó por un viejo amigo. “Este mes tienes un poco más para llevar. Son varios barriletes. El Sr. Waldeck va a estar feliz de verte”. Después de estas palabras, colocó su sombrero con su mano izquierda y abandonó la casa, con la certeza que volvería muchas veces más.

### **Bruselas, 30 de octubre de 2013**

Un Wayeb más, infelizmente el último que pude compartir con Alfonso y Erik. Fue un evento muy interesante y en especial hubo una noche memorable en la que, en compañía de Alfonso, Dmitri Beliaev y Macarena López Oliva, disfrutamos de una exquisita comida. Pero lo más delicioso de la noche fueron las anécdotas que Alfonso y Dmitri nos contaron de sus primeros tiempos, cuando ambos aún

empezaban a dar sus primeros pasos en el mundo de la epigrafía. En ese momento, el historiador que llevo dentro de mí se peleaba con el niño enamorado de sus héroes. Ese Wayeb fue la última vez que tuve la oportunidad de compartir un tiempo con Erik.

### **Nueva York, 12 de diciembre de 1834**

El sonido de la puerta abierta con relativa violencia despertó a Dante, el viejo gato blanco de la librería. La causa de tal hecho era un hombre alto y delgado, vestido rigurosamente y con los bolsillos repletos de dólares para gastar. “Bryan, mi viejo amigo. ¿Conseguiste los libros que te pedí a un par de meses atrás?” preguntó mientras soplaban el polvo de arriba de unos manuscritos que servían de catálogo de las novedades. El pobre Bryan había tenido probablemente el mayor desafío de su carrera, pero cumplió con las expectativas, y dentro de una caja de madera guardaba religiosamente un conjunto de libros. “Perdón por preguntar, pero ¿por qué va enviar estos libros para Tabasco?”. Mientras procedía al pago y confirmaba el estado de cada uno de los volúmenes, el hombre alto y delgado contestó explicando que por esas regiones residía un buen amigo; y con una señal al librero y una caricia a Dante abandonó la tienda. En su interior Bryan borró el viejo pizarrón, manteniendo solamente “Pedidos del Dr. Mitchill”.

### **Madrid, 14 de Marzo de 2014**

Por norma no me gustan las despedidas, pero siempre existe una excepción, sobre todo cuando uno se despide a Madrid. El año de 2014 marca mi partida para Guatemala, donde residí entre 2014 y 2018. Alfonso fue un gran amigo en esos momentos y supo apoyarme incondicionalmente. Recuerdo con estima las sucesivas despedidas que él, juntamente con Jesús Adámez Pavón, Rocío García Valgañón, Kajetan Jagodzinski, Macarena López Oliva y Esteban Aguayo Sepúlveda, organizaron para despedirme. Sin la fuerza y el apoyo de todos ellos, todo habría sido más complicado.

### **Nueva York, 22 de marzo de 1836**

Nieva en Nueva York. Es una noche de luna nueva. Desde la calle se puede ver una ventana iluminada desde adentro. Ahí, la sombra

en la pared revela una figura masculina que deambula por la habitación. En el silencio de la noche podemos oír sus palabras: “Va a ser un éxito rotundo. Este material debe ser publicado. Extraordinario. El mundo merece conocer esto. Es fantástico, dará para al menos dos volúmenes. Debe ser publicado en papel de calidad”. Diez meses después, los mismos papeles siguen en esa habitación, pero la persona que antes los leía ahora duerme para siempre. Sus familiares guardan sus pertenencias en cajas de cartón, para después dejarlas abandonadas en una habitación cualquiera de una dirección que aún hoy no conocemos con certeza. Ese tesoro nunca fue publicado, los únicos que conocían sus misterios navegan ahora en el mar del olvido.

