

AN UNUSUAL SIGN: THE “WRINKLE” LOGOGRAM IN MAYA WRITING

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This short note is based on David Stuart's discussion of the pre-accession name of *K'ihnich-7Ahku7l-Mo7-Naahb'* III (2005: 151, Fig. 115-116). Stuart notes that the pre-accession name of *K'ihnich-7Ahku7l-Mo7-Naahb'* III is attested on the sanctuary jambs of Temple XVIII in Palenque (Fig. 1a, b), and among the jumbled stucco glyphs of the same temple (Fig. 1c, No. 492 according to Schele and Matthews 1979). Visiting Palenque in 2011, I have seen two almost identical examples of the name on the fallen stucco glyphs exhibited in the Museum of the archaeological site (Fig. 2).

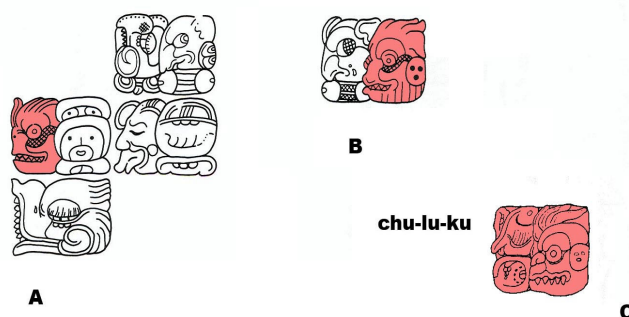


Figure 1. Pre-accession name of *K'ihnich-7Ahku7l-Mo7-Naahb'* III. (A) Sanctuary Jamb Tablets of Temple XVIII in Palenque. (B) Sanctuary Jamb of Temple XVIII in Palenque. (C) Stucco glyph from Temple XVIII in Palenque (after Lucia Henderson's drawings in Stuart 2005: Fig. 115-116).



Figure 2. Pre-accession name of *K'ihnich-7Ahku7l-Mo7-Naahb'* III. Fallen stucco glyph from Temple XVIII in Palenque (photo by the author).

The name is written with the sign T1068, a glyph representing the head of a 'crested-lizard'. It is a naturalistic depiction of the Basilisk (*Basiliscus sp.*; Greek βασιλίσκος "little king") with a characteristic comb, small sharp teeth, large scales on its lower jaw, the distinctive brow of the serpent and a 'three-dots' reptilian ear, the iconographic design common to many Maya logographic representations of reptiles and amphibians. The pictorial elements mentioned can be easily seen on a close-up photo of this fabulous creature called Jesus lizard for its abilities to run on the water surface (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Plumed basilisk *Basiliscus plumifrons* (photo by Hans Hillewaert in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basiliscus_plumifrons).

A common term for basilisk in Lowland Mayan languages (Kaufman and Justeson 2003, Wichmann and Brown n.d.) is **t'ohlok*. It is attested in Ch'orti: *t'ohrok* "crest of bird or animal, charancaso or bebe-leche (a small edible crested lizard, about three feet long, said to suck the milk of cows at night)", cf. *saksak t'ohrok* "a small light-gray lizard (cotete blanco)", *tantan t'ohrok* "cotete (a small crested lizard resembling the charancaco)", *yaxyax t'ohrok* "cotete verde (small lizard)", see also *tojrok'*, *tojro'k* "basilisco, cutete, cuatete", Chol de Tumbalá: *t'orjol* "toloque (basilisco, pasarrios, reptil), Chontal: *7ah-t'olok* "toloque, passarios", and Tzeltal de Bachajón: *j-t'olok* "salamanquesa". A comparable cognate set refers to similar species in Yukatek (*tóolok* "lagarto otro que anda por los árboles; una especie de iguana con cresta o montera; basilisco"), Lacandón (*tóorok* "lagartija"), Itzaj (*7aj-*

tolok "chameleon"), Poqomchi" (*tohlook* "lagartija"), Poqomam (*tahlook* "lagartija"), Q'eqchi" (*tohlok* "lagartija") and Kaqchikel (*ʔix-tolok* "lagartija"). It is possible that the last word is attested several times in Classic Maya inscriptions as a part of personal names: **7AJ-YA7X to-lo-ki** *ʔAj-Yaʔx-Tohlook* "He of Green Basilisk" (a polychrome cylindrical vessel from El Señor del Petén [K9144, Cortés de Brasdefer 1996: 6], see also K3026, K8123).

