



THE MONTH NAME *WAYEB'*: A SUBSTITUTION PATTERN

Christian M. Prager

Institut für Altamerikanistik und Ethnologie (IAE)
Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn

This note is concerned with the hieroglyph of the Maya month *Wayeb*. The standard variant of this glyph, as featured in Eric Thompson's compilation month glyphs (1950), consists of T157:548. The sign T157 and its allographs T728 / T769 depict the gaping lower jaw of the earth monster, often regarded as a symbolic chasm into the underworld. The decipherment of this hieroglyph as /**WAY**/ has been proposed by Barbara MacLeod (Macri and Loooper 2003). The reading is based on the occurrence in the hieroglyph for the month *Wayeb*, which was probably spelled *Wayab'* in the Classic Period. Nonetheless, several authors have questioned the reading /**WAY**/ for T157, because this morpheme is exclusively expressed by the sign T539. Up to date a substitution between T539 and T157 has not been noticed that would provide the /**WAY**/ reading for T157. On the other hand the reading for T539 /**WAY**/ has been generally accepted. It was first read independently by Nikolai Grube, Stephen Houston and David Stuart (Houston and Stuart 1989). This hieroglyphic is generally associated with the belief in co-essences or animal companion spirits among Mesoamerican civilizations.

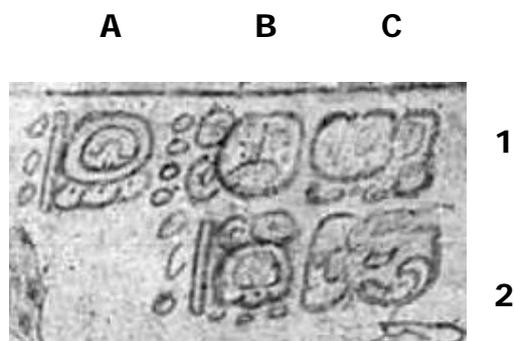


Figure 1: Enlargement of the hieroglyphic texts on Kerr 3201. The Calendar Round at A1-B1 8 Kib 4 *Wayeb* provides an unusual spelling of the month name *Wayeb*. Notice that the scribe used T539 instead of T157 in order to spell the *way*-morpheme of the month name (photograph by Justin Kerr, Kerr 3201). The Calendar Round is given in Peten Style and cannot be correlated with an appropriate Long Count, since it refers to an event that occurred at a mythological place at a mythological time.

A Codex Style Ceramic of unknown provenance (Kerr 3201) may provide the crucial substitution pattern (Fig 2). The painted surface contains the alleged sacrifice of the reclining Jaguar Baby which is flanked by the Rain God *Cha:k* with a flourish of his stone axe and the Death God. However, the text provides that this is the birth of a

supernatural named *Wuk ? Yax Kay*, which is possibly the birth name of the Jaguar Baby, but this remains obscure. The hieroglyphic inscriptions above the reclining supernatural reads (Fig. 1).

A1	WAXAK "KIB"	"at 8 Kib"
B1	IV wa-WAY?	"4 Wayeb"
C1	SIH-ya-ja	"it is born"
B2	wuk ?-?-ma	"Seven ?"
C2	YAX KAY?	"Green Fish"

Hieroglyphic block B1 is, however, in the focus of this short note. It consists of three signs, classified as T-VII.130.539. Here, the month name *Wayeb* is written with the sign T130.539 instead of T157 or one of its allographs. T130 is the syllable /**wa**/ and functions as phonemic complement to T539. To conclude this ceramic text provides, thus, good evidence that T539 is substituting T157 and that the sign T157 represents also the logograph /**WAY**/.



Figure 2: Codex Style Ceramic Vessel (photograph by Justin Kerr, Kerr 3201; FAMSI homepage, www.famsi.org)

References Cited

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