### **Guatemala, 31 de diciembre de 2017**

Gracias a mi querido amigo Camilo Luin, que tuvo la gentileza de invitarme a compartir con él las clases en el Seminario de Epigrafía Maya, en la Universidad San Carlos de Guatemala. Desde el primer día Alfonso fue una persona presente, aunque no físicamente. Su presencia estaba en las gramáticas, en las reglas vocálicas, en las anécdotas y en los pensamientos de Camilo y míos. Durante ese año recibí algunos viejos amigos, o mejor será decir familia. Juntamente con Zoraida Raimundez, Serguey Vepretskii, Alejandro Garay, Sebastian Matteo, siempre recordábamos viejos momentos pasados con Alfonso; en parte Alfonso, a la par de los mayas, es lo que nos une a nosotros, por su ejemplo y por habernos educado en ese espíritu de comunión.

### **Madrid, 24 de enero de 2018**

Llegado de Guatemala, mi único deseo era estar con Alfonso. A ese momento único lo llamó “la clase magistral”. Cuando estaba delante de la puerta de su habitación en el hospital, y la vi cerrada, no pensé dos veces en llamar a la puerta. Fue más fuerte que yo, allí dentro estaba mi amigo, mi maestro, mi padre académico. Pero, sobre todo, allí dentro estaba yo, y necesitaba encontrarme conmigo, lo que es lo mismo que decir que allí estaba ese niño pequeño delante de su mayor héroe. Alfonso sonrió mucho, estaba muy feliz con mi visita. Y yo estaba tan contento por tenerlo ahí conmigo... Conversamos de

todo un poco, lo que para un mayista significa hablar de glifos. Salí de esa habitación emocionado, tan emocionado como en el primer día que tuve el honor de estar en su presencia. Pensé que lo iría a visitar un par de semanas después a su casa, pero el destino llegó demasiado temprano.

### Lisboa, 14 de agosto de 2018

Es la 1h con 17m de la madrugada y aquí estoy, escribiendo estas últimas líneas de texto. No me juzguen, no soy la típica persona que deja todo para el último momento, o por lo menos intento no serlo. Llevo semanas pensando lo que puedo o debo escribir. Pensé en varios temas y varios modelos de presentación del mismo, pero la sagrallidad de este momento me obliga a honrar al maestro, aunque falle en el intento, porque eso, según la opinión de Alfonso, solamente significa que debo seguir la investigación en otro sentido. Honrar la memoria de Alfonso es pensar fuera de la caja, buscar respuestas en otras áreas, en otros temas. Cuando me obligan a definirme por áreas del saber, yo evado la cuestión respondiendo que mis trabajos están orientados a los temas de memoria, historia y olvido. Sí, es amplio, yo lo sé. No me gusta limitarme, es uno de los problemas que nosotros, los alumnos de Alfonso, tenemos: no nos gustan los límites, porque no los hay.

### La historia por detrás de la narrativa

En la parte de este ensayo referente a los *flashbacks*, en una parte de ellos utilizo la memoria individual proyectada; la otra parte son meras creaciones. ¿Pero no es la memoria, en parte, un proceso creativo? Parcialmente sí, lo es. Las memorias pueden no pertenecer a elementos totalmente factibles, o sea, de alguna forma el individuo se obliga a recordar, así revive una acción del pasado, pero con el conocimiento del presente, lo que limita su visión del pasado. Para despejar dudas en relación a su propia memoria individual, debe buscar otras memorias, buscar una ecuación posible entre ellas, en el intento de acercarse un paso más al camino del pasado real. Por ese motivo convoqué a la memoria grupal, al mencionar a otros individuos que vivieron algunas acciones al mismo tiempo que yo. Como casi todos ellos son autores en este volumen de homenaje a

Alfonso, espero tener un *feedback* suyo, para así nivelar mi memoria. ¿Pero, de dónde provienen las creaciones, más precisamente las relativas al siglo XIX?

El lector que no sea conocedor de la historiografía maya se preguntará por qué motivo hubo tantas referencias al siglo XIX. En realidad, todos esos *flashbacks* eran narrativas de ficción, con base en un personaje histórico. Si su cerebro le hizo pensar en Jean-Frédéric Waldeck, felicitaciones, pero su cerebro le jugó una mala pasada. De hecho, Waldeck es un personaje histórico, pero no es nuestro personaje. Su nombre casi se ha quedado olvidado, él es Francisco Corroy.