Unfortunately, I am not aware of either phonetic complements or phonetic substitutions for the 'Crested-Lizard' glyph at Palenque, so it would be premature to suggest any reading for the sign. It is worth noting in this regard that the words for the basilisk in Lowland Mayan languages are symbolic in origin, being derived from lexemes for "crest" pGrLL #teel, #tzel (cf. pLL *tel "stretch out, long, extended") and "spine" (cf. pLL *t'ol "cut up in section, align, be aligned") by means of the -Vk, -VC and -VS suffixes for affective adjectives, where V stands for the synharmonic vowel, in other words, a vowel identical to the vowel of the root, C for any affricate and S for any sibilant (for symbolic/affective words in Mayan languages see for example Keller 1984, Kaufman 2006): Chol *tzeljol* "basilisco, iguana", Tzotzil *telex* "Jesus Christ lizard, *Basiliscus vittatus*", *t'elech* "basilisco, cuatete, salamanquesa", Tzeltal *t'ehlech~t'erech* "basilisco, cuatete" (Kaufman and Justeson 2003), Epigraphic Mayan *teles* (Marc Zender 2010, pers. comm.). Interpretation of the forms adduced as symbolic in origin explains the chaotically preserved final consonant, as well as alternation between lateral consonants and rhotics and between glottalized and plain consonants, attested for symbolic words in Mayan languages. It also suggests the following possible translations for the derived forms in question: "crested", "striated", "walking with long tail" (cf. Yukatek *t'ó'ot'ó'ol* aj. "striated", Tzotzil *telet, telelet* av. "walking with long tail").

The sign in question is similar but not identical in form to the logogram for **TELES** "basilisk" in the inscriptions on Bonampak monuments (Fig. 4) that has been recently deciphered by Marc Zender (Marc Zender 2010, pers. commun.). Probably, the two logograms have different readings based on different words for basilisk, or even refer to two different species of the genus *Basiliscus* or less probably, in my opinion, represent two regional variants of the same sign.

As David Stuart has previously mentioned, the fallen glyphs of Temple XVII (Fig. 1c) bear an interesting addition of the prefixed syllables **chu[lu]-ku**. In Ch'orti', the same word *chuluk* is a noun for "wrinkle" and an adjective for "wrinkled" (Stuart 2005: 151). A similar word is attested in Tzeltal *chuhlek'tik* "arruga (de la cara por la vejéz)". Both words seem to be

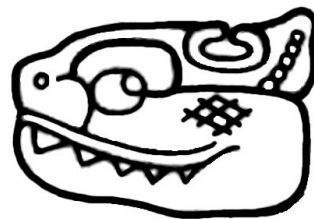


Figure 4. The logogram for **TELES** "basilisk" from Bonampak Stela 1 (after drawing by Peter Mathews).

derived from a positional verb root **chul-*, cf. Yukatek *chul* (pv) "swell up, blister" (Chol de Tumbalá *chulu7 ha7* "chorrito de agua", Chontal *chulub', chulu7 ha7* "agua de lluvia", etc.). If we take a closer look at the first two examples of *K'ihnich-7Ahku7l-Mo7-Naahb'* III's pre-accession name (Fig. 1a, b), we may see that the only difference between the examples in Fig. 1a and b, on the one hand, and the examples in Fig. 1c and Fig. 2, on the other one, is a thick black line crossing the 'Crested Lizard' Sign under the eye (Fig. 5) in the former examples.



Figure 5. Unusual sign.

I suggest that this line is an unusual **CHULUK** "winkle, wrinkled" logogram written in conflation with the 'Crested Lizard' sign. Therefore, the child's name of *K'ihnich-7Ahku7l-Mo7-Naahb'* III might be "Wrinkled Basilisk", a quite felicitous nickname for a newborn baby king.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Alexandre Tokovinine for his help in the preparation of the note and to Cecil Brown, Otto Schumann, Søren Wichmann and Una Canger for the opportunity to work with their unpublished manuscripts. Many thanks to Marc Zender for sharing his observations and thoughts with me.

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