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The Sacred Obligations of War and Reciprocity: Readings for T78:514 and its Syllabic Substitutions

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Introduction

The most elusive interpersonal agency expression in the Maya script has been T78:514 and its various derivations and presumed substitutions (Figure 1). While with other agency expressions a secure syllabic substitution or regular orthography makes the morphology and meaning transparent, with T78:514 the relationships between the logographic and syllabic spellings have been vexingly uncertain. The spellings which should be equivalent to T78:514 present irreconcilable phonological conflicts. Prior efforts at correlation of all known spelling variants have led to such problematic proposals as *eht, *e'te' or *ehte' (Martin 2004:105-115).¹

We are obliged to conclude that *only a pair of near-homophones*—both appropriate to the relationship between a captor and a captive, and both fitting the syntactic frame within which they substitute in military contexts—offers a viable solution. The evidence for this proposal lies in a rabbit-warren of morphophonemic argumentation into which we happily invite the reader.

'Fellow, Companion...' (also 'Portrait,' 'Property')

The history of the attempted decipherment of T78:514 is complex, and has previously been summarized by Martin (2004), Bíró (2011a:14-29), and Gronemeyer (2014, n. 942). We observe three principal categories of proposals. Early researchers implicitly connected this term to 'companionship'

(Schele 1991b:75; Schele and Mathews 1991:235; Martin 2004) via the Ch'olan and Yucatecan roots 'et and *'eHt 'fellow-', 'co-X' (Kaufman and Justeson 2003:1519). Stephen Houston (in Stuart 1998:Note 5) proposed a reading TE' ~ ET for a set of roots 'e[h]t, meaning 'companion, friend, work, likeness' (Gronemeyer 2014:Note 942). This methodology was useful at a time when decipherment was less exacting; the problems—the occasional -je suffix or absence of an ergative prefix, the function of the TE'² logograph, the restricted cultural domain, the semantic looseness—were not yet being addressed. This expression was sometimes stated to

¹ Martin (2004: 112) "There is currently no easy choice between these alternatives: 1) et/e'teht, 2) e'ht, 3) e'te'/ehte'."

² In this paper we use the following rules of orthography, transliteration, and transcription: when a given text is presented there will be a full broad transliteration and a broad transcription using the alphabet designed by the Guatemalan Academy of Mayan Languages. In transliteration, a single question mark directly following a grapheme indicates uncertain decipherment, and when it stands alone it indicates an unknown reading. An ellipsis (...) indicates erosion in a given monument. Transliteration will be given in **boldface** letters, with syllabograms in **lower case** and logographs in **UPPER CASE**, separated by hyphens. In the transliteration we do not employ the glottal stop with the initial vowel but we do put it in the transcription (i.e., **AJAW** ~ 'ajaw). The pronominal clitics *u* and *a* are not preceded by a glottal stop in relevant Mayan languages, so we will not transcribe them. In some cases in the transcription we distinguish morphemes with hyphens (i.e., *y-ajaw te'*, *u-we'-ij-iy*). Furthermore, we do not follow proposed

be a verb; at other times it was interpreted as a noun. In relevant languages, the *'et/*'eht* 'fellow-' term forms compounds with intransitive verb roots to create complex nouns with meanings like 'co-worker' and 'fellow-traveler'; it is also the basis for conjunctions such as *y-éet-el* 'with', 'and' in Yucatec.

More recently, Gronemeyer (2014:Note 942) has supported a reading **ET** for the logogram ZZ5 (T78:514) in the Macri-Looper (MHD) Database, stating "more viable is the nominal(ised) GLL cognate set *e(h)t* with the broad meaning range 'co-..., company, friend, work, semblance'." He also (ibid.:Note 725) cites a proposal by Erik Boot (2009:25), who was the first to propose the logogram at Dzibanche' to be the possessed *'atej*, "companion" (**ya-TE'-je**), based on the derived transitive verb *'at-ey* 'be in partnership with' in Tzotzil (Laughlin 1988:137). Such a nominalized form is unattested. Boot (2009:25) also proposed *'atejaj* (?) 'companion person' for the most common presentation at Dzibanche'. While for several reasons we don't consider the "companion" proposal viable, we will defer further consideration of it until the Discussion.

Other suggestions for T78:514 and related spellings circulating at this time

included *'eht* from Ch'ol *'ehtaläl* 'semejanza, foto' (Aulie and Aulie 1978:57)—by extension 'portrait,' referring to the nine stucco images in the Temple of the Inscriptions tomb,³ and Eastern Mayan *'eht* 'property' suggested by Terrence Kaufman at the 1999 Texas Maya Meetings workshop. Neither suggestion reached more than a speculative level, and in our view neither meets the morphophonemic and semantic constraints imposed by the full body of examples.

'Spear-Fellow, Spear-Edge, Spear-Tooth, Counting Stick...'

The second category has been motivated by the phonology of related sets of spellings—presumed substitutions with **ye-T78:514**—such as **ye-he/je-T87(TE')** which include the logogram **TE'** in final position at Yaxchilan. Because these came to predominate in Late Classic warfare contexts, they suggested a phrase including Ch'olan *te'* 'wood' or 'spear' or a derivative battlefield metaphor; it remained only to discern the first half of the phrase. Worthy of acknowledgment is Riese's (1982:281-283) proposal of the set of signs as *Sieger* 'victor' and "as a war-context relational noun, connecting a defeated person or site with the protagonist" (Gronemeyer 2014:Note 942).

But orthographic dissonance and awkward or improbable semantics arose with attempts to project these

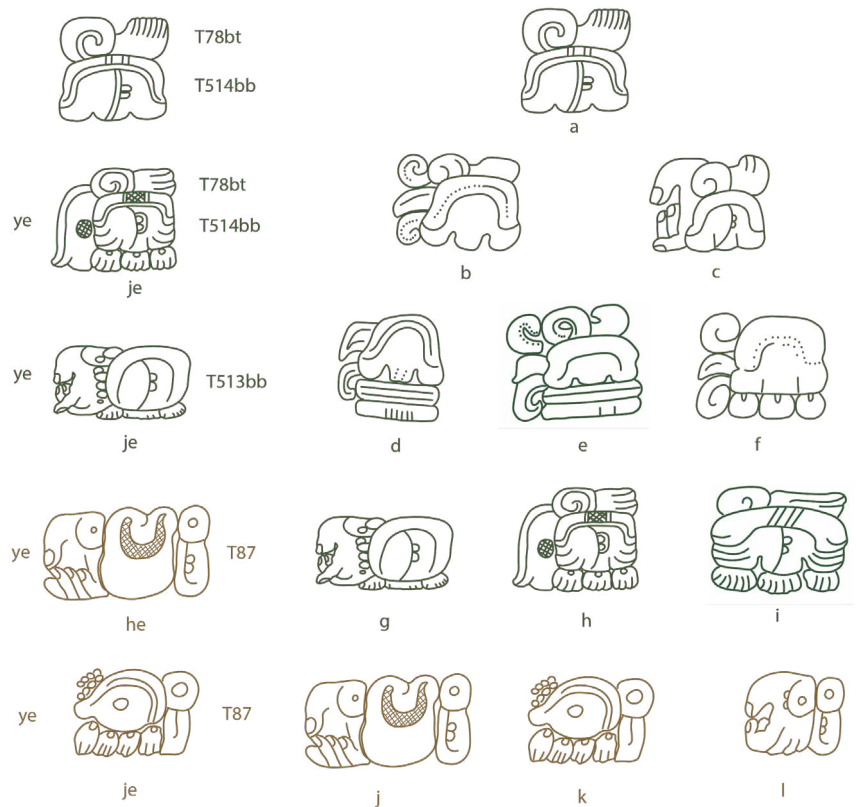


Figure 1. (abbreviations: bt = bipartite top; bb = bipartite bottom in a digraph): (a) T78:514; (b) **ya**-T78:514; (c) **ye**-T78:514; (d) **ya**-T514-AJ; (e) **ya**-T78:514-AJ; (f) **ya**-T78:514-je; (g) **ye**-T513-je; (h) **ye**-T78:514-je; (i) T78:514-je; (j) **ye-he**-T87; (k) **ye-je**-T87; (l) **ye**-T87 (drawings by Péter Bíró).

disharmonic rules in the paper and we do not accept the existence of morphosyllables; therefore this category of signs will not be represented in our transliterations or in transcriptions.

Transcription is in *italics*, and every independent lexeme will be written in lowercase letters. Any reconstruction (historical, internal, and palaeographical) is in square brackets []. An ellipsis (...) in transcription indicates unknown reading. Literal translations will be given between single quotation marks ('...').

³ This proposal fits the context of the tomb, and proto-Mayan **'ehtaal* 'huella, rastro, señal' is archaic and widespread in Mayan (Kaufman 2003:191). But all reflexes have the *-a(a)l* suffix, and in most T78:514 contexts, 'portrait' is inapplicable while 'sign, track' is an overly-long reach, or cannot function without an ergative, or leaves a final *-je* suffix unexplained. Furthermore, it does not explain the documented *a>e* vowel change, which will be further elaborated in a later section.

Proto-Ch'olan **'ehtal* is attested in the inscriptions, spelled phonetically in two different constructions as **ye-ta** (once on Bonampak Stela 2) or **ye-te** (on the Tortuguero Box, Yaxchilan Stela 11, and on the Piedras Negras Tomb 5 Shell Plaques). In all cases, the forms are either connected to **K'ABA'-a-li** or **k'a-ba-li** with the meaning of 'namesake [name-likeness]' and 'together [same-hand]', resulting in a transcription of *'e[h]t-k'a'bal*. These spellings are clearly different from the logographic and syllabic members of the T78:514 constellation.

‘wood-and-spear’ solutions back onto T78:514 itself—whose syntactic idiosyncrasies and final *-je* phonetic complementation defied suggestions based upon *TE’*.⁴

Foremost in this regard are the Late Classic spellings of *ye-he/je-TE’* at Yaxchilan employing T87.⁵ Guillermo Bernal (2015) and Alexandre Tokovinine (2019a:77-100, 2020:276-298) have each interpreted these to represent a “spear” term, with Bernal proposing the reading as *yej te’* ‘lance-edge’⁶ and Tokovinine proposing *(y-)eh te’* ‘tooth spear’ (halberd).⁷ Recently, Albert Davletshin (in press) has written an excellent paper on his decipherment of the *tz’o* syllabogram. However, in his analysis of the T78:514 *-tz’o-no* phrase at Tonina he proposes several ideas which we will refute in our Discussion, including (1) that T514 is graphically a wooden pendant serving as a military insignia, and (2) that all spellings—T78:514, *ye-TE’* and variants—may be transcribed as *[yleht]* (related to Ch’ol *’ehtaläl* above) and refer to captives as ‘reward’ and ‘payment’.

We have taken the aforementioned “spear” ideas into account and disagree—not only with the **(y)eh* ‘tooth/edge’ component but also with the back-casting upon T78:514 a “spear” metaphor or a *TE’* component. For Dzibanche’, where T78:514 always has a *ya-* prefix (which must encode both the 3rd singular ergative *y-* plus the initial vowel of the following word), Tokovinine (2019:86) has offered a reading *’al[h]t te’-aj* ‘counting stick-person’ as applied to counted captives. But because the foregoing proposals presume a “spear” or “wood” component in the T78:514 word itself, they run afoul of its several secure non-military contexts. Furthermore, they cannot explain the absence of an ergative prefix at Yaxchilan, Tortuguero, Tonina, Palenque, and Piedras Negras: the word *te’*—either alone or as part of a compound noun—may not function as a bare, unpossessed predicate. This grammatical problem cannot be ignored, nor can the graphically absent pronominal prefix be “reconstructed” in this case, in contrast with underspelled ergatives in recurring royal names. We now turn to the third approach.

‘Sacred Service (for the Gods)’

Another avenue of interpretation, first developed by MacLeod (n.d. and at the Texas Maya Meetings workshops 2000–2004 and in 2003 correspondence with Simon Martin), and supported by Terrence Kaufman (personal communication 2003) connects T78:514 and its derivations to the proto-Mayan transitive root **’ab* ‘send on an errand,’ its proto-Western Mayan reflex **’abt-ej* ‘trabajar’ (g.v.), its Greater Tzeltalan reflexes *’abtej* ‘trabajar’ (i.v.) and *’abt-el* ‘trabajo,’ ‘cargo religioso’ (t.v. > n.) noted in Tzotzil (Laughlin 1975:2; Laughlin and Haviland 1988:126), an inferred transitive stem **’ab.t-* ‘serve (someone/-thing),’ and *’e’tel* ‘autoridades’ in Ch’ol (Kaufman and Justeson 2003:58).⁸ These ‘work’ terms in Tzotzil have a range of meanings from the caretaking obligations of religious cargo-holders in the

cofradías to the daily work in the *milpa*. In addition to Ch’ol *’e’tel* (also a general term for ‘trabajo/work’), that language has instrumental derivations *’e’tejibäl/’e’tijibäl* ‘equipment for work’ (Aulie and Aulie 1978:58; Hopkins et al. 2011:57, citing Becerra 1935:263). A singular advantage of the ‘work’ interpretation with modern reflexes

⁴ Notwithstanding a Late Classic spelling of the *Yajawte’ K’inich* title on the PAL T.XIX Bench, S, W3, wherein the usual and expected T(78):513 *TE’* is substituted with T78:514 instead. Epigraphers have used this TXIX “tail” to wag the non-viable “dog” of all earlier T78:514 examples. In a Facebook discussion on the topic of the decipherment of T78:514, David Stuart referenced the Palenque spelling, suggesting that it was “important ... to consider [that] the sign proposed by Guillermo [Bernal] as *YEJ* is probably a detailed variant of the *TE’* logogram” (personal communication 2015, translated from Spanish). But the substitution is both unique and late, suggesting that it might not fully bear on the earlier and widespread T78:514 agency expressions.

⁵ T78:513 has its own path in the script (Martin 2004:110) which is largely independent of the T514-related expression under discussion. While we find it multiple times in the sequence *ye-TE’-je* on HS. 1, it is not used in final position to spell **ye-je-TE’* on that stairway. In several environments—notably the spellings of the “13- or 14-T78:513” title at Tikal and especially *’iximte’el kakaw* in the dedicatory rim texts on ceramics—it has the value *TE’* and substitutes for T(87):513 (Martin 2004:110, n. 5). T78 presents its own puzzle, as it seems to have no independent value, save one apparent exception in the Dresden Codex. The *ye-he/je-TE’* spellings employing T87 *TE’* appear only at Yaxchilan, but at Tonina and a few other sites, they are replaced by *ye-TE’* (with T87) in the same context, that being to introduce the captor (and not the captive) in war and capture statements.

⁶ Bernal Romero (2015a, 2015b) identified the T514 logogram as the molar (*y-eh*) of a jaguar. We respect his contribution but disagree with the reading.

⁷ Tokovinine (2019:85): “If this assumption is correct, T78:514 likely stands for a conflation of *TE’* with a logogram that would most likely be *EH*, “tooth,” and potentially a third glyph with a reading that begins with *a-*, as the examples prefixed by *ya-* appear to indicate. Therefore, the full *difrasismo* would consist of *y-eh-te’-(aj)*, “his/her *eh-te’* (person),” and *y-a ...-te’-(aj)*, “his/her *a ... te’* (person); (2020:293): “If such interpretation of the T78:514 and related glyphs is correct, the captives were referred to as people who pertained to the weapons and the accounting devices of the captor, his “halberd (person)” and “tally (person).”

⁸ In her proposed analysis of the T78:514 word, MacLeod references not the *-ej* intransitivizing suffix of Tzeltal and Tzotzil but rather an archaic nominalizer/participle suffix *-ej* on transitive stems hitherto unattested in Ch’olan (Kaufman 2015:307, 311, 319, 416, 459, 465; see also Laughlin 1975:25). On p. 319 Kaufman cites MacLeod’s discovery of the morpheme in Epigraphic Mayan. We propose that T78:514 as *ABTEJ/E’TEJ* represents a transitive stem **’ab.t > *’e(b).t-* plus the nominalizer/participle suffix **-ej* wherein **-ej* has been incorporated and the word fossilized while retaining its syntactic roles. As a participle it operates as a predicate adjective with no ergative (e.g., Yaxchilan L. 11, 49; Palenque Temple XVII); with an ergative (e.g., Yaxchilan L. 37, 35; Palenque Scribe Tablet) it is a possessed nominalization. The ergative prefix is cued by either *ya-* (Dzibanche’) or *ye-* (elsewhere).

John Justeson (personal communication 2009), proposed that the word was derived from a transitive verb ‘to carry out someone’s orders, to work’ (on this we agree), which relates to script forms *ye-be-ta* (later *ye-be-te*) ‘servant, messenger.’ While this is cognate with our proposal for T78:514, there are no substitutions linking them.

'*abtej* and '*e'tel* is that the well-documented */a/ : /e/ vowel correspondence explains the early **ya**-T78:514 spellings at Dzibanche' vis-à-vis the comparably early **ye**-T78:514 spellings on the earliest lintels of Yaxchilan.⁹ The (ye)-T78:514(-je) form continued at other sites, notably Palenque, into the Late Classic.

The challenges of T78:514 and its related forms are uniquely complex in the corpus, largely because the logogram was already archaic at first appearance, preserving and incorporating derivations no longer productive in the script language, and it encoded a concept so fundamental to the pact of reciprocity between men and gods that in its most sacrosanct contexts it could not be superseded. To add to epigraphers' woes, it became entangled with a different term—one with comparable cultural potency which substituted semantically in battle contexts. We ultimately pursue no ordinary "interpersonal agency expression."

Within a wide chronological and geographic overview, not only do patterns emerge, but presuppositions forged in a narrower field are re-evaluated. A closer look at one specific text (Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 of Yaxchilan) has prompted a course-change. We believe we have finally resolved the perplex of T78:514 and its substitutions in combining approaches outlined above via a pair of near-homophones—one a battle metaphor not previously suggested based on 'spear' and the other a long-standing suggestion based on 'work.'

Given the cultural contexts—military and otherwise—for the logogram under investigation, given the entries for '*abtej* in Tzeltalan and '*e'tel* in Ch'ol which associate these with 'authority,' 'responsibility,' and 'religious cargo,' and considering the cognate nouns '*ab-at* and '*ebet* 'servant, messenger' (Kaufman and Norman 1984:119), we propose a reading and transcription **ABTEJ/E'TEJ** '*abt-ej*/'*e'tej* for T78:514 in all contexts. We translate it as 'sacred service (for the gods).' We will demonstrate its function as both a participle and a possessed nominalization. We will argue that the spelling **ye-TE'-je** *y-el*/'*tej* (employing T78:513 in medial position specifically, on Yaxchilan HS. 1 and twice at Palenque) is the same word, now "unpacked" and consistently possessed, with the meaning 'it was his sacred service.' We will argue that other similar syllabic substitutions (**ye-he**/'**je-TE'** and **ye-TE'**) are *not* this word but rather a possessed incorporating compound *y-eh*[t]-*te'* or *y-el*[ht]-*te'* (depending on spelling), literally 'try-the-spear' or more usefully, 'his battle-trial,' including the transitive root '*eht* 'test, try, attempt' reconstructed to proto-Ch'olan with reflexes in Ch'orti' (Kaufman and Norman 1984; Hull 2016; Korovina/Wisdom 2019).¹⁰ We suggest that this pair of near-homophones resolves the readings of this set of signs in all contexts, including late ones—perhaps only one—in which we discern a rare merger or crossover. We now proceed to an inventory through time and space of T78:514 and the syllabic collocations

which substitute with it.

Parts of this investigation are laid out chronologically within one site. Although we will at times follow a chronological thread in jumping between sites, our path traces the interface between linguistic and epigraphic evidence but also considers the military and religious eggregore of the term(s). Thus we will sometimes backtrack in time, or move to another site, in pursuit of a cultural/political lens apart from dry issues of morphemic equivalence, patterns of substitution, and evolution of spellings across the region. Special attention will be given to topics such as the buildings termed (9)-T78:514 *Nah*, their associated warrior titles and tombs, the implications and distribution of examples with no ergative prefix, and the later, incipient crossover between two subtly distinct sets of spellings. In the midst we ask, and try to answer: what was so special about these terms that they were used so sparingly and only at certain Classic cities?

Spatio-Temporal Inventory of T78:514 and Its Substitutions

We acknowledge the considerable previous research (Martin 2004:105-115; Velásquez García 2004:80; Nahm 2006; Bíró 2011a:24-29; Bernal Romero 2015a, 2015b;

⁹ The proposed relationship of *'abtej and '*e'tej* reflects the [a] > [e] shift of assimilation of the root vowel to the vowel of a following suffix such as -et or -el. In relevant languages, this is documented in a handful of entries. Only two of these in Ch'olan are vowel-initial; **7ab- 'work' and **7aaty 'partner' (Mora-Marín personal communication 2022). Examples provided by Mora-Marín (personal communication 2022):

proto-Mayan *'aaty > Tzeltalan *'aty > Tzotzil 'at > Ch'orti 'et-
'partner'
proto-Mayan *'aab > *'ab > Tzeltalan *'abel > Ch'ol 'e't-el 'work'
proto-Mayan *'aab-eety-el proto-Ch'olan *'ebet > *'ebt-el
proto-Ch'olan *bak'-et Yokot'an bek'et 'body'
proto-Ch'olan *cha'-le Yokot'an, Ch'orti' che 'to do, make'
Tzeltalan *samet proto-Ch'olan *seme[h]t
proto-Mayan *wa' > *wa'-eel Greater Tzeltalan *we';
proto-Ch'olan *we'-el 'meat', 'to eat'

Apart from **ABTEJ/E'TEJ** in Epigraphic Mayan there is another item of vowel-shift from */a/ to */e/ in the pair *wa'el* and *we'el* in the inscriptions (note the final pair above). While elsewhere we have the spellings **WE'-le**, **WE'-ne** and **WE'-bi**, on the Palenque "K'an Tok Panel," there is a spelling **wa-WA'/WE'-la** which we interpret as *wa'el* "meat." The expression appears in a title sequence **K'AN-to-ko-wa-WA'/WE'-la**, which we take as a toponym 'Precious Burning Feast (for the gods)'—a burnt sacrificial offering. We propose the **wa-** as a clue that the vowel /e/ in **WE'** should be read as /a/. We speculate that an old place name—that of the first noble mentioned on the panel, who lived in the fifth century—motivated the preservation of the archaic form *wa'el*.

¹⁰ A well-known compound in the Classic script with an identical transitive verb root - object structure is *u-k'al-tun* 'his stone-binding'; it refers to a king's formal commemoration of major cycles in the Long Count. Compounds of this structure in Mayan languages have been termed "strong" by Nora England (1983:70).

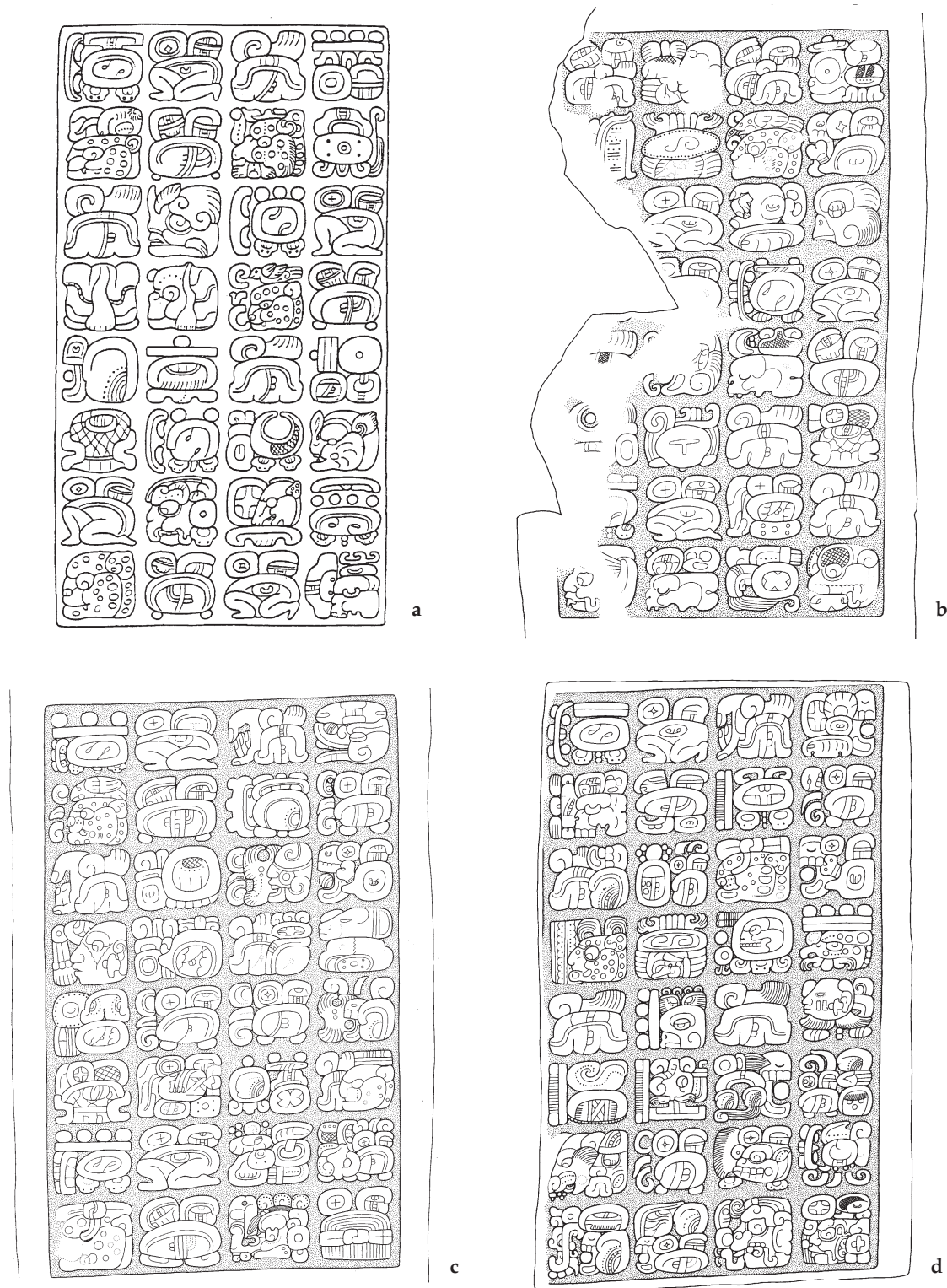


Figure 2. Yaxchilan lintels: (a) Lintel 11 (drawing by Peter Mathews); (b) Lintel 49 (drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 2004.15.6.6.22); (c) Lintel 37 (drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 2004.15.6.6.8); (d) Lintel 35 (drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 2004.15.6.6.7).

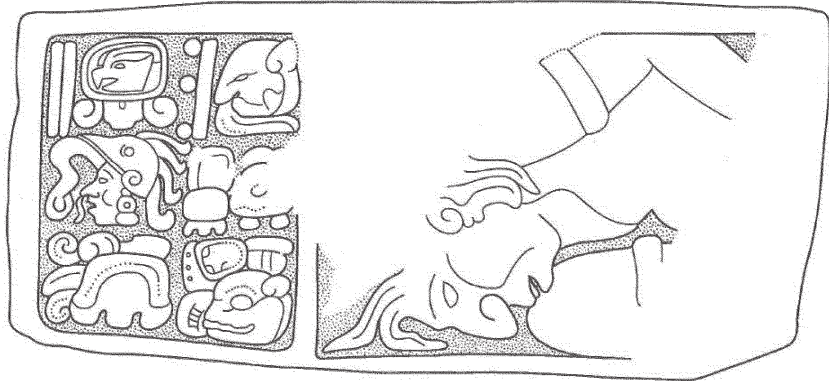
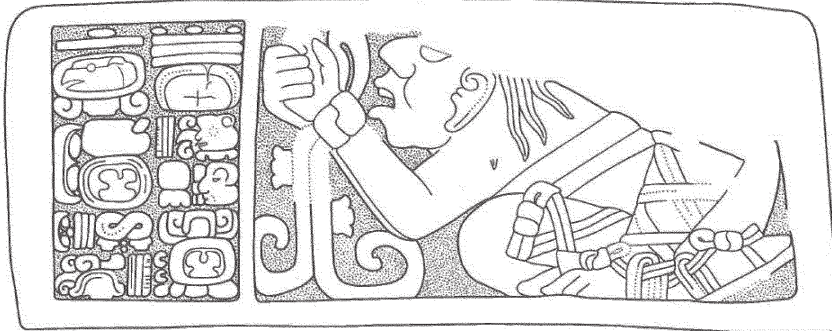


Figure 3. Dzibanche Monuments 13 and 15 (drawings by Erik Velásquez García).

Robert Wald, personal communication 2003) and other sources upon which our own finds footing. We follow the same methodological path as Simon Martin (2004 and personal communication 2003), who investigated in detail the formal distribution of the T78:514 expression and its substitutions.

Early Classic Period: Dzibanche' and Early Yaxchilan

The earliest attested form of the logogram is T78:514, and while various epigraphers have considered that it is a composite logograph—an archaic conflation—its history is elusive.¹¹

The first known occurrences of the T78:514 logogram are found on the early lintels of Structure 12 at Yaxchilan, Chiapas, dedicated close to 537 CE, and on the hieroglyphic stairway steps of Dzibanche', Quintana Roo, which were dedicated between 490 and 518 (Velásquez García 2004:81-82). The Yaxchilan Lintels 11, 49, 37, and 35 (in this order) comprise one extended narrative, wherein the spelling is T78:514 alone in thirteen cases and **ye**-T78:514 in three cases without any difference in syntax (Figure 2). At Dzibanche' there is a consistent **ya**- prefix with a variety of suffixes: one notes **ya**-T514-**je** (one case); **ya**-T78:514-**AJ** (five cases); **ya**-T78:514 (two cases); and **ya**-T514-**AJ** (one case; Figure 3). From this it is apparent that T514

¹¹ An article by Bíró, MacLeod, and Grofe (2014:176-177, n. 18) identifies a unique example of Cumku as T78:506 on page 62 of the Dresden Codex, wherein the Era Day anchor (13.0.0.0.0) 4 Ahau 8 Cumku appears at the bottom of sequential pages amid deep-time counts approximating 30,000-plus years BCE. In all cases save this one, the superfix on the main sign of Cumku (T506 OHL) is the standard T155. The authors demonstrate that a very early value of T155 was **AH**—later superseded by **BIX** and by **HUL** at Tonina—and argue for the semantic motivation for all these values in this “final month” context. Assuming that the superfix in the Dresden example is indeed T78, it suggests that the sign alone may have had an archaic ***A(')** value which survived into Postclassic times. Nonetheless, we now prefer to understand the antecedent to T78:514 as a syllabic spelling **ya-TE(')**-**je** *y-a'tej* employing T78:513 **TE'** without assigning a separate value to T78.

was the lexical carrier of the logogram at Dzibanche', and that T78 was optional amid other markers. This is almost unique, because across time and geography, T78 is ubiquitous with T514 (one exception at Tonina will be considered later).

Because of affixation to the logogram and the syntax, both Simon Martin (2004:114-115) and Erik Velásquez García (2004:80) concluded that **ya-T78:514-je** was a verbal form and that **ya-T78:514-AJ** was an agentive noun derived by an *-aj* suffix. We consider both to be possessed nominalizations with the **-AJ/-aj** suffix marking a nominalized antipassive (NAP) rather than an agentive noun, because the latter tend to be unpossessed. Importantly, these contrasting nominalizations correspond to two different syntactic patterns in these texts: those with T12 **-AJ** follow ordinal constructions (with one exception) and the others (with **-je** or no suffix) do not. More discussion will follow, but let's now consider the early Yaxchilan lintels.

Structure 12 is an unassuming building in the Central Acropolis of Yaxchilan—a great city built on a promontory around which the Usumacinta River formed a horseshoe bend. It had an extensive Early as well as Late Classic occupation. Lintels 11, 49, 37, and 35 were originally situated in an unknown Early Classic structure and later repositioned by Yaxun Bahlam IV into four doorways of Structure 12. They had been commissioned by K'inich Tatbu Jol (who acceded in 526) as a tribute to himself and his nine dynastic forebears and their successful campaigns against Bonampak, Piedras Negras (repeatedly), and Calakmul. These lintels, which have different histories of discovery amid rubble in front of the northeast doorways of the building—recount a series of ten royal “sit-downs”—a descriptor for an early logogram for accession. Each employs (with ergative *u-* and a coefficient) an ordinal construction followed by the T700 “squatting legs” logogram (syntactically part of a noun phrase) with an **AJAW** superfix which is substituted for by the accession phrase *chumwani ti 'ajawlel* ‘he sat in rulership’ on Hieroglyphic Stair 1 (Nahm 2006:28). On the lintels this is followed repeatedly by the name and Emblem Glyph of an early Yaxchilan king, then is followed by T78:514, and then by a complex nominal phrase naming a prisoner from another polity destined for sacrifice amid the festivities. Later in the four-lintel chronicle the **ye-** prefix appears thrice on T78:514, but not in sequence, as if to display grammatical options. The subtext of these ten accessions—for years ambiguous—has been elucidated by a progressive denouement of regional politics and specifically by the corresponding narrative on Hieroglyphic Stair 1, the first part of which is a Late Classic reiteration of the histories of these early ten kings of the dynasty, their accessions and their relation to these same captives (Mathews 1997; Nahm 2006; Bíró 2011a). At the close of the narrative on Lintel

35, we are told via the sentence *u-we'-ij-iy* (nominals of two patron gods) that ‘they (patron gods) ate them (the foregoing captives)’—in a manner we might imagine amid protocols of Classic Maya sacrifice. The point is not to be gory, but to position T78:514 ‘*e'tej*’ in a context wherein (as we are told at each turn) these captives were engaged in ‘sacred service.’ We will see that in later texts the stated burden of service shifts exclusively to the kings, not only at Yaxchilan but across the region. We will also see that ‘sacred service’ applies to acts of service to the court other than the offering of captives for sacrifice, and that occasionally gods are its agents.

The **ye-T78:514** and **ya-T78:514-AJ/je** spellings show that at least two forms of the word existed. Current dating of the Dzibanche' texts makes them roughly contemporary with the Yaxchilan early lintel texts, which would suggest a synchronic dialectal difference. Nevertheless, if the stairways were instead earlier (as suggested by Simon Martin in Velásquez García 2004:82), this would then reflect a temporal difference amid which an otherwise-documented vowel change proceeded (see Footnote 8).

We recognize the necessity of having the entire corpus of T78:514 examples and substitutions at hand in order to make progress. Although we are not yet discussing the Late Classic cases, these have continually informed us in proposing readings and semantics. We have considered as clues the **ya-** and **ye-** prefixes; syntactic evidence and overall script patterns show these to be the third-person singular ergative pronoun in many and varied texts. We have noted that on the early Yaxchilan lintels, the favored, and earliest, presentation of the logogram lacks the ergative and that there are otherwise no affixes. This rigorously constrains what the word can be. At Dzibanche' we see an assortment of suffixes, and in substantial agreement with Martin and Velásquez-García, we recognize the collocation syntactically as a noun. We do not view it as a verb—either at Dzibanche' or anywhere else. One finds the T78:514 word to be a counted thing, as part of an ordinal construction. In contrast, the ordinals on the early Yaxchilan lintels count the successive accession ceremonies of the kings, and not their associated acts of prisoner-taking.

Other evidence arises from not only the internal structure of T514 (see Footnote 8) but from the syllabic spelling **ye-T78:513-je** seen on Yaxchilan HS. 1, including the steps which restate the histories of Rulers 1–10. This has long been a clue that the word in question, in addition to being a possessed noun beginning with /'a/ or /'e/, contains the sound /te/ and ends with /ej/. It was this which first led MacLeod to propose the word to be 'abtej/'e'tej. Further support lies in the grammar of a word ending in *-ej* which could operate with or without an ergative prefix amid identical syntax (see Footnotes 3 and 5). Further evidence is found in the grammatical category to which 'abtej/'e'tej belongs: a perfect participle/nominalization derived from a transitive stem



Figure 4. (top) Yaxchilan Lintel 11; (bottom) Yaxchilan Lintel 37 (drawings by Péter Bíró).

by a morpheme *-ej* reconstructed from proto-Mayan forward to Greater Tzeltalan (Kaufman and Justeson 2003:307, 311, 319). In Tzotzil (Laughlin 1975:25; Haviland 1988:86), *-ej* creates verbal nouns from derived transitive stems. For the Early Classic lintels, we suggest *'e'tej-Ø* 'in (a state of) sacred service is (the captive),' and *y-e'tej* 'it is his sacred service, (the captive)' (Figure 4a, b).

u-NAH-TAL-la AJAW:T700 YOP-AT PA'CHAN-AJAW

u-nah-tal ... Yopat Ba[h]lam Pa' Chan 'Ajaw...

“(it was) his first royal seating, Yopat Bahlam, Pa' Chan Lord...”

T78:514 XOK OL ? a-ku 6-ba-na AK

'e'tej Xok 'O[h]l ... 'A[h]k Wak Ban 'Ahk

“in (a state of) sacred service was 'Shark-Heart ... 6 Ban Ahk (of Piedras Negras).”

(Yaxchilan Lintel 11)

u-8-TAL-la AJAW:T700 ya-YAXUN-BALAM

PA'-CHAN-AJAW

u-waxak-tal ... Yaxun Ba[h]lam Pa' Chan 'Ajaw

“(it was) his eighth royal seating, Yaxun Bahlam Pa' Chan Lord”

ye-T78:514 SAK-HA' ? SAK-tzi?-chu-ki PAT-?-ki u-ya-AJAW-TE' ITZAM-K'AN-AK yo-ki-bi-AJAW

y-e't-ej Sak Ha'... Sak Tzichuk Pat ... u-yajaw te' 'Itzam K'an 'A[h]k Yokib 'Ajaw

“(it was) his sacred service, Sak Ha'... Sak Tzichuk Pat ... the spear-lord (war captain) of the Lord of Piedras Negras”

(Yaxchilan Lintel 37)

The following discussion relies largely upon contributions to the 2004 volume *Los cautivos de Dzibanche'* edited by Dr. Enrique Nalda.