Tenemos muy poca información relativa a Corroy, y mucha de esa información está dispersa por variadas fuentes. Con total certeza, sabemos que nuestro hombre olvidado fue durante algunas décadas médico en un hospital de Villahermosa (Torruco Saraiva 1987: 51); al parecer, tenía un corazón tan grande como el de Alfonso, pues durante algún tiempo distribuyó vacunas en varios distritos de forma gratuita siendo también responsable del surgimiento de la primera farmacia en Villahermosa (Arias Gómez et al. 1987: 82).

Pero Francisco Corroy desempeña también un papel importante en el mundo intelectual ya que fue miembro de varias sociedades científicas (Arias Gómez et al. 1987: 217; Podgorny 2008: 579, 2011), siendo la *Société de Géographie* una de ellas. Es debido a la conservación del *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* que tenemos acceso a algunas informaciones relativas a las actividades realizadas en Palenque, escritas en la primera persona (e.g. Corroy 1828, 1831a, 1831b, 1832, 1833). A la par de esta fuente, y hasta el momento, la mayor parte de las informaciones relativas a su impacto en la historiografía de los estudios mayas proviene de periódicos culturales como el *Mercurio, Family Magazine, or Weekly of General Knowledge; The Knickerbocker; y The Federal American Monthly*. ¿Quién era entonces Francisco Corroy y cuál fue su importancia?

Francisco Corroy era de origen francés (Fernández de Navarrete 1838: 52) y residía en México, transitando entre Tabasco y Chiapas (Podgorny 2008), probablemente fruto de sus funciones como médico. No se sabe con certeza cuándo ni cómo conoce a Waldeck, pero existe una relación de amistad entre los dos. El médico había sido cirujano en los ejércitos de Napoleón (Muñoz Cano 2018: 63). También Waldeck alardeaba ante la gente que había acompañado a

la expedición de Napoleón a Egipto. Así existe la posibilidad de que se hubieran conocido durante ese tiempo. Francisco Corroy ayudaba a Waldeck, sobre todo, en los aspectos logísticos:

The three barrels of white powder which I received with your letter is not the right kind of plaster for making moulds or casts, but the half barrel which you sent is really fine plaster, and very good for the purpose desired. I forward it to Mr. Waldeck, who lives at the ruins, forty leagues from tabasco, and we should have commenced moulding, and making casts and facsimiles of the characters and bas-reliefs on the walls of the ruins to supply the museums of all nations and individuals who desire to have them, as well as other curious and interesting things from this ruined city supposed to have flourished nearly one thousand three hundred years ago, but the quantity was too small, and we must suspend our operations until you can send us an additional supply (Ruins of the American City 1834: 317).

Existen indicios de que estaría desarrollando un trabajo con Waldeck, lo que podemos deducir esto por la utilización del plural en la cita anterior, pero también por otro texto:

The information collected by him [Francisco Corroy] from personal observation and otherwise has been embodied in a series of letters addressed and dedicated to the writer here of, and ample enough to make two volumes, which are intend for publication at some future time as he is still engaged in the same interesting researches (Ruins of the American City 1834: 307).

Como es posible notar en el texto, existe la suficiente referencia a “documentos como para editar dos volúmenes” dedicados a los estudios realizados por Francisco Corroy. Hasta el momento, se ignora a ciencia cierta donde están esos documentos.

Existía, sin duda alguna, una relación de proximidad entre Francisco Corroy y otros miembros de las sociedades citadas. La confianza era tanta que no solamente intercambiaban cartas y regalos sino que —por estas redes de contacto— incluso eran enviados algunos objetos para llegar hasta su último destino.

On my return from the ruins I received the books and the likeness of Dr. Mitchill, which you had the goodness to send me. In your letter to me you remark, that on one of the idols which I sent to Dr. Mitchill to be forward to Mr. Jomard of Paris, there appeared to be characters similar to Greek letters. On this point, there is no doubt in my mind, that the tribes which formerly inhabited this ancient city, were composed of Phenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, Asiatics, Arabs and Chinese (Ruins of the American City 1834: 316).

Sin ningún tipo de duda, Corroy es un elemento importante para conocer lo que pasaba en Palenque en la época de Waldeck, en los espacios del saber, siendo un vehículo de información fundamental.

### **Un aviso que viene del pasado**

Francisco Corroy fue una figura influyente en su tiempo, pero ello no fue suficiente para evitar que el tiempo borrase su memoria; en parte esa desaparición es un proceso gradual, donde cabe a cada generación recordar a sus héroes a través de festividades cívicas.

El destino de la memoria de Alfonso no reside en nuestra generación, huérfana de él, pero sí en las generaciones posteriores. Si no existe una política de memoria activa, también la arena del tiempo puede empezar, grano a grano, a ocultar su obra y su legado.

El primero paso contra el olvido de Alfonso y de su obra y legado es dado con este volumen de homenaje, pero cada año se debería rememorar a Alfonso y los demás, pues todos ellos forman parte de esa gran muralla de Uruk.

**Agradecimientos:** En primer lugar me gustaría dedicar este ensayo a la memoria de Alfonso Lacadena y de Erik Boot, pero también extender la misma dedicatoria a toda la familia Lacadena García-Gallo y a la familia Boot. En segundo lugar, me gustaría agradecer la revisión del ensayo a Esteban Aguayo Sepúlveda, amigo de Alfonso y mío. El autor del presente ensayo es el único responsable de cualquier error que pueda contener.

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# **Mayas y teotihuacanos, las eternas preguntas**

MARÍA TERESA URIARTE

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

(tereu786@gmail.com)

**D**ecidí escribir este pequeño homenaje a mi querido amigo Alfonso Lacadena porque gracias a él y a Ignacio Cases, se pudo establecer que el gobernante de Naachtún se ostenta como *kalo'mte'* de Siyaj K'ahk' y que Teotihuacan sí estuvo presente en el área maya, específicamente en Tikal como presencia militar (Cases y Lacadena 2014). Este es un tema que me ha fascinado desde siempre, mucho antes de que se publicara la aportación de David Stuart (2000), en el libro trascendental sobre el Clásico y su herencia mesoamericana.

Me intrigó mucho la primera vez que estuve delante de los relieves que hay en Palenque frente a la cancha de juego de pelota porque se parecían tanto a lo que hay en los murales de Tepantitla, y además estaban directamente relacionados con la cancha de juego de pelota y Tlaloc que se hacía presente. Esto lo vería repetido muchas veces, y esta deidad, tan conspicua como todas las mesoamericanas, estaba definitivamente vinculada con el juego de pelota.

Era evidente una relación entre Kaminaljuyú y Teotihuacán, y que los incensarios teatro, que no son teotihuacanos, sino de Tiquisate, Escuintla o la Gomera en Guatemala, además de numerosas piezas de cerámica y el marcador del juego de pelota de Tikal iban configurando un panorama difícil de entender, pero aparecieron esas letras de nuestro amigo y de Ignacio Cases, y las cosas adquirieron un nuevo significado.

Me podrán decir que las piezas mesoamericanas con similitudes son incontables y tendrán razón, pero a mí las que más me interesan son las que vinculan al Altiplano Central mexicano con el área maya y resulta que hay, como con todo en las culturas mesoamericanas, una mezcla difícil de dilucidar. No quiero abundar demasiado porque daría para un libro completo sobre el tema, pero por ejemplo la serpiente emplumada, las placas bucales en forma de mariposa, las vinculaciones ideológicas de Venus con edificios y con el maíz, y en fin, los rasgos que desde Kirchhoff configuraron su concepto de Mesoamérica.