The site of Dzibanche', found in 1927 in southern Quintana Roo by Thomas Gann, was a major Classic Maya city situated upon elevated land among seasonal *bajos* just inland from Laguna Bacalar. Gann named it 'written-on wood' for its wooden lintels with cartouches with readable dates. It was the Early Classic seat of the Kan dynasty, as documented in the texts under discussion. Archaeological excavations show that it was in continuous occupation from the Middle Preclassic onward through the Terminal Classic. The steps of the Temple of the Captives were found in disarray amid a fallen hieroglyphic stair during excavations in 1993 by Enrique Nalda (Nalda 2004:13-55; Velásquez García 2004:79-104). They feature short texts usually accompanied by images of humiliated and bound captives. The home cities of the captives are unknown; in all cases the individual taking credit in acts of 'sacred service' is Yuhknom Ch'en I of the Kan dynasty, which originated at Dzibanche' and relocated to Calakmul more than a century later. The texts open with a verbal phrase *'och u-ch'en* 'he entered the cave/center of...' followed by the name of the enemy prisoner (Martin 2004:105-116), and then most often by an ordinal construction in which the *ya*-T78:514 collocation appears. The term *ch'en* 'cave, center (of a city)' is analyzed in detail by Bíró (2011b) and the hostile act *'och-ch'en* 'enters-the-cave of' by Martin (2004).

A full translation would be 'On (date) he entered the cave of [enemy name]; it was the fifth of his acts of sacred service (here "captive-taking"), Yuhknom Ch'en the First.' Although the texts are short, the array of spelling variants is more complex than at early Yaxchilan. Figure 5 and Table 1 illustrate the contrasting spellings and syntax in context.

We propose that in every case, 'captive-taking' is the implied meaning of 'sacred service,' but in other contexts, captives and war need not be mentioned.

In our reduction of these patterns to two contrasting nominalizations *'ab.t-ej* and *'ab.t-aj* with identical translations and different morphemic histories, we keep in mind other examples in the T78:514 inventory, many of which we have not yet introduced. With this data, we assume the core of T78:514 at this site to be *'ab.t-ej*, with *-je* a

recurring phonetic complement. The suffix unique to Dzibanche' is T12 -AJ.¹²

In spelling/syntax patterns (1) and (2) we have **ya-T78:514-AJ** *y-ab.t-aj*—the favored choice, most often associated with a prior ordinal construction *u-#-tal* as in 'it was the fifth of his (acts of) sacred service.' The exception is example (2) following *chuhk-aj* 'was captured...'. We take these all to be *y-abtaj*. Example (3) with **ya-T514-AJ** (with no T78) also belongs to this grammatical set.

In example (4) we see another

¹² We propose an underlying sequence *y-abtej-a-aj for *y-ab.t-aj* 'his (act[s] of) sacred service.' This offers a viable derivational sequence including the -a 'factive' transitivity for noun roots and nominalizations. One must have a transitive stem in order to derive a nominalized antipassive (NAP) in -aj from either an archaic transitive stem *ab.t- or from a transitivized archaic nominalization *abtej-a. We don't know which it was, but have chosen the latter because for obvious reasons we cannot assign a value *ABT- to T78:514 itself. An archaic transitive stem *ab.t-/*eb.t- is implied in Kaufman's acceptance of script E'TEJ as a perfect participle / nominalization with the -ej suffix (see Footnote 7). However, due to 'abtej being an intransitive verb in Tzeltalan languages, the core has been assumed to be *ab.[a]t 'messenger, servant' (Polian 2018:40). Apart from the -ej participle/nominalizer for transitive stems, there is an -ej intransitivizer in Tzeltalan which is not found in Ch'olan.

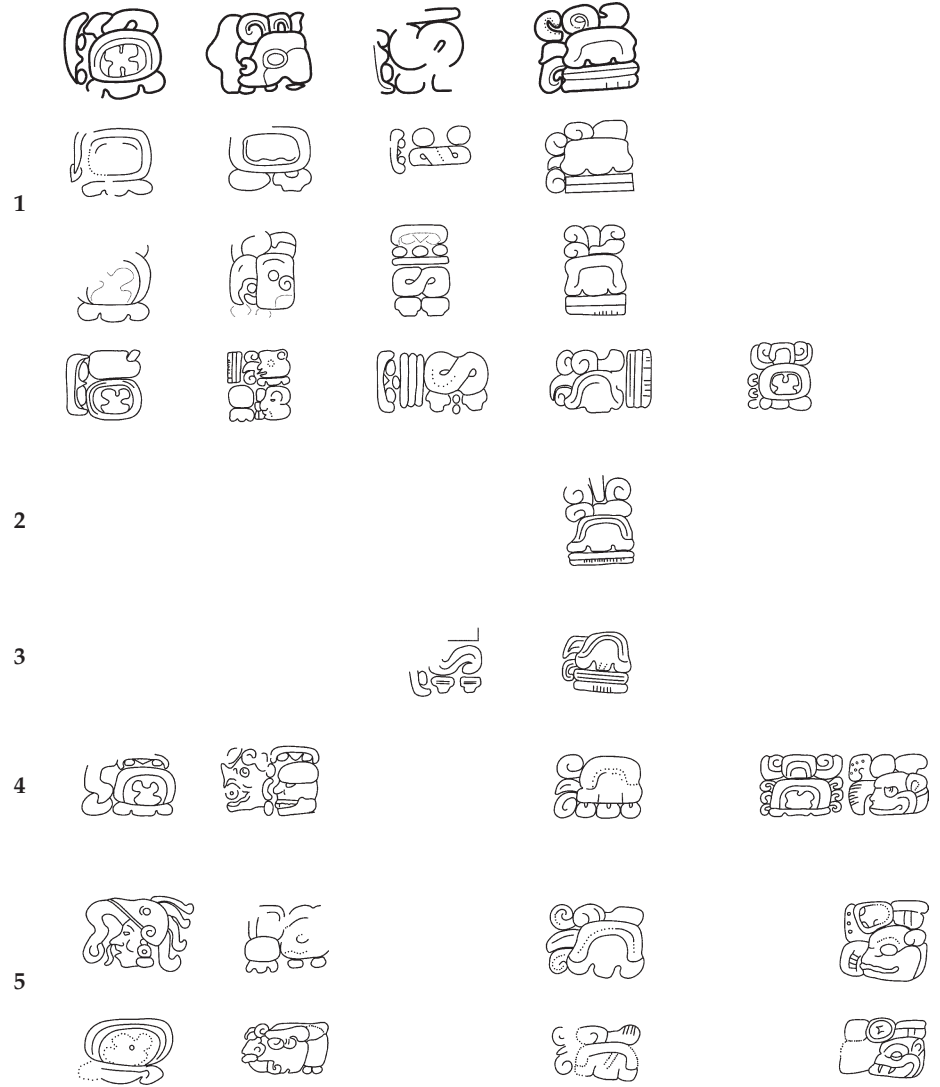


Figure 5. Dzibanche parallel clauses (drawings by Péter Bíró).

- (1) ['och u-ch'en Enemy Name] *u-ho'tal* **ya-T78:514-AJ** *y-ab.t-aj* < *y-abtej-a-aj [King's Name]
'...(it was) the fifth of his (acts of) sacred service' (4 cases, different counts)
- (2) [*chuhk-aj* Enemy Name] **ya-T78:514-AJ** *y-ab.t-aj* < *y-abtej-a-aj [King's Name]
'...(it was) his (act of) sacred service...' (Mon. 13A)
- (3) (eroded text with ordinal) **ya-T514-AJ** *y-ab.t-aj* < *y-abtej-a-aj [King's Name]
'...(it was) his (act of) sacred service...' (Mon. 20A)
- (4) ['och u-ch'en Enemy Name] **ya-T514-je** *y-ab.t-ej* [King's Name]
'...(it was) his (act of) sacred service...' (Mon. 5A)
- (5) ['och u-ch'en Enemy Name] **ya-T78:514** *y-ab.t-ej* [King's Name]
'...(it was) his (act of) sacred service' (Mons. 12A and 15A)

Table 1. Contrasting spellings and syntax of Dzibanche' parallel clauses.

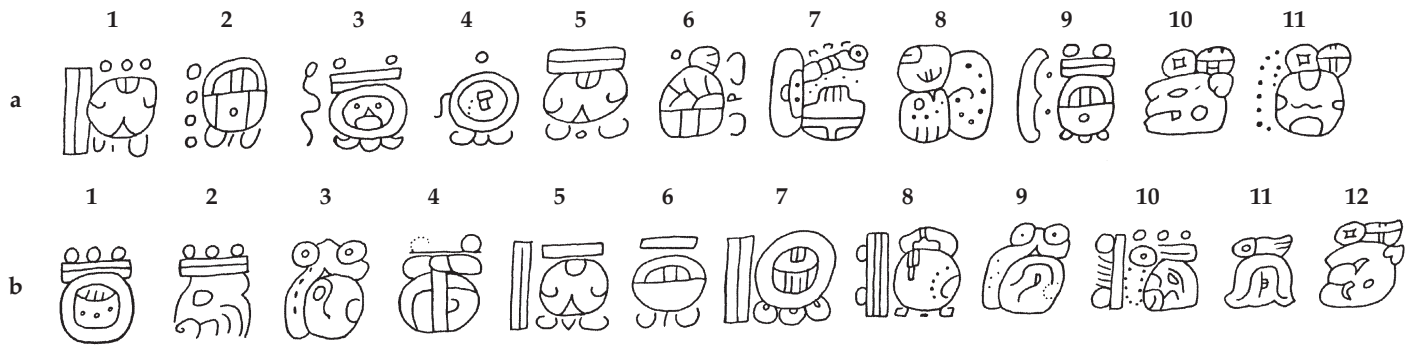


Figure 6. Tortuguero Jade inscription (drawing by Sven Gronemeyer).

ya-514 without T78: it has a *-je* suffix. We assign this to set (5) and assume *-je* is a phonetic complement; all should be *y-abtej*.

We don't know why the possessed nominalized antipassive *'ab.t-aj* was the preferred form of T78:514 at Dzibanche', but perhaps it was being superseded by the *'ab.t-ej* form. It does not appear anywhere else, nor does the /a/-initial T78:514 word, nor the bald absence of T78 on T514, nor the embedding of the ergative-T78:514 expression within an ordinal construction. There are other known cases of a nominalized antipassive (NAP) *-aj* in the script, with suffixed T12 **-AJ** as the preferred marker, but unpossessed agentive nouns are also suffixed with T12. The NAP morpheme is found throughout Ch'olan and Yucatecan languages. These script NAPs are possessed, as in the Distance Number Introductory Glyph (DNIG) **u-TZ'AK-AJ** *u-tz'ak-aj* 'its accumulation was...'. On the other hand, Dzibanche' has no examples of T78:514 without an ergative prefix, nor has it any evidence of attempts to render it phonetically, nor does T78:514 appear at the site in a non-military context.

The Tortuguero Jade Earflare

Following the chronology of T78:514 with a century-plus leap, we briefly visit the Late Classic city of Tortuguero, Tabasco, located some 60 kilometers northwest of Palenque in Chiapas. There is substantial evidence that in the Early Classic the Bakal dynasty of Tortuguero split from that of the same dynastic name which ruled Palenque. Gronemeyer (2006:93-100) recounts the history of the earflare's discovery in 1922 by Frans Blom and its travels through the shadows of the antiquities trade thereafter; its whereabouts are now unknown. Ian Graham was fortunate to have access sometime in the 1960s, long enough to sketch the object and its text. The text opens with a count since a "scattering" event, which is spelled **PAT-ya YAX-?-pu lu-k'a-ba-bu?** *pa[h]t[aj]iy/pa[h]t-iy yax pul-k'ab* 'was made [his] first hand-casting'; the subject is the famous belligerent king Bahlam Ajaw (Figure 6). Two war events on the earflare—his attacks on Comalcalco and on the unknown Ux Te' K'uh—are also

registered in the long history of Tortuguero Monument 6 (Gronemeyer and MacLeod 2010). Pertinent to our investigation is the latter, expressed as a "Star War" against Ux Te' K'uh, followed by T78:514 with no ergative, and then by the name Bahlam Ajaw. The date corresponds to September 13, 655. Here we interpret T78:514 as *'e'tej-Ø* the participle, followed by the third singular absolutive, translated as 'in (a state of) sacred service (was) Bahlam Ajaw.' We are particularly interested in the occurrences of the participial form, two of which appear at Palenque soon after the Tortuguero case. Yet others occur even later at Tonina and Piedras Negras, testifying to the persistence of this archaic term which carried its perfect participle derivation *-ej* intrinsically while occasionally taking a *-je* phonetic complement (as noted above at Dzibanche').

10-K'AN/OL 17-YAX-SIHOM-ma "Star War"
AJ-3-TE'-K'UH

10 K'an 17 Yax Sihom "star war" 'aj 'ux te' k'uh

"On 10 Kan 17 Yax collapsed/fell those of Ux Te' K'uh"

T78:514 BALAM-AJAW

'e'tej Ba[h]lam 'Ajaw

"in sacred service was Bahlam Ajaw"

Tortuguero Earflare

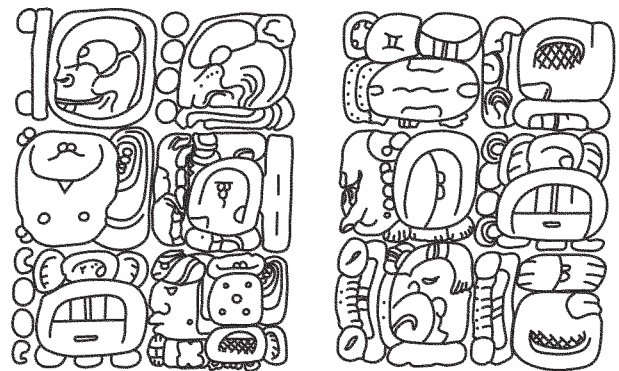


Figure 7. Palenque, Tableritos of the Subterráneos (drawing by Péter Bíró).

Late Classic Palenque, Part I

The magnificent site of Palenque, with its exquisitely-carved monuments and elegant palace, plazas, and temples, sits on the escarpment at the edge of the Chiapas Highlands overlooking the Tabasco Plain to the north. Active streams with waterfalls and plunge-pools flow through the site, and the Classic builders modified and redirected the flow of several of them. The region also receives copious amounts of annual rainfall; thus water management was given paramount priority.

Only a year before Bahlam Ajaw attacked Ux Te' K'uh, two small chambers under the Palace of the king K'inich Janab Pakal were completed and the event commemorated in 654 CE. The pertinent text is on one of the small panels known as the Tableritos (see Parmington 2011:72). The dedication formula consists of *ma[h]kaj u-pak'il* 'the construction of [K'inich Janab Pakal] was covered (completed).' Following this is the agency attribution, not with **ye-T78:514** but with a collocation we now recognize due to multiple examples on Yaxchilan HS. 1 as its syllabic equivalent, the spelling **ye-T78:513-je**. But T78 is here absent—a rarity with T513 in this context (Figure 7).

²la-ja u-MAY-TUN-a-NAH 2-WINIK-HAB K'INICH-na-bi-ja-pa-ka-la K'UH BAK-la-AJAW

la[h]jaj u-may-tun-a' nah cha' winikhab 'ajaw k'inich janab pakal k'uh[ul] bak[al] 'ajaw

'It was completed his *May Tun-a'* house, the two-*k'atun* lord K'inich Janab Pakal Holy Lord of Palenque'

u-pa-k'a-li ye-T513-je 2-WINIK-HAB AJ K'UH-na AJ su-lu

u-pak'il yel'ltej cha' winikhab 'aj k'uh[u]n 'aj sul

'his construction was his sacred service, the two-*k'atun* *aj k'uhun* Aj Sul'¹³

(Tableritos of the Subterráneos [June 12 and 14, 654])

Noteworthy is the use of the expression *y-e'tej* 'his sacred service' in reference to the construction of chambers beneath the Palace as part of a system of aqueducts, reservoirs, and flood control. This is our first of multiple non-military contexts for T78:514.¹⁴

We will for the moment skip over the Palace Hieroglyphic Stair (commemorated in 659) and the Temple of the Inscriptions (690), saving them for a later examination of the structures termed E'tej Nah at Palenque, Tzendaes, and Tikal.

We find at Palenque one other example of the canonical syllabic form

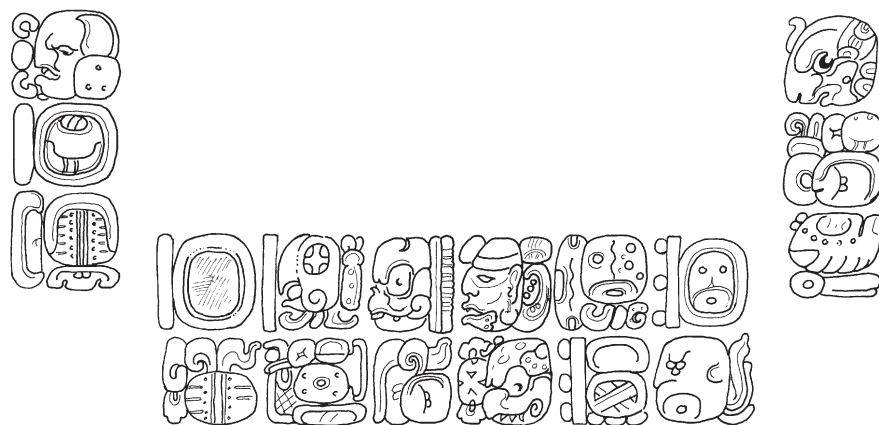


Figure 8. Palenque, Skull Monument (drawing by Merle Greene Robertson [1991:Fig. 286]).

ye-T78:513-je on the Skull (or "Death Head") Monument, discovered in a building close to the Temple of Foliated Cross. The inscription commemorated the closing of the *k'atun* in 9.13.0.0.0 (692), but earlier it featured the dedication of the building with the '*och-k'ahk*' 'fire-entering' formula (a rite for new buildings or for renewal). Following this we see **ye-T78:513(-je)**—a rare underspelling—and then the name and titles of Kan Bahlam II (Figure 8).

5-EB 5-K'AN-a-si-ya OCH-K'AK'

tu-pi-bi-li-NAH CHAM-AJ

AKAN-YAX-ja

5 Eb 5 K'anasiy 'och-k'a[h]k' tu pibnah[i]l

cham-aj 'akan yax[a]j

'On 5 Eb 5 Kayab fire entered the sanctuary (*pibnah*) of Chamaj Akan Yaxaj'

ye-T78:513 K'INICH-KAN-BALAM

BAK-WAY-ya-la

y-e'tej] k'inich kan ba[h]lam bak[el]

way[wa]

'it was the sacred service of (the king) K'inich Kan Bahlam *bakel waywal*'

(Skull Monument 9.12.19.14.12, Jan. 10, 692; the dedication is 9.13.0.0.0)

¹³ David Stuart (2006:151) transcribes an identical spelling **u-k'a[pa]-li/u-pa-k'a-li** at I7 on the Secondary Text of the Temple of the Foliated Cross as *u-pak'il* 'the planting or edifice of (K'uk' Bahlam).' Alternatively, with the **pa** infix interpreted as an unread element in the **k'a** syllabogram, this could spell **u-k'a-li** *u-k'al* 'his enclosure' (Lacadena 2004:120). The root *sul* in Yucatec is related to water and wetting (Barrera Vásquez 1980:742), which suggests the person responsible ("in sacred service") for the rooms under the Palace to be a hydraulic engineer. The water connection is additionally suggested by the structure name *May Tun-a'*, which we speculate to mean 'stone(s) (which) give water'—perhaps a reference to the aqueduct itself. Yet more evidence is seen in the mention of Aj Sul in a small panel in the wall of the adjacent Otolum aqueduct. An individual named Aj Sul acceded to the office of *y-ajaw k'ahk'* on December 28, 610 (Stuart 2005:124), as registered on the Group IV incensario.

¹⁴ Here unequivocally with the glottal stop as a simplification of */b/. In accepting **ye-T78:513-je** as a true substitution, we think *y-e'tej* now likely not only at Palenque, but in every example of T78:514 and its unpacked phonetic equivalent. More discussion will follow with the analysis of this substitution on Yaxchilan HS. 1.

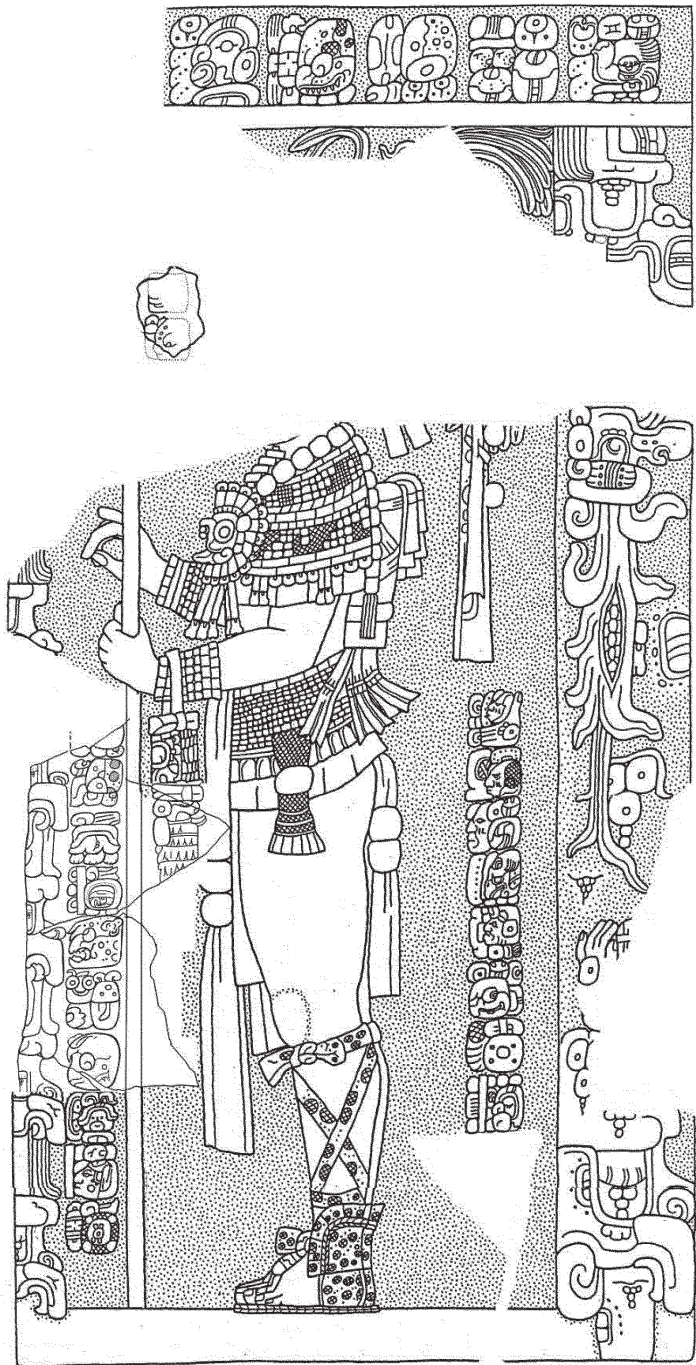


Figure 9. Palenque, Temple of the Sun, North Jamb (drawing by Guillermo Bernal Romero).

The deity to whom the building is dedicated is Akan, known from many contexts as a “gateway” Death God. Here he carries the title *cham-aj* ‘He of Death’ employing an agentive noun with the T12 -AJ suffix. Although he is the owner of the sanctuary, the title itself is unpossessed. The context is not battle-related but the undercurrent of war is associated with the recipient of the honor.

Two identical statements dated September 12, 687 record ‘*och ch’en*’ cave-entering—an attack on **pu**/PUH-‘DRUM’ *waywal* (the Tonina king)—by the Palenque king K’inich Kan Bahlam. This is the same invasive act documented above at Dzibanche’. One is found on the North Jamb of the Temple of the Sun, whose central panel features signature icons of war (the Jaguar God of the Underworld, crossed centipede spears, and subservient gods) and recounts the ‘*ok-te*’ warrior titles of Bakal dynastic forebears. The other appears on the panel of Temple XVII—otherwise a retrospective reflection on Early Classic history. Both celebrate the *k’atun* ending 9.13.0.0.0 in 692 and introduce the Palenque king with ‘*e’tej*’ in sacred service was...’ The North Jamb text includes an additional ‘*e’tej*’ statement crediting a rare protagonist or deity Wak Mihnal Hix Ch’a(j) Ut Sibik as assisting in the attack. Noteworthy for our investigation are the three participial examples of T78:514 without an ergative prefix. At least two (one is effaced) have a -je final phonetic complement.

Temple of the Sun, North Jamb (Figure 9)

T78:514-je 6-MIH-NAL-la HIX ch’a-UT-SIBIK

‘*e’tej*... wak mihnal hix ch’a[j]’ ut sibik

‘in (a state of) sacred service was Wak Mihnal Hix Ch’aj Ut Sibik’

Panel of Temple XVII (Figure 10)

10-CHUWEN 4-SAK-SIHOM OCH-u-CH’EN-na
pu/PUH-‘DRUM’-la WAY-ya po-o-AJAW

10 Chuwen 4 Sak Sihom ‘och u-ch’en pu...[a]l way[wal]
po’ ‘ajaw

‘On 10 Chuen 4 Zac he entered the cave/center of
pu...al waywal the Lord of Tonina’

T78:514-je ... BAK-le-WAY-[wa]la ...

‘*e’tej* ... bak[e]l waywal ...

‘in (a state of) sacred service was (K’inich Kan Bahlam),
bakel waywal, (Holy Lord of Palenque)’

The Late Classic Yaxchilan Hieroglyphic Stairs 1, 3, and 5: ‘Sacred Service’ to ‘Battle-Trial’

The following discussion relies on previous epigraphic work by Peter Mathews (1997:71-119), Simon Martin, and Nikolai Grube (2000), in-depth discussion by Simon Martin (2004) and Werner Nahm (2006), an extended overview by Péter Bíró (2011a:84-88), and on the photos and drawings by Ian Graham of the CMHI (1982), as well as prior suggestions by other scholars. The most detailed account is that of Nahm (2006).

Yaxchilan Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, an immense 480-glyph text on Structure 5 located at the riverbank, consists of six long steps carved on risers in single rows (Nahm 2006:140) (Figure 11). The first

four steps, dedicated by the king Yaxun Bahlam IV around 766, are a retrospective history of the accessions and conquests of Rulers 1 through 14 of the Pa' Chan dynasty (Martin and Grube 2000:129; Nahm 2006:28-36). The text thus restates with contemporaneous spellings and more detail the histories of Rulers 1–10 given on the Early Classic lintels, mentioned above. Much of the text is in poor condition, but enough has survived to allow Nahm, referencing Martin (in Martin and Grube [2000]) and the narrative on the early lintels, to tease out dates, names of the early kings, and the identities of some of their captives and enemy towns of origin. Martin (2004:111 n. 9) additionally identifies specific occurrences of T78:514 and its substitutions amid the many eroded blocks on these steps. Nahm presents the recurring formula of Steps I–IV (the early king list) as:

Date-*chumwani ti ajawlel* / name of ruler / EG(s) / DNIG/ Distance Number / *i u-ti* / Date / *ye-te-he* / captive name(s) / *ye-te-he* / *ch'ahoom* / name of ruler / EG(s) (Nahm 2006:28).

To minimize inevitable confusion with these spellings, we now clarify that Nahm's <ye-te-he> is our **ye-T78:513-je**—the dominant pattern on HS. 1. But he likely included **ye-T78:514(-je)** in this spelling category, as these are difficult to segregate and the collocation was not his focus.

Nahm goes on to explain that the later Steps V and VI register contemporaneous histories of the exploits and prisoner-taking of Yaxun Bahlam IV and his father, again with the formula <ye-te-he> (his notation for our **ye-T78:513-je**) followed by the captive name. But now (p. 29) he mentions the presence of a <ye-he-te> spelling in this later history in contrast with the “older” <ye-te-he>, but



Figure 10. Palenque, Panel of Temple XVII (drawing by Linda Schele © David Schele, used with permission).

does not identify its location. His analysis is helpfully supplemented by Martin (personal communication 2003, 2004:111 n. 9), who observes that on Step VI, block 25, a spelling **ye-he-TE'**—with T512 **ye**, T574/587 **he**, and T87 **TE'**—is seen, albeit badly damaged (Figure 12).¹⁵ This is the spelling which dominates the earlier Hieroglyphic Stair 3 (to be considered below), dedicated in 723 by his father and which also appears in his own pre-accession captive-taking on Lintel 16 (752).¹⁶

The distribution on HS. 1 of **ye-T78:513-je** plus occasional occurrences of **ye-T78:514(-je)** is telling in another way. Here we see the term before both captives and the kings who took them prisoner, in contrast with the pattern on the four early lintels wherein T78:514 or **ye-T78:514** preceded only names of captives. We also see—per Nahm's analysis (p. 36) of the captive's partly effaced nominal phrase which follows this new **ye-he-TE'** spelling on Block 25—that in this one instance, *a captive is the subject*. Here are several examples from HS. 1:

¹⁵ (Martin 2004:111 n. 9, translated from Spanish): “In the photographs published in Graham (1982:142-152) we can discern T514 (Step I, 15), **ye-T514** (Step II, 54), **ye-T514-je** (Step I, 59), and probably **ye-he-TE'** (Step VI, 25).” We additionally note an example of **ye-T78:514-je** on Step I, Block 10. In all cases, the details of T514 are subtly visible in the CMHI photo but not drawn—thus the sign was not distinguished from T78:513 by Graham.

¹⁶ The spelling **ye-he-TE'** appears on HS. 3 and on Lintel 16, and **ye-je-TE'** appears on HS. 5. In all these cases **TE'** is represented by T87 and not T78:513.

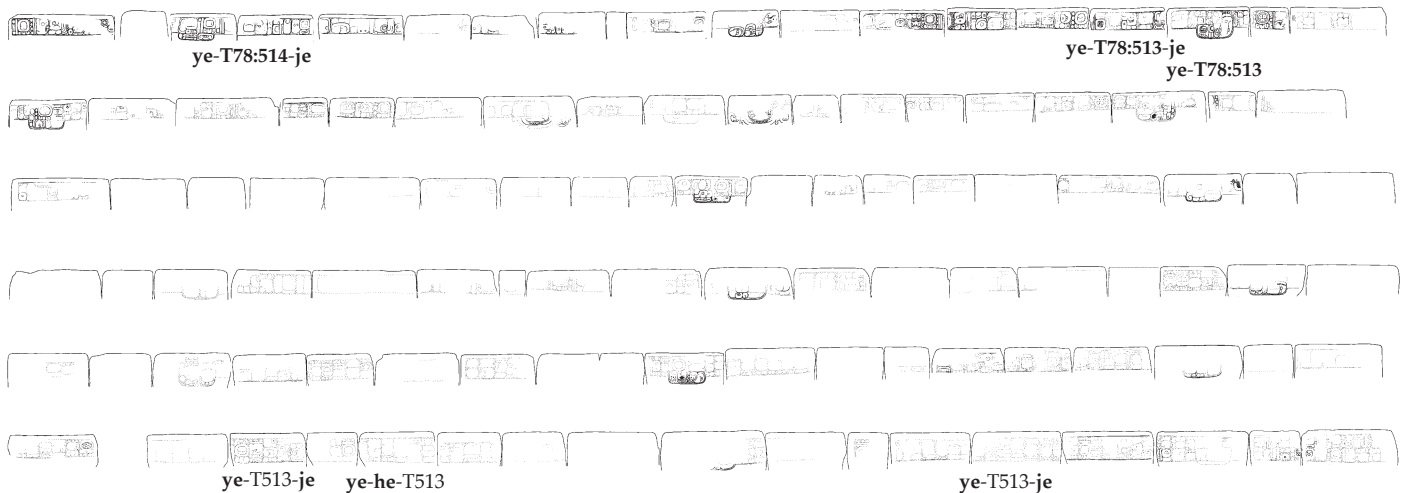


Figure 11. Yaxchilan HS. 1 (drawings by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 2004.15.6.7.8, 2004.15.6.7.9, 2004.15.6.7.10, 2004.15.6.7.11, 2004.15.6.7.12, 2004.15.6.7.13).

(Step I, Block 44) **ye-T78:513-je** Shield Jaguar I (Ruler 2)¹⁷
 (Step I, Block 59) **ye-T78:T514-je** Captive **ye-T78:T513-[je]**¹⁸...
 (Step I, Block 64) **ye-T78:513 ch'a-ho[-ma]** Yaxun Bahlam I (Ruler 3)
 (Step VI, Block 17) **ye-T513-je** Captive (another case of “bald” T513 in this context)
 (Step VI, Blocks 25–31) **ye-T574/587 he-T87 TE'** - Captive... *u-bak* Yaxun Bahlam IV.

We propose that the spellings **ye-T78:514(-je)** (see Footnote 19) and **ye-T78:513-je** found in all but one of the other readable examples on HS. 1 (that one being Step VI, block 25) represent the *only true spelling substitution*, the canon. We have seen two cases of it previously at Palenque, but in each example a piece (T78 or -je) was missing. Even with the generally poor-to-unreadable condition of the text, multiple examples on Yaxchilan HS. 1 provide confidence that the allographic canon is **ye-T78:513-je** with no variation in the order of constituents. We will later consider how this spelling appears to be an unpacking or restoration of the constituents of the conflated and fossilized T78:514. This is a move toward the resolution of confusing spellings which eventually leads to the decipherment of the whole conundrum.

Amid the decades-long impossibility of reconciling a *-te'*-final word

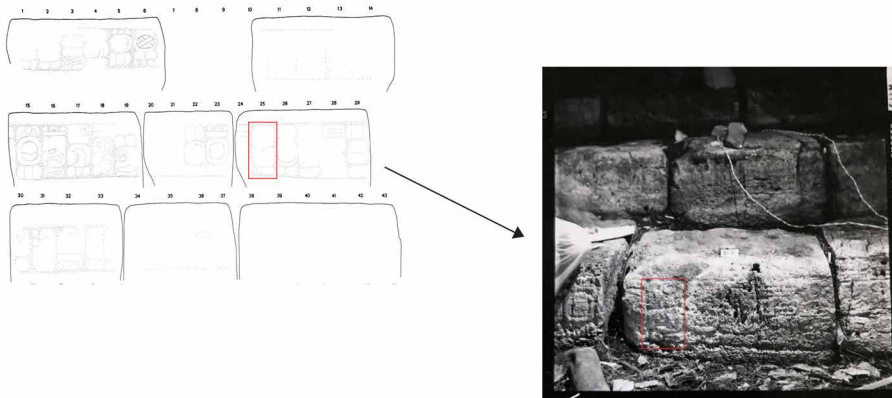


Figure 12. Yaxchilan HS. 1 Step VI, Block 25 (photo and drawing by Ian Graham, courtesy of Peter Mathews).

with a *-je*-final one, our “true” substitution is evidence that the **ye-he/je-T87** spellings we shall now consider on HS. 3 and HS. 5 and Lintel 16 are *not the same word*. They are equivalents of **ye-TE'** spellings at Tonina and elsewhere.

We now step back four decades to 723 and the commemoration of

¹⁷ The ‘God D’ glyphs here and elsewhere remain undeciphered, though proposals have been made (see Martin 2015). In fact, the regnal name at Yaxchilan is composed of God N and the Principal Bird Deity, and the reading *kokaaj* has been proposed for the latter (Martin 2015:209 n. 35). Martin, however, doubts the reading because in one inscription there is a possible phonetic complement to the “akbal mirror” sign as **ch'a** (Martin 2015:216 n. 52). Nevertheless, it could be that the phonetic complement only refers to the mirror part of the composite grapheme, therefore the whole reading would be ‘Itzam Ch'a... Kok Mut Bahlam. Several epigraphers have used the Colonial Yucatec entry *cocah*, but Martin noted (2015:209 n. 35) that the word is not otherwise attested in Yucatec. One solution is to read the whole collocation as Yax Ah Coc Ah Mut, which occurs in the K'atun 4 Ahaw prophecy in the first version of the *k'atun* wheel (Tizimin, 15v folio; Pérez I. pages 128–129; Pérez II, pages 83–84; and Pérez III, page 154; Bíró n.d.). The *ah* in *cocah mut* thus is not a suffix but functions as an agentive prefix, and for this reason the correct reading is *coc ah mut*. The *kok mut* collocation shows up in the text of an unprovenanced mask (probably from Río Azul) in E5 as **ko-mu-tu** or **ko[k] mut** “Turtle Bird.” Given these complexities, we retain the ‘Shield Jaguar’ moniker.

¹⁸ We have restored the final *-je*, likely omitted due to lack of space.

Yaxchilan Hieroglyphic Stairway 3—a series of six blocks in three sets of paired risers and treads leading to the three doorways of Structure 44. Most of the treads are carved in a grid of four columns and nine or more rows. The risers have a two-row format with a dozen two-glyph columns (Graham 1982:165). The stairway was commemorated by Shield Jaguar III in 723, and features his own exploits in war among other details of his life and lineage history. We should bear in mind that this stairway is considerably earlier than HS. 1, and its consistent **ye-he-TE'** spellings (with T512 **ye**, T574/587 **he**, and T87 **TE'**) associated with captive-taking were in fact the earliest presentation of a spelling noted once on HS. 1 above. An alternate spelling **ye-je-TE'** (also with T87) appears on HS. 5, to be discussed shortly. We will sometimes lump them as **ye-he/je-TE'**, and we are confident they represent the same phrase.¹⁹

Excellent examples of the recurring pattern are displayed on HS. 3, Step I, Tread (Figure 13)—always **ye-he-TE'** (Table 2).

Yaxchilan Lintel 16, with a 'capture' and 'battle-trial' by Yaxun Bahlam IV dated 752 (before his accession, carved after) conforms to the pattern of HS. 3 (Figure 14, Table 3).

In consideration of the anachronistic nature of Hieroglyphic Stair 1, created by Yaxun Bahlam IV in order to honor his dynastic forebears (Martin and Grube 2000:129-130), Werner Nahm (2006:36) states that the retrospective portion of HS. 1 "seems to have been copied from an old book." One should also assume that the narrative on the Early Classic lintels was transcribed from a yet older historical codex. But the codical prototype for HS. 1 would have had a spelling **ye-T78:513-je y-e'tej** in substitution with its equivalent **ye-T78:514-je y-e'tej**—a spelling not in contemporaneous use at Yaxchilan. We see this from the standardized spelling **ye-he-T87** on HS. 3, carved four decades prior to HS. 1, and we see its equivalent **ye-je-TE'** on HS. 5. We also see it in the retrospective history of Lintel 16, where **ye-he-TE'** appears. But on Steps V and VI of HS. 1 we

¹⁹ The scribes of Yaxchilan were among the earliest to represent the loss of contrast between the phonemes /h/ and /j/—a contrast well-documented in the script (Grube 2004), and whose loss is also a certainty (Kaufman and Norman 1984). Numerous spellings at this site attest to a penchant to ignore the distinction, as in the spelling **ba-ji** for *bah*. While we are not yet certain which spirant is represented in **ye-he-TE'** and/or **ye-je-TE'**, we will offer morphophonemic evidence of a spirant arising as an allophone at the consonant cluster we believe is present.