Hace quince años se aceptaba con dificultad la presencia teotihuacana en Tikal, ahora sabemos y lo hemos confirmado gracias al trabajo de Alfonso Lacadena e Ignacio Cases, en el informe que mencionaba antes, que esas “entradas” fueron apoyadas militarmente.

En la actualidad trabajo la herencia de Adela Breton en Chichén Itzá y me encuentro con temas que no puedo explicarme y que me encantaría platicar con Alfonso, tal vez sea en estos momentos cuando lo extraño muchísimo.

Me cuesta trabajo pensar en un viaje a Madrid y no tener su compañía para visitar lugares increíbles como San Fructuoso cerca de Segovia en donde conocí los buitres leonados, todo un privilegio, pero volveré al tema Chichén Itzá. Los temas de la pintura del Templo Superior de los Jaguares en el Juego de Pelota de Chichén Itzá copiados por Adela Breton y que son la única evidencia sobreviviente de la totalidad de esos murales, me han cautivado. No solo por su paleta o su composición, sino porque hay partícipes en la batalla que no pueden más que encenderme focos. Personajes que tienen falda con lo que se conoce como el símbolo de Venus, la Serpiente Emplumada, el Sol, Tláloc y una batalla, cinco elementos que encontramos en Cacaxtla y también en este sitio maya.

Mi amigo Erik Velásquez, que ha publicado sobre el tema de los itzaes, ya me previno: “ni siquiera sabemos quiénes fundaron Chichén ¡Itzá? Porque en ningún lado se menciona en los textos jeroglíficos a este grupo.”

De manera que en adelante me declaro incompetente. No oigo las respuestas de mi queridísimo Alfonso, si es que me las da, porque conociéndolo, siempre estará interesado en un nuevo tema, siempre animando a sus alumnos para que indaguen más, siempre consintiendo a sus amigos y trabajando como esclavo dando clases y revisando trabajos.

Una vez nos reímos mucho —vía email— por la manera tan diversa como nuestros alumnos habían escrito Teopantecuanatlán, eso era nuestro Alfonso —más de Laura, su amor de vida, y de sus hijos que de nadie más— pero todos lo recordamos por sus virtudes académicas y por su inmensa calidad humana, por eso ahora que se le rinde tributo quiero unirme a este grupo de seres que lo conocimos, lo admiramos y lo quisimos tanto.

Siempre estás en nuestras ideas y sobre todo, siempre estás en nuestro corazón. Los mexicanos agradecidos por haber cruzado nuestros caminos contigo te decimos: “Hasta la vista, querido amigo, que, con suerte, nuestros caminos se volverán a cruzar”.

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# Losing Alfonso

NORMAN HAMMOND

Emeritus Professor of Archaeology, Boston University

(ndch@bu.edu)

My last attempted encounter with Alfonso ended in abject failure. My wife and I were in Madrid as part of a tour, and had arranged with Andrés and Pepa to meet for dinner on October 21<sup>st</sup> 2017. Andrés was to drive in, collect us from our very central hotel near the Prado, and take us to their home for a dinner with *jamón ibérico* and Rioja. They had invited Alfonso and Laura—I had not seen Alfonso since the last SEEM conference in Granada (2009) all too many years ago.

When we stepped out on to the Madrid street at the appointed time, we found the whole center of town was sealed off from traffic and awash with pedestrian crowds—it was a celebration called “*La Noche de la Luna*”, with bands playing everywhere. I called Pepa, who said that Andrés had been driving fruitlessly around for an hour trying to find a way into the city. Then Alfonso called our hotel with the same message—but my wife took the call, so I never even got to speak with him that one last time.

Next morning Pepa e-mailed me photographs of the four of them eating all the *jamón* meant for six of us, and happily drinking the 2007 Rioja Reserva (Figure 1). Alfonso looked very happy: it is my last memory of a valued friend and colleague.



a



b

**Figure 1.** October 21<sup>st</sup> 2017. a) Iberian specialties awaiting the invitees, b) the lucky four who finally ate up all the *jamón*, bemoaning the absence of Norman Hammond and Jean Wilson.







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