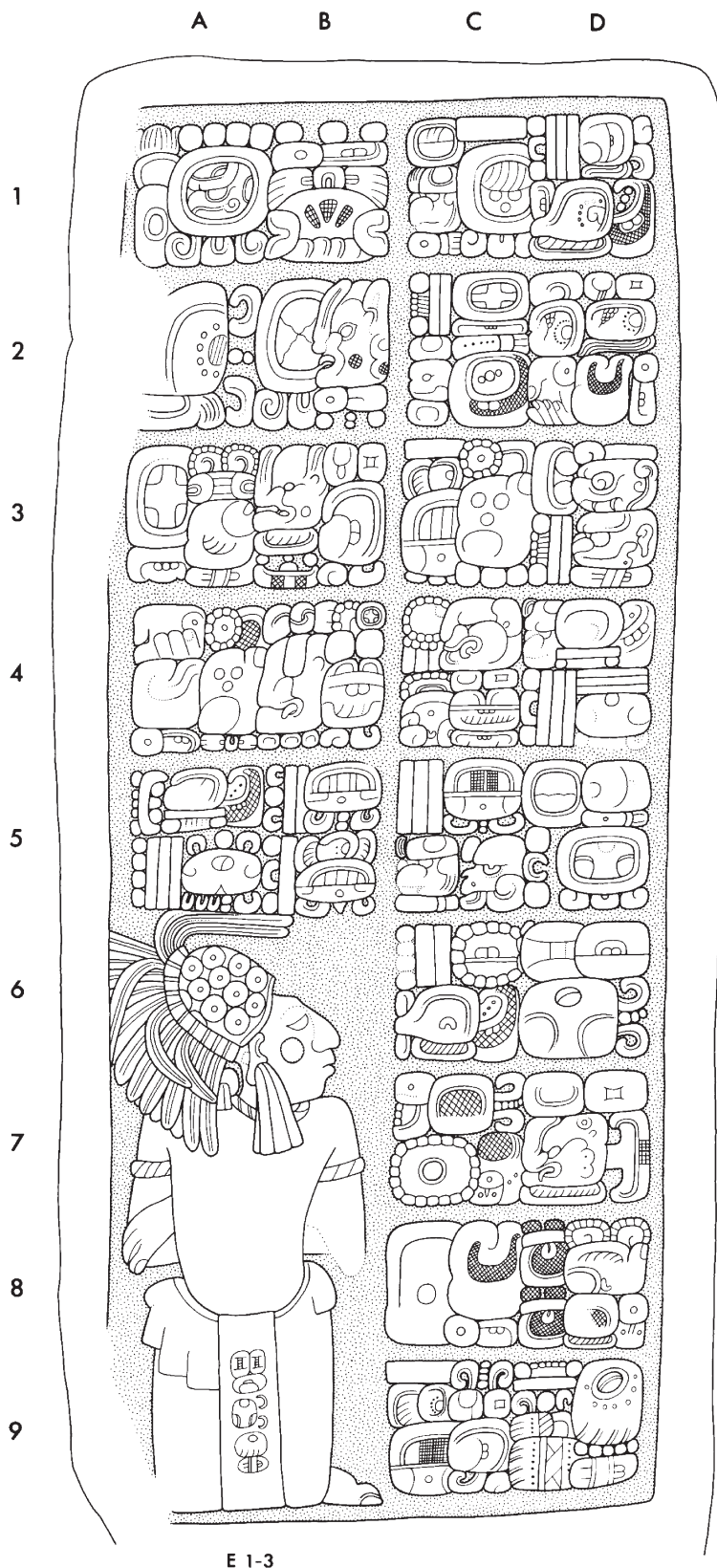


Figure 13. Yaxchilan HS. 3, Step I, Tread (drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 2004.15.6.7.29).

chu[h]k-aj-jiy “Etz’nab” Sutz’ Te’el k’an tok luk xukalnah [y]-ajaw te’ y-eh[t]-te’ ch’ahom “Trophy” ba[h]lam k’uh[ul] pa’ chan ‘ajaw

‘he was captured “Etz’nab” Sutz’ Te’el (from) K’an Tok Luk Xukalnah spear-lord (captain), (it was) his battle-trial, the incense-offerer “Trophy” Bahlam, Holy Lord of Yaxchilan’

chu[h]k-aj ‘aj k’an ‘usij buk’tun ‘ajaw y-eh[t]-te’ ho’ winikhab ch’ahom u-cha[n] [ul] ‘aj bak “Shield Jaguar” k’uh[ul] pa’ chan ‘ajaw

‘he was captured Aj K’an Usij Lord of Buk’tun, (it was) his battle-trial the five-k’atun incense-offerer, the captor / guardian of Aj Bak, Shield Jaguar III, Holy Lord of Yaxchilan’

chu[h]k-aj popol chay ‘a[j] pay mo’ol xukalnah ‘ajaw y-eh[t]-te’ tu-tok’ tu-pakal ho’ winikhab y-ajaw te’ ‘aj “21” bak

‘he was captured Popol Chay (from) Pay Mo’ol Lord of Xukalnah, (it was) his battle-trial with his flint, with his shield, the five-k’atun captain, he of 21 captives’ [Shield Jaguar III]’

Table 2. Recurring pattern on Yaxchilan HS. 3, Step I, Tread.



Figure 14. Yaxchilan Lintel 16 (drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 2004.15.6.5.15).

continue to see the predominance of **ye-T78:513-je**, as if Yaxun Bahlam IV chose to honor the older term *‘e’tej* ‘sacred service’ amid the histories of his father and himself. From this point forward *‘e’tej* in either form passes out of the Yaxchilan record.

Hieroglyphic Stair 5, commemorated in 800 by Shield Jaguar IV (known as Chelew Chan K’inich before accession), was constructed as a single long step running across the front of the platform of Structure 44 (Martin and Grube 2000:135) (Figure 15). Its text is a 182-glyph, one-row narrative documenting his taking of fifteen-plus captives from far-flung polities. The standard format begins with the passive *chuhkaj* followed by the nominal phrase of the captive and his affiliation, then follows the spelling **ye-je-T87** and a short or expanded nominal phrase of Shield Jaguar IV. Several captives are grouped within a single battle. Parts of the text are effaced, but the **ye-je-TE’** spelling, which—as on HS. 3—introduces the king, is seen in glyphs 62, 82, 140, 151b, 162a, and 172b.

The **ye-he/je-TE’** spelling (employing T87) is restricted to the Yaxchilan polity. At Tonina, the simpler equivalent **ye-TE’** (also with T87) had been in use for several decades.

La Pasadita Lintel 1 and Piedras Negras Panel 3

La Pasadita was a Late Classic satellite of Yaxchilan and the center of a *sajal* who in December 771 (9.17.0.16.1 9 Imix 14 Pax) commissioned four lintels

chu[h]k-aj yax ? tok’ ‘aj wak’ab u-sajal pay lakam cha[h]k wak’ab ‘ajaw y-eh[t]-te’ ‘ux winikhab ‘ajaw yaxun ba[h]lam ‘aj k’al bak k’uh[ul] pa’ chan ‘ajaw

‘he was captured Yax ... Tok’ from Wak’ab the *sajal* of Pay Lakam Cha[h]k, Wak’ab Lord, (it was) his battle-trial the three-k’atun lord Yaxun Bahlam’, ‘He of 20 Captives, Holy Lord of Yaxchilan’

Table 3. ‘Capture’ and ‘battle-trial’ on Yaxchilan Lintel 16.

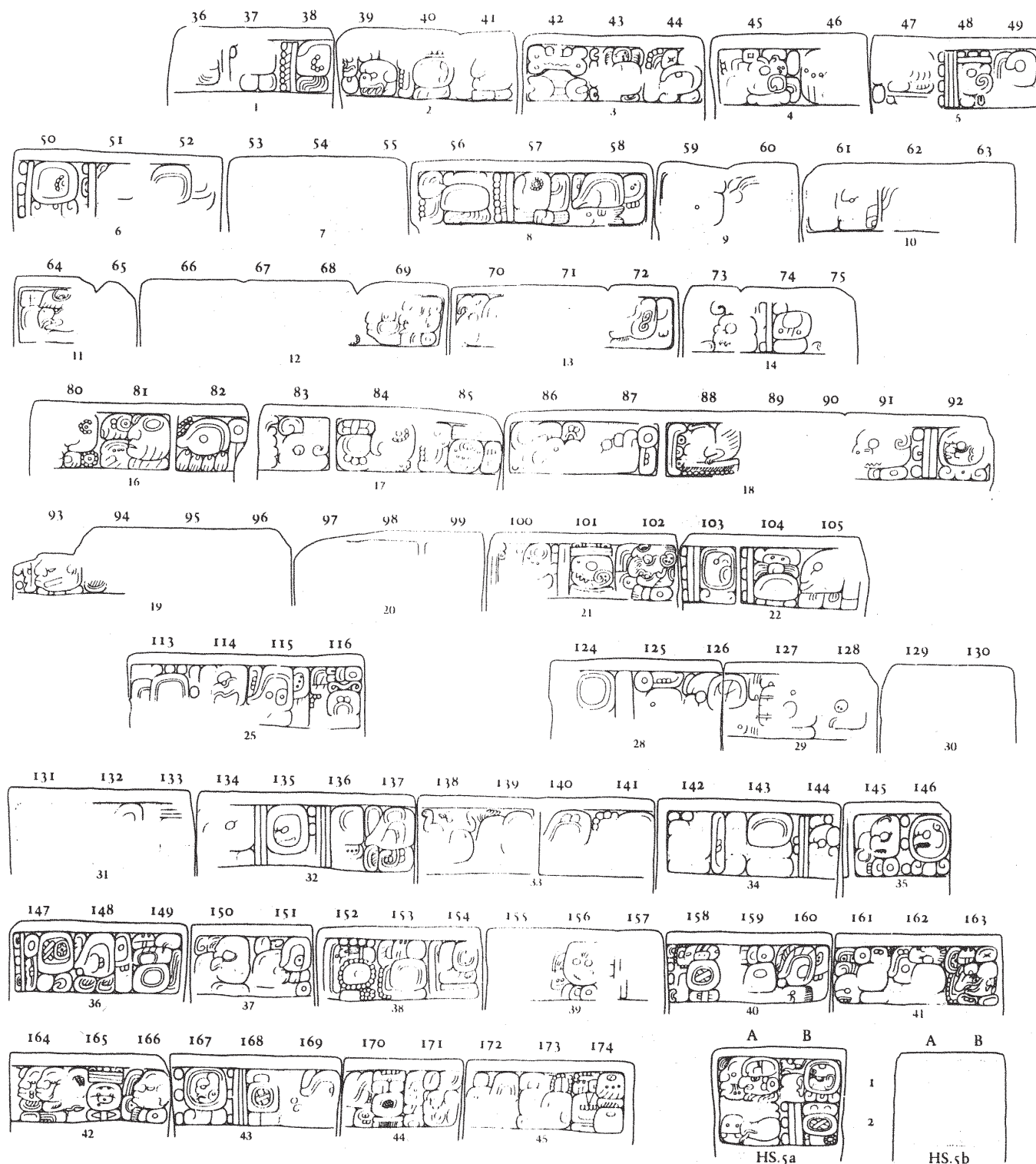


Figure 15. Yaxchilan HS. 5 (drawings by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 2004.15.6.7.41, 2004.15.6.7.42).

in the style of Yaxchilan (Figure 16). It was a minor center equidistant from Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan, and very close to Tecolote and Chicomzapote—the latter on the Yaxchilan side of the river. The three settlements

were located in the border zone between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan, and they functioned as “fortresses” to control the roads along the shores of the river (Golden et al. 2012). The lintels represent various important

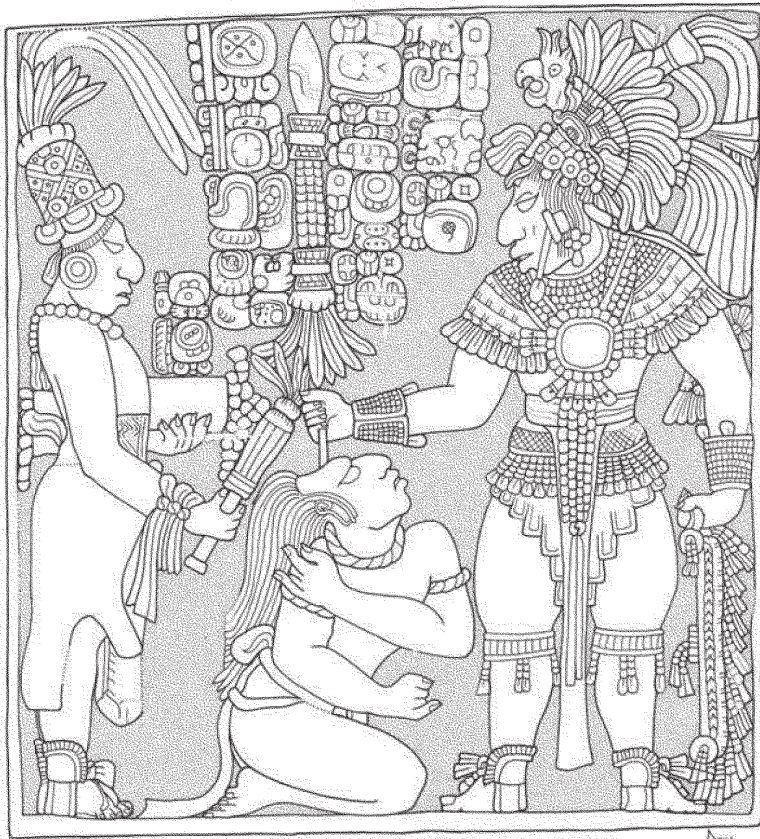


Figure 16. La Pasadita Lintel 1 (drawing by Alexander Safronov).

episodes in the life of Tilom *sajal*:

(Lintel 1: June 14, 759): his captive presentation to Yaxun Bahlam IV;

(Lintel 2: February 19, 766): his participation in a 'scattering' ceremony with Yaxun Bahlam IV;

(Lintel 3: no date): his visit to the court of Shield Jaguar IV (reign 769–800);

(Lintel 4: December 11, 771): his dance with a knot-staff (Bíró 2011a:246–247).

These were carved in an interval of peace, but they open a window onto the turbulent period when Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras clashed continually in the border zone. After Yaxun Bahlam IV won the internecine fractional war in 752, he went to multiple minor centers—La Pasadita, Laxtunich, Site N, Site R, Dos Caobas, El Kinel, and Chicozapote—and/or he invited non-royal nobles to his court to pay homage to him. Later, his son Shield Jaguar IV undertook similar visits and hosted audiences with loyal *sajals* (Bíró 2011a:246).

The event of Lintel 1 is dated (9.16.8.3.18) 9 Etznab 11 Yax (14 June, 759). Depicted on the left is Tilom *sajal*: one hand holds a bowl while the other holds a short staff with feathers on top. In the center sits T'ul Chik of Piedras Negras, with a rope around his neck and with his arm across his chest in a display of submission to Yaxun Bahlam IV on the right, who holds a tall ceremonial spear and a flexible shield.

La Pasadita Lintel 1

9 Etznab 11 Yax **chu-ka-ja t'u-lu chi-ku**
K'IN-ni-AJAW

chu[h]kaj t'ul chik k'in 'ajaw

'he was captured, T'ul Chik (Rabbit-Coati), K'in Lord'

ye-he-TE' 3-WINIK-HAB-AJAW ya-YAXUN
BALAM

y-eh[t-] te' 'ux winikhab 'ajaw yaxun ba[h]llam

'it was his battle-trial, the three-k'atun lord Yaxun Bahlam'

a-20-BAK K'UH-KAJ-AJAW

K'UH-PA'CHAN-AJAW

'a[j] winik bak k'uh[ul] kaj 'ajaw k'uh[ul] pa'chan 'ajaw

'he of twenty captives, Holy Lord of Kaj, Holy Lord of Yaxchilan'

ti-lo-ma sa-ja-la

tilom sajal

'(this is) Tilom *sajal*'

T'ul Chik was no minor captive. On the majestic Panel 3 of Piedras Negras (commissioned retrospectively in 787 by the king Yat Ahk II), T'ul Chik *ch'ok* of Piedras Negras ('youth/heir' of the Yokib lineage) stands with Mo' Chahk *ch'ok* from La Mar and Jasaw Chan K'awil *aj k'uhun* behind the throne of Itzam K'an Ahk II (Beliaev and Safronov 2013:546–547). The event was a major banquet which took place in 749, and which was attended by canoe (*y-ilaj ti jukub*) by the Yaxchilan king Yopat Bahlam II and his princes; these sit or stand before the Yokib king as he addresses them (Montgomery 1995; Fitzsimmons 1998; Teufel 2004; Martin and Grube 2008:249; Bíró 2011c). The La Mar prince would later become a famous captain who helped Yat Ahk II in the campaign against Pomona portrayed on Piedras Negras Stela 12. The capture of T'ul Chik took place ten years after the famous banquet and 28 years before Panel 3 was created.

The iconography and text of La Pasadita Lintel 1 indicate that it was the battle-trial (*y-eh-te'*) of Yaxun Bahlam IV. One assumes that in most cases Maya kings—if indeed they attended the battle—did not do the initial take-down of a captive; rather, it was achieved by the captain (here Tilom *sajal*, who is present in the scene) and his foot-soldiers. We will see a similar case at Caracol wherein a captain amid own his 'battle-trial' presents the captive as a gift to his newly enthroned king (Bíró 2011a:246).

Yopat Bahlam II was never mentioned at Yaxchilan, or his monuments were destroyed, but

it is assumed he was the ‘interregnum’ (742–752) ruler between Shield Jaguar III and Yaxun Bahlam IV.

Late Classic Period: Dos Pilas

If the date is correctly reconstructed, Stela 17 of Dos Pilas registers in 682 a rather early example of the spelling **ye-TE’** (Figure 17).²⁰ The monument celebrated the 9.12.10.0.0 *lajuntun* amid the great war campaign initiated in 679 by the Dos Pilas king Bajlaj Chan K’awil, with help from Calakmul, against Tikal. It registers the capture of Nun Bahlam of Tikal, who is crouched in the bottom register accompanied by the caption:

u-ba 6-?-AJAW 13-tzu-ku NUN-BALAM

u-ba[h] 6 ? ‘ajaw 13 tzuk nun-ba[h]lam

‘it was his image 6-?-Ajaw, (of the) 13 Divisions, Nun Bahlam’

ye-T87 BAJ-CHAN-K’AWIL-la:

y-e[ht]-te’ Baj[laj] Chan K’awil

‘(it was) his battle-trial, Bajlaj Chan K’awil’

The spellings **ye-he/je-TE’** at Yaxchilan are equivalent to **ye-TE’** at Tonina and elsewhere. They reflect the production within the compound *y-eh-t-te’* of a spirant *-h-* or *-j-* where two /t/ phonemes meet at the morpheme boundary, yielding *y-eh-te’* (or *y-ej-te’*). Despite a superficial resemblance to suggestions coupling *eh* ‘tooth, edge’ with *te’*, the similarity results solely from a morphophonemic reduction of *-tt-* to *-ht-* (or *-jt-*); nor is this spelling likely to be an attempt to represent the internal *h* of a CVhC root.²¹

Late Classic Tonina

The kingdom of Tonina was located in the transitional Chiapas highlands, where deciduous forest meets conifers, at about 2500’ above sea level and some 65 kilometers south of Palenque in the Ocosingo Valley, Chiapas. The naturally outcropping fine-grained sandstone provided the material for building construction and the production of monuments.

²⁰ The date of Dos Pilas St. 17 was reconstructed by Schele (1982: Chart 77:3) as [9.12.10.0.0] 9 Ahau [18 Zotz’], based on her hypothesis that a 9 Ahau (seen at A2) fell on a Period Ending in the lifetime of Bajlaj Chan K’awil. We now know of earlier examples of **ye-TE’** at Tonina (Krempel et al. in press).

²¹ This rule of the script is beyond doubt, as there are many examples of CVhC roots wherein *-h-* is ignored. We note a common morphophonemic process in Yucatec seen with the root ‘*éet*’ ‘fellow, co-X’ when joined with *taal* ‘come’ in normal speech. The underlying form of the compound is ‘*éht=taal*’; the surface form is ‘*éeh-taal*’ ‘companion.’ The following entry, which we suggest as explanatory for **ye-he/je-TE’** *y-eh-t-te’*, is from the Hocaba’ Dictionary of Yucatec (Bricker et al. 1998:9):

? *éeh-taal*, n. (n6&ivcpd) 1. companion, friend.



Figure 17. Dos Pilas Stela 17 (rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson).

The first modern archaeological excavation at Tonina was conducted by the French Archaeological Mission in the 1970s (Bequelin and Baudez 1982-1984; Bequelin and Taladoire 1990). Thereafter, excavation led by Juan Yadeun continued as an ongoing INAH project. The French Mission published four volumes with excellent excavation reports. Peter Mathews was their official epigrapher and drew all the then-known inscriptions; the contributions of Ian Graham, Lucia Henderson, and David Stuart are also acknowledged (see Mathews 1983; Graham and Mathews 1996, 1999; Graham et al. 2006).

Tonina had a substantial Early Classic history, and its three hundred-plus carved and stuccoed monuments—whose themes are dominated by accounts of battles, captive-taking, and sacrifice—date to both the Early and Late Classic (Krempel et al. in press; Guido Krempel, personal communication 2023). The many hieroglyphic texts demonstrate that Tonina's long-term principal enemy was Palenque (see Martin and Grube 2008; Martin 2020). The records of each city (recalling the panel of Temple XVII at Palenque) reference campaigns against the other, but Tonina's penchant for vivid representation of war, captives, and death outshines all its rivals. The famous Monument 122 depicts the Palenque king K'an Joy Chitam II as a bound captive taken by the Tonina child-king Ruler 4 in 711, though his eventual fate is equivocal (Martin and Grube 2000:183; Stuart 2004).

Many of the carved monuments depicting captives are located in the main plaza, on the fifth and sixth terraces of the Acropolis, and adjacent to the ballcourt, or were found via recent excavations in the ballcourt itself. Our focus will be on those surviving texts which register T78:514 as well as those with the **ye-TE'** spelling which substitutes for it in the same context.

Much of what follows has relied upon prior summary and interpretation by Bíró (2011a:154-158). Our knowledge has been substantially updated through personal communications with Guido Krempel, who is working with Ángel Sánchez Gamboa under the auspices of a longterm CNCPC-INAH project. This project, directed by Martha Cuevas García and Luz de Lourdes Herbert Pesquera, intends to consolidate, reassemble, document, and re-draw the many monuments at the site and to catalogue and prepare the new monuments for publication and public access. Krempel's work will also be realized as a forthcoming doctoral dissertation at the University of Bonn in Germany while the documentation and investigation further continues in collaboration with the Textdatabase and Dictionary of Classic Mayan project. A work in progress by Krempel, Sánchez Gamboa, and Alejandro Sheseña (in press) shared with us has been enormously useful in providing a comprehensive overview of the pertinent captive monuments at Tonina. This article represents the latest research along a dynamic frontier of documentation. Because we are able to focus only on the fraction of this polity's monumental

corpus which pertains to T78:514, the relative brevity of our synopsis is particularly apparent with Tonina.

In 2011, two new in-the-round sculptures of bound captives were presented which had previously been excavated within the ballcourt area (Stuart 2011; Yadeun 2011; Bernal 2015a, 2015b; Guido Krempel, personal communications 2022, 2023). These two sculptures have recently been designated Monuments 194 and 195 (Krempel et al. in press). One of these was featured in Guillermo Bernal's 2015a and 2015b articles on T514 because it bears the phrase 9-T78:514 on its left shoulder in addition to a dedicatory event and a personal name *Buk'-T533* on the front. We propose T533 to be **BAK**: 'captive' (MacLeod n.d.). The text on this sculpture was previously analyzed by Stuart (2011).

Six "shield" monuments—the long-known Monuments 31, 52, 65, and 72 (see see Graham and Mathews 1996:78; 97, 102, 106; Mathews 2001) and the newer 196 and 197—were discovered in situ within the ballcourt itself. These were originally located at north, south, and medial positions along both walls (Krempel et al. in press). Each consisted—though not all parts have survived—of a horizontally-mounted bound captive sculpture accompanied by a wall plaque or shield bearing a recurring text opening with the phrase 9-T78:514 **tz'o-no** followed by the captive's name and political affiliation, which in most cases is either directly or indirectly that of Palenque/Bakal.²² These captives were all taken by the king K'inich Baknal Chahk during a series of attacks over four years beginning in 692 against smaller cities along the Usumacinta subordinate to the Bakal kingdom (Bíró 2011a:154-155; Martin 2020:269-273; Krempel et al. in press). While the six "shield" texts all bear—and open with—the 9-T78:514 **tz'o-no** phrase, a number of other monuments cross-reference these captures by (for example) naming the same captive without the phrase and/or citing the October 2, 692 date of the attack, the June 27, 696 date of the '*och-k'al[h]k*' ballcourt dedication where these individuals were displayed, or the near-future 1 Ahau (3 Pop) *k'al-tun* event on February 15, 697 to which the ballcourt dedication was anchored (Stuart 2011; Krempel et al. in press). With one later exception, the texts including T78:514 and its hybrid forms all fall within the reign of K'inich Baknal Chahk.

The "shield" texts are similar to one another in that all open with 9-T78:514 **tz'o-no** and consist entirely of noun phrases or nominals. The variable content lies with the captives and their affiliations. Many make reference to the Bakal/Palenque kingdom (*yajaw Aj Pitzil Ti' Bakal Ajaw*) directly or via surrogates; two eventually end with Tzolkin dates (Krempel et al. in press) (Figure 18):

²² The **tz'o** reading was first proposed in this context by Albert Davletshin (2001). The full proposal for the decipherment will be published soon (Davletshin in press).

9-T78:514 **tz'o-no... SAK-BALAM AJ-k'a-lo ya-AJAW-wa AJ-pi-tzi la-ti-i BAK-^{*}la-AJAW-wa**

balun 'e'tej tz'on... sak ba[h]lam 'aj k'al? y-ajaw 'aj pitz[i]l ti' bak[al] 'ajaw
'Nine Sacred-Service Hunt... Sak Bahlam, Aj K'al, lord (soldier) of the ballplayer and speaker of the Lord of Palenque.'

(Tonina Mon. 65)

The lexeme *tz'on* is cognate with the Yucatecan transitive root *tz'on* 'shoot, throw,' the (nominalized) antipassive *tz'oon* 'shoot, hunt,' and the nouns 'gun' and 'hunt(ing),' as well as *aj tz'oon* 'hunter' (Barrera Vásquez 1980:889; Hofling and Tesucún 1997:642). *Tz'oon* originally meant 'cerbatana' / 'blowgun' and to hunt with one. The Yucatec entry also includes 'pájaro muerto con cerbatana.' At Tonina *balun 'e'tej tz'on* would include 'blowgun(ner)' *only* if we posit that the phrase originated at Palenque to designate a category of hunter / soldier linked to the Temple of the Inscriptions, whose text names the tomb (*u-mukil*) of K'inich Janab Pakal as Balun E'tej Nah 'Nine Sacred-Servants House' (to be discussed shortly). This is the only other context in the script corpus where the number nine is juxtaposed to T78:514.

Far more plausible is that the term Balun E'tej Tz'on originated at Tonina to refer to the campaign (*tz'on* 'hunt' [n.]) against these captured Palenque-affiliated warriors. We will also see that '*e'tej tz'on* 'sacred-service hunt' was later in use in Tonina without *balun*.

Significantly, some of these captives were held by their captors for almost four years before finally being sacrificed, per Bíró (2011a:154) and Krempel et al. in press (Krempel, personal communication 2023) amid the rites of the ballcourt dedication in 696. We speculate that "Balun E'tej Tz'on" was crafted by the Tonina king to mock his arch-enemy's extravagant new structure, the tomb of K'inich Janab Pakal, whose interment was accompanied at the sarcophagus-chamber doorway by the sacrifice of several captives. In this way the Bakal

ancestral line and its patron gods would be disparaged. The dedication date of the Palenque Temple of the Inscriptions is July 6, 690, just over two years before the Tonina king initiated his ambitious campaign against Palenque's allies on the Usumacinta.

Thus we do not propose that these captives were sacrificed with blowgun darts, as that weapon was mainly used to hunt birds and small mammals; rather, the term for 'hunt-with-blowgun' had already been applied to the form of bush warfare in which captives were sought for later ritual death. Furthermore, there is ample iconographic evidence of specific methods of execution at Tonina such as immolation (Sánchez Gamboa et al. 2018). In consideration of syntax, semantics, and the symbolic weaponry of enmity, we propose Balun E'tej Tz'on to have been 'The Nine Sacred-Service Hunt,' a cleverly-aimed epithet for the 692 (and beyond) campaign against Palenque.

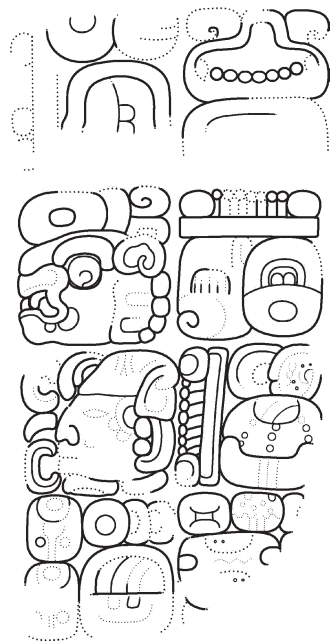


Figure 18. Tonina Monument 65 (provisional drawing by Guido Krempel, CNCPC-INAH).

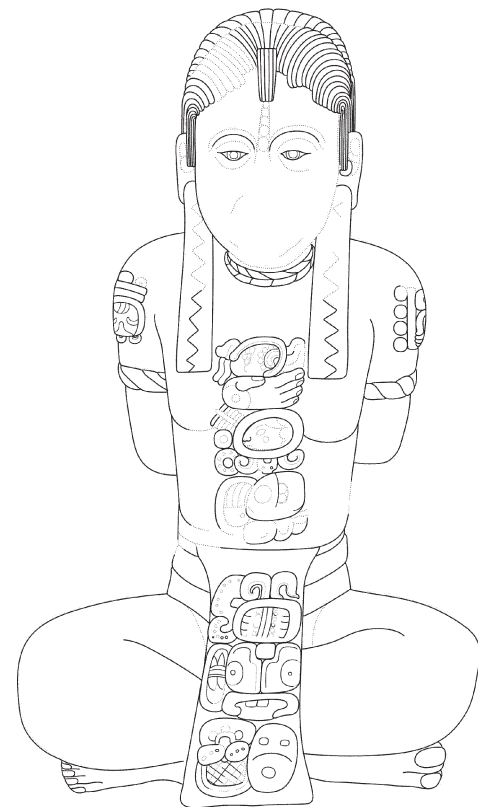


Figure 19. Tonina Monument 194 (provisional drawing by Guido Krempel, CNCPC-INAH).

Stuart (2011) links the sculpture now designated Mon. 194 (Figure 19) to the text of Monument 145. We present his analysis below with minor orthographic changes and one differing interpretation:

13-11-WINIK-ji

'uxlajun(-ew) buluch winikij

'Thirteen-and-eleven score days (before)'

K'AL-TUUN-ni ta-1-AJAW

k'altun ta Jun 'Ajaw

'the stone binding on 1 Ahau'

i-u-ti OCH-K'AK' TA-

"BALLCOURT"-na

'i 'uhti' 'ochk'ahk' ta ?n

'then occurred the fire-entering at the ballcourt'

bu-k'u-T533

Buk' Bak

'Buk' the Captive'

9 E'TEJ

Balun 'E'tej [Tz'on]

'(of the) Nine-Sacred Service [Hunt]'

(rather than Stuart's [2011]):

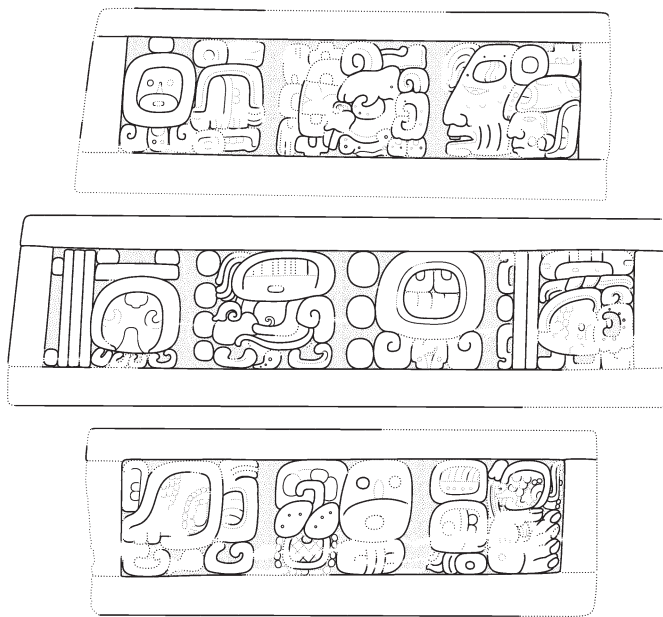


Figure 20. Tonina Monument 145 (provisional drawing by Guido Krempel, CNCPC-INAH).

9-EHT?

bolon 'eht?

'(It is) Buk' ? of the nine companions(?)'

(Tonina Mon. 194)

Here is our transcribed and translated text of Mon. 145, with a transliteration of the first part (Figure 20):

1-AJAW-T78:514-TE' K'INICH-BAK-NAL-CHAK BAH-TE'-AJAW

Jun 'Ajaw 'E'tej K'inich Baknal Chahk Bah Te' 'Ajaw
'the One Ajaw Sacred Service (of) K'inich Baknal Chahk, Head Warrior Lord'

wuklajun (k'in) huk winikijiy chan tun 3 'Ak'bal 11 Kej
(9.13.0.10.3, Oct. 7, 692)

'seventeen days, seven winals and four tuns'

chuhk[al]-iy Buk' Bak 'i 'uhti k'altun

'since he was captured Buk' the Captive, and then the Tun-Ending happens' (on 9.13.5.0.0 1 Ahau 3 Pop [February 20, 697])

As revealed by a new provisional drawing by Krempel (Krempel et al. in press; Sánchez Gamboa et al. 2022), one of the "shield" texts (Mon. 196), following Balun E'tej Tz'on, mentions Buk' Bak as the *ajk'uhun* of the Palenque king.

Mon. 145 registers the same date 9.13.0.10.33 Akbal 11 Ceh (October 7, 692) seen on Monument 172, and which attests to the defeat of Palenque in battle and the capture of K'awil Mo'—a high-ranking military leader from a city allied with Palenque, who on Mon. 27 bears on his thigh the term *chaklib*. Proceeding from a <chac> entry in Moran's Ch'olti dictionary (1695:72), Søren Wichmann

(2002:7-8) interpreted this as 'tied-up thing'/'prisoner' in reference to how he is bound (Figure 21), but we have determined that <chac> *chak* as 'to tie' does not occur in Ch'olti'. Our translation of *chak[-aj]-l-lb* 'place of reddening/sacrificial altar' will appear in a future essay.

3-AK'BAL 9-?-OL ?? ?-u 11-YAX-SIHOM

"STAR-WAR" u-TOK'-PAKAL

3 'Ak'bal ... 11 Yax Sihom "star-war" u-tok' (u)-pakal
'was defeated his flint, his shield'

AJ-pi-tzi-la BAK-la-AJAW-wa

'aj pitz[i]l bak[a]l 'ajaw

'ballplayer, Lord of Palenque'

chu-ku-?ja-ya K'AWIL-la MO'-o

chu[h]k[al]-iy.. k'awil mo'

'was captured, K'awil Mo''

T87:514 K'INICH-BAK-NAL-la CHAK-ki

K'UH-po-o-AJAW

'e'tej k'inich baknal cha[h]k k'uh[ul] po' 'ajaw

'in sacred service was K'inich Baknal Chahk Holy Lord of Tonina'

(Tonina Mon. 172 [AD 692])

Monument 27 (AD 692) is the carved tread of a step depicting the bound, supine K'awil Mo' with his name adjacent. A separate text reads T78:514

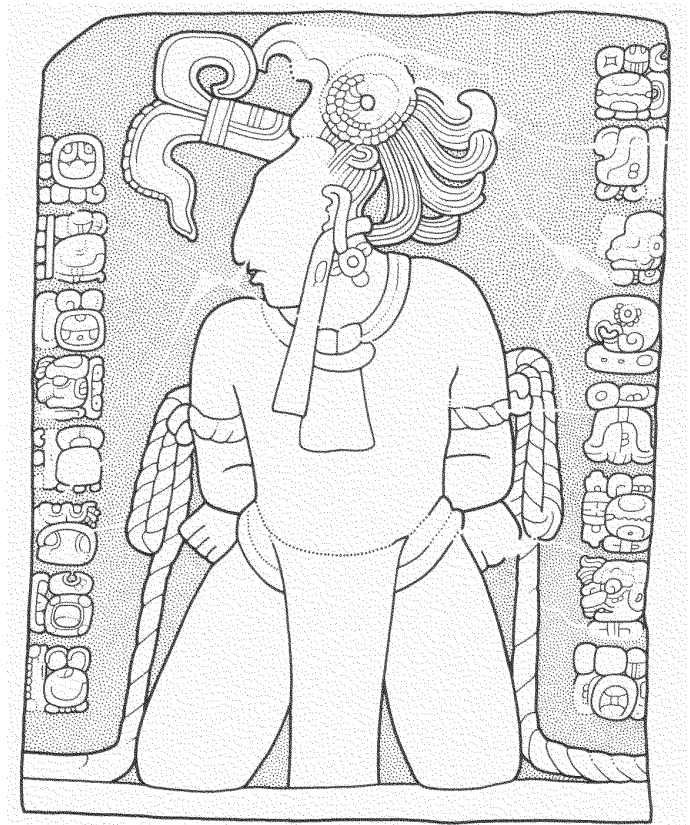


Figure 21. Tonina Monument 172 (drawing by Simon Martin).

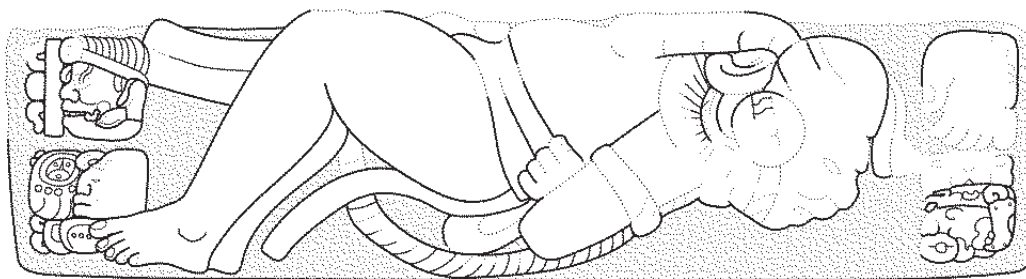


Figure 22. Tonina Monument 125 (drawing by Guido Krempel).

K'INICH-BAK-CHAK 'e'tej k'inich baknal chahk 'in sacred service was K'inich Baknal Chahk'. A newly-catalogued fragment (Krempel et al. in press:Fig. 9c) has an almost identical text with 'e'tej k'inich baknal chahk.

These two monuments are different statements of the same event wherein three variants of the original *e'tej* participial form substitute. As with the Balun E'tej Tz'on "shield" texts, that of Mon. 27 is the expected T78:514; thus the canonical form was known and preserved via script pathways which have not survived.

On Mon. 172 the superfix is T87, a logogram with an independent value **TE'**. And on Mon. 145, T514 has a T78 superfix as well as a T87

TE' suffix (a correction first recognized by Guido Krempel [Krempel et al. in press]). These spellings demonstrate that at Tonina a merger was in progress between 'e'tej and 'eht-te' (or perhaps a simplified form 'eeh-te'), and these monuments have captured the transition. It is significant that the canonical T78:514 is preserved on the ballcourt "shield" texts, where it is locked into a noun phrase, while during the same king's reign it is undergoing hybridization. With no ergative, one assumes this hybrid to (a) mark an established—not new but fading—syntactic pattern in Tonina script discourse, and (b) to have continued to function as a participle meaning 'in (a state of) sacred service' until **ye-TE'** 'his battle-trial' predominates. But given the unique presence of T87 **TE'** as superfix or suffix with T514 in two cases, one wonders if the pronunciation had itself become a hybrid much like *frustrated* in colloquial American English, wherein *frustrated* is conflated or confused with *flustered* by some speakers.

While later monuments shift exclusively to the **ye-TE'** spelling, indicating that T78:514 'e'tej 'sacred service' was exiting the stage as it had at Yaxchilan, there are two **ye-TE'** texts (Krempel et al. in press:Figs. 3, 5) which precede the reign of K'inich Baknal Chahk. These demonstrate that **ye-TE'** 'his battle-trial' does not necessarily show a linear evolution beyond T78:514 'sacred service,' but was rather a sociolinguistic marker which favored reverence for the kings over that for the gods.²³ These early examples (Krempel et al. in press:10-11) are on Mon. 125 and Mon. 99. Mon. 125 (Figure 22) depicts a prone, bound captive from an elusive site Mamis; his nominal is followed by **ye-TE'** 'his battle-trial' and the name of the Tonina king Bahlam Chapaht. Mon. 99 (Figure 23) belongs to "Ruler 2" and uniquely depicts a bound female captive with a verb **K'AL-la-ja** k'a[h]laj 'was held/bound,' then her undeciphered nominal, then **ye-TE'** y-eh-t-te' waywal K'uh[ul] Pu...al 'Ajaw. The epithet waywal 'sorcerer,' used by Ruler 2, is here followed by a second and uncommon local Emblem Glyph Pu...al (Figure 23).

Monuments 153 and 154, dated to between 708 and 723 (or

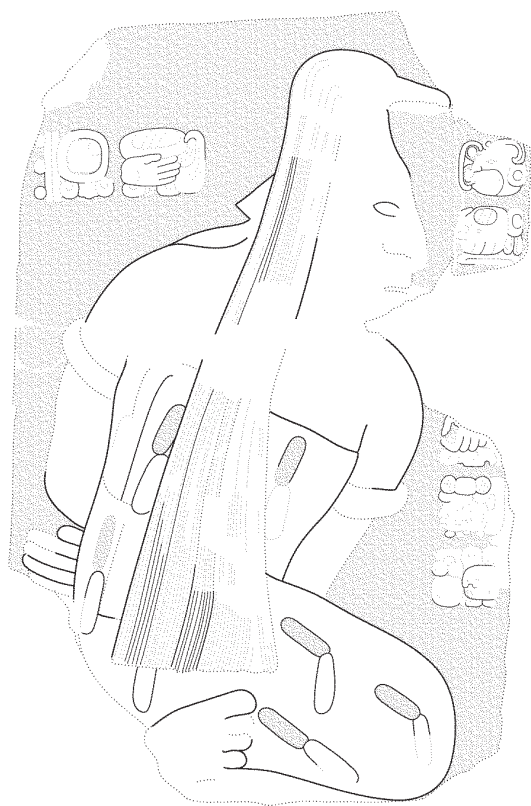


Figure 23. Tonina Monument 99 (drawing by Guido Krempel).

²³ As stated earlier, the spellings **ye-he-TE'** and **ye-je-TE'** at Yaxchilan are equivalent to the further-simplified **ye-TE'** at Tonina and elsewhere. At Yaxchilan, **ye-he/je-TE'** 'his battle trial' represented that city's final step in an observed morphological and semantic progression amid a shift from a focus on the captive to one solely crediting the king. At Tonina, where **ye-TE'** 'his battle trial' is contemporaneous with various spellings involving T[78]:514 **E'TEJ** 'sacred service', the agent is always the king or his military representative. Not only do spellings featuring T[78]:514 overlap in time with **ye-TE'** at Tonina, the former merge into unique hybrids whose syntactic role (possessed nominalization vs. participle) is determined by the presence or absence of the third-person ergative pronoun, since only 'e'tej '[in] sacred service [is]' may function as a participle.

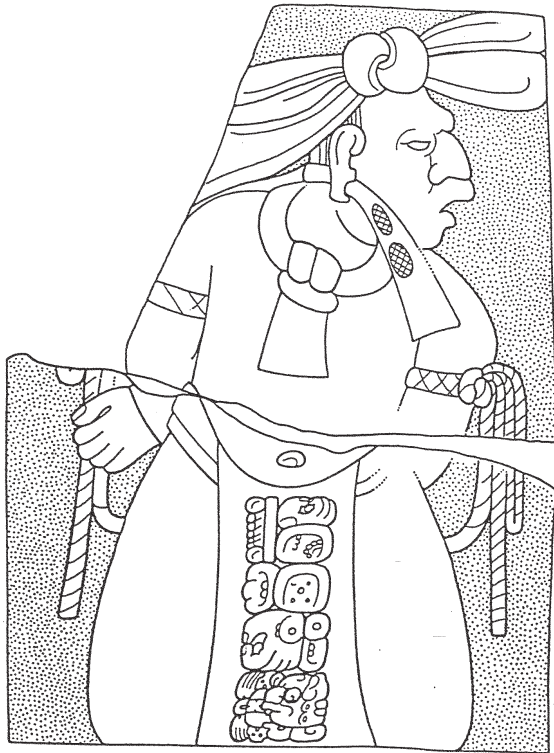


Figure 24. Tonina Monument 153 (drawing by David Stuart © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 2004.15.15.2.71)..



Figure 25. Tonina Monument 154 (drawing by David Stuart © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 2004.15.15.2.72).

~716), depict captives from Calakmul and an unknown site. Both use the **ye-T87** *y-eh-t-te'* term (Figures 24 and 25).

AJ-chi-ku na-bi ye-T87-K'INICH-?-K'AK'

'aj chi[h]k na[h]b y-e[ht]-te' k'inich ? k'a[h]k'

'He of Chihk Nahb (Calakmul) (it was) his battle-trial, Ruler 4'

(Tonina Mon. 153)

ba-to-k'a xo-yi ye-T87 K'INICH-?-K'AK'

ba[h] tok' xoy y-e[ht]-te' k'inich ? k'a[h]k'

'Head Flint Encircler/?Spy²⁴ (it was) his battle-trial, Ruler 4'

(Tonina Mon. 154)

A fascinating example (Figure 26) which came to our attention recently (Krempel et al. in press:Fig. 17b) appears on a miniature stela of unknown provenance tied by Krempel, Sánchez Gamboa, and Sheseña (in press) to the late Tonina court. We have permission to discuss the portion of it (Column A) which includes T514 in a unique configuration. It shows a dignitary dressed as the Sun God who is standing on a subdued captive (Krempel et al. in press:35, Fig. 17b; Mark Van Stone, personal communication 2023).²⁵ The text forms two single-glyph columns on either side of the standing figure, whom Krempel identifies as the king rather than the other protagonist of the text. We note in Krempel's

drawing an example of **ye-T514-je** without the T78 superfix, suggesting that as with the hybrids above, T514 alone carries the value '*e'tej*' 'sacred service.' A **-no** suffix identified by Krempel is uniquely present here; this we suggest to be an underspelling of **tz'o-no**. Our transliteration of Column A builds upon that of Krempel et al. (in press), who identify the date, remark on the T514 collocation without detail, and identify a protagonist Aj Til (Guido Krempel, personal communication 2023). Our understanding of the noun compound *y-e'tej tz'on* (here with T78 absent) requires its agent to follow. We translate the possessed compound as 'it was his sacred-service hunt (campaign).' Aj Til, as the personal name of the agent, was presumably a war captain of high rank; his name is followed by an undeciphered collocation which qualifies him in some way.²⁶

²⁴ *xoy* in Yucatec (Barrera Vásquez 1980:953) is given as 'rodear, cercar, espiar.'

²⁵ The dimensions of this stela are 31.75 cm high by 11.11 cm wide. The drawings are by Guido Krempel, who has investigated this monument for more than a decade. All measurements and photographs were taken by Mark Van Stone and are shared with his permission.

²⁶ Guido Krempel and his colleagues had studied this monument via photographs supplied by Donald Hales long before he kindly brought it to our attention. Based on discussions with Krempel, we appreciate that only a full analysis of the entire text (Columns A and B) can establish for publication that the agent of **ye-E'TEJ-je** [tz'o]-**no** is a war captain; thus our proposal is provisional.

Column A:

11 AJAW
ye-E'TEJ-je [tz'o]-no
AJ TIL

?-?

Buluch 'Ajaw

y-e'tej-[tz'o]n

'Aj Til

?-?

'Eleven Ajaw (was) his Sacred-Service Hunt/his campaign, Aj Til ?-?

(Miniature Stela, Tonina)

We are pleased to see that the possessed nominalization **ye-T78:514-je** here compounded with **[tz'o]-no** has put in an appearance at Tonina many years after the reign of K'inich Baknal Chahk. This (minus **[tz'o]-no**) is one of the two spellings seen on the Early Classic lintels at Yaxchilan, and it is evidence that this term and its grammar were conserved in codices or on portable objects at Tonina and occasionally used on monuments well after **ye-TE'** 'his battle-trial' had become the norm.

The last known example of **ye-T87** at Tonina appears on the undated Monument 131, accompanying a crouching captive (Figure 27).

?? ?-si-AJAW ye-T87 K'UH-po-o-AJAW

?? ...-si ajaw y-e[ht]-te' k'uh[ul] po' 'ajaw

... Lord it was his battle-trial, the Holy Lord of Tonina'

Late Classic Caracol

Altar 23 of Caracol, dated to 800, is part of a history both beyond the scope of this study and shrouded in mystery (Stuart 2019) (Figure 28). It raises the question of how a high-ranking official or regent, likely of advanced age and who had never been king, can claim these two

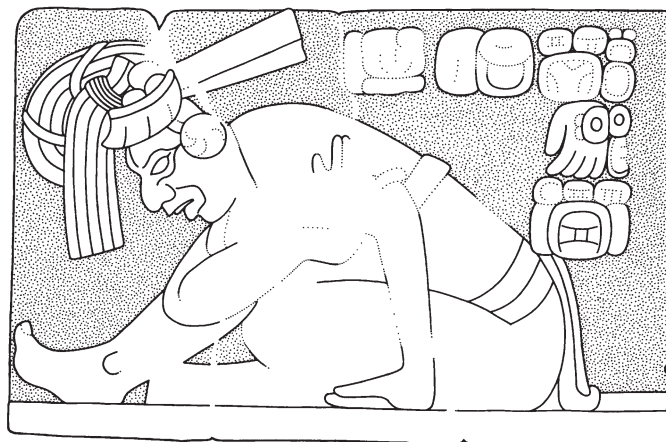


Figure 27. Tonina Monument 131 (drawing by Peter Mathews © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 2004.15.6.16.19).

prisoners in a **ye-TE'** statement. We will endeavor to fill in some gaps.

This agent of the largely-silent Caracol court had apparently for decades been crafting and stabilizing a network between various smaller sites of the region. His name, Tum Yohl K'inich, appears in 744 in the cave of Naj Tunich (Stone 1995; MacLeod in press), and in that role he participates in the founding of an alliance between Caracol, Sacul, and Baxtun; its 28-Haab anniversary was then celebrated by a lord from Calakmul, a longtime ally of Caracol.

Altar 23 depicts two bound high-ranking captives; each is named with his polity followed by the **ye-T87** formula. The name Tum Yol K'inich follows. One captive is a *k'uhul ajaw* from Bital, an unknown polity, and the other is Xub Chahk, a *k'uhul ajaw* of Ucanal (then an enemy of Caracol) captured three-plus years earlier (Aug. 11, 796) by the king K'inich Lakamtun of Yaxha', located some 45 km. to the northwest of Caracol. Soon after, Yaxha' was attacked by Naranjo (Helmke et al. 2018; Stuart 2019), which sent K'inich Lakamtun fleeing, and in the midst, Xub Chahk was mysteriously transferred to Caracol amid the "battle-trial" of Tum Yohl K'inich in connection with the first accession to the Caracol throne in a century. The paraphrasing, transcription, and translations which follow incorporate those of Stuart (2019), with the specific exception of **ye-TE'**.²⁷

The main text celebrates a *k'al-tun* 'stone-enclosing' event *ti tanlamaw*, of the half-period, followed by the newly-installed king K'inich Joy K'awil and the Caracol Emblem Glyph. Next we see *chul[h]kaj*, 'was captured'

²⁷ Stuart (2019) says: "The caption continues with **ye-te**, a relationship term perhaps based on *et* or *eht* (*y-et*, 'his companion'(?))..." We note that in the foregoing absence of a conclusive decipherment of T78:514 and its constellation of related collocations, the "companion" idea, while perennially questionable, is still extant. In the Caracol Altar 23 context, given its complex back-story and associated hostilities, 'companion' is especially doubtful.



Figure 26. Tonina Miniature Stela (photo by Mark van Stone).

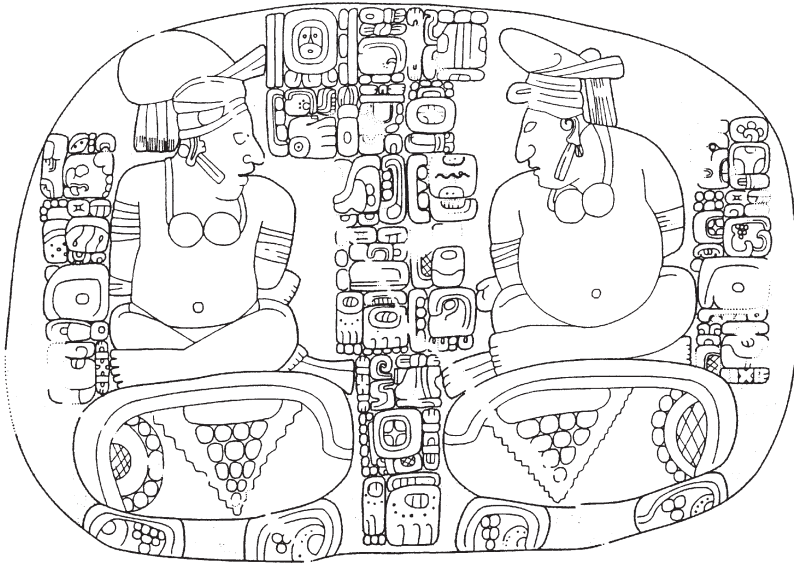


Figure 28. Caracol Altar 23 (drawing by Nikolai Grube).

and *u-bak*, ‘his prisoner(s)’—an apparent revision of history, unless this capture extended over several years. The subject of the verb is the ‘*ux winikhab* ‘*ajaw* ‘three k’atun lord’ **tu-[mu]-OL K’INICH** *Tu[m]* [Y]o[h]l K’inich with his *bah kab* ‘head of the land’ title, and the event was overseen (*u-kab-’ij-iy*) by K’inich Joy K’awil with his own emblem and title. This monument gives center-stage to a venerable military / political strategist who is in his third *k’atun* in this role. The broader narrative offers glimpses of the additional obligations which comprise the battle-trial. The texts accompanying the captives are as follows:

(Left)

LEM?-TI’-BALAM, K’UH bi / BIH-TAL AJAW

lem ‘uti’ *ba[h]lam*, *k’u[hul]* *bital* ‘ajaw

‘Shining-Mouth-Jaguar Holy Bital Lord’

ye-TE’ tu-[mu]-OL K’INICH

y-e[ht]-te’ tum [y]o[h]l *k’inich*

‘it was his battle-trial, Tum Yohl K’inich’

(Right)

xu-bu-cha-ki K’UH K’AN WITZ-NAL AJAW

xub chahk *k’uh[ul]* *k’an witznal* ‘ajaw

‘Whistling Chahk, Holy Lord of Ucanal’

ye-TE’ tu-[mu]-OL K’INICH

y-e[ht]-te’ tum [y]o[h]l *k’inich*

‘it was his battle-trial, Tum Yohl K’inich’

Late Classic Palenque, Part II

The hieroglyphic records of Palenque became the enduring repository of T78:514 “sacred service”—employing it in both its possessed-nominalization form and its participial form, occasionally appending the final *-je* complement, applying the term not only to paramount necessities of the court such as the construction and dedication of buildings within the palace, but also to elite

rites of sacrifice and penitence and the deeds of gods in primordial time. We have previously discussed two military contexts wherein the first event was a ‘cave-entering’ directed at Tonina, a bitter enemy, followed by testimony to the Palenque king’s “sacred service.”

We are about to set foot into a special architectural context with unequivocal military associations, wherein a category of *nah* ‘house, temple’ owned by the king appears first as E’t_{ej} Nah “Sacred-Service-House,” and later as a tomb named Balun E’t_{ej} Nah ‘Nine-(acts-of)-Sacred-Service-House’ (or perhaps ‘Nine-Sacred-Servants-House’). We will argue that these were two different buildings.

The Palace House C Hieroglyphic Stair

The text opens with a Long Count 9.8.9.13.0 (March 26, 603), the date of K’inich Janab Pakal’s birth, then cites his accession before backtracking to a devastating attack on the city by Calakmul in 599 (Figure 29). The rest is an account of this attack and the subsequent revenge enacted upon the Kan lords and their regional allies, including Nun U-Jol Chahk of Santa Elena and Ahin Chan Ahk of Pomona. The passage immediately prior to the naming of the E’t_{ej} Nah (C6d) is dated (9.11.6.16.11) 7 Chuen 4 Ch’en: August 10, 659; it opens with the verb *chul[h]kaj* followed by a list of captives taken by the war god Balun Yokte’ and by K’inich Janab Pakal.²⁸ The closing statement is summarized as ‘*e’t_{ej} nah* (T78:514-NAH) ‘Sacred-Service-House’ *u-k’aba’ y-otot* ‘...was its name, his building,’ followed by *pat-laj*

²⁸ We propose that the eroded sign at D5c just prior to Balun Yokte’ is a misdrawn T78:514-*je* ‘*e’t_{ej}* ‘in (a state of) sacred service were (Balun Yokte’ and K’inich Janab Pakal).’ This establishes a grammatical antecedent for the placement of the unpossessed building at the close of the text. We note that Bernal Romero (2015a:7) had reached a similar identification. The arraignment of Nun U-Jol Chahk and his captured companions is restated in more detail on the West Tablet of the Inscriptions, starting at K9b; the Long Count date is 9.11.6.16.17, just six days after their capture.

Bernal Romero lists the captives whose names appear on the Hieroglyphic Stair: “...Palenque tomó la iniciativa y emprendió una campaña militar hacia el oriente. K’inich Janab Pakal penetró en esa zona y libró una batalla decisiva el 7 de agosto de 659. Los escudos y lanzas de pedernal (*to’k’-pakal*) de Lakamha’ salieron victoriosos y la contienda resultó catastrófica para los aliados de Calakmul, ya que fueron capturados: Nu’n U Jol Chaahk, el gobernante principal de Santa Elena-*Wak’ab-[h]a*’; un dignatario de la población de K’in[h]a’ (perteneciente al señorío de Piedras Negras-Yokib); *dos*

Lakam-Ha' '(which) was formed (built) in Lakam-Ha' (the core of the city).

i-chu-ka-ja 7-CHUWEN 4-**IK'**-SIHOM-ma yi-ta-[ji]
AHIN CHAN-na AK AJAN?-a-ku **SAK-BAK?** 8-ch'u?-
bi SAK-ja-li?

i-chu[h]k[a]j Huk Chuwen Chan 'Ik'-Sihom y-itaj 'ahin chan
 'a[h]k 'ajan? 'a[h]k sak bak 8 ch'ub? sakja[l]
 'they were captured on [CR date]²⁹ ... they accompanied
 him... [names of captives]

[ye-T78:514-je] 9-K'UH-OK-TE' K'INICH JANAB
pa-ka-la K'UH BAK AJAW
y-'e'tej balun [y]okte' k'uh k'inich janab pakal k'uh[ul] bak[al]
 'ajaw

'it was their sacred service, Balun Yokte' K'uh and
 K'inich Janab Pakal, Holy Lord of Palenque'

T78:514-**NAH u-K'ABA** yo-OTOT PAT-la-ja
LAKAM-HA'
'e'tej-nah u-k'aba' y-otot pat-laj lakamha'
 'Sacred-Service-House was the name of his building
 (which) was formed (built) in Lakam-Ha''

Chronologically, this second example of *'e'tej* at Palenque (the first being its syllabic equivalent in 654 on the Tableritos) is the first time we see a reference to the E'tej Nah of that city. The term is otherwise more familiar as the 9-T78:514-**NAH** Balun E'tej Nah 'Nine Sacred-Service-House,' designated as *u-muhk-il* 'the tomb of' K'inich Janab Pakal at the close of the West Tablet of the Temple of the Inscriptions.

It is likely these captives on the Hieroglyphic Stair were brought to this building for their arraignment, but which building was it? This event took place thirty years before the dedication of the Temple of the Inscriptions, and that building was constructed around the sarcophagus chamber at its heart. We note below that textual evidence suggests construction began on the Temple of the Inscriptions in 677, 18 years later. We concur with Guillermo Bernal's (2015a:8) proposal that the original E'tej Nah (what he termed *Yeh Te' Naah* 'la casa de la Lanza Afilada') was House C within the Palace—the location of the hieroglyphic stair itself.

Temple of the Inscriptions, Pier A

This eight foot tall rectangular text containing 96 glyphs was applied in stucco to the outer surface of Pier A of the Temple of the Inscriptions, and while small parts

de Pomoná-Pip[h]a', Sak-jal Itzamnaj y Ahin Chan Ahk; y los gobernantes locales de Yaxkab y Batuun" (Bernal Romero 2011:53, boldface added). (We will return to this war when we discuss Pomona.) Bernal Romero (2011:370, Fig. 1.19.Bis.2) compares Schele's drawings of the profiles of these six captives with their name cartouches; one is Ahin Chan Ahk of *Pip-a'* (Pomona).

²⁹ The syntax makes clear that *i-chuhkaj* here refers to the capture of Nun-U-Jol Chahk mentioned in the previous sentence.

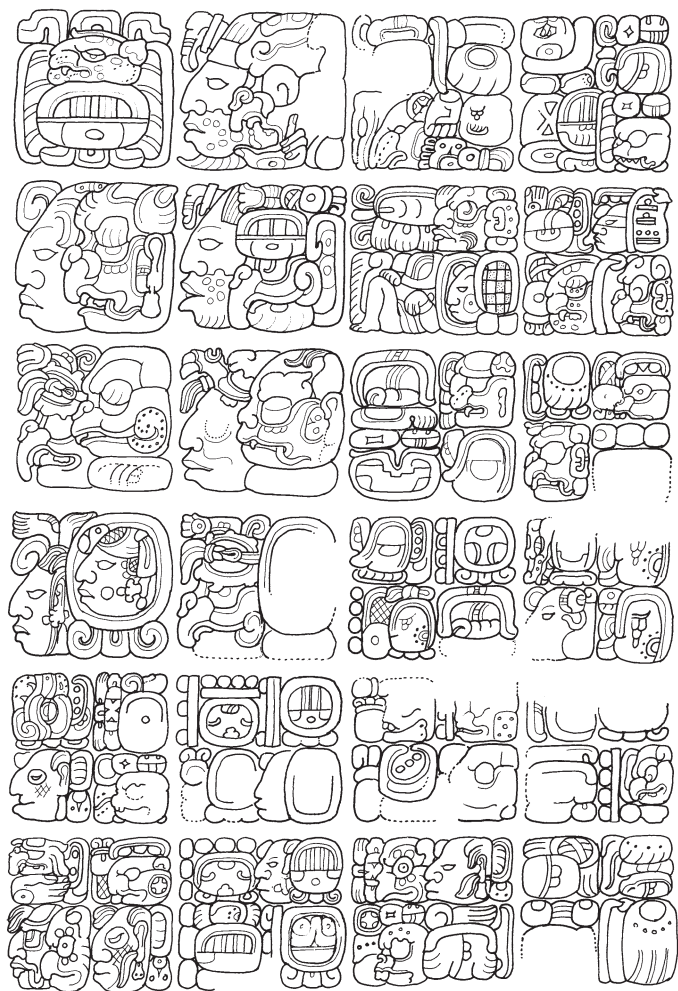


Figure 29. Palenque HS. 1 (drawing by Linda Schele © David Schele, used with permission).

are coherent and include a Distance Number, it is not possible to determine where the fallen block in question originated (Figure 30). It reads **ye-TE'**(T87)-**na-hi**, employing a rare head variant of **ye** and the T60:528 syllabogram **hi**. One might consider this text and block to be a reference to the building to which it was affixed, but we think it is instead a bridge to an original E'tej Nah in the Palace rather than corresponding to the name 9-T78:514-**NAH** given to the TI at the close of its narrative. The Temple of the Inscriptions was dedicated on (9.12.18.4.19) July 6, 690 (Stuart and Stuart 2008:171).

This example raises the prospect of an occasional cross-over between the spellings **ye**-T78:514/**ye**-T78:513-**je** *'e'tej* and **ye**-T87 **'eht-te' > 'e[ht]e'*. Prior to this point across the Maya area, these terms and their spellings were kept absolutely separate. We noted above that in 692 on the Tonina "K'awil Mo' Panel" (Mon. 172) there is a T87 **TE'** superfix on T514, replacing T78, but the syntax nonetheless requires the participle *'e'tej* 'in (a state of) sacred service.' In the Pier A case we might assume *y-e'tej* 'his sacred service (house)' as well, given

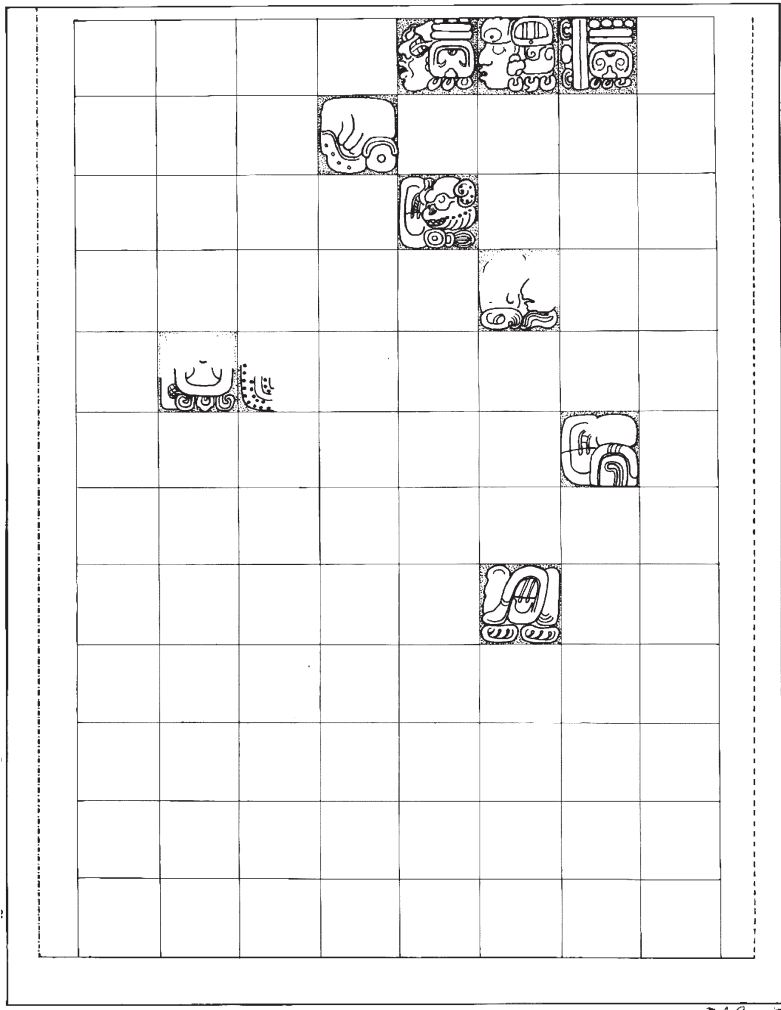


Figure 30. Palenque, Pier A of Temple of the Inscriptions (drawing by Merle Greene Robertson, modified for context).

the T78:514 spellings on the House C HS and on the TI West Tablet, but 'his battle-trial-house' is indicated by the spelling and is appropriate here. It is hard to fathom the scribal academies of arch-enemies Palenque and Tonina sharing innovations amid an intellectual détente, but one may assume a common repertoire of terms, military and otherwise, into which innovations were introduced, including substitutions between the homophones we propose. Perhaps such lexical exchanges took place between captors and captives. And spies were everywhere.

Temple of the Inscriptions: Balun E'tej Nah

The Temple of the Inscriptions was the grandest of the buildings of K'inich Janab Pakal, completed after his death by his son K'inich Kan Bahlam II, with its exterior, including a now-collapsed roofcomb, entirely covered with stucco texts and imagery. Only fragments of these survive, including the Pier A text mentioned above. The excavation and documentation from 1949–1952 by Dr. Alberto Ruz Lhuillier of the tomb chamber and sarcophagus deep in its core make it the most famous of Classic Maya buildings. Only

a brief summary of the long inscription carved on three tablets is possible here; our discussion relies on the extensive accounts by Bernal Romero (2011), Bíró (2011a), and especially the superb 2007 transliteration, transcription, translation, and analysis of the entire text by Stanley Guenter (2007). Amid a detailed history of the investigation of the structure itself, Guenter, citing Schele and Mathews (1998:100), describes the archaeological and epigraphic effort which led to the dates of the likely initiation of construction of the temple in 677 and its completion in 689. The last date given on the West Tablet is (9.12.11.12.10) 8 Oc 3 Kayab: January 10, 684. These are the final sentences (Figure 31):

ta-8-OK-3-K'AN-a-si-ya K'AL-SAK-HUN-na tu-u-BAH-hi

ta 8 'ok, 3 k'anasiy k'al sak hun tu' bah (January 7, 684)

'on (date) it was held the white headband to his head'

K'INICH-KAN[BALAM]-ma

K'UH-AJAW-BAK-la-wa

k'inich kan ba[h]lam k'uh[ul] bakal 'ajaw

'K'inich Kan Bahlam Holy Lord of Palenque'

ya-k'a-wa-1-TAN-na 9-T78:514-NAH

u-K'ABA'-u-MUK-li

yak'aw jun ta[h]n balun 'e'tej nah uk'aba' umu[h]k[i]l

'he gave caretaking in the Nine Sacred-Service-House (which) is its name, the tomb of...'

K'INICH-JANAB[PAKAL]-K'UH-BAK-la-AJAW

k'inich janab pakal k'uh[ul] bak[a]l 'ajaw

'K'inich Janab Pakal Holy Lord of Palenque'

The long narrative of the three tablets begins on the East Tablet with an Initial Series date of 9.4.0.0.0 (514) and the giving of *pik*, 'vestments' to the Triad patron gods of Palenque by the ruler Ahkul Mo' Nahb II. The event is tied to his prior accession, as is true of all the kings (and a queen) who follow. This king was the first of the nine dynasts who over eight k'atuns, through times of abundance and hardship under enemy rule, gave (*y-ak'aw* 'he gave [objects]') adornments and clothing to the patron gods. Other deities who ruled the *k'atuns* were honored amidst those celebrations. When the fist of the Kan polity and its vassal state Santa Elena was most oppressive, the rulers could not (*ma' y-ak'aw*) give vestments to the gods, and during Katun 3 Ajaw (9.9.0.0.0: 593–613—the wars with the

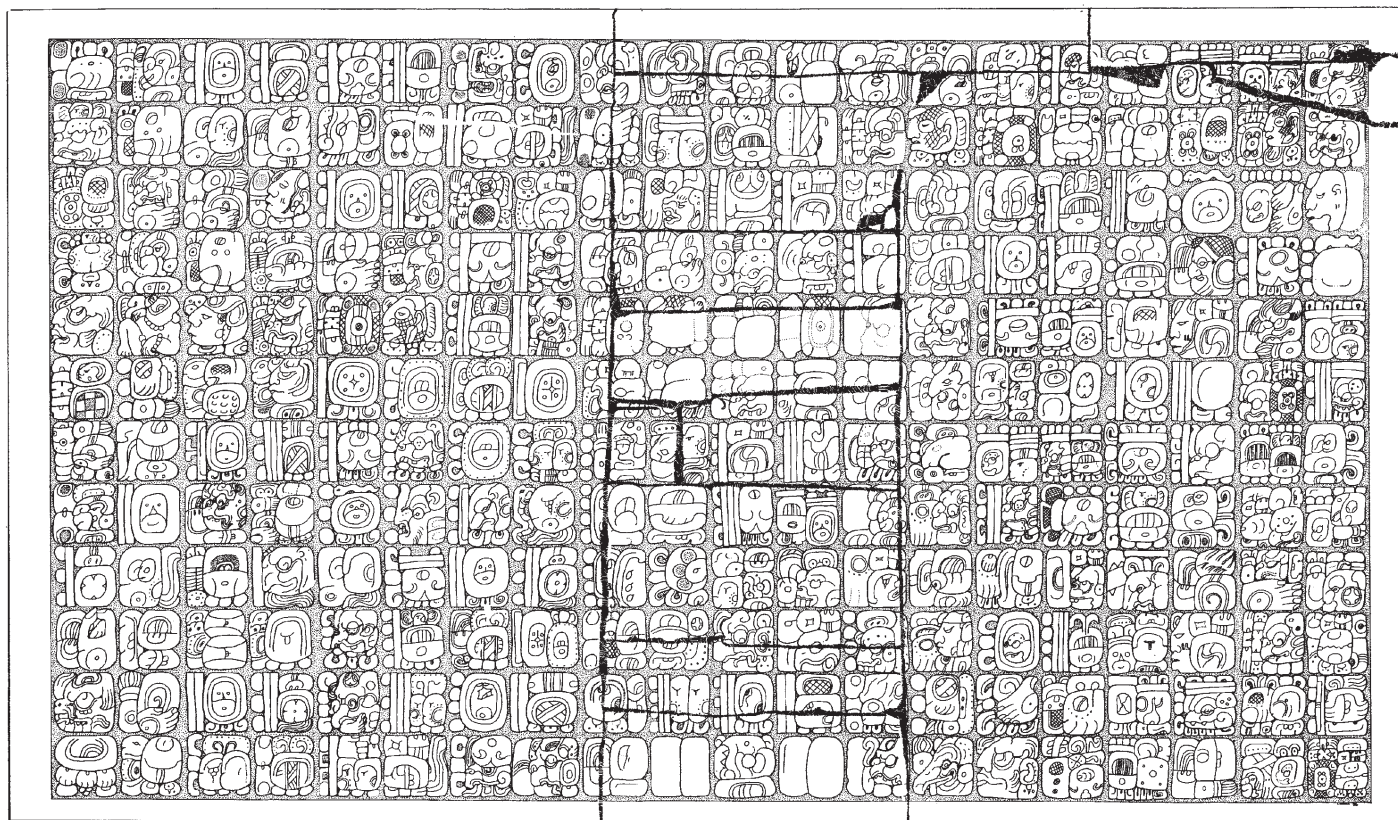


Figure 31. Palenque, West Panel of Temple of the Inscriptions (drawing by Linda Schele © David Schele, used with permission).

Kan polity mentioned on the Hieroglyphic Stair), high-ranking ladies and lords 'were lost' (*satay k'uhul 'ixik, satay 'ajaw*).

K'inich Janab Pakal acceded to the throne on 9.9.2.4.8 (July 29, 615) at the age of twelve, within K'atun 9.10.0.0.0 and near its ending date. The character of this, Pakal's own history on the Middle Tablet, brightens; the metaphors of abundance in K'atun 9.11.0.0.0 proliferate; the Triad gods receive a cornucopia of gifts, including crowns, jade earspools, necklaces, and multilayered vestments, even the white headband of rulership. Metaphorical trees of vitality and prosperity flower in synchrony with the king's capacity to honor the gods; heavenly and earthly bundles are bestowed upon the gods and reciprocally, upon all. But the twelfth *k'atun*, ruled by 10 Ajaw, will be Pakal's last, and within it arise sequential misfortunes, including the death of his wife and finally of himself in August, 683. The trees of wealth and vitality wither.

The West Tablet is concerned with the demeanor and blessings of the gods together with Pakal, now resident among them and continuing to influence the affairs of his court. These are enjoined to let pour out the contentment of their hearts: '*ich naik u-tim[a]jel 'a[w]-o[h]l*', as a series of prodigious leaps by *bak'tuns* into the future is initiated. The count proceeds forward to the next *piktun*, in 4772, then weaves Pakal's birth and accession into the matrix of primordial time and

the rule of the enigmatic "Square-nosed Beast," tying the king to the commensurations of deep solar and planetary cycles and assuring his favor with the gods until finally returning to a peak event of his life: his military victory over Nun U-Jol Chahk and the alliance of Santa Elena with Pomona, acting as surrogates of Calakmul. This event, first mentioned on the House C Hieroglyphic Stairway, is now fleshed out with details of their arraignment, including the parade of humiliated lords with their equally humiliated Kan-dynasty gods, as if in retribution for the time when the Palenque Triad gods were fallen: *yahlej*, during the attack on Palenque in 599, when Pakal was four years old. Thereafter, we read *u-we'-ij-iy*: they (the Triad gods and Balun Yokte') 'ate them.' This is the statement which concluded the Early Classic narrative of the four lintels of Yaxchilan Structure 12, wherein the captives of ten successive kings were said to be in 'sacred service' as designated sacrifices to be "eaten" by the gods.

With one notable exception,³⁰ the rest of the West Tablet text is devoted to anchoring the marriage of Pakal and his wife Ix Tz'akbu Ajaw chronologically to their deaths, and to his interment in the tomb, leading us to

³⁰ A distant count of 3699 years and 285 days back in time records a date 1 Kimi wherein the heart of the Death God is (perhaps) extracted, and then by the hand of the god GI 'is thrown into the ocean' *yal[h]l[a]j-iy tu k'ab ta k'ak'nab*. This passage remains a mystery.

the final two sentences with which this account began.

We have given this attention to the history of a tomb named Balun E'tej Nah because that history offers unparalleled access to the glory and nuance of a Classic Maya king's 'sacred service' and the obligations and rewards inherent therein. One must assume that blood sacrifice attended the dressing and adornment of the gods at every step, even though this is not made explicit until the very end.

One naturally asks: who or what are the "Nine" in the name of this temple/tomb? There are nine stucco royal figures on the walls of the chamber surrounding the sarcophagus. The figures are much alike with the exception of the female (in a skirt), all wearing plumed headdresses and heavy jade collars, holding the JGU war shield in one hand and a *k'awil* scepter in the other; the hands holding them mirror one another across the chamber. Sufficient portions of their name glyphs remain to have allowed Stuart (2005) to tentatively identify them in chronological sequence:

- (1) A[h]kul Mo' Na[h]b I
- (2) K'an Joy Chitam I
- (3) A[h]kul Mo' Na[h]b II
- (4) Kan Ba[h]lam I
- (5) Ix Yo[h]l Ik'nal
- (6) Ajen Yo[h]l Mat
- (7) Janab Pakal (I)
- (8) K'an Hix Mo'
- (9) K'inich Janab Pakal (?)

The chronology of the rulers who accede and venerate the Triad gods on the three tablets (Guenther 2007) matches the first seven of these, but does not mention K'an Hix Mo', and in his place gives Muwan Mat. The final king is named as K'inich Kan Bahlam II, who commissioned the text—or at least its completion—and finished the exterior construction on the building. Politics notwithstanding, in both assemblages there are nine protagonists, and these must equate with the "Nine" in the name.³¹

Apart from the meticulous accounts of 'sacred service' by these nine kings in the narrative, the scepter and shield held by the stucco figures distill the concept into two potent symbols. The shield represents the

obligation to conduct war and offer sacrificial blood; the *k'awil* scepter embodies the receipt and bestowal of metaphysical lightning and sustenance. The script term *k'awil* may function as agricultural abundance, as on K1599, and in Yucatec (Barrera Vásquez 1980:387) *k'awil* is 'alimento.' The term is appended to names for the Maize God (Bolles 1997). Furthermore, it encodes the concept of "kingly power," mentioned in the stairway panel from Xunantunich (Helmke and Awe 2016:14-16).

Tzendales Stela 1

The small site of Tzendales is a lost city in the Selva Lacandona of Chiapas. It was found in 1905 by Alfred Tozzer, who described it as having several large buildings, one with a vaulted chamber which housed this monument, Stela 1. No investigator ever returned after Tozzer's visit, and efforts to relocate it have been unsuccessful. Tozzer's original sketch was redrawn and published by his student Herbert Spinden (1913), and more recently by David Stuart (2013). The image is of a Maya ruler holding a tall K'awil scepter and the cloth "incense" bag often seen in ritual iconography. In his headdress are images of K'awil and the solar "Principal Bird Deity" and his backrack contains the term *k'ahk' mijin* 'child of father' with a portrait head. The text registers a rite of fire-entering into a tomb by the king, followed by a count forward to the 9.13.0.0.0 k'atun ending (March 18, 692) (Figure 32). The pertinent text is:

ta-YIH-K'IN (7 Imix 13 Zip) **OCH-chi-K'AK'** T78:514-
NAH u-K'ABA'-a u-MUK-li

ta-yihk'in 'ochi k'a[h]k' 'e'tej nah u-k'aba' u-mu[h]k-il

'After sunset ... entered fire (into the) E'tej Nah (which is) the name of his tomb...'

This is followed by *Jun Tz'i'-nal*—either a toponym or the name of an ancestor-owner of the tomb; thereafter (per Stuart 2013) we see the name of the king who conducted the rite: the One-K'atun Lord K'ahk' Witz' K'awil, whose Emblem Glyph is present but unrecognizable. Significantly, we have another identification of the E'tej Nah as a tomb, just as at Palenque.

Tikal Temple IV Lintel 2

We'll now take another detour from Palenque, to Tikal and the only other occurrence of the term T78:514-NAH E'tej Nah in the corpus. This lintel, one of three installed in the largest temple-pyramid at Tikal, records the famous attack in 744 by the king Yihk'in Chan K'awil on the city of Naranjo—a devastating blow which disrupted that polity's connections to vassal states, tribute networks, and trade routes (Bíró 2011a:200; Carter 2016). The item of greatest prestige in Yihk'in Chan K'awil's plunder that day was a "hummingbird palanquin"—bedecked with effigies of the Naranjo king's patron

³¹ The grammar of E'tej in Balun E'tej... is ambiguous. Were it simply E'tej Nah, as in the House C HS text, it would translate smoothly as 'Sacred Service House', wherein a noun functions as an adjective. But the coefficient pushes the term back toward noun status, or to an interpretation "Nine-(Acts-of)-Sacred-Service House" which doesn't quite work, as there were nine kings, each of whom performed many (countless) acts of investiture and sacrifice to the patron gods. Alternatively, we propose that the original participle formed from a transitive stem with *-ej* could jump either to an agentive ('one who is in service, = servant') or an antipassive ('act of service') nominalization.



Figure 32. Tzendales Stela 1 (drawing by Herbert Spinden).

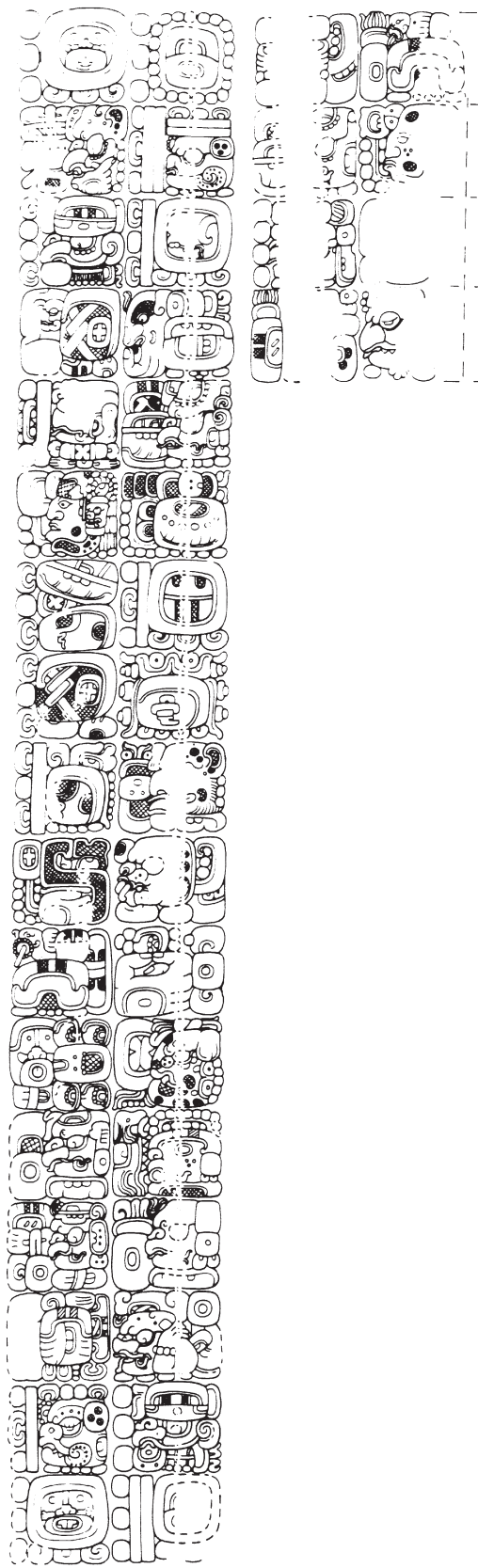


Figure 33. Tikal Temple IV, Lintel 2 (drawing by William R. Coe).

gods—which was captured and ‘carried back’ (*put-uy*) to Tikal,³² whereupon it—and the victorious king seated in it—were likely paraded around the city with the palanquin then installed in his E’tēh Nah. The scene adjacent to the vertical text depicts the triumphant king in the elaborate conveyance, whose crown is a human profile impersonating the Jaguar God of the Underworld.

The Dedicatory Date is 9.16.0.0.0; the attack on Naranjo took place on 9.15.12.11.13 7 Ben 1 Pop (Feb. 8, 744). The day before, on the New Year, Yihk’in Chan K’awil ‘descended’ (*em-ey*) from a shrine, having done a ‘burning (*el*) of vital substance (*sak-bak*)’³³ in the role of the bellicose Huk Chapat K’inich, and ‘entered his sacred water’ *‘och tu k’uh[ul] ha’*, an enigmatic phrase suggesting a descent to the underworld in preparation for the battle (Figure 33).

EM-ye SAK-T533-EL?-la 7-CHAPAT-K’INICH YIK’IN-CHAN-K’AWIL-la OCH-tu-K’UH-HA’

‘em-e[y] sak bak ‘el? huk chapat k’inich yi[h]k’in chan k’awil ‘och tu k’uh[ul] ha’

‘he came down from (the burning rite) as Huk Chapat K’inich Yihk’in Chan K’awil and entered his sacred water’

1-PAS 7-“BEN” 1-K’AN-JAL-wa “STAR-WAR” KAJ 6-KAB-NAL tu-CH’EN-na K’UH-mi-?

jun pas[aj] 7 ben 1 k’anjal[a]w “star-war”-kaj wak kabnal tu ch’e’n k’uh[ul] mi[son]?

‘One day later (on) 7 Ben 1 Pop was destroyed Wak Kabnal in the city of the Divine Mison?’

BAK-wa-ja TZ’UNUN?-PIT-ta

bak-w-aj tz’unun? pit

‘it was captured, the Hummingbird Palanquin’

PUT-yu T533-ki pi-li-pi K’IN-ni hi-HIX IK’-HUN-na

put-[u]ly [u-]bak pilpil k’in hix ik’ hun

‘was carried back [his] maize-decorated solar jaguar black headband’

u-K’UH-li YAX-ma-yu-CHAK-ki SAK CHUWEN-na

u- k’uh-[i]l yax mayu[y] cha[h]k sak churwen

‘the god of Yax Mayuy Chahk of the Sak Chuwen (lineage)’

[ye-] T78:514-NAH-ji-ya KAL-ma-TE’

[y-] e’tēj nah-[i]j-iy kal[o]mte’

‘he used it/them in/at the Sacred Service House, the *kalomte’* (the Tikal king)’³⁴

Collectively, the known texts which reference a building termed E’tēj Nah point to these attributes: (a) it was associated with war and the disposition of captives taken in battle; (b) it was, as at Tikal, the repository of deity effigies seized in attacks on enemy cities; (c) it may have been—but not exclusively—the locus of sacrificial rites to one’s own patron gods; (d) these structures were in two cases tombs; (e) mention of the E’tēj Nah

sometimes closes the written discourse of war.

We know little about the lost building mentioned on Tzendales Stela 1; perhaps it housed the tomb itself as well as the stela. We don’t know where at Tikal the E’tēj Nah was located during the reign of Yik’in Chan K’awil, but given the remarkable statement on Lintel 2 of Temple IV that the palanquin was “E’tēj-nah-ed”—i.e., put into it in some manner, we doubt for pragmatic reasons that the building was Temple IV. It was more likely the less imposing Structure 5D-73, which housed the famous “tomb of the jade jaguar,” the final resting place of Yihk’in Chan K’awil himself. Thus another E’tēj Nah became a tomb.

Palenque likely had more than one E’tēj Nah, with the first surely located within the Palace and cited in the HS text almost two decades before construction on the second was begun. The interior stairway of House A leading to the East Court has nine large limestone slabs flanking it, with four on one side, five on the other. Each is carved with an image of a disproportionate, submissive captive; amid the Palenque canon of beauty, these are patently ugly. The stair registering the capture of the Santa Elena lord is on House C, across the courtyard. The name Balun E’tēj Nah given to the second of these structures was intended as closure not only on Pakal’s legacy of ‘sacred service,’ but on that of the dynastic line into which he had stepped at a time of rupture.

In consideration of the arraignment at Tonina of Palenque warriors amid an enemy campaign termed Balun E’tēj Tz’on (ca. 692–696), we have previously hypothesized that after Pakal’s death and the completion of the West Tablet designating the name of the building (690), the Tonina king chose to openly taunt Palenque’s nine “sacred servant” ancestors amid the construction and dedication of his own ballcourt.

³² The **PUT** reading for T174:chi was first proposed in 2010 in an unpublished paper by Alexandre Tokovinine, Marc Zender, and Albert Davletshin (n.d.) and updated in two conference presentations by Dmitri Beliaev and Albert Davletshin in 2014 and 2018. The argument is based on contexts of T174:chi which have a -tV complement and wherein a meaning ‘carry on the shoulders’ is appropriate. The entry *put ‘acarrear trayendo a cuestras’* appears in Barrera Vásquez (1980:677-678).

³³ MacLeod (n.d.) argues that T533 is intimately associated with the maize plant and reads **BAK** *bak* ‘xilote’, vital force, young child’ amid substitutions for a homophone *bak* ‘bone’ and copious other evidence. The palanquin is visibly decorated with maize leaves and ears.

³⁴ Syntax dictates that a **ye** syllabogram is the only sign which can have been carved in this completely effaced block.

Here we have a complex derived transitive stem based on the compound *‘e’tēj-nah* which is verbalized by the Ch’olan usative suffix -i followed by the perfect -ej (MacLeod 2004) which assimilates to the preceding vowel (>-ij), followed by the deictic -iy pointing to the “gods of the Naranjo king” in the foregoing sentences.



Figure 34. Palenque Tablet of Temple XIV (drawing by Linda Schele © David Schele, used with permission).

Palenque: The Tablet of Temple XIV

This discussion draws upon prior work by Bernal Romero (2011:328-329) and Grofe (2009), as well as discussions with Michael Grofe (personal communication 2022). The contemporaneous date on the tablet (C5-D5) is either 9.11.1.2.0 (Nov. 18, 653) or 9.13.13.15.0 (Nov. 6, 705) 9 Ahau 3 Kankin.³⁵ K'inich Kan Bahlam II, the first son of K'inich Janab Pakal, is either eighteen or has now been dead for almost four years. On this date he has 'entered the cave' ('*och u-ch'en*') of the '*Ik' Ta[h]n-Nal*', the same 'Black-Center-Place' where the gods were 'set in order' on Era Day (13.0.0.0.0 4 Ahau 8 Cumku, Aug. 13, 3114 BCE), as depicted on K2796 and K7750, the Vases of the Seven and Eleven Gods (Grofe 2009). In the scene, he dances upon the primordial waters of the Underworld while his mother in the guise of the Moon Goddess offers him an unbundled effigy of K'awil. His entry and *k'awil*-receiving in the black-center-place are owed to the 'sacred service' of three important deities whose names follow (Figure 34).

9 Ahau 3 Kankin **OCH-u-CH'EN-na IK'-?TAN-?WINIK**
'*och[i] u-ch'en 'ik' ta[h]n-winik[i]*

'he entered the cave of the Black-Center-Being'

**ye-T78:514 XOK-CHAK BALAM ya-na-tz'i K'AK'-AJ
SAK NAH CHA' IX-AJAW**

*y-e'tej xok cha[h]k ba[h]lam y-antz? k'a[h]k'-aj sak nah cha'
'ix-'ajaw*

'it was their sacred service Shark Chahk, Jaguar, mother of the Fire-God, White-First-Two, Lordly Female'

u-K'UH-li BAK WAY-wa-la K'INICH KAN-BALAM

³⁵ Because none of the dates on this panel are controlled by a Long Count and most are in deep time, this leaves open the question of the age of Kan Bahlam on the 9 Ahau 3 Kankin date. Some scholars (Bassie-Sweet 1991; Stuart 2006:99) have suggested he is eighteen, and others (Schele and Miller 1986; Bernal Romero 2015a) take the event as posthumous. Due in part to the abundant underworld symbolism and the uniqueness of this '*och ch'en*' event as unrelated to warfare, we provisionally follow Bernal Romero's view that it is posthumous, but consider that it was intentionally made ambiguous. We observe, as did Schele, that the posthumous Temple XIV—built by K'an Joy Chitam to honor his elder brother—was not erected in his brother's lifetime like the other temples in the Cross group, and it effectively closes access to that sector of the city.

K'UH BAK AJAW

u-k'uh[i]l bak wa[h]ywal k'inich kan ba[h]lam k'uh[ul] bak[al] 'ajaw

'the gods of *bak wahywal* K'inich Kan Bahlam Holy Lord of Palenque'

While we recall that previous '*och-ch'en*' events at Dzibanche' were hostile invasions of the sanctuaries of enemy towns followed by *y-abtej-aj* / *y-abtaj* the 'sacred service' of the king, here we see the antipodal aspect of cave-entry, rife with symbols of sustenance, wherein *y-e'tej* 'their sacred service' is followed by GI, then a solar jaguar deity, then the Moon Goddess named as 'the mother of the Fire Lord,' *Sak Nah Cha* 'White First Two' (the theomorphic number two), and '*Ix 'Ajaw* or 'Lordly Female.'

The text opens at A1-B1 with a remote-past date 9 Ik 10 Mol—932,174 years prior to Kan-Bahlam's '*och ch'en*'—on which the Moon Goddess and two aged deer deities supervise a first *k'awil*-taking. 4268 days later, on 13 Oc 18 Uo (A5-B5)³⁶ the following event occurs:

9-i-pi-*na-ja SAK-BAK-ki NAH-CHAPAT *u-WAY-*ya K'AWIL

balun 'ip-n-aj sak bak nah chapat u-wa[h]y k'awil
'Nine times was strengthened the White Bone (vital force of?) First Centipede, the Nagual of K'awil'

u-CH'AM-wa BALUN 9-OK-TE'-K'UH

u-ch'am-aw balun [y]okte' k'uh
'he received it, Balun (Y)okte' K'uh'

Another deep-time passage follows this one, but we consider the significant interval to be that between the "centipede-strengthening" and K'awil-taking by Balun Yokte' K'uh at the 13 Oc 18 Uo terminus and the cave-entering by Kan-Bahlam—be he 18 or 70—at the other. Grofe (2009) discovered that this interval is a precise multiple of the Palenque value of the lunar synodic cycle, which is echoed by the references to the Moon Goddess in the text.

The Palenque Palace Tablet

The Palace Tablet was dedicated by Palenque's next king K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II, the second son of K'inich Janab Pakal. He was fifty-seven when he took the throne, and late in life commissioned a new construction (House A-D) within the Palace named *K'al-Hun-Nah* 'headband-fastening house,' signifying it as the venue for accessions into high office (Stuart 2012:120). The text was dedicated to courtly milestones in this king's own life, including childhood rites, the deaths of his father and elder brother, and his own accession. His capture and release by Tonina nine years prior (cf. Stuart 2004) was understandably not included.

The central image—a trifigural panel in which the protagonist is flanked by his parents who transfer

canonical symbols of royal authority—has been the subject of debate, but the theme is the assumption of kingship (Stuart 2012:121-122). One of the objects being transferred is the "drum-major" headdress held by his father; its diadem is the Piscine Jester God, itself symbolic of metaphysical sustenance. The dedicatory text features an object called *Pul-Tzin 'Ux Yop Hun* 'Provider-of-Sustenance-Three-Leaf-Paper' (Stuart 2012; MacLeod 2021). The dedication begins at Q9 with the day 9 Men; between the Tzolkin and the Haab we see Glyph F/G7 with a full Lunar Series, then 3 Yax, or (9.14.8.14.15) August 14, 720 (Figure 35).

o-chi-K'AK' K'AL-HUN-?-NAH u-K'ABA'

'och-i k'a[h]k' k'al-hun-nah 'u k'aba'

'fire entered (into) the Headband-Fastening House (which is) its name'

3-K'IN-ni ja-a³⁷ ta yo-OTOT-ti PUL-la-tzi-ni 3-YOP-HUN

'ux k'in ja(b) ta y-otot pul-tzin 'ux yop hun

'three days it (the rite) occupied in his house, Provider-of-Sustenance Three-Leaf Paper'

ye-T78:514-je K'INICH-K'AN-[JOY-CHITAM]-ma K'UH BAK-la AJAW

y-e'tej k'inich k'an joy chitam k'uh[ul] bak[al] 'ajaw

'it was the sacred service of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam the Holy Lord of Palenque'

The dedicatory rite conducted by K'inich K'an Joy Chitam is itself *y-e'tej* 'his sacred service.' It is the final

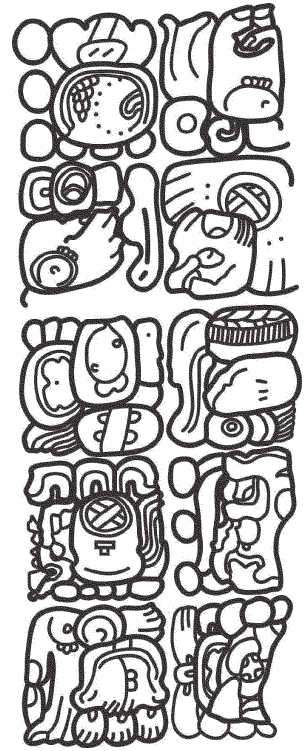


Figure 35. Palenque, Palace Tablet (drawing by Péter Bíró).

³⁶ Michael Grofe (2009): "The interval that I found between 13 'Ok 18 Wo and 9 'Ajaw 3 K'ank'in is 340,465,290 days, which is 11,529,134 x 9.53086419753086. This is the Palenque lunar synodic cycle first discovered by Teeple within Cross Group texts and is the same lunar synodic cycle derived from the Dresden Lunar Table, where 11,960 days = 405 lunations." Grofe cites Wald and Carrasco (2004) and Stuart (2006:99) for recognizing the connection to the Regal Rabbit Vase (K1398) via the same 13 Oc 18 Uo date on which the Moon Goddess (as the Rabbit) and Balun Yokte' conspire to shame God L.

³⁷ The Ch'orti' intransitive verb *jabi-ba* (refl.) is given as *emplearse tiempo* 'use time, make oneself busy with something, make use of time' (Hull 2016:159).

event on the tablet, and we are told it took three days. It relates to the trifigural scene via the *Ficus* bark-paper headband fundamental to royal power that is meta-physically entangled with the drum-major headdress via its diadem. It is “the animate essence of paper” (per Stuart 2012) which is both the physical object placed on the head at accession and the being it represents: a chimera of the three-leafed *Ficus* strangler-fig and the Avian Jester God. This object/being has an independent life and pedigree which is handed down through the royal line. The *Ux Yop Hun* ‘Three-Leaf-Paper’ on the Palace Tablet is further qualified as *pul-tzin* ‘Provider of Sustenance,’ and its animate essence is the Piscine Jester God—the diadem on the headdress whose hieroglyph is **TZIN** ‘sustenance’ (MacLeod 2021).³⁸

The Notre Dame Panel

The Notre Dame Panel, located in the Snite Museum of the University of Notre Dame, is a looted fragment—perhaps part of a balustrade—undoubtedly from Palenque. It is undated, and at present we lack details on its dimensions. It was drawn by Linda Schele, and in 2019 a 3D rendering of a photo was done by Alexandre Tokovinine (2019b), who comments on its current location, likely provenience, and part of its epigraphic content. In a lost prior sentence, it mentions deities termed ‘*ohlis k’uh*

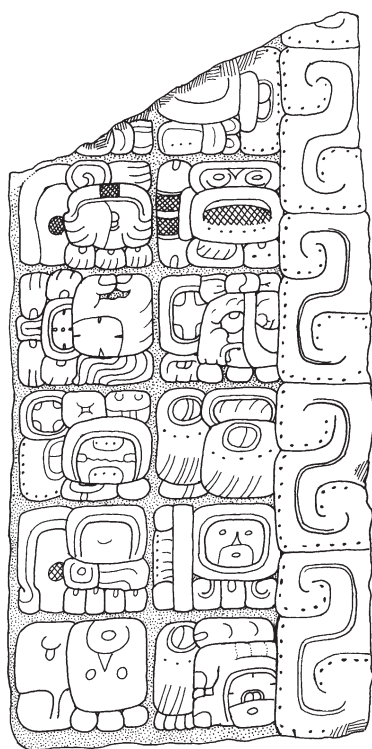


Figure 36. Notre Dame Panel Fragment (drawing by Linda Schele © David Schele, used with permission).

‘heart-gods’³⁹ who are given ‘sacred service’ by K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II, who carries the epithet *Chak Upakal K’inich* ‘Great/Red is the Shield of the Sun God.’ A second protagonist Aj Ajaw Chalam (otherwise unknown in the record) has the title *ba[h] lek-et*, which we translate as ‘head worthy person.’ He is introduced by an unknown and rare agency expression, though we have hints about it. There are deliberate parallels in the structures of both sentences, with *y-e-tej* positioned congruently with the unknown sign, also prefixed

by *ye-*. Both persons are termed *bah-* ‘head (of),’ with these titles also in identical positions (Figure 36).

...-ti **OL-si-K’UH**

...-ti ‘o[h]l[i]s k’uh

‘...(for) heart-gods’

ye-E’TEJ-je CHAK-u-pa-[ka]la K’INICH-[K’IN]chi-ni K’AN-na-[JOY]CHITAM-ma

y-e-tej chak u-pakal k’inich k’inich k’an joy chitam

‘it was his sacred service... Chak Upakal K’inich, K’inich K’an Joy Chitam’

K’UH-BAK-AJAW-wa ba-ka-ba

k’uh[ul] bak[al] ‘ajaw ba[h]kab

‘Holy Lord of Palenque head of the land’

ye-?-ji⁴⁰ AJ-AJAW cha-la-ma ba le-ke-te

y-e...[il]-j ‘aj-ajaw chalam ba[h] lek-et

‘he has ??-ed it/him... He of Lord Chalam head worthy person’⁴¹

Tablets of the Scribe and Orator

Our story about these tablets proceeds from prior discussion by B  r   (2011a:168-171). Their texts have long been opaque due to the use of first- and second-person pronouns which renders uncertain the relationship between the three available protagonists. These are:

(a) Chak Sutz’, named in the left side text, last glyph block of the Scribe Tablet following **ye-T78:514 y-e-tej**; we therefore assume his ‘sacred service’ to have been the delivery of the captive from the battlefield (cf. Guenter

³⁸ The Palenque Bodega (Schele and Mathews 1979) contains fragments (Nos. 208 and 209) found in the North Gallery of the Palace, under the Palace Tablet. They are thought to have been jamb panels mounted on the piers of the North Gallery. Among them is a fragment with a complete spelling **ye-T78:514-je** of indeterminate context.

³⁹ On the main Palace Tablet beginning at F7, a *yax k’al ch’ich’ k’a[h]l-aj mayij* ‘first blood/gift-holding’ rite by the youthful K’an Joy Chitam (‘Ux Jan ‘third sprout’) honors a series of gods termed *Ohlis K’uh* ‘Heart Gods’ at E14–F14. These include the Triad Gods and others named on other Palenque monuments. The *Ohlis K’uh* epithet is uncommon, with other notable examples on the Comalcalco perforators.

⁴⁰ At A5 is a curious collocation T196.517:86:136 framed by **ye-...-ji** which is structurally paired with A2 **ye-T78:514-je** as a second agency or relationship term. It is likely a possessed derived transitive perfect whose stem begins with <e->. We do not think it substitutes for T196.78:514 *y-e-tej* lexically or semantically. The Macri/Looper Database codes T517:86 as a unique sign ZFA and reads it as ?TE’, but that derives from a hypothesis that it substitutes here for T78:514. A TE’ value is otherwise unsupported.

⁴¹ Colonial Tzeltal *lec*, ‘hermosa cosa, digno’ (Ara 1986:319-320). Tzotzil *lek*, ‘elegant, gallant, genteel, graceful, handsome, polished’ (Laughlin 1988:1:243). *lek*, ‘good’ (Laughlin 1975:208). -Vt is a nominalizing suffix known elsewhere in the script and in relevant languages.

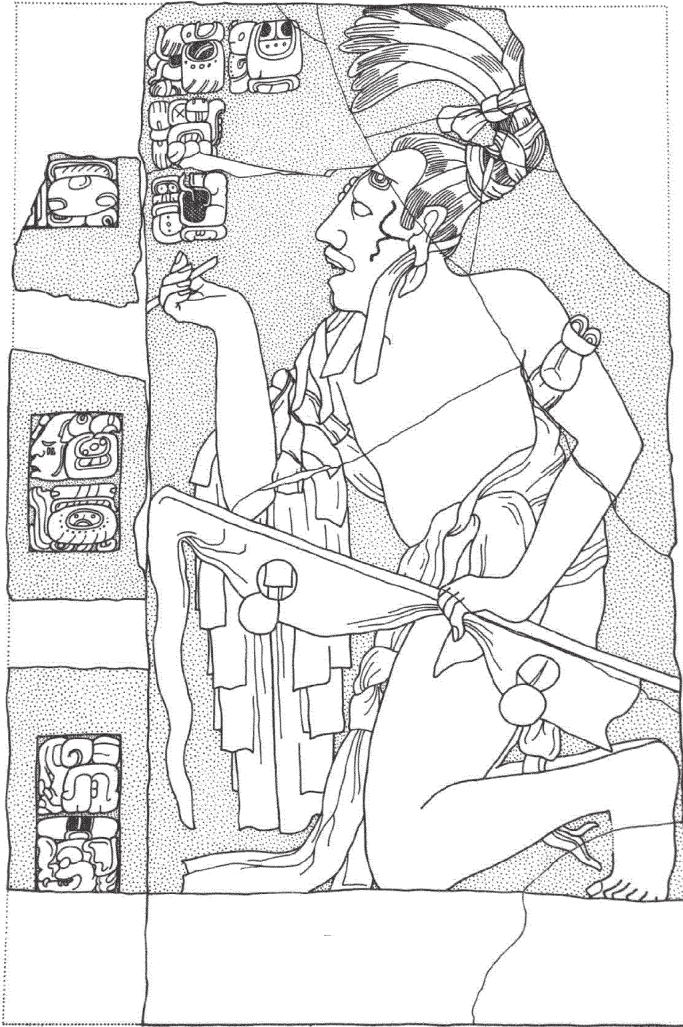


Figure 37. Palenque, Scribe Tablet (drawing by Linda Schele © David Schele, used with permission).

and Zender 1999);

(b) Y-ajawte' K'inich Ahkul Mo' Nahb, named as *Matwil'il* *Ajaw* on the main Scribe Tablet, upper left, and with his full name on the main Orator Tablet, upper right;

(c) *u-sajal* Yo'nal Ahk, a subordinate of the Piedras Negras king, named in the right side text of the Orator Tablet, last glyph block.

Chak Sutz' is named on the Tablet of the Slaves as a *sajal* ('subordinate' of K'inich Ahkul Mo' Nahb), also as a *bah ajaw*, 'First Lord' or a prince in the royal lineage, and as a *y-ajaw k'ahk* "Fire-Lord"—a war-lord title. The details of the history and this battle are discussed by Guenter and Zender (1999), who propose the arraignment of our Piedras Negras *sajal* to have taken place on 10 Zec (May 8, 725) five days later.⁴² They also suggest that he may have been released thereafter—not without precedent, but we have epigraphic evidence, at that time unavailable, suggesting he was sacrificed.

From cues in the main texts it appears the Scribe and

Orator tablets were positioned side by side, with the Scribe on the left and the Orator on the right, and with their vertical secondary texts forming a partial frame left and right. In this arrangement, the names of Chak Sutz' and the *sajal* of the PN king are in opposing positions in the bottom cartouches and the full name of the Palenque king Ahkul Mo' Nahb is above and right-central. Both protagonists show in detail the posture and accoutrements of ritual humiliation and autosacrifice. Guenter and Zender (1999:6-7) argue that the Orator figure must be the subordinate *sajal* of the Piedras Negras king; we think the Scribe is the same captive. One should recall that for years he was thought to be Chak Sutz' himself (and perhaps his sovereign as well) in obligatory ritual penance (Miller 1993:370).

We see the side texts not as connected but parallel, with separate cartouches. The central cartouche on the left reads **na-wa-ja** *na*['*l-w-aj ni-CHAK ka-ma-ya ni-chak kamay* 'is made known (displayed) my red *kamay*'. In the corresponding cartouche on the right, we see **ni-SAK ka-ma-ya** and propose the missing sign to also be **na-wa-ja**; thus a display of 'my red *kamay*' and 'my white *kamay*.'

We now ask: who is using *ni-* the first person pronoun? Is it the captive, offering his noble and final testimony? We ask who is being addressed; it must be Ahkul Mo' Nahb, offstage, but named on the Orator Tablet and referenced by his ancient lineage name *Matwil'il* on the Scribe Tablet. *Kamay* is enigmatic, but likely contains an archaic root **kam*, whose reflex in Ch'olan is *cham* 'die'.⁴³ We suggest a color/direction schema, wherein a captive destined for *kamay*—ritual death?—is offered to quadripartite deities, with only two shown.

Here are the side-text cartouches which remain.

(9.14.13.11.7) 12 Manik 10 Zec (May 12, 725):

Scribe Tablet (Figure 37):

[12 Manik] 10-**ka-se-wa**
'[12 Manik] 10? Zec'

⁴² The authors propose the partly-effaced date to be [9.14.13.11.7 12 Manik] 10 Zec (May 8, 725).

⁴³ The root **kam* is followed by a -*Vy* suffix, which here must also be archaic, given that CVC-*Vy* verses in the script and modern Ch'olan do not operate as nouns, cannot take an adjective, and cannot be possessed.

The term *kamay* appears rarely in the script. One noteworthy example is on K2067 where the "Snake Lady" who conjures the serpent (who is K'awil) is named 'Ix Yal Kopem Ix Kamay "Lady of the Winder's Child, Lady Kamay." Another text on this vase names the serpent as 'Uk' Kan 'drink-snake.' A captive on Yaxchilan HS. 1 Steps IV and VI (Nahm 2006:36) has a nominal phrase beginning with **ka-ma-ya kamay**. Another occurrence of *kamay* appears on a small stone tablet in the Art History Collection at UT/Austin, wherein a lord impersonating Itzam dialogues with a *witz'* water serpent: '*alay t'abay y-otot kamay, u-bah-il 'an 'itzam* (Astrid Runggaldier, personal communication 2022).

na-wa-ja ni-CHAK-ka-ma-ya

na[']-w-aj ni-chak kamay

'is displayed my red *kamay* (my ritual death?, to the East gods)'

ye-T78.514 CHAK SUTZ'

y-e'tej chak sutz'

'it is his sacred service, Chak Sutz''

Orator Tablet (Figure 38):

(date cartouche missing)

[na-wa-ja] ni-SAK-ka-ma-ya

na[']-w-aj ni-sak kamay

'is displayed my white *kamay* (my ritual death?, to the North gods)'

u-sa-ja-la yo-NAL-a-ku

u-sajal yo'nal 'a[h]k

'(it is) the high-ranking vassal of Yo'nal Ahk'

Turning to the main texts, on the Scribe Tablet we have:

IL-a⁴⁴ a-ba a-CH'AB a-AK'AB-li ma-ta-wi AJAW u-si?
?-na

ila a-ba[h] a-ch'a[h]b a[w]-a[h]k'ab-il matwi['il] 'ajaw u-si[h]
?...n

'witness yourself, your creation-darkness, Matwi['il]
Lord.... 'it is the gift of ?'

And on the Orator Tablet, the text is:

u-ba CHIT a-CH'AB [a]-AK'AB-li ya-AJAW-TE'
K'INICH a-ku-la MO'-NAB ba-ka-ba

u-ba[h] chit a-ch'a[h]b a[w]-a[h]k'ab-il y-ajaw te' k'inich
'a[h]kul mo' na[h]b ba[h]kab

'(It is) the image-companion of your creation-darkness,
Captain Ahkul Mo' Nahb head of the land'

We cannot rule out that an offstage Chak Sutz' is addressing his king with respect to the *ch'ab-'a[h]k'ab* rite in which he (the king) and the captive *sajal* are now engaged. But since the captive in both scenes appears to be speaking, we opt for it being the latter (whose name we are not given) who speaks to the Palenque king. It is a poignant final performance by this captive, wherein he addresses the enemy king once as Matwi'il Ajaw 'Lord of the Root of Mat,' and once by his full name Y-Ajawte' K'inich Ahkul Mo' Nahb. He refers to the event of his own impending death (*ni-chak*, *ni-sak kamay*) and to his performance as *chit* 'companion of' the 'creation-darkness' (penitence, blood offering) of the king, accepting (or so the written record implies) his sacrifice as his own obligation—entangled with those of Yo'nal Ahk and Ahkul Mo' Na[h]b—to the gods they all acknowledge. We are reminded that the winners control the narrative, but here the losing warrior is given his last hurrah. It is Chak Sutz' who in 'sacred service' (*y-e'tej*) takes credit for providing the captive and choreographing the



Figure 38. Palenque, Orator Tablet (drawing by Linda Schele © David Schele, used with permission).

occasion. We know it was a more protracted task than the record allows.

Late Classic Period: Piedras Negras and Pomona

Palenque, Piedras Negras, and Pomona were throughout much of the Classic engaged in strained or fractious competition for control of the major river linking the cities of the western heartland to the fertile Tabasco Plain and the Gulf. Santa Elena (on a major tributary) and Yaxchilan (upstream) were also involved. A geographic player given insufficient attention in the epigraphic record is the towering, narrow, and treacherous San José Canyon with its formidable rapids and huge

⁴⁴ The imperative of the irregular transitive root 'ila would be 'ila. The term *chit*, seen on the Orator Tablet and in various script contexts, was first proposed in 2005 by MacLeod for the CHIT logogram and presented at the 2006 Maya Meetings Advanced Workshop. In Classic Ch'olan it corresponds to Yucatec *ket* 'one of a pair, companion in X, co-X' (Barrera Vásquez 1980:311-312).

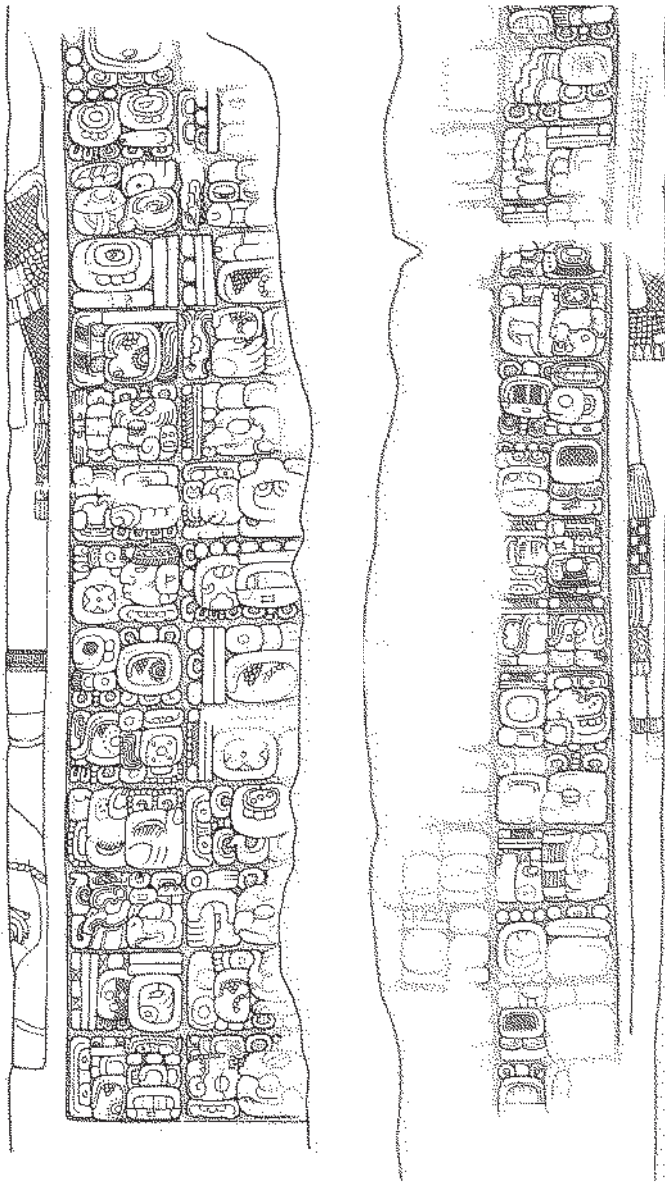


Figure 39. Piedras Negras Stela 12 (drawing by David Stuart © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 2004.15.6.19.39).

whirlpools—impassable for dugout canoes—together with the sections of the Usumacinta above (to Piedras Negras) and below (to Boca del Cerro, near Panhale and nearby Pomona) which are largely enclosed within lesser canyons. The Ahk ‘Turtlesell’ dynasty of Piedras Negras, situated among hills on the rocky north shore of the river upstream from this series of canyons, forged political and marriage alliances with the *Naman* kingdom at La Florida specifically for overland access to the slow, easily navigable Río San Pedro which joins the Usumacinta below Boca Del Cerro. But this still obligated a détente with or control of Pomona just

downstream of that point, as well as Santa Elena, in an equally strategic location on the San Pedro. While these cities may have been intermittently under the aegis of—or neutral to—Palenque after the war of 659, enduring stability is unlikely. Regarding Pomona’s allegiances thereafter, a case is made that Piedras Negras had previously been subordinate to Pomona in 559, as documented on PN Stela 12 (Bíró 2011a:91-93). Thereafter the Piedras Negras king attacked Santa Elena (662) and Pomona (702) (Bíró 2011a:132). Forty-nine years later the Palenque king K’inich Kan Bahlam III traveled there in 751 to attend an accession and to celebrate the 9.16.0.0.0 Period Ending, as registered on Pomona Stela 7, which we will shortly consider. This would not have pleased the Piedras Negras court.

Relations between Piedras Negras and Santa Elena (*Wan*) and Pomona downstream on the trade corridor were precarious at best and increasingly fractious going into the seventh century. PN Stela 35 (662) and Stela 4 (702) register wars with Santa Elena and Pomona, respectively, with their captive warriors brought home for display.

Relations between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan, its upstream rival, were bellicose from the Early Classic forward, as the HS. 1 record has informed us. While there were brief intervals of apparent peace between them, the Turtlesell king K’inich Yat Ahk who commissioned the famous Stela 12, and who hammered Santa Elena and Pomona from 787 to 794 and displayed their defeated warriors at home—that last king of Piedras Negras would himself be taken prisoner in 808 by K’inich Tatbu Jol III of Yaxchilan.

Piedras Negras Stela 12, erected on 9.18.5.0.0 (795), shows the new king Yat Ahk II triumphantly seated upon his throne; with him stand two military lieutenants including his trusted ally Mo’ Ahk from La Mar across the river. Below them: a veritable pile of unhappy captives. The text narrates Yat Ahk’s campaigns in 787 (against Santa Elena), 792 and 794 (against Pomona)—the last two in alliance with La Mar, whose Stela 3 also documented the events in 792—though four days earlier—and in 794. Yat Ahk’s capture of a *y-ajaw k’ahk* ‘Fire-Lord’—a war captain—from Santa Elena (whose defeated warriors we met earlier at Palenque) was particularly significant. The relevant passages of St. 12 in chronological sequence follow:

Piedras Negras Stela 12 (Figure 39)

Dedicatory date 9.18.5.0.0. 4 Ahau 13 Ceh (Sep. 15, 795)

D6–D11: (9.6.5.1.4) 13 Kan 2 Uayeb (Mar. 20, 559): subordinate Piedras Negras lords travel to Pomona:

Translation: “It was 18 days, 7 *winal*s, 16 *tun*s, 11 *k’atun*s since 13 Kan 2 Uayeb (Mar. 20, 559) when they went up (*t’abay*) to Pakbul (Pomona)...Tz’am Sutz’, Aj Ihk’ Sutz’, He of Ahk, Holy Way (Cenote, Chasm, Abyss) Lord...in

the presence of (*y-ichonal*) Put-K'in Bahlam "Sun-Carrier Jaguar" [Holy Lord of Pomona]⁴⁵

**

A16–B19: (9.17.16.14.19 1 Cauac 12 Zac (Aug. 27, 787): attack on Santa Elena

chu-ku-ji-ya TE'-ni-bi K'UH AJ-...-K'IN-ni

chu[h]k-[a]j-iy te'-n-ib k'uh 'aj [och]-k'in

'was captured Spearer-God from the west'

K'UH-lu to-k'a u-ya-ja-[wa] K'AK' K'AK'-?-?

wa-WAN-AJAW

k'uh[ul] tok' u-yaja[w] k'a[h]k' k'a[h]k' ... wan 'ajaw

'Holy Flint the lord of fire of Fiery ... Lord of Santa Elena'

T78-514 ya-AT AK

'e'tej yat 'a[h]k

'in [a state of] sacred service was Yat Ahk'

**

C1–D6: 9.18.1.9.2 7 Ik 10 Zodz (Apr. 5, 792): first attack on Pomona

"Star-War"-KAB pa-ka-bu ... u-tz'a-ka-wa-TE'

"star war"-kab pakbu[l] ... 'u tz'akaw te'

'attack (on) land (of) Pomona ... they (the captors) lined up the spears (=the captives)'

... .. **AJ-TZ'AM? SUTZ' SAK SUTZ' AJ-K'IN-ni**

ye-TE' ...

['aj ... chih] 'aj-tz'am sutz' sak sutz' 'aj k'in ye[ht]-te'...

'Aj ... Chih Aj Tz'am Sutz' Sak Sutz', the priest, the champion ...'

Note: Sak Sutz'⁴⁶ is a famous captive named on La Mar Stela 3 as *u sajal* Put-K'in Bahlam Pakabul Ajaw.

...ya-AT-AK K'UH yo-ki-bi AJAW

...yat 'a[h]k k'uh[ul] yokib 'ajaw

'...Yat Ahk, Holy Lord of Piedras Negras'

**

C12–D18: (9.18.3.5.19) 1 Cauac 2 Uayeb (Jan. 22, 794): second attack on Pomona

(DN: 17 days, 14 *winals*, 1 *tun*: 1 Cauac 2 Uayeb)

2 "Star-War" **KAB pa-ka-bu**

AJ-[JUN]-WINIK-BAK K'UH-WAY-AJAW

cha' "star-war" kab ... pakbu[l] k'inich yat 'ahk] 'aj [jun]

winik bak k'uh[ul] way 'ajaw...

'second time attack on Pomona by K'inich Yat Ahk, he of the 21 captives, Holy Lord of Abyss'

[SAK SUTZ'] AJ K'IN ye-TE'-AJ-k'e-se-me-TOK'

AJ K'AN-a u sa-ja-la [PUT-K'IN BALAM]

[sak sutz'] 'aj k'in ye[ht]-te' 'aj k'esem tok' 'aj k'an [ha] 'u sajal [put-k'in ba[h]lam pakbu[l] 'ajaw]

'Sak Sutz', the priest, the champion, Aj K'esem Tok' from K'an Ha', they are the *sajals* of Put-K'in Bahlam, Lord of Pomona'

T78:514 ya-AT AK K'UH [yo-ki-bi AJAW]

'e'tej ya[t] 'a[h]k k'uh[ul] [yokib 'ajaw]

'in [a state of] sacred service was Yat Ahk, Holy Lord of Piedras Negras...'

We note that the interval between the 559 event on 2 Uayeb (when subordinate PN lords "went up" to Pomona) and the 794 event on 2 Uayeb (the second attack by PN upon Pomona) is exactly 235 Haab. We propose that the "lining up of spears" (*u-tz'akaw te'*) in 792 represented an arraignment of captives in situ, wherein *te'* was a stand-in for 'warrior.' La Mar Stela 3 registers the decapitation (*ch'akba[h] u-ba[h]*) of thirteen unnamed captives (**ba-ki bak**) amid this campaign. This—plus the appearance of the same captives' names in 792 and 794 on PN Stela 12—suggests that while some low-status soldiers were sacrificed in 792, those of higher rank were released, then captured again and dispatched in 794.

We've run through a long geopolitical drum-roll to arrive at the peak epigraphic—and admittedly anticlimactic—events of this story: two examples of the participial form of *'e'tej*: 'in [a state of] sacred service was K'inich Yat Ahk.' It is telling that this uncommon usage with no ergative still surfaces almost unexpectedly in these late texts to remind us of the durability of this archaic term and the rarefied domain of its application. We see that its sparing use reflects a historically- and politically-laden milieu.

Pomona

The site of Pomona lies near the great bend of the Usumacinta River, just downstream of the mountain range through which the Usumacinta carved its spectacular channel. Neighboring Panhale controlled the majestic canyon of the Boca del Cerro (Anaya 2002; García Moll 2005). Apart from consolidation of the main group of structures at Pomona between 1987 and 1988 there has been no archaeological excavation at either site, which leaves the epigraphic material as the sole source of information about their history (García Moll 2005). Armando Anaya Hernández has done a

⁴⁵ A **HACH** 'raise/rise' reading for this variant of the T174 set was suggested in a 2004 note by David Mora-Marín (personal communication 2010), and by David Stuart (2005:97). Both argued for the reading due to T174:**cha-wa-ni** spellings on carved bones from Tikal Burial 116 plus the visual image in the "Sun-Raiser Jaguar" name of the Pomona king. But we accept the reading **PUT** 'carry' for T174:**chi** (following Beliaev and Davletshin cited above in Footnote 32) in the Palenque "rope spool" case, the Tikal "palanquin" cases, and here by extension in this case, although the **chi** main sign does not appear.

⁴⁶ This captive's name on La Mar Stela 3 differs in one respect: where **ye-TE'** (T87) appears on PN St. 12, there is instead a profile head with raised arm, perhaps with a headband. It resembles—but is not—Kalomte'. We wonder whether it might be a unique logographic substitution for **ye-TE'**.

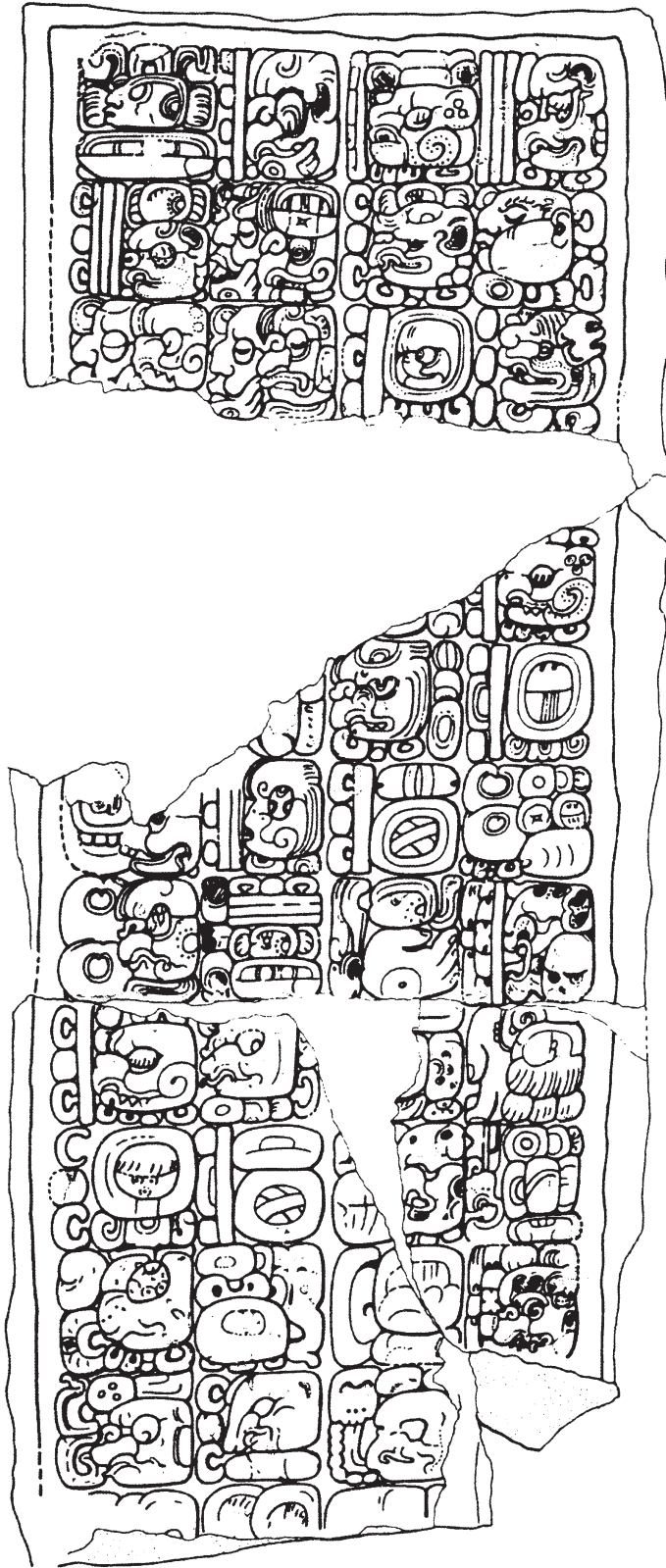


Figure 40: Pomona Stela 7 (after García Moll 2005:Fig. 624).

preliminary survey of the territory of the Pomona polity (2002) which yields important data on several minor sites on the floodplains of the Usumacinta River and the frontier zone between Pomona and Piedras Negras.

Pomona had two Emblem Glyphs—*Pip-a'* and *Pakbul*—and had a long history throughout the Classic Period, but little survives of early monuments. Unfortunately, many of the later ones were broken and scattered during a devastating attack by Piedras Negras in 794. The status of Pomona vis-à-vis its neighbors is inferred from other sources, all late, but there are suggestions of regional interchange as early as 8.13.0.0.0 (Dec. 14, 297) (Martin and Grube 2000:140). The site has six major architectural groups and is spread out among hills along the west bank of the Usumacinta downstream from Boca del Cerro. Though a few kings are recognized, no one has formally investigated its dynastic history. The later surviving monuments display a high level of artistry in low-relief sculpture and calligraphy which—together with thematic and textual content—suggests ties to Palenque.

While the preserved inscriptions offer little information on the foreign affairs of Pomona, other sites of the region give accounts from an enemy's viewpoint. The Palenque HS and flanking texts narrate a 659 retaliation for an earlier defeat by the Kan dynasty and its surrogates. The scribes named the captives: a high-ranking one was from Santa Elena; two were from Pomona, and another was from K'in Ha'—perhaps a vassal of Piedras Negras or Chinikiha. Piedras Negras Stela 4 (702) depicts a Pomona captive. While Piedras Negras Stela 12 proudly narrates the war campaigns against Pomona and Santa Elena from 787 to 794, an earlier, partly effaced passage mentions a subservient 'going up' (*t'abay*) to Pakbul in 559 by several Yokib lords to appear in the presence of (*y-ichonal*) the Pakbul king. The understated content and placement of this passage (between two direct attacks on Pomona more than two centuries later) are interpreted as a much earlier attack upon Piedras Negras by Pomona (García-Juárez 2015:292-326).

From the 659 record on the Palenque HS, we infer that Pomona was then an enemy of Palenque, and it is reasonable to assume that it was a member of the Kan alliance holding the western front as Palenque endeavored to conquer the fertile Tabasco plains (Martin 2003). After this meager data, there is a gap of almost one hundred years, although the inscriptions of Pomona narrate *k'atun* ceremonies and other dedications by two rulers between 692 and 790.

Pomona Stela 7 is one of the best-preserved monuments at the site. It portrays the ruler K'inich Ho' Hix Bahlam in full regalia for the celebration of the 9.16.0.0.0 2 Ahau 13 Zec Period Ending (May 9, 751) (Figure 40). The main text opens with an Initial Series followed by an 819-Day Count, a color-directional calendric notation absent in the region other than at Palenque and

Yaxchilan. Via a damaged Distance Number, it implies the king's birth on (9.14.4.17.15) 7 Men 3 Kankin (Nov. 3, 716). A short DN of 47 days counts back from the dedication to his accession on (9.15.19.15.13) 7 Ben 6 Zip (Mar. 23, 751). Then follows *u-k'al-tun* 'his stone binding,' then the Pomona ruler with his Emblem Glyph. Thereafter, we see **ye-T78:514-je** *y-e'tej* 'it is his sacred service' *'Uh/Jun Ba[h]lam Ti' Sak Hun* 'Jewel/One Jaguar, the orator/mouth of the white headband,' and then *y-itaj* K'inich Kan Bahlam III, the current king of Palenque.

Pomona Stela 7

9.16.0.0.0 2 Ajau 13 Tzec (May 9, 751)

(7.2) 7-"BEN" 6-CHAK-AT CHUM-ji-ya-ti-AJAW-le

chu[h]m-(a)j-iy ti 'ajaw-le[l]

'47 days prior ... he sat in rulership (there)'

u-K'AL-TUN-ni K'INICH-HO'-[HIX]BALAM [K'UH] [AJAW]

pa-ka-bu-la

u-k'al-tun k'inich ho' hix ba[h]lam k'uh[ul] pakbul 'ajaw

'it was his stone-wrapping, K'inich Ho' Hix Bahlam, Holy Lord of Pomona'

ye-T78:514-je UH-BALAM-ma TI'-SAK-HUN-na

y-e'tej 'uh/jun ba[h]lam ti' sak hun

'it was his sacred service, Uh/Jun Bahlam, mouth (orator) of the white headband (Pomona King)'

yi-ta-ji K'INICH-ka-[KAN]BALAM K'UH BAK AJAW

yitaj k'inich kan ba[h]lam k'uh[ul] bak[al] 'ajaw

'he has accompanied it/them, K'inich Kan Bahlam III Holy Lord of Bakal'

K'inich Kan Bahlam III appears to have come to Pomona not only to celebrate the *k'atun* ending, but to oversee the accession 47 days prior of K'inich Ho' Hix Bahlam as an autonomous but allied king. Uh/Jun Bahlam is a high-ranking lord, a spokesman, for the Pakbul court. It is he who performs 'sacred service' (for the gods, lest we forget) on behalf of both kings. This notable *ti' sak hun* is known from three other important texts (Zender 2004:328-330; Luín et al. 2022:904): the famous, exquisite incised shell from The Cleveland Museum of Art which features him wearing a magnificent deer headdress and smoking a cigar, an incised alabaster vase in the Museo Popol Vuh of the Universidad Francisco Marroquín in Guatemala City, and the enigmatic Stela 1 from Jonuta, to be briefly considered below. In their consideration of the protagonist of the alabaster vase, Luín et al. explain that the "jewel" of the eponymous Uh Bahlam should—following a later proposal by Zender (2014)—be read *Jun*, the number One, in the manner in which it appears in the name Jun Ixim, the Maize God. We therefore transcribe his name as Uh/Jun Bahlam.

Stela 7 thus represents the formalization of what appears to have been an early eighth-century friendship between Palenque and Pomona, as suggested by sculptural, thematic, and calendrical similarities. We may also assume continuing enmity between Piedras Negras and Palenque, with the Scribe and Orator tablets as evidence in 725.

Jonuta, Tabasco

Relative to Pomona, the Late Classic site of Jonuta was well more than halfway downriver toward the coast in an area of fertile lowlands

and swamps at an altitude of three meters MSL, where the Río San Antonio joins the Usumacinta from the southwest. The modern town of Jonuta, with a population of about 7,000, is situated at the site, with a modern viewing platform on the tallest original mound. There is also a museum of both Precolumbian and Colonial-period materials.

We propose a new analysis of the name *Jonuta* based on Western Ch'olan languages as *jo[l]* 'head,' *nut* 'narrow,' and *[h]a* 'water, river': *[u-]* *jo[l]* *nut* *[h]a* 'the head/confluence of the narrow river—i.e., the San Antonio, where it joins the wide Usumacinta.

Relatively little is known archaeologically about Jonuta. Two Carnegie Institute of Washington reports by Heinrich Berlin (1953, 1956) offer an overview of the site mentioning the discovery of the bottom half of "Relief 2" (now termed Stela 1), found ca. 1936 within a structure amid rubble (Figure 41). At that writing it was still in Jonuta in the possession of a local official, but its current location is unknown (Stuart 2007). The top half has never been seen. Berlin (1956) also briefly mentions "Relief 1," the

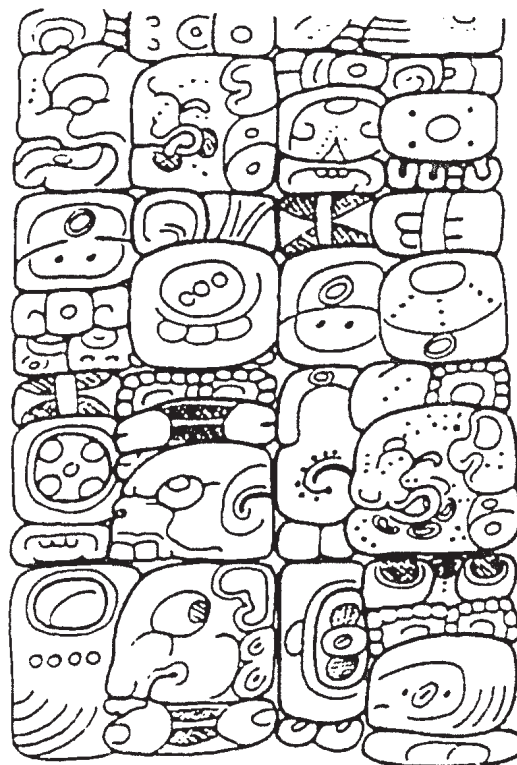


Figure 41. Jonuta Stela 1 (drawing by David Stuart).



Figure 42. Tri-Figural Panel (drawings by Donald M. Hales, adjusted by Mark Van Stone, Copyright, All Rights Reserved).

other Jonuta sculptured piece (the right figure of the Tri-Figural Panel discussed below) amid prior investigators' conflicting reports of provenance: Campeche vs. Jonuta vs. Palenque.

While the aforementioned monuments reflected an elegant Late Classic sculptural tradition reminiscent of both Pomona and Palenque, Jonuta had no stone for building or sculpting. The craftsmen made bricks for construction and had a robust ceramic industry:

hundreds of figurines have been found in local fields and many are on display in the museum. A 2009 study by Miriam Gallegos Gómora summarizes much of what is known archaeologically about the site and its regional connections, its abundant ceramic production, and evidence for contact with both Palenque and Pomona.

David Stuart (2007) drew the incomplete text of Stela 1 from a photo by Hasso von Winning (published by Tatiana Proskouriakoff [1950:Fig. 69b]) as he prepared

his doctoral dissertation (Stuart 1995); he discusses it briefly in his 2007 article. The lower portion of the monument depicts the legs and feet of an elite protagonist standing on a ground line featuring a dotted *k'ik'* 'blood' sign, a *k'ahk' mijin* 'child-of-lineage' sign, and a skeletal shark head amid centipede jaws and maize foliation. The adjacent text mentions at B1 the name and title Uh/Jun Bahlam *ti' sak hun* (Zender 2004, 2014) amid a death statement involving his mother: ...*y-antz 'Uh/Jun Bahlam ti' sak hun 'och-bih-ijiy, 'iyuwal...* 'his mother, Uh/Jun Bahlam, the Speaker of the White Headband...' since [(s)he] road-entered, and then...'. An elusive verb **SAK-ja** appears at B2 in the sentence *'iyuwal SAK-ja ta 'ikitz ta k'an tok jol* 'and then ? ? for the jade/bundle, for the precious cloud/burning skull.' The blood and lineage iconography suggest this to have been a veneration of the crown jewels and conjuring tools enacted by a local lord with Uh/Jun Bahlam present. The text continues with the names and titles of Ti' K'uh Bahlam Bah Ch'ok—surely a local heir—and concludes with *u-tojol* 'his payment.'

This text establishes the Late Classic connection between Pomona and Jonuta via this important high-ranking Pomona lord. While we may speculate about the meaning of this text, it seems that Uh/Jun Bahlam was engaged in forging an alliance with Jonuta as he had done with Pomona. Stuart's assessment of the stylistic attributes of the text have bearing on the late time frame for the other monument alleged to have come from Jonuta, the Tri-Figural Panel, which we discuss below.⁴⁷

The provenance of the Tri-Figural Panel (Figure 42) has long been in dispute, as first lamented by Heinrich Berlin (1956). The following distillation of history, hearsay, and locations of the fragments has been provided by Donald Hales (personal communications 2022, 2023). The panel is thus known from pieces either never seen, or acquired and sold by dealers, confiscated from looters, or sold/gifted to museums by private collectors. A text we will transliterate and translate below remains in Zurich in a trust set up by the family of the owner.

We reiterate that no section of the panel has been found archaeologically. It was originally manufactured as three separate limestone blocks, each approximately 79.5 inches in height, 27 inches in width, and 1.75 inches in thickness (Mark Van Stone, personal communication 2023); see also Miller and Martin (2004:85) for the dimensions of the Houston MFA (lower left) fragment. These blocks would have been carved separately, assembled together as a wall panel, and the spaces between them filled with stucco and carved.

The re-assembled scene is of a central standing figure in Teotihuacano dress (bottom central fragment now at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art). His torso and head are missing, but a fragment of his War Serpent headdress was confiscated from looters sometime before 1966.⁴⁸ He is flanked by two kneeling lords

holding sumptuous offerings. The right-hand fragment depicting a kneeling lord with a quetzal headdress holding an offering plate was first published by Leopoldo Batres (1888) (Donald Hales, personal communication 2022) and has since resided in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City. The left-hand lower piece, showing a kneeling lord with a God L owl-hat holding a magnificent Tlaloc headdress, is located in the Houston Museum of Fine Arts (Miller and Martin 2004:85, Pl. 36). An exhibition photograph of the lower left-hand section together with a reassembled drawing by Donald Hales of other (not all) known fragments is published in Miller and Martin (2004:85) accompanied by a seminal discussion of the scene and its iconography. The right-hand upper text (now in Zurich), which we will discuss in detail, was published by Mayer (1991:Frontispiece, 28-29) with commentary by Nikolai Grube, who states, citing Linda Schele, that Peter Mathews had already determined that this text fit with both the Houston MFA fragment and the lower-left fragment now in Mexico City. He reiterates the speculation that it came from Palenque but ultimately prefers an origin elsewhere within the Palenque sphere.

Miller and Martin assign the Tri-Figural Panel to "the Palenque region, to a provincial satellite of Palenque," commenting that it "remains an unsolved puzzle." Considering that there is no stone available anywhere near Jonuta, we speculate as others have that the limestone blocks for this panel (if it came from Jonuta) and for Stela 1 (which originated there) were floated down from far upriver, perhaps from Pomona—or from Palenque via the Chacamax River to the Usumacinta—and assembled and carved locally by a sculptor from Palenque. The origin first questioned by Berlin (1956) amid the murky history of the Leopoldo Batres (1888) acquisition became further obscured in ensuing decades when other fragments began to appear on the market. The trails of these are fraught with intrigue; they include a 1950s crash at Jonuta of a plane which came from Palenque with a surreptitious transfer of unspecified cargo to points unknown, eventually reaching a certain dealer in Mexico City, who later sold the pieces to known collectors. There has been an ongoing quest

⁴⁷ David Stuart (2007), regarding Jonuta Stela 1: "The crisp style of these glyphs suggests to me a date of about 9.17. or 9.18.0.0.0. Jonuta remains a very poorly known site, but in the Late Classic it evidently held some importance as a major political and ritual center along the extreme lower Usumacinta River, well downriver from Pomona and the Pakbul kingdom" (Stuart 2007).

⁴⁸ This fragment was included in an assemblage of artifacts, including several Palenque incensarios, confiscated in the town of Palenque and transported to a bodega in Tuxtla Gutierrez soon after 1962. It was later identified by Guido Krempel as likely belonging to the Tri-Figural Panel and was photographed in 2022 by Jorge Pérez de Lara (Donald Hales, personal communication 2023). It remains in the bodega.

for alternative sites of origin upriver such as El Retiro, and theories persist that the panel came from Palenque itself (Donald Hales, personal communication 2022).

A small text in front of the right-hand figure recently discussed by Beliaev and Davletshin (2018) has long been known to include the name of a Palenque king. Miller and Martin (2004:85) consider this kneeling figure to be Kan Bahlam II, but we will argue from various points of evidence—including another text at the upper right corner—that the Palenque king is Kan Bahlam III and that he is the central standing figure. The flanking lords are honoring the king with vestments, a Teotihuacan-style headdress, and a palanquin, as noted in the small text we discuss below.

The right-hand kneeling lord with the quetzal headdress and a winsome goatee has a small, intact text before him; it opens with a focus marker signaling that *this* one (*ha'-i*) 'gifted' (*'ak'-w-iy*) *pach* and *pit*—a diphrastric

kenning referring to a royal palanquin (Beliaev and Davletshin 2018) (Figure 43). The text ends with a name (per Miller and Martin 2004:85) originally identified as Kan Bahlam II, Holy Lord of Palenque.

ha'-i AK'-wi-ya u-pa-chi u-PIT-ta K'INICH-ni-chi
[KAN]BALAM K'UH-BAK-AJAW ba-ka-ba

ha'-i 'ak'-w[i]-iy⁴⁹ u-pach u-pit k'inich kan ba[h]lam k'uh[ul]
bak[al] 'ajaw bah kab

'this [is the] one [who] gave [him] his seat, his palanquin, K'inich Kan Bahlam (III) the Holy Lord of Palenque, head of the land'

(Beliaev and Davletshin 2018)

The focus marker *ha'i* 'this one' refers to the right-hand kneeling figure and not to the standing king. The verb *'ak'wiy* 'who gave it' is a focus antipassive first recognized by Beliaev and Davletshin (2018), who also noted the interesting diphrastric kenning *u-pach u-pit* 'su baldaquín, su trono'. The syntax prescribes that the kneeling lord had given a palanquin to Kan Bahlam, the central standing figure. But the question now becomes: which Kan Bahlam is he?

A larger text in the upper-right fragment located in Zurich (Figure 44) was first published by Mayer (1991:Frontispiece, 28-29), with a discussion by Nikolai Grube that cites 1982 written commentary by Berthold Riese. We had not seen these observations of Riese/Grube prior to undertaking our own analysis below, but we are in agreement on most points. Riese and Grube read the Lunar Series and the Haab position as we have done, but do not undertake to reconstruct the Long Count, which we have done. Grube identifies the nominal phrase of <Lord Chan Bahlum> with the <bacab> and <macuch/bate> titles—i.e., the king now known as Kan Bahlam II. We conclude that he is Kan Bahlam III. He identifies the "house dedication" as <ochi> and interprets the "relationship glyph" (our *ye-T78:514-je* collocation) as <yetel> 'together, with.' He did not venture a reading for a new title which we deciphered earlier this year in collaboration with Guido Krempel.

The three figures of the panel are positioned before a background lattice of serpents with centipede jaws entangled with flowering trees reminiscent of the ancestor trees on the sides of the Palenque sarcophagus. On the left upper side, these ophidians wind around and through quatrefoils, and on the right, just below the text to be discussed, is an ancestor figure who gazes up at the hieroglyphs from behind the open maw of a skeletal serpent-centipede. As with Jonuta Stela 1, an event of singular political import is positioned within a context of lineage and ancestor iconography.



Figure 43. Tri-Figural Panel, detail (photo courtesy of Albert Davletshin).

⁴⁹ This is an uncommon focus antipassive construction in the script. The AP morpheme is *-wi* (Quizar 2020:275 citing Lacadena 2000). For **AK'** see Houston et al. (2017).

The largely legible text opens with a Lunar Series, indicating that an Initial Series must have been present in either the upper central or the far upper left section—both lost to history.

The lunar text begins at A1:

15 *huliy*
'fifteen days since the moon arrived'
(15D)

k'ahlaj 4 "JGU" '*uh*
'four moons of the Young Lord /Jaguar-God-of-the-Underworld bundle have been bound' (4C)
X-ii = square-nosed beast with blood in mouth (accompanies C coefficients of 3 and 4) (Grube 2018)

u-k'aba 29
'is the name of the 29 (days in the current lunation)'

2-Chen = the Haab position at A4 corresponding to the missing Long Count and Tzolkin

Archaeoastronomer Michael Grofe (personal communication 2022) offered to search for a Long Count matching the lunar data and Haab position of this text using Maya calendar programs which commensurate the Long Count with the Lunar Series. Using the 584285 correlation, his best candidate falls on July 17, 748:

9.15.17.2.14 3 Ix 2 Chen July 17, 748 CE
Gregorian 14D 6C Y X-iv.⁵⁰

The text continues:

2-[IK']SIHOM-ma i-OCH-chi-K'AK'
2 *Chen* 'i 'och-i k'a[h]k'
'(On) 2 Chen, and then entered fire'

?*tu-na-?hi u-ka-ha*
tu-nah u-kah
'into its house, his/their town (into the house of his/their town)'

We initially considered the ergative *u* in (*t-u-nah*) *u-kah* (A5-B5) to perhaps refer to the ancestor with the skeletal serpent just below the text, which in turn designates the 'house'—which now holds this panel—as an ancestral shrine, cleansed and re-dedicated in the 'fire-entering' rite.

From this point forward, the protagonist is the king:



Figure 44. Tri-Figural Panel, detail (photo courtesy of Donald M. Hales, Copyright, All Rights Reserved).

ye-T78:514-je i-ki SIH TOK' ba
y-e'tej 'Iki[n] Sih Tok' Bah
'it is his sacred service, the Image of the Owl Born of Flint'

⁵⁰ "I've made a list of all of the possible dates for 2 Ch'en during the reigns of both Kan Bahlam II and III using the 584285 correlation. Unfortunately, there are no exact hits that give us an expected Glyph D15 and Glyph CY4 (JGU), though I have highlighted the candidates that agree with or approximate various elements of the text, and there are a couple that are close in both Glyph D and Glyph C, but nothing spot on. I would expect both Glyph D and Glyph C to vary from the expected value by 1 or 2, in which case, [this] one date stands out during the reign of Kan Bahlam III" (Michael Grofe, personal communication 2022). Grofe adds (personal communication 2022) that with the Martin-Skidmore correlation 584286, the coefficient of D would be 15, as written.



Figure 45. Palenque, Temple XIX, South Panel (drawing by David Stuart).

K'INICH-ka-KAN-BALAM-la ba-ka-ba

K'uh[ul] Bakal Bahlam bah kab

'the head of the land'

K'UH AJAW BAK-la KAL-ma-TE'

K'uh[ul] Bakal Ajaw Kalomte'

'Holy Lord of Bakal/Palenque, Kalomte'

This Long Count date, derived from the Lunar Series as written (i.e., July 17, 748 ce), nicely corresponds to the short reign of K'inich Kan Bahlam III, the same king who orchestrated an alliance with Pomona some two years later. We note as well that the gifting of palanquins amid the founding or strengthening of political alliances was a late Late Classic practice. It had not hitherto been documented at Palenque, but rather was featured at sites to the east and southeast: Cancuen, Naranjo, Seibal, Ucanal, and Sacul (see Beliaev and Davletshin 2018; Carter 2016). The title bestowed on the standing king by the flanking lords in the trifigural scene appears unique to this event, naming *his image* as 'Owl Born of Flint.' We trust that if his upper half were not lost we would find that name iconographically ratified.

We can say with confidence that amid his many appearances at Palenque, the earlier K'inich Kan Bahlam II is never depicted in group settings, nor does he ever take the *kalomte'* title, much less as the final sign in his nominal phrase. Palenque is not known to have indulged in a Teotihuacan renaissance. But we have little data on the late king Kan Bahlam III and, to date, no monuments at home.

But what evidence have we that this panel originated at Jonuta rather than at Palenque? Prior arguments for and against seem to neutralize one another and are entangled with hearsay and speculation, even skulduggery.

Favoring a Palenque provenance, we have mentioned a small piece of the panel (a part of the king's

headdress) which was confiscated in the town of Palenque amid incensarios from the site. The panel's carving is absolutely reflective of Palenque sculptural traditions, and the Jonuta-provenance argument has all along invoked this connection, explaining it as the later Kan Bahlam going abroad and building alliances along the lower Usumacinta. But what if this Palenque-esque iconography were instead crafted on its home turf? And then: *why would a Palenque king in 'sacred service' be dedicating the lineage shrine of another polity?* We recall that on Pomona Stela 7, he takes a back seat introduced by *y-itaj*, leaving *y-e'tej* to the high-ranking Pomona lord. And finally: what if the ergative *u* in *u-kah* above refers not to an ancestor but rather to the king whose 'sacred service' immediately follows?

We are thus led to conclude that this '*och-k'ahk'* rite was enacted at Palenque by the short-lived Kan Bahlam III. But who are these visiting lords bestowing Teotihuacan titles and attire, sumptuous gifts, and a palanquin upon him? Was their visit in some way an antecedent to the alliance with Pomona? Was this beautiful sculpture intentionally shattered in antiquity and the king deposed? Tantalizing questions we cannot answer.

Late Classic Palenque Part III: The Platform of Temple XIX

Temples XIX (734) and XXI (736), dedicated during the reign of K'inich Ahkul Mo' Nahb III, represent the aesthetic apogee of that king's sculptural tradition amid the mythological anchoring of dynastic succession and the elevation of non-royal nobles amid various rites of building consecration. Our focus will be on Temple XIX, discovered in 1999, where a subordinate lord of Ahkul Mo' Nahb III commissioned several magnificent texts. The longest of these narrated that in an archaic epoch, the god GI acceded to power, then decapitated



a mythical caiman—the “Starry Deer Crocodile” who is the Milky Way—which triggered a flood of its blood upon the earth. Then followed its receding, with the drilling of fire symbolic of “a new cosmic order” (Stuart 2005:68-77; Velásquez-García 2006). These acts were collectively termed *ye-T78:514-je* ‘his sacred service, GI.’ The contemporaneous events carved on the West and South Panels of the Temple XIX Platform are linked to this god and to his primordial act of destruction and creation. While the unequivocal ownership of the building depends upon a better understanding of the term *y-okbil*, it appears that the non-royal noble Salaj Balun had these texts carved to commemorate his own role in a mysterious rope-taking rite on behalf of the god GI, to honor his own lineage of origin, and to glorify his king K’inich Ahkul Mo’ Nahb in his ceremony of investiture (Stuart 2004b:262, 2005:59ff).

There are two sections of the Temple XIX Platform, where the longest texts are located. The West Panel portrays Salaj Balun Okib Aj Ux Te’ K’uh (Stuart 2005:129) holding a massive spool of rope in a tri-figural scene dated 9.15.2.9.0 7 Ahau 3 Uayeb (Feb. 7, 734). He is flanked by two individuals (each designated *ch’ok* in their nominal texts) who have around their necks loosely knotted loops of the rope which have uncoiled from the spool. The South Panel presents the accession of K’inich Ahkul Mo’ Nahb III on 9.14.10.4.2 9 Ik 5 Kayab (Jan. 3, 722). Here he is flanked by six subordinate lords, all named, while being dressed and crowned by one who impersonates the “new first” Itzamnaj (Stuart 2005:119-121) and shares with him a re-enactment of the archaic accession ceremony performed by the deities God D and GI. This antecedent rite took place about 200 years prior to the 13.0.0.0.0 Era Day (Aug. 13, 3114 BC). Our distillation is largely based upon the detailed commentary of Stuart (2005:60-108), with additional reference to Velásquez-García (2006).

The South Panel

The text on the South Panel opens with an Initial Series date 12.10.1.13.2 9 Ik 5 Mol, or March 10, 3309 BC (Figure 45). This 9 Ik is a datum which will be reiterated multiple times in the pre-Era-Day epoch until the long seven-*baktun* leap to 9.14.10.4.2 9 Ik 5 Kayab, the day on which K’inich Ahkul Mo’ Nahb is crowned.⁵¹ The pre-Era Initial Series proceeds in Palenque’s grand tradition through a Lunar Series and an 819-Day Count, followed by ‘*i-uh*ti and the Haab position 5 Mol. The first verbal phrases are:

chumlaj ta ‘ajawle[l] GI u-kab-iy yax nah ‘God D’
‘he sat in rulership (the god) GI’; ‘he oversaw it, New First God D’

‘uhtiy ta lem? chan....16.1.11 (12.10.12.14.18) 1 ‘Etz’nab 6 Yaxk’in
‘it happened at ?Resplendent Sky ...3996 days [to]’
(Stuart: *lem? chan*: “Heaven”)

Approaching our peak event:

CH’AK-ka-u-BAH WAY-PAT-AHIN
tz’i-ba-la-PAT-AHIN

ch’a[h]kal[j] u-bah way pat ‘ahin tz’i[h]bal pat ‘ahin
‘was chopped its head the cenote-back caiman, the painted-back caiman’

3-POLAW-wa-ja u-K’IK’-le

hux polaw-aj, u-k’ik’[e]l
‘became three inundations, its blood’ (its blood became three inundations)

⁵¹ An intervening date (1.18.5.3.2) 9 Ik 15 Ceh is registered on the TXIX timeline before the narrative reaches the 9 Ik accession date of Ahkul Mo’ Nahb. This 9 Ik 15 Ceh appears on the Tablet of the Cross as the birth date of GI at Matwil. Here it must be a rebirth.

na-ka-POLAW-wa-AJ jo-ch'o-K'AK'-AJ

nak-polarw-aj joch'-ka[h]k'-aj

'there was a flood-settling (receding); there was a fire-drilling' (Tzeltal/Tzotzil *nak* 'settle/sink')

i-PAT-la-ja ye-T78:514-je 1-ye-WINIK-XOK-CH'AK

*'i pat-laj y-e'tej jun y-e[j] winik[il]-xok cha[h]k (GI)*⁵²

'and then it (the new order) formed; it was the sacred service of Jun Yej Winikil Xok Chahk (GI)'

The next episodes proceed through the three births of the Triad Gods, starting with the "rebirth" of GI on another 9 Ik station, followed by the births of GII and then GIII within a few days, as narrated on the three tablets of the Group of the Cross. Following this third birth is the accession on 9 Ik Seating of Zac of the Triad Progenitor (once thought to be female and nicknamed "Lady Beastie"), whose Emblem Glyph is K'uhul Matwil Ajaw.

Finally, after a prodigious leap forward, we move into contemporaneous time and the accession on 9 Ik 5 Kayab of K'inich Ahkul Mo' Nahb. This verb, with suffix sequence **-ya-ni**,⁵³ is a later allograph of the "royal sit-down" or "squatting legs-AJAW" logogram we saw on the Early Classic lintels of Yaxchilan. Now the Palenque king 'rules' with the title *okib* prefixed to his standard nominal phrase.

0 k'in, 12 winal, 9 tun, 14 winikhab, 7 pik... 'i-uhti 9 'Ik' 5 K'anasiy

'ajaw-yan 'okib k'inich 'ahkul mo' nahb k'uh[ul] bak[a]l 'ajaw
'he ruled *okib* K'inich Ahkul Mo' Nahb, Holy Lord of Palenque'

Ahkul Mo' Nahb is surrounded by six named subordinates, the most important of whom faces him, holding the headband (*sak hun*) with its composite Jester God diadem which the king is about to receive. This individual, named in a secondary text as Janab Ajaw Mukut Ajaw (and known from another famous panel), wears the headdress of the Avian Jester God and is stated to be impersonating (*u-bahil 'an*) 'his person [is] in existence as Yax Nah 'God D'. It is not unexpected, then, that in his own nominal cartouche the king is stated to be *u-bahil 'an jun y-ej winikil xok chahk* 'his person [is] in existence as the God GI.' Together they re-create the

primordial crowning of the deity who would then as his 'sacred service' enact the decapitation of the caiman and the destruction and resurrection of the world. The full name phrase of the king in his nominal cartouche is:

u-bahil 'an jun y-e[j] winik[il]-xok cha[h]k (GI)

ya-AJAW-T78:514-K'INICH *'ahkul mo' nahb k'uhul bak[al] 'ajaw kalomte'*

'it is his person in existence as GI, Y-Ajaw E'tej K'inich, Ahkul Mo' Nahb...'

Here we see the famous substitution of T78:514 into the standard title Y-Ajaw Te' K'inich (where **TE'** should be represented by either T513 or T87) which has sent many an epigrapher down the primrose path into the briar patch. We will shortly give this example due consideration.

The South Panel narrative now moves to 9.14.13.0.0. 6 Ahau 8 Ceh (Sep. 27, 724) and registers the king's 'first [13]-tun enclosing' (*u-nah k'al-tun*) and his taking (*u-ch'amaw*) of his 'caiman palanquin' (*'ahin pit*) 'in the presence of (*y-ichonal*) the gods GI, GII, and GIII. The text ends with *'uhti tan ch'en lakamha* 'it happened in the city center of Palenque.'

The West Panel

While the West Panel (per Stuart 2005:91-108) registers an equally engaging chronicle, one in which historical persons enact dedicatory rites for buildings belonging to gods, we offer just a summary amid consideration of the *okib* title and the "rope-taking" event (Figure 46).

The text opens with a date (9.6.7.0.0) 7 Ahau 8 Kayab and the 'shaping' (*patwan*) of 'his X' (*y-okbil*) followed by the name Yax Itzam At Tun Ajaw, the grandfather of Ix Tz'akbu Ajaw, the wife of K'inich Janab Pakal who came from Ux Te' K'uh. As Stuart (2005:92-93) notes, the possessed and unpossessed forms of *okib* (**yo-ko-bi-li** vs. **o-ki-bi**) suggest an equivalence between the platform and the title held by members of the Ux Te' K'uh lineage, perhaps with deliberate entanglement. We must ask—without an answer—what relationship does this have to the Emblem Glyph of Piedras Negras?

The term *'okib*—an instrumental noun apparently based on *'ok* 'foot, pedestal'—has long been thought a designator for the stone platform, but its appearance in the nominal phrases of Ux Te' K'uh persons (Stuart 2005:87; Bíró 2011a:94) raises questions, such that we translate it as 'base, support structure' referring to both the lineage and the platform. Here the dedication of the *y-okbil*, in typical "name-tagging" format, is presented as:

(9.6.7.0.0) 7 Ahau 8 Kayab (Feb. 13, 561) ...

7-[ku]lu-TUN-ni PAT-wa-ni yo-ko-bi-li YAX-ITZAM[AT] TUN-ni-AJAW

⁵² We tentatively explore a reading for this "Palenque-only" aspect of GI as Jun Y-ej Winikil-Xok Chahk 'One Chahk-(who)-carries the-person-(of) Shark' (Tzeltal, Tzotzil *'eljl-aj* (iv.); *'eljl-an* (tv.) 'acarrear'). We also acknowledge Stuart's view (2005:161-162) that the **ye** here is a logogram with another value.

⁵³ Stuart (2005:82) discusses other script occurrences of a **-ya-ni** *-y-an* intransitivizer on the noun **AJAW**, proposing that this "squatting legs with **AJAW** superfix" is a Palenque variant of **AJAW**. Robin Quizar (2020:276-278) discusses a *-y-an* intransitivizer in Ch'orti' which forms absolutive antipassives, as in this case. Here the word would mean not 'he became lord', but rather, 'he ruled.' Kerry Hull (2016:18-19) lists *-yan* as a productive antipassive suffix in Ch'orti' on a variety of stems, alone or in sequence with other morphemes.

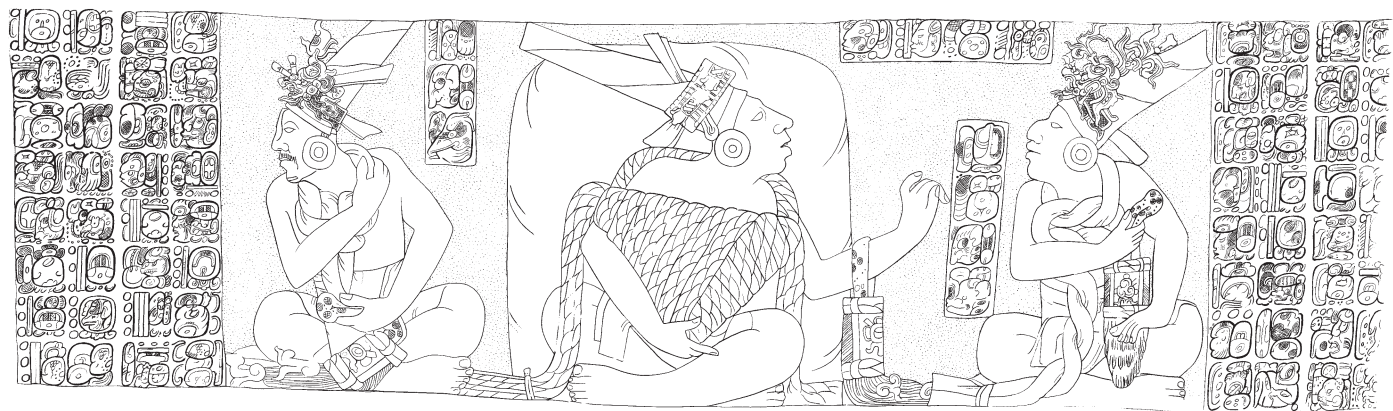


Figure 46. Palenque, Temple XIX, West Panel (drawing by David Stuart).

*huk-kuhl*⁵⁴ *tun patwan y-okobil yax 'itzam 'at tun 'ajaw*
'seven *tun* was built his base/support structure
(lineage?) Yax Itzam At, Stone Lord'

This is followed by 'he incense-scattered it' (*u-chok-ch'aj-ij*) and the name of the first K'an Joy Chitam of the Bakal lineage, whose regnal interval fits the date. One purpose of the West Panel text is to underscore the legitimacy of the bloodline originating at Ux Te' K'uh—most likely an undiscovered site near Palenque (Grube et al. 2002; Bernal Romero and Venegas Durán 2005; Stuart 2005:131). Here we have an 'okbil dedication by a royal ancestor who predated Pakal and his wife—one not a direct forebear of either.

In the next passage we find the celebration of the 9.15.0.0.0 4 Ahau 13 Yax (Aug. 22, 731) 'stone-enclosing' by K'inich Ahkul Mo' Nahb, who here (uniquely) takes the Matwil Emblem Glyph. On this date we also see '(it is) the first (*u-nah*) of his (rope-) carryings (*u-put*)' by Salaj Balun:

u-NAH u-PUT-tu ta "GI" sa-la-ja-9

*u-nah u-put*⁵⁵ *ta "GI" salaj balun*

'its first, his carryings for GI (the first of his [rope-] carryings for GI) Salaj Balun'

We are not told what the connection is between GI and this rope-carrying rite, but because it features this god it was as integral to the platform as was the accession/re-enactment of the king on the South Panel. A second reference to the rope follows 24 days after the next event—a "fire-entering" (*'och-k'a[h]k'*) dedication of a building belonging to GI, itself two-plus years after the first rope event. Curiously, the interval between rope events is 900 days:⁵⁶

4.20 7 AJAW 3 WAY-HAB k'a-ma—"Rope" u-?SUM-mu-li u-PUT-tu sa-la-ja-9

(24 days) *k'am-?sum u-sum-il u-put salaj balun*

'he rope-received; (it was) the rope of/for his carrying, Salaj Balun'

The next passage is another '*och-k'ahk*' 'fire entering' rite, this time for a building belonging to GII and GIII, and including opaque or undeciphered signs which we haven't time to pursue, although Stuart (2005:104-105) offers perceptive suggestions.

The last event recorded in the West Panel inscription is a 'scattering' rite for the '*hotun-ending*' conducted by K'inich Ahkul Mo' Nahb III on (9.15.5.0.0) 10 Ahau 8 Chen (July 26, 736). But the event itself features an effaced verb which follows *y-okbil*, and which Stuart (2005:107) proposes to be of negative portent, with its "raised arm of woe" and a juxtaposed *hi-li hil* 'rest, end' syllabic sequence. This could signal a ritual pause for either a series of constructions or perhaps for the lineage to which *okib* refers.

In arriving here, we have sometimes strayed off-topic—that being the mythological and cultural portfolio of '*e'tej*'. But this building and these texts are deeply entangled with the person and acts of the god GI—paramount among the Triad gods, and one who also engaged in 'sacred service' on the panel of Temple XIV. Stuart (2005:159-174) offers a robust and nuanced account of this singular deity who has solar and watery (fish/shark) attributes, Venus associations, and a central role in the Classic Maya Era Day event of 4 Ahau 8 Cumku. This is depicted on an Early Classic greenstone mask probably from Río Azul, where as the agent of the event he is termed the *Yax Wayib* of Chahk, and on Quirigua Stela C, where on Era Day he establishes a

⁵⁴ *Kuhl* is a classifier for piled things like stones.

⁵⁵ We use a broad transcription throughout this essay, but here we note that *put*, syntactically a noun, must be a possessed nominalized antipassive (NAP) likely of the form CVVC: *puut*. Please see Footnote 32 for more on the **PUT** reading.

⁵⁶ This is half of a *ho'tun* (1800 days) as noted by Stuart (2005:103). Also curious is that the interval between the pre-Era accession of GI and his chopping of the caiman is 3996 days, which is 444 x 9 or 4 x 999.

“watery” throne at the “edge of the sky.” We have, near the end of the Temple of the Inscriptions narrative, read of his heaving the heart of the Death God into the ocean. In sum, Stuart (2005:170) says of him: “it is possible that GI was a kind of “proto-sun” that existed before the ordering of the world and the appearance of K’inich Ajaw in a more current cosmological order.”

We haven’t space to share in ample measure the epigraphic, iconographic, and ethnohistorical research done by Stuart (2005) and by Erik Velásquez García (2006) which reifies the theme of the caiman sacrifice as archetypal in Maya mythology and central to the accounts—both Classic and Postclassic—of the events of the last destruction and re-creation of the world. This saurian, also termed the “starry deer crocodile” due to stars affixed to its body and attributes of the animal—is depicted in Classic iconography as the animate firmament, the night sky, and the Milky Way, and is also the sky of the Underworld. On a Palenque “cosmological” throne it is written of as a being which “passes through sky, passes through earth” (Stuart 2003), and it carries the sacrificial censuring bowl (the Quadripartite Badge) on one of its heads and cervid features (ears, hooves, an antler) with the other.

Pertinent to our topic in the South Panel account is the contrast between the agency expressions *u-kab-iy* used for the “overseeing” by God D of GI’s pre-Era-Day accession versus *y-e’tej* employed as ‘his sacred service’ for the ensuing destruction and renewal of the world by GI. These expressions do not substitute, except perhaps once at Tonina. *u-kab-iy* and *u-kab-ij-iy* are based on the agricultural motif of “caring for land” (*kab/chab* in relevant languages) amid the political affairs of humans, whereas *e’tej* almost always directly benefits the gods. In this case, even the affairs of the highest gods are subject to a hierarchy of gravitas.

ya-AJAW-T78:514 K’INICH as Y-Ajaw ‘E’tej K’inich: Intention? Reanalysis? A Clue?

We must address the T78:514 substitution in Ahkul Mo’ Nahb’s nominal cartouche on the South Panel. The sign we have read **E’TEJ** replaces **TE’** in the title **ya-AJAW-TE’ K’INICH** *y-ajaw te’ k’inich*: ‘the spear-lord (war captain) of the Sun God.’ This elaborated honorific title, wherein **TE’** is otherwise consistently represented by either T513 or by T87, was widely used by Classic Maya kings; several Palenque examples are seen in Stuart (2005:122). It may be that the ubiquitous K’inich is a simplification of the whole honorific. As we observed in an earlier section, the full spelling **ya-AJAW-TE’ (T513) K’INICH a-ku-la MO’ NAB ba-ka-ba** *y-ajaw te’ k’inich ‘ahkul mo’ na[h]b bah kab* appears on the Tablet of the Orator amid direct address by the Piedras Negras captive to the Palenque king. But in the main, this king is simply named K’inich Ahkul Mo’ Nahb, as

we see in all of the Temple XIX texts save the one under scrutiny. What is so special about his nominal phrase in the South Panel accession scene? Why might the scribe have inserted the sign T78:514 which otherwise never substitutes for T(78):513 or T87?

Here is a footnote from Simon Martin (2004:110 n. 5) copied from his original English draft for the Nalda volume, which he kindly shared recently (personal communication 2022):

We can see this lack of substitution between T514 and the various forms of **TE’** (T87, T78:513v, T1071) by examining some common contexts for this sign, such as **IXIM-TE’-le** *iximte’el*, an adjectival form from the Primary Standard Sequence on ceramic vessels, literally meaning “maize tree-like” but seemingly a reference to the cacao plant (the *ixim* reading by David Stuart, personal communication 1999). Despite a very large sample, no instance of T514 ever appears there. The illustrated example from Palenque Temple XIX platform (Figure 5a) is the sole exception to this rule. I believe this occurred as the result of “re-analysis” by Palenque scribes, who were already using T514 in a manner perfectly well filled by **TE’**.

By “re-analysis,” Martin meant that a scribe seeing or writing **ye-T78:514-je** (which appears at position GI in the South Panel text) and pronouncing it /yetej/ or /ye’tej/ could have assigned a functional **TE’** value to the middle sign without knowing its history, its morphology, nor that it could appear without an ergative. Because the spelling **ye-T78:514-je** was then the common form at Palenque, this scribe would find support in other examples. Martin’s prescience in his 2004 conclusion—without knowing the reading of T78:514—is testimony to the productivity of identifying every context for the sign and its variants and observing patterns over time and geography.

But we have ventured another explanation: Ahkul Mo’ Nahb and Janab Ajaw are engaged in a re-enactment of an archaic accession which anticipated world rupture and renewal. They have stepped into “being in existence as” with a time-entangling capacity and commitment beyond anything in modern thespian performance. The king, now fully the God GI, imbued with the power and the glory, will bear the near-future burden of (metaphorical, metaphysical) destruction and renewal of the cosmic order. That burden was archaically termed *e’tej* ‘sacred service.’ In this primordial moment, Ahkul Mo’ Nahb is *Y-ajaw ‘E’tej K’inich*.

The Yete’ K’inich Regnal Names of Motul de San José and Sak Tz’i’

We have briefly touched upon the widely-employed *Y-ajaw Te’ K’inich* title, which we translate literally as ‘lord of the spear,’ considering *te’* ‘wood, shaft of wood’ as standing for ‘spear’—a common weapon which would typically have had a flaked flint point at its tip. In battle scenes depicted on stelae, the victorious king

is shown holding a spear in one hand and the hair of a captive in the other. Bonampak Lintels 1, 2, and 3 are exemplars, as are Yaxchilan Lintels 8, 45, and 46. Generally, in scenes featuring kings and their prisoners, the spear is prominent in the king's hand, as on several other Yaxchilan lintels and on Piedras Negras Stela 12. We have noted amid our discussion of the 792 event on that stela a sentence *u-tz'ak-aw te'* 'they lined up the *te'*—which in context must refer to the captured Pomona warriors, rather than to their weapons. On Tortuguero Monument 6—mentioned in passing above—there is a sentence starting at F10: **nu-pu-TE'-ja ta AYIN** *nup-te'-aj ta 'ayin* 'spears (i.e., warriors) joined/spear-joining at Ayin (a staging location)' (Gronemeyer and MacLeod 2010:47). Viewing warriors (field soldiers, not kings) as *te'* clarifies *y-ajaw te'* as a captain, a leader of warriors. In this title, its bearer serves the Sun God, K'inich, as is also true of the name Yete' K'inich.

This analysis opens the way to a better understanding of Yete' K'inich (*ye[ht]-te' k'inich*: 'the Champion of the Sun God') as a structurally and semantically related term, albeit an uncommon one, as only three kings are known to have used it. At Motul de San José and Sak Tz'i', Yete' K'inich was not a title but the king's primary name. Two so-named kings are known from Motul de San José—originally named *'Ik'a'*, 'windy water,' per Tokovinine and Zender (2012), given its location on the north shore of Lake Petén Itzá'. These authors have done the most comprehensive study thus far of known texts and references, either in situ or by allies and enemies, while lamenting that the archaeological record—which hints at an occupation stretching back into the Preclassic and forward into the early Postclassic—is woefully sparse given the paramount importance of the site. Its epigraphic record is largely Late Classic, and that is unfortunately also sparse and largely represented on other sites' monuments and in a series of unprovenienced Late Classic polychrome cylinder vases (Reents-Budet et al. 1994:172-179; Tokovinine and Zender 2012).

Motul Stela 1, whose text is highly readable, registers the accession of the first Yete' K'inich⁵⁷ on 9.13.9.1.17 9 Caban Seating of Uo (Mar. 9, 701), then counts forward to his celebration (*u-k'al-tun*) of the closing (*i-tzutz-uy*) of the 14th *k'atun* (Dec. 5, 711) together with his patron gods. The final glyphs of his accession statement denote him as *y-ajaw jasaw chan k'awil* 'the vassal of (the Tikal king) Jasaw Chan K'awil (Tokovinine and Zender 2012:33-34). He is lost to history thereafter. The second Yete' K'inich is known only from his appearances on several polychrome vases; the authors propose a Gregorian date of 781 from the reconstructed Calendar Round of one of these. The vases K534 and K1399 naming him have eroded CRs permitting only tentative dates of 783 or 796 (ibid.:46). In between these two kings, four others held the throne, the most notable of whom

was named Y-ajaw Te' K'inich ('The Fat Cacique') and whose record from ~738 to ~768 is largely known from ceramics.⁵⁸ In this interval, wars against Ik'a' are registered on enemy monuments, as are alliances with Yaxchilan, but apparently this key friendship eventually failed amid Yaxchilan's relentless campaigns across the river. Overall, the Late Classic milieu of Ik'a' (which might explain these war-inspired royal names) is one of widespread contact, trade, influence, an occasional marriage—and an equal measure of ongoing war and disruption amid which these kings bounced between overlords in an unending quest for political survival.

We turn now to two Bonampak monuments: Lintels 1 and 2.

Bonampak Lintels 1 and 2

On Lintels 1 and 2 at Bonampak (*Usij Witz*: 'Vulture Hill'⁵⁹)—dated four days apart—we find two appearances of the name **ye-T87-K'INICH**. Both refer to the current king of Sak Tz'i' via one of his war captains (*y-ajawte'*), who has just been taken prisoner. Lintel 2, dated (9.17.16.3.8) 4 Lamat 6 Cumku (Jan. 8, 787), portrays the king Shield Jaguar IV of Yaxchilan seizing his captive by the hair, spear in hand. The like-in-kind event of Lintel 1, dated (9.17.16.3.12) 8 Eb 10 Cumku (Jan. 12, 787) features Yajaw Chan Muwan II of Usij Witz in a similar posture, taking another *y-ajawte'* by the hair. The interval between these testifies to a days-long (or longer) campaign. Evidence of extended battles is not unique in Classic Maya history (Figures 47 and 48).

Lintel 2

4 Lamat 6 Cumku **chu-ka-ja xu-k'u-ba a-ku? u-ya-AJAW-TE'** (T513?)

4 Eb 6 Cumku *chu[h]kaj xuk'ub a[h]k u-yajaw te'*
'on 4 Lamat 6 Cumku he was captured, Xuk'ub Ahk the captain of'

⁵⁷ Transcribed by the authors as Ye[h] Te' K'inich, without translation, but likely a similar albeit independent interpretation along the lines of Bernal Romero's 'edge of the spear.'

⁵⁸ Y-ajaw Te' K'inich appears multiple times on ceramics K1452, K1439, K791, K3120, K5418, and K1463. Here the spelling is consistently **ya-AJAW**-T513.

⁵⁹ The kings of Bonampak (whose ancient toponym was Usij Witz) used the title Xukalnah Ajaw in the seventh century, while in the eighth Aj Sak Teles and Yajaw Chan Muwan II employed the Emblem Glyphs K'uhul Ak'e Ajaw and K'uhul Xukalnah Ajaw. The city apparently received from Yaxchilan the right to use both prestigious titles with the *k'uhul* adjective, although in the same period lords of Sak Tz'i' also used both EGs in their inscriptions. The history of the Lacanha Valley indicates that Usij Witz and Sak Tz'i' represented cadet branches of the original houses of Ak'e and Xukalnah. That the story is complex and mutable is evidenced by the previously-noted captures of Xukalnah lords by Shield Jaguar III on Yaxchilan HS. 3.

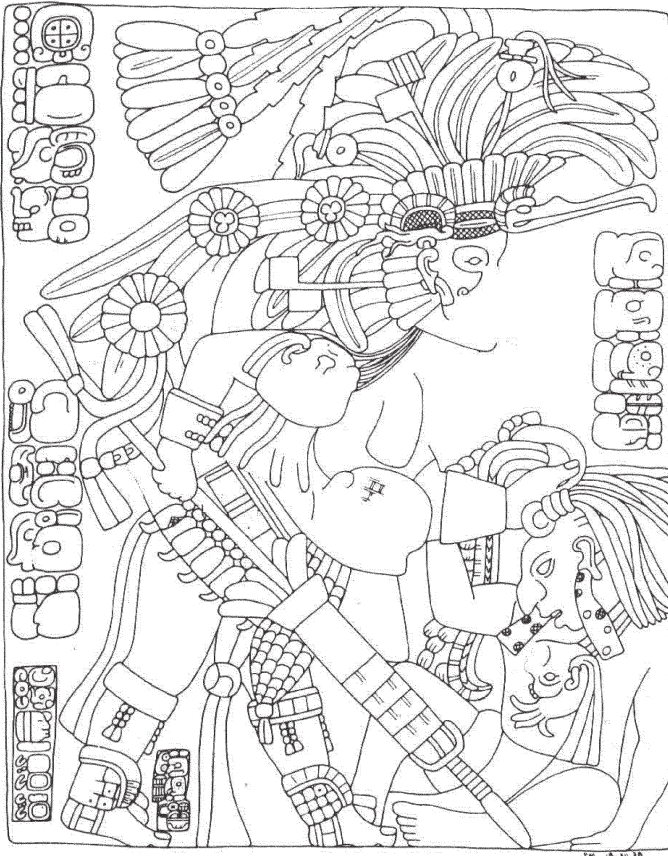


Figure 47. Bonampak Lintel 2 (drawing by Peter Mathews).

ye-T87-K'INICH SAK-TZ'I'-AJAW

ye[ht] te' k'inich sak tz'i' ajaw

'Yeht-te' K'inich ('the Sun God's Champion'), the Lord of Sak Tz'i' ('White Dog')

u-BAH?-hi? u-CHAN-nu TAJ-MO'-o PA'CHAN-AJAW

u-bah u-chan taj mo' pa' chan ajaw

'it was his image, the guardian of Taj Mo', Lord of Yaxchilan'

yu-xu-lu ? ya-? ya-na-bi u-CHAN-TAJ-MO' K'UH-PA' CHAN-AJAW

yuxul ya... y-anab u-chan taj mo' k'uh[ul] pa' chan ajaw

'it was the carving of A..., the helper of the guardian of Taj Mo', Lord of Yaxchilan'

Lintel 1

8 Eb 10 Cumku **chu-ka-ja AJ-5-BAK u-ya-AJAW-TE'** (T87)

chu[h]kaj 'aj ho' bak u-yajaw te'

'he was captured, He of 5 Captives, the captain of'

ye-T87-K'INICH SAK-TZ'I'-AJAW

ye[ht] te' k'inich sak tz'i' ajaw ...

'Yeht-te' K'inich ('the Sun God's Champion'), the Lord of Sak Tz'i' ('White Dog')

We don't know specifically why Usij Witz rebelled against Sak Tz'i', but it was plausibly due to the protracted hostilities between Yaxchilan and the Sak Tz'i'-Piedras Negras alliance which occupied the entire Late Classic Period. While surviving monuments indicate that Usij Witz was a staunch vassal of Yaxchilan in the Late Classic, there was a gap in the former's history which hints that it was occasionally a part of the Sak Tz'i' hegemony.⁶⁰

Sak Tz'i' in the eighth century dominated the Lacanha' River valley. The site Lacanha' has one monument dated to 746, the "Kuna-Lacanha' Lintel" which

⁶⁰ Usij Witz has four inscriptions from the period 603 to 683 (Mons. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5), followed by a gap of 93 years until 776, when Yajaw Chan Muwan II acceded to the throne (Bíró 2007, 2011a). Yajaw Chan Muwan II commissioned Stelae 1, 2, and 3 and Lintels 1, 2, and 3 of Str. 1, in which the murals were painted. The monuments from 603 to 683 were carefully selected: Mons. 2 and 3 were the panels of Yajaw Chan Muwan I, attesting to the later name-sake (St.2, D6: **ye-ta-K'ABA'**) Yajaw Chan Muwan II. This phrase *y-e[ht]t-k'aba'* is based on *'ehtal* 'likeness' and not the term spelled by **ye-TE'** (see Note 3).

Mon. 2 was placed in front of Yajaw Chan Muwan II's Stela 2. Mons. 4 and 5 were selected because they portrayed an Usij Witz ruler's accession in the company of the Yaxchilan overlord. We think that all the preserved monuments of Usij Witz were selected by Yajaw Chan Muwan II to tell the story of loyalty to Yaxchilan, while any which disputed it were destroyed (Bíró 2011a:120).

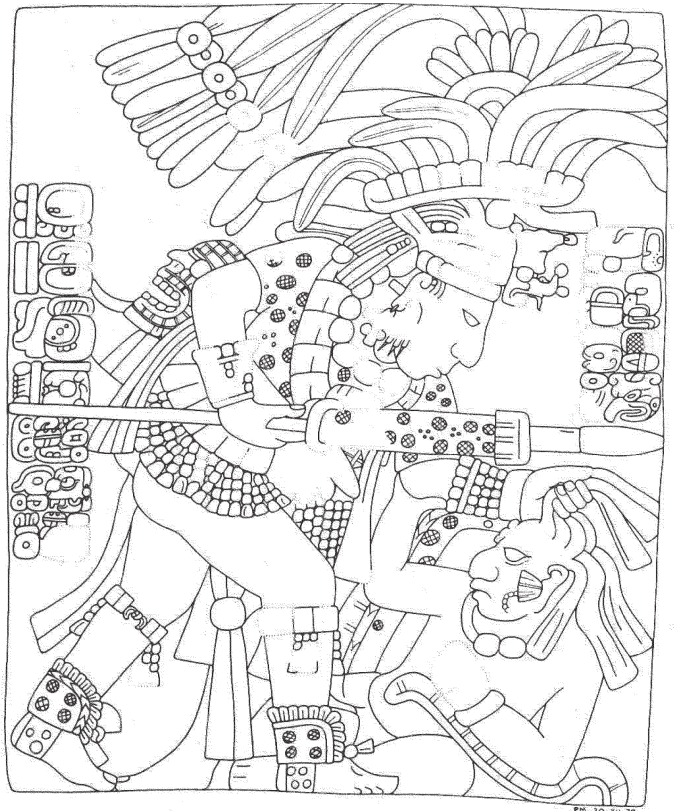


Figure 48. Bonampak Lintel 1 (drawing by Peter Mathews),

portrays Aj Sak Teles, the father of Yajaw Chan Muwan II. It features his accession to *sajal*-ship under the supervision of “Trophy” (the erstwhile “Knot-Eye”) Jaguar of the unknown “Knot Site.” However, the El Cedro/Nuevo Jalisco Panels recount that this Trophy Jaguar’s accession in 734 was supervised by K’ab Chan Te’, Sak Tz’i’ Ajaw. Therefore Usij Witz in the 740s occupied the third-tier position in the hierarchy under Sak Tz’i’.

According to Lintel 3 of Usij Witz, Aj Sak Teles in 748 rebelled against his former overlord Trophy Jaguar (of the Knot Site). This move could be one of the steps in the factional war within Yaxchilan, which lasted from 742 to 752 (Grube 1999; B  r   2011a:207). It was won by Yaxun Bahlam IV, father of Shield Jaguar IV, who is represented by title on Usij Witz Lintel 2. We suspect that Sak Tz’i’ and the Knot Site had been allies of Yokib, who in turn seemingly championed another Yaxchilan king, Yopat Bahlam II, the internecine adversary of Yaxun Bahlam IV. The former is portrayed as a visitor to the Piedras Negras court on its majestic Panel 3 (Martin and Grube 2000:149; B  r   2011c).

Although we must scroll past almost three decades in returning to Lintels 1 and 2 of Usij Witz (Bonampak), here we see that Yajaw Chan Muwan II and his overlord Shield Jaguar IV in 787 have defeated the army of the major power of the Selva Lacandona, Sak Tz’i’. Thereafter its king Yete’ K’inich ‘Champion of the Sun God’ vanishes from the historical record.

In leaving this topic, we recall that Sak Sutz’, the highest-ranking captive on Piedras Negras Stela 12, had the title **ye-TE’** *y-e[ht]-te’* ‘champion’ at the end of his nominal phrases in 792 and 794. But in his name on La Mar Stela 3, this component is replaced by an unknown “*kalomte*” semblant with a raised arm and a distinctive headband, after which we read that this warrior was a *sajal* of the Pomona king Put-K’in Bahlam.

Discussion

In this section we will cover several specific topics: (a) an examination of our strategy for isolating these two terms within the full constellation of spellings; (b) a detailed examination of recent articles by three influential scholars, highlighting agreements and disagreements; (c) a summary of the distributions through time and space of the two homophonic terms, amid noteworthy absences from major polities; (d) further consideration of the meanings, applications, and cultural implications of ‘sacred service’ and ‘battle trial.’

How We Arrived at Our Solution of Two Near-Homophones

We introduce this section with remarks by Linda Schele (1991b:20-21) published in the 1991 Texas Maya Meetings Workbook, followed by excerpts from email

conversations with colleagues vis-  -vis T78:514 and its substitutions. Schele was the first epigrapher to suggest that T78:514 related to the meanings ‘work’ and ‘authority.’ Concerning a key Palenque example next to its image, she said: “An example from the Tableritos of Palenque shows the three signs drawn separately, which[whereas] the **he** is added to T514 in the other Palenque examples above.”

The “three signs” to which she referred were: (a) the **ye**-prefix; (b) the T513 **TE’** main sign (in this case missing T78); and (c) the **-je** suffix (and not **he**, following Grube’s (2004) discovery of the **hV** vs. **jV** distinction in the script). Then, in sharing entries from the 1973 doctoral dissertation on Ch’ol by John Attinasi, she wrote: “I came across an entry that seems to fit the contexts...exactly,” and cited ‘*e’t* ‘work, authority’; ‘*e’tal* ‘religious cargo, position of responsibility, authority, public office’; ‘*et-i-hi-bal* ‘office,’ and ‘*etihib* ‘mayordomo’s sceptre of authority, *bast  n m  s milagroso*.’ With this understanding she interpreted the Palenque Palace Tablet example as the possessed form much as we do, but found herself stumped by the Early Classic lintels of Yaxchilan, writing: “[S]ome of them have the **ye** hand and some do not, even though both versions appear to function in exactly the same way. My only suggestion is that T514 is a logogram for *yet* or *et*...”

Barbara MacLeod had a series of email exchanges with Simon Martin and Robert Wald in the spring of 2003 (forwarded by Robert Wald in August 2003):

Excerpts from MacLeod to Martin and Wald: “It occurs to me that the **ye-he-TE’** spellings may in fact represent a different root than the T514 complex does. What I don’t know is whether these (**ye-he-TE’**) spellings are all in the context of a relation between captor and captive...”

“I think the T514 word originated in Greater Tzeltalan (prior to separation of Ch’olan) as **ab*—a noun. I suspect the root is that seen in ‘*ab-ol*’ suffering.’ The most common transitivizing suffix for nouns is *-t-*; it is found widely in Mayan languages. So a noun **ab* would be transitivized by the addition of *-t-*, yielding **’ab-t-*, a derived transitive stem meaning ‘work on/at (some task or office).’”

“The gerundive/participial suffix for derived transitives in Greater Tzeltalan is *-ej*. Hence a gerund (noun) meaning ‘working,’ ‘officiating,’ or ‘work,’ would have been **’abt-ej*. This is the form I reconstruct from the data in Colonial and Modern Tzotzil.”

“The logogram originated at this stage as a sign for the word ‘work,’ incorporating the suffix, because the suffix was essential to the nounishness of ‘work’ and its religious-office ramifications. Its value was **ABTEJ** and later **EBTEJ/E’TEJ**. Perhaps it continued as **ABTEJ** in the dialect of Dzibanche’.”

“But the words ‘*abt-ej*’/‘*e’tej*’, like other gerunds so derived, also had a perfect participle function. The word could also mean ‘officiating’ as in ‘officiating at the retirement banquet was the CEO of the company’.”

“The form in the first case would be **ye-E’TEJ**-name,

and the form in the second would be **E'TEJ**-name. The second case could be understood to have a zero third person absolutive pronoun, as in *'e'tej-Ø*."

"As such, I think this works partly like the **IL** root in the script; I think the **IL-ji** forms are perfect participles serving as predicate adjectives meaning 'visible (was) the king in his penance'."

Martin to MacLeod and Wald: "One important issue you [Barb] raise is: are the T514 forms truly the same root as that reflected by **ye-he-TE'** (and presumably you would include **ye-TE'**)? The answer to this cannot be conclusive, since we lack unambiguous substitutions. However, the Palenque Tableritos spelling of **ye-TE'-je** offers a bridge that is hard to ignore, linking the **ye-TE'** on the Cross Group Skull (and all those at Tonina) with its common Palenque use of **ye-T514-je**. The alternative would be to posit two almost identical roots—even though we know that T514 must contain *e-* as V1—what are the options? If a totally unambiguous substitution is still missing, YAX HS. 1 Step VI 25 could offer this. [Note first that the syntax is correct, following the verb in a pattern that dominates the text. Next, see how the **TE'** suffix is clear and the superfixed **ye**-hand almost as much. In between there is a sign that cannot be T514, it lacks the top part. Instead it seems to have an inner curl, though one can't be certain of it.]"

By far the most detailed commentary amid this Spring 2003 discussion is that of Robert Wald, comprising twelve single-spaced pages with incisive, pertinent observations about the T78:514 logograph, its substitutions and derivational paths among related morphemes. We will share a few (*pace* Bob) among many of his comments which shed light upon the obstacles we all encountered in trying to untie the Gordian knot:

Wald to Martin and MacLeod: "The first proposal I ever heard for T514 was Barbara's **ETEH** about 10 years ago. That's pretty close to your **EHTE'** and Barbara's **ETEJ** or **E'TEJ**. Treating it as a logogram opens the way for the actual existence of those and similar variations in the script. I would think that a strict T514 probably could also be considered to contain an infix **je**. In other words, the bottom part of T514 could at its beginning have been considered to be an added syllable."

"First of all, the documented entries *'abtej/a'tej* in the Tzotzil and Tzeltal sources are intransitive verbs in Tzotzil and Tzeltal. This is clearly not the *-oj/-ej* of the stative (resultative, perfect). It is also not the *-ej* that derives verbal nouns. Instead, it is the widely used *-Vj* suffix that derives intransitive verbs from nouns and adjectives that include those examples mentioned above from Tzotzil and Ch'orti' ... It is theoretically possible that some of the occurrences of *e'tej/ehtej* represent this derived intransitive form. That would have to be investigated context by context. Those with the ergative pronoun attached could be ruled out from the start. So far, I have not found any contexts where this form seems

as likely as some of the other possibilities."

"Could it be the *-ej* of the transitive stative/resultative/perfect? But it could be that only if it is attached to a root or derived transitive verb stem. But if it is true, as I have argued, the *-t-* in *abtej/e'tej* is not the */t/* that derives transitives, the stem is indeed a noun perhaps of the form *abat/ebet*. Also, the suffix *-Vj* (here *-ej/-ij*) does not derive intransitives from transitives but rather from nouns and adjectives."

"Also, I believe there is sufficient evidence to show that the *-VVj* stative/resultative suffix is used only with transitive verbs both in Tzeltalan and in the Classic inscriptions. The suffix *-o'm* is used as the stative/resultative/perfect suffix on intransitive verbs in the Classic and shares these duties with *-em* in Colonial Tzotzil. Considering only the three, that leaves us with one Tzeltalan suffix as a possible candidate, the *-ej* that derives verbal nouns from verbs. In this, I agree with you, Barbara, that it is a very good candidate for several of the contexts since it can be used with both transitive and intransitive verbs. It also seems like a good fit since it can appear both with and without the ergative person marker depending upon whether it is possessed or not. Either way it can be used in a copulaless/verbless sentence."

Finally, from the English pre-publication draft of Simon Martin's chapter in Enrique Nalda's (2004) *Los cautivos de Dzibanche'* (Simon Martin, personal communication 2022) we quote two passages:

"Epigraphers are in broad agreement that some behave like possessed nouns and others like verbs. In one category, spellings of T514 and **ye-TE'** appear between the names of captives and captors in captions belonging to prisoner depictions. Here we would normally expect to see possessed nouns, but it is troubling that once again we can see the T514 sign standing alone, without a possessive pronoun."

"From these various transcription and translation options epigraphers have derived a range of preferences: *yéetel* "with/and" (David Stuart, personal communication to Linda Schele 1988; Stuart 1998:382-383); *yeteh* "the work/authority of" (Schele 1991a:18-21); *et/eh* "companion" (Stephen Houston, personal communication to David Stuart 1991); *ete* "grab/hold" (Nikolai Grube, personal communication 1997); *eht* "property" (Terrence Kaufman, personal communication to Barbara MacLeod 1999); *e'tej* "work/officiating" (Barbara MacLeod, personal communication 2003). We do not have an adequate control on the sense of the passages concerned to demonstrate which is correct."

As we prepared to write this article, we revisited at length the salient questions and proposed derivations debated two decades and more ago, and were reminded how circular and ungrounded was the whole quest for a one-word/phrase resolution, in spite of so much solid evidence for a single term *'e'tej* 'work,

authority.’ But before we retrace our steps in service to this term, we need to further acknowledge, then set aside, a competing candidate.

The “Partner” Perplex

The ‘companion’ hypothesis has been raised repeatedly over the years, beginning with both Stuart and Houston in 1991 (cited in the quote above from Martin 2004 [personal communication 2022]), then argued for by Boot (2009:25), with a recent value for T78:514 proposed to be logographic ET by Gronemeyer (2014:Note 942 [see Footnote 63 below]) and then by Stuart (2019, in Footnote 27) for the **ye-TE** on Caracol Altar 23. Furthermore, because the Tzeltalan *’at* > Ch’olan *’et* ‘partner’ term represents *the only other pair* aside from Tzeltalan *’abtel* > Ch’ol *e’tel* which could explain the morphophonemics of the T78:514 cases at Dzibanche’, we must take pains to acknowledge compatible grammar and to clarify that largely for its feeble or improbable semantics we do not consider it viable. Here are a relevant few (among many) dictionary entries:

pM *7ety= ~ 7aty= ‘fellow’ (Kaufman and Justeson 2003:1519)

LL+WM *7ety

CHR w-et s compañero / /

YUK ERG-eHt-el con

MOP et-el con MOP keet pol compañero, amigo

LL *7et=’ok

ITZ wet’ok compañero, amigo

MOP et’ok-tzil pariente, familiar

pCh *7et’ok s/sr companion; with, and

CHT #etoc s amigo,compañero

CHL it’ok sr con

YOK t’ok sr con

MOP uyet’oktaj lo acompañó

CHR uyet’oki lo acompañó (selected etyma above from Kaufman and Justeson 2003:1522)

Colonial Tzotzil

’at (2)

’at, tv. count, belong to, be in partnership with, *contar*.

’atbilon. I am a partner, *parcionero*.

x’atey ta ’atojol. He is your partner, *parcionero*.

xa’atey ku’un. I make you my partner, *parcionero hacer a otro*. (Laughlin and Haviland 1988: 137)

Yucatec

’éet ‘companion, equal, co-X’

’et ‘take in the hand’ (Barrera Vásquez 1980:157-159)

In order for a ‘partner, companion’ term to be grammatical on the Early Classic lintels at Yaxchilan, it must be (a) derived as a participle which can be nominalized, or (b) an intransitive verb in *-ej* with a related transitive form. Neither modern Ch’olan nor the script has an *-ej* suffix which fulfills such intransitive/transitive roles, but progressive vowel assimilation is possible. We have previously discussed our participial candidate *’e’tej* in detail and will say more shortly. In theory, the noun *’et* ‘partner’ could be verbalized with *-t-*, a common transitivizer for nouns in relevant languages. The resulting stem **’et-t-* would mean ‘apply partner status upon X.’ While Mayan languages have preferred ways to enact this concept (the usative *-i*), this putative stem would then be derived as a participle **’et-t-ej* ‘in partnership (was X)’ (no such form is known) or operate as an intransitive verb **’et-ej* (likewise, no such form is known). The possessed nominalization would be **y-et-t-ej* ‘he (the king’s accession) was his partnering, X.’ Or—given how *y-itaj* ‘he (had) attended it’ functions in the script, one might argue that the Early Classic Yaxchilan variants be translated ‘in attendance was X’ vs. ‘he (X) attended it’—that is, we might analyze the form with the ergative as a transitive verb **y-et-t-ej* rather than the nominalized “partner” of the participle, and we could also posit an active intransitive verb **’et-ej*. In the interests of due diligence, we continue.

The common derived transitive verb **yi-ta-ji** *y-it-aj* (an unequivocal cognate of the ‘fellow/partner’ terms cited above [cf. Ch’ol *’it’ok*: Kaufman and Justeson 2003; MacLeod 2004]) ‘he has accompanied it/him’ (as well as a conjunction ‘and’) appears at Yaxchilan in non-military environments; in fact, across time and geography it *does not* relate captors and captives, but tags high-status—often foreign—attendees at courtly events or operates as a conjunction, as at Naj Tunich Cave (MacLeod in press). A **ye-te-ja/ji** spelling is found at Uxul, where the term serves as a conjunction between protagonists; we regard it as a Yucatecan equivalent (more below). On the Palenque Hieroglyphic Stair, *y-itaj* is a conjunction linking captives to one another, but not to their captors.

In considering a ‘companion’ term on the early lintels, let us not forget that the agent is the captive who is poised to be sacrificed for the accession banquet of the new Yaxchilan king. Here ‘sacred service’ is more to the point: ‘it ([his presence at] the accession) was his sacred service, X.’ Moving to Dzibanche’, we would have ‘(ordinal expression) **y-at-t-ej-aj* Kan king’ ‘it is [the fifth of] his “companionings” (captive-takings)...’ which borders on improbable sentimentality, whereas ‘his (counted) acts of sacred service’ better fits the situation. Then on Yaxchilan HS. 1, where we find both captives and kings as subjects of the “unpacked” *y-e’tej* (or **y-et-t-ej*) term, are we to understand them all as “accompanying” both accessions and captures? The formula as laid out by Nahm (2006:28) would be:

Date-*chumwani ti ajawlel* / name of ruler / EG(s) / DNIG / Distance Number / *i u-ti* / Date /
he accompanied it? / captive name(s) / **he accompanied it?** / *ch'ahoom* / name of ruler / EG(s).

Yes, they were both there, but in the ‘companion/ accompany’ interpretation, both captive and king are merely *attendees* within this history. Let’s move onward to more decisive invalidation: in the following now-familiar texts a verbalized ‘companion’ term or the concept ‘to attend’ denies agency to the *de facto* agent of the event:

‘three days it (the rite) occupied in his house, Provider-of-Sustenance Three-Leaf Paper...’

*y-et-t-ej *k'inich k'an joy chitam k'uh[ul] bak[a]l 'ajaw*
‘he attended it? *K'inich K'an Joy Chitam the Holy Lord of Palenque*

‘was chopped its head the cenote-back caiman, the painted-back caiman’
 ‘became three inundations, its blood’ (its blood became three inundations)
 ‘there was a flood-settling (receding); there was a fire-drilling ...

i-PAT-la-ja ye-T78:514-je 1-ye-WINIK-XOK-CH'AK
*'i pat-laj *y-et-t-ej jun y-el[j] winik[il]-xok cha[h]k* (GI)
 ‘and then it (the new order) formed; **‘he attended it?**
Jun Yej Winikil Xok Chahk (GI)

In the case of Piedras Negras Stela 12, the king *K'inich Yat Ahk* would merely be ‘in attendance’ at the arraignment of the defeated warriors he proudly displayed cowering below him. And in the Palenque Tableritos case, the engineer’s construction as something “he attended” makes no sense. While one might force the interpretation in an occasional case, the overall inapplicability of ‘companion,’ ‘partner’ and ‘attendance’ has obliged us to set these proposals aside in favor of the ‘work,’ ‘authority’ terms *‘abtej* and *‘e'tej*.

‘Abtej and ‘E'tej as the Better Half of the Solution

In attempting to accommodate the uncooperative forms like **ye-he-TE'** and **ye-TE'** we were still wrestling chimeras—not quite the same improbable *yet, *yeht beasts as before (because we could now explain as participles the forms with no ergative) but others spawned by the spellings consistently ending with **TE'** clamoring for a ‘spear’ or ‘warrior’ interpretation. These were now obfuscated by the discovery of Palenque Temple XIX and the substitution of T78:514 into a common regnal title *y-ajawte' k'inich* where T87 or T513 **TE'** should be. Because there was still no consensus among epigraphers on the ‘work, authority’ term (though the authors were committed to it), this cast T78:514 back into the quagmire of doubt and circular argument. Our initial strategy was

simple: we knew we had a participle (and an occasional possessed nominalization) on the Early Classic lintels of Yaxchilan, so we staked this as an inviolable datum and gave no quarter to arguments that T78:514 could have the value **TE'** in those texts. This is because *te'*—whatever else it might do—could not stand alone as a predicate. Furthermore, we were confident that in spite of a rare ambiguity with the **YAL** logogram (the only possible exception), the script would not countenance ergatives embedded within logographs in productive discourse, and would only occasionally allow it in archaic logographs such as royal names and titles (*Tum [Y]-ohl K'inich*). We also judged it unlikely that under-spelling could explain a missing ergative on the Early Classic lintels, since those with no **ye-** were by far the most common.

That said, we did have the matter of an embedded derivational suffix *-ej* in *‘abtej/‘e'tej*—also an item that violated script rules as we understand them. We’ll say more about this when we revisit the **ye-T78:513-je** spellings on Yaxchilan HS. 1 and two cases at Palenque, the Skull and Tableritos cases.

Issues have been raised in earlier sections, usually in footnotes, about the core of the *‘abtej/‘e'tej* word since its phonology, morphology, and syntax could only be explained by the derivational suffix *-ej* which forms participles and nominalizations from *transitive* stems. Therefore, in spite of the view (proposed by Wald above in 2003) that the core was the noun *‘abat ‘messenger,’ we argue that here it must be the transitive stem *‘ab-t (proposed by MacLeod above in 2003). Sadly, Terrence Kaufman is no longer with us to clarify, but in those discussions early in the millennium he supported MacLeod’s discovery of the *-ej* participle/nominalizer in the script as well as the *‘abtej/‘e'tej* proposal, as cited in Footnote 8.

As we substantiated our commitment to T78:514 as *‘abtej/‘e'tej*, we observed a corresponding dissonance in the *other* spellings—apparent substitutions ending in **TE'**—which, as with square pegs into round holes, could not be made to fit. We entertained phonological shifts; we had an inspired week of exploring metathesis of *‘e'tej into *‘ehte' with the same meaning (perhaps the scribes wanted badly to ditch that medial glottal stop?). But squarely in contradiction stood the many cases of T78:514 throughout the Classic Period—with and without an ergative—which sometimes had an additional **-je** suffix, sometimes not, in the manner of a phonetic complement. This was another stake in the ground: T78:514 words end in <ej>. *All of them.*

There is irony in noting how close we and our colleagues came two decades ago to the clues which now seem obvious. Schele, mystified by the syntax of the Early Classic lintels of Yaxchilan, proposed that the T78:514 word might have an embedded ergative. More recently Bernal [2014] has argued obliquely at length for

the same solution. Martin found these ergativeless cases “troubling.” MacLeod proposed—and forgot (repeatedly)—that the solution might lie in seeing **ye-he-TE'** as a different word from T78:514. Amid the 2003 exchanges cited above, Simon Martin prophetically mused: “The alternative would be to posit two almost identical roots—even though we know that T514 must contain *e-* as V1—what are the options?”

Both Schele and Martin brought up the Tableritos—each looking at the “elephant” from a different angle. Schele was the first to suggest this example as the actual “unpacking” of T514 (only) into its T513 **TE'** and **je** components—a recognition which proved crucial for us on Yaxchilan HS. 1. Martin (personal communication 2003) considered it a “bridge” between two sets of spellings which otherwise were kept absolutely separate; we now see it as a rather different bridge. In the midst, a review of Martin’s correspondence and publication brought to our attention the one substitution of **ye-he-TE'** for **ye-T78:513-je** on Step VI of HS. 1: this was Yaxun Bahlam IV’s “small step for a king” which inserted into HS. 1 a semantic near-homophonic kindred term which had already been in use on HS. 3 and which heralded a shift at Yaxchilan from *'e'tej* to *'eht-te'*.

What matters at the moment is that the former ends in <-ej> and the latter in <-te'>, and that these are *not* the same word. We doubt that metathesis ever played a role, but if it did, there was already fertile soil in military culture or parlance which allowed the result to take root as *'eht-te'*. The data from Tonina demonstrate that the two terms were in play preferentially, with political drivers, as part of that city’s repertoire. A few Tonina scribes even enjoyed conflating them. The Yaxchilan pattern does suggest that *y-eh-te'* replaced in linear fashion the more archaic *y-e'tej*, but we regard this as a shift away from ‘sacred service’ as deity-centered and toward ‘battle-trial’ as king-centered. Perhaps the ponderous grammar of an anachronistic term played a role in this shift at Yaxchilan, but the Palenquanos reveled in and elevated *y-e'tej*, just as their texts and iconography echo an enduring deity-focused practice.

In our own epigraphic practice, we deduced that **ye-TE'**(T78:513)-**je** was *not* phonetically equivalent to **ye-he-TE'**(T87) at Yaxchilan in spite of close similarities, but was rather an “unpacking,” much as Schele had described for the Tableritos example in 1991. Thus the *only true substitution* for the original T78:514 was this unpacked spelling of T78:513 **TE'** plus **je**, with **ye-** obligatorily prefixed to it, because the unpacked version lacked the initial syllable of the word and could not function as the unpossessed participle. T78 rides habitually along as a superfix on T514 (and may occasionally be left out), but it belongs properly to T513. It has no independent value of its own, although in Footnote 11 we consider that it may have had an archaic value **A** or

AB'.

We conclude that all **ye-T78:513-(je)**-spelled words end in <-ej> (and not <-te'>) and represent *y-e'tej* ‘his sacred service’ just as **ye-T78:514(-je)** spellings do. This is true for both these spellings, even when the final **-je** is absent. Thus T78 functions as a default *semantic* marker for the *'e'tej* word. In contrast—and this is pivotal in distinguishing the two homophones—when the <-te'>-final term *y-eh-te'* was called for, *only* T87 **TE'** (and *never* T78:513 **TE'**) was used: the permitted spellings were **ye-he/je-T87** (Yaxchilan) and **ye-T87** (Tonina and elsewhere).⁶¹

It seems fair to ask why the transient and confusing **ye-TE'**(T78:513)-**je** spelling was crafted at Yaxchilan, but what really should be asked (we defer, having no time-travel conveyance) of whoever originally crafted T514 is: *why is there a TE' in it? Why did a productive syllabic spelling become frozen into a logograph? What is the cap for?*

T78:514 represents an intact lexeme which can function without an ergative, yet we do not see it with its participial function at Dzibanche'. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that it was a fossilization arising within **(y)a-TE'-je y-a(b)'tej* at Dzibanche' or an antecedent speech community prior to the /a/>/e/ vowel shift in this word. Graphically, T78:514 is a fossilized conflation of **TE'** (T78:513) plus **-je** plus a “cap” on the new main sign⁶² with its derivational *-ej* suffix now embedded and the initial vowel of the lexeme also embedded. The embedding of grammatical morphemes was by no means a normal script practice, yet here it remains the only workable analysis, along with the acknowledgment that the term was already archaic and fused in the Early Classic, with the *-ej* suffix perhaps no longer productive in Classic Ch'olan. The scribes later explored a deconstructed form—one found only on Yaxchilan HS. 1 and

⁶¹ We advise that the late “hybrids” at Tonina with T87 superfixed or suffixed to T514 must be understood as a subset of T514 spellings operating as participles—few in number but with the potential to perpetuate a decades-long epigraphic quagmire. The two defective spellings on the Death Head and Tableritos texts at Palenque must also be considered a special category for the same reason. We have elsewhere demonstrated that *all of the above* represent (y)-*'e'tej* ‘sacred service.’

⁶² The ubiquitous “cap” icon in T514 was called to our attention by David Mora-Marín (personal communication 2023), who referenced the identical cap on T535 **MIJIN**. We had not given the cap much attention, nor—after considering T535 as well as the **IK'** logogram—do we fully understand its function. Epigraphers agree that the cap on T535 is diagnostic (differentiating it from T533)—even more so than the ‘fire’ superfix which often appears. The **IK'** logogram has the cap inconsistently, and freely substitutes in non-calendrical contexts with the form lacking the cap. We speculate that the cap is an archaic semantic marker for certain logograms derived from other signs. But this does not explain the **IK'** sign unless the cap originally served to distinguish it from the day sign.

in two cases at Palenque, but it was short-lived for reasons we might guess: (a) it was no better, in fact; it was less commanding and venerable than the original; (b) its T78:513 component introduced ambiguity with the spellings ending in **TE'** *for which it was not an equivalent*. This ambiguity has plagued epigraphers for decades, but we hope to have now resolved it.

“Spear” Terms

Our comprehensive inventory of texts with (ye-)T78:514 and its proposed **ye**-T78:513-**je**, **ye-he/je-TE'**, **ye-TE'** substitutions had yielded predictable environments for all forms ending with **TE'**. These clustered in certain texts: the Yaxchilan Hieroglyphic Stairs 3 and 5 and two lintels, several Tonina captive-taking examples, and a few other monuments with single cases. Across all coordinates, forms ending with **TE'** *only appeared in military contexts* whereas T78:514 spellings partook of both military and non-military contexts. Here was another datum: **TE'** *te'* ‘wood,’ ‘spear’ words *never* appeared in non-military texts. We had explored and exhausted the explanatory strategies of metathesis and underspellings, but because others before us had proposed “spear” terms which had failed to break the impasse, we circled the idea for weeks like reluctant hounds afraid to bag the rabbit. Once caught, it challenged us to identify the first part of a “spear” term which had either not already been proposed and discarded or which had been given short shrift. We were confident of the (ye-)T78:514(-**je**) spellings as (y-)’*e’tej* ‘(his) sacred service’ and in its participial form’s indemnity from a **TE'** assignment. This still left a surprising number of *ye*-initial or *e*-initial candidates—most mentioned at the beginning of this essay and most previously considered:

Yucatecan ’*éet* ‘companion, equal, co-X’
 ’*et* ‘take in the hand’ (Barrera Vásquez 1980:157-159)

Lowland and Western Mayan *’*ety* ‘companion, equal, co-X’ (Kaufman and Justeson 2003:1522)

Eastern Mayan *’*ehty* ‘property’ (ibid.:759)

Eastern Mayan *’*eht-a*/*’*eht-abal* ‘to measure/cord for measuring’ (ibid.:189)

Ch’olan, Tzeltalan, and Yucatecan ’*eh* ‘tooth, edge’ (ibid.:256)

Ch’ol and Highland Mayan ’*ehtal* ‘likeness,’ sign’ (ibid.:191)

Tzotzil ’*e(h)-ah* (iv.) ’*e(h)-an* (tv.) ‘carry a load a short distance’ (Laughlin 1975:105; 1988:139)

Tzeltal ’*eh-an* (tv.) ‘carry,’ ‘transport’ (Polian 2018:182)

Proto-Ch’olan *’*eht-ä* and Ch’orti ’*ejt-a* (’*eht-a*) ‘to try,’ ‘to test’ (Kaufman and Norman 1984:120; Hull 2016:134).

Previous proposals have been predicated upon finding a single term ending in <-te’> which fit the T78:514 contexts, seeing the cases without **ye-** as either underspellings or evidence for a *y*-initial root, and not considering the evidence for final **-ej**. Several investigators have also leaned heavily upon a single substitution of T78:514 for **TE'** in a title of Ahkul Mo’ Nahb on the Temple XIX platform at Palenque. Of these proposals, most had gone one of several routes:

(a) the concept made a plausible but thin cultural assumption in military contexts but fell short in all others—e.g., *y-et-te'* ‘his battle companion (literally spear-fellow),’ used by a king in reference to a captive as if they are equals before the gods, but as argued above, inapplicable to the completion of a water-management construction beneath the Palenque Palace and other dedicatory contexts (see Gronemeyer 2014 in Footnote 63 below);

(b) the sense in which it applied was too restricted—e.g., ’*ehtal* ‘likeness’ suggested for the nine stucco dynastic portraits in the Temple of the Inscriptions tomb but a long reach for battle scenes and incompatible with other T78:514 contexts;

(c) it might apply to captives and to buildings in a literal sense—e.g., *y-eh* ‘(it is) his property,’ but would miss the mark in the dedication of Pomona Stela 7 and in the rite of passage on the Palenque Temple XIV Tablet, and would be a ham-fisted claim for a god’s destruction and renewal of the world (Palenque Temple XIX). Furthermore, the lexeme is found only in Eastern Mayan;

(d) the proposal is applicable to battle scenes and military themes,⁶³ but a mismatch or a forced interpretation for most T78:514 examples, as in *y-eh-te'* ‘(it was) his edge of the spear’ for the Palenque Palace Tablet and Temple XIV examples, which are dedicatory and initiatory, respectively. This would also be true of *y-et(e')* ‘he takes it (a spear) in (the) hand.’

(e) The proposal is a “place-holder” without an anchor in relevant dictionaries—e.g., *’*ehte*’/’*ejte*’ as a nonspecific term for ‘capture/seizure/reward’ (Krempel et al. in press), or **ET** ‘co-, company, friend, work, semblance’ (Gronemeyer 2014:Note 942 citing Riese 1982:281-283 and Houston in Stuart 1998:Note 5) or a panoply of options such as ’*et*’/’*e’t*’/’*eht* and ’*e’ht* and ’*e’t*’/’*ehte*’ proposed by Martin (2004:112) (see Footnote

⁶³ Even if semantically proximal, it is a stative construction in which a verbal phrase ‘he was captured-X’ is presumed equal to ‘his edge of the spear.’ The presumption misses the mark: *a weapon is not an action*. Statives are common in the script and in modern Mayan languages, and they are precise equations.

1).⁶⁴

Amid the above entries, Tzeltalan *'eh* 'carry/transport' and proto-Ch'olan/Ch'orti' *'eht* 'test, try, trial' had not yet been considered.⁶⁵ These now appeared viable, given that the *y-e...-te'* term could not be projected upon (ye-)T78:514(-je) and its **ye**-T78:513-**je** equivalent. While the Tzeltalan 'carry, transport' lexeme closely fits with (d) above, the concept 'try, test' and by extension 'trial' for *'eht*- was more productive—not least because T78:514 'sacred service' in essence obliged the gods; thus the Yaxchilan spelling **ye-he-TE'** and **ye-je-TE'** which replaced it should, we thought, carry comparable responsibility and honor. The concepts 'spear-edge/-taking/-carrying' simply fell—and fall—short and seem(ed) restricted to a specific weapon or capture and were off-balance equations, whereas 'battle-trial' could apply to the weightier obligations of warcraft, statecraft, sustained campaigns, and negotiations required of kings by the gods in a perennial exchange of sustenance and fertility for war and sacrifice. Yet 'sacred service' continued in use at several cities for these war-related tasks as well as a variety of non-military ones.

The entry **'eht-a* 'probar,' 'try' appears in proto-Ch'olan with a citation of **ehta* in proto-Mayan (Kaufman and Norman 1984:120) and in Ch'orti' (Hull 2016:134). We propose a possessed incorporating compound *y-eh[t]-te'* or *y-e[h]t-te'* (depending on spellings **ye-he/je-TE'** vs. **ye-TE'**) 'his battle-trial,' including the transitive root *'eht[-ä]* 'test, try, attempt' reconstructed to proto-Ch'olan with reflexes in Ch'orti' (Kaufman and Norman 1984, Hull 2016, Korovina/Wisdom 2019).

Ch'orti' (Hull 2016:134)

ejta. tv9. *probar, saborear.* try, taste, test

ejtayaj. nom1... *probar.* try, attempt.

E winik ejtayaj patna'rtaka war uche. *El hombre está probando el trabajo no más.* The man is just trying out the work.

ejtbir. pp art4. *probado.* tried, attempted.

Uk'ani ejtna'r e winik jay o'bna apatna. *Hay que probar al hombre para ver si puede trabajar.* It is necessary to test the man to see if he is able to work

Ch'orti' (Wisdom 1950 [Korovina 2019:11])

eht a. *trying, trial, test*

ehta. *try, test*

ehta u-če. *try to do (something)*

The Ch'orti' sentences above demonstrate that *'eht-a* 'try,' 'test' is used not only for trying new foods, but also for circumstances in which the strength or capacity of an individual is tested. We suggest that for a king or high-ranking lieutenant amid a warring elite culture,

the "test" may be a severe and lengthy one. We might consider the decades-long military efforts of Tum Yohl K'inich of Caracol as a template.

We can speculate how a lexical and cultural transition from (*y-je'tej* 'his sacred service' to **y-eh-te' > y-ehte'* 'his battle trial' at Yaxchilan occurred. The two terms may have existed side-by-side in military contexts⁶⁶ before one fell into disuse, perhaps because they encode a shift of attention away from the gods (and captives as their sacred servants) and onto the kings. A similar transition is seen in Tonina texts. Conversely at Palenque,

⁶⁴ Martin (2004) and Gronemeyer (2014) have published the most comprehensive expositions thus far on the history of attempts to decipher T78:514/ZZ5 and on the range of possibilities within relevant languages. Of particular interest is this excerpt from Gronemeyer (2014:Note 942): "When turning to the reading of ZZ5, it is important to stress that the supposed underlying verbal stem is not related to the Ch'olan or Yucatekan meanings, see pCh **eht-ä*, "probar / / try" (Kaufman and Norman 1984:120) and YUK *et*, "tener en la mano" (Barrera Vásquez 1993:158). More viable is the nominal(ised) GLL cognate set *e[h]t* with the broad meaning range "co-..., company, friend, work, semblance." Out of this domain, Riese (1982:281-283) established his decipherment *Sieger* 'victor' as a war-context relational noun, connecting a defeated person or site with the protagonist."

Unfortunately the arguments in Gronemeyer's footnote leave unexplained why (unless it is simply his stated preference for a 'companion/accompany' term) he summarily rejected the proposal **eht-ä*, "probar / try" which we now consider the likely first lexeme for terms ending in *<-te'>*. In that same footnote, pertinent to cases with no ergative, Gronemeyer states: "Besides an under-spelling, several other contexts also suggest that *e[h]t* may form a nominal compound or act as an intransitive stem to explain the absence of an ergative pronoun."

Here Gronemeyer's *e[h]t* is understood as the transcribed form of **ET**, but it is unclear to us how this *e[h]t* might function without an ergative. Elsewhere (ibid.:577), under the heading *e-[h]t-a* "Derived Transitive Verb," Gronemeyer lists a number of **ye**-T78:514/ZZ5-**je** examples, transliterates these as **ye-ET-je**, transcribes them as *y-e[h]t-[al]j-Ø*, and includes them with the **ye-ta-ji** spellings from Uxul which we consider a Yucatecan cognate of the ubiquitous Ch'olan *y-itaj* 'he accompanied him/it.' We thus diverge from his analysis for several reasons. We are therefore gratified to note that, having reviewed our manuscript, Gronemeyer is prepared to be persuaded by our arguments.

⁶⁵ Kaufman and Norman cite proto-Mayan **ehta* for the reconstruction to proto-Ch'olan. Given the apparent semantic overlap between Eastern Mayan **'ehta* 'to measure' and proto-Ch'olan **'ehta* 'probar' we assume **'ehta* 'to measure' is the proto-Mayan term to which the proto-Ch'olan entry is linked, even though Kaufman (2003) does not specifically cross-reference them.

We also suggest that in a verb-noun incorporation in Epigraphic Mayan the *-a* of *'eht-a* would have been dropped as it is in the derivations *ejtb'ir* and *ejtna'r* in Hull's (2016) Ch'orti' entries. This contrasts with the Korovina/Wisdom entry *'eht-a u-che* 'try to do something', which is not an incorporation and retains the transitive *-a* suffix.

⁶⁶ We think it improbable that *'eht-te'* was coined via metathesis, but given the remarkable homophony, we leave it at the edge of the table.

the ‘battle-trial’ term never took root: it appears only once on Pier A of the Temple of the Inscriptions to redesignate the *former* ‘Sacred Service House’ (House C of the Palace) as a ‘battle-trial house,’ in contrast with the newly-completed Temple of the Inscriptions. The Bakal court—as befits that city’s tradition of exquisite sculpture, archaic ancestry, and deep-time narratives featuring the gods—employed (*y-*)’*e’tej* ‘sacred service’ in both military and dedicatory contexts and had little use for the ‘battle-trial’ term.

Phonologically, we note in the spellings **ye-he-TE’**, later **ye-je-TE’** (both unique to Yaxchilan kings) the representation of a medial spirant amid the leveling of the *h/j* phonemic contrast which occurred early in its texts. We do not think this is the *-h-* in *’eht*, because the script generally ignores *-h-* in words of CVhC shape. We explained this in Footnote 21, with evidence from a Yucatec dictionary, as the production of a spirant *-h-* or *-j-* (we don’t know which for Yaxchilan) at the morpheme boundary within the incorporation *y-eh-te’* where two /t/ phonemes meet, yielding /*yehte*/. At other sites (Tonina, Caracol, Dos Pilas), but not at Yaxchilan, a further simplification resulted in **ye-TE’** (presumably *y-ete’*).⁶⁷

Bernal Romero’s YEJ Proposal

A 2015 article in *Arqueología Mexicana* and a longer 2015 antecedent by Guillermo Bernal Romero gained considerable public, even international, attention and stirred concomitant debate among epigraphers amid a somnolent decade of little visible progress on T78:514. Bernal proposed a novel identification of T514 (alone) as the molar of a jaguar, assigning it the reading **YEJ** ‘filo’ (edge) based on *’eh* ‘tooth’ (“El vocablo *yej*, ‘filo,’ es un derivado del término *’ej*, ‘diente’” [2014:3]). While *yej* ‘filo’ does appear in Ch’ol (Aulie and Aulie 1978:142), *’ejal* ‘diente’ is also found in the same source (ibid.:160), and *yej* ‘filo’ is a possessed noun *y-ey* ‘the edge of...’. In Chontal (Keller and Luciano 1997:297) *yej* is given as ‘[tercera persona poseída de *’ej*] ‘sus dientes’ as well as ‘filo,’ but always in sentences making clear that it is possessed. In Ch’orti’ (Hull 2016:133) the entry is *’ej* for both ‘tooth/mouth’ and ‘edge.’⁶⁸ Thus Bernal apparently misconstrued Ch’olan sources and proceeded through his articles as if his **YEJ** logogram incorporated an ergative pronoun. We know that many examples of T78:514—and all the spellings ending in **TE’**—have a **ye-** prefix, so were that prefix present, there might still be substance in his *y-eh-te’* ‘(his) edge-of-the-lance’ proposal as a metaphor for a capture or other military achievement. The idea was intriguing in spite of grammatical foibles; it constituted a fresh look at a stagnant conundrum, and might have been a viable candidate for the **TE’** terms, so long as ‘edge-of-the-lance’ was not grafted onto T78:514. But indeed the “jaguar molar as **YEJ**” originated with T514, per the author, so there was no

redemption possible in our view. It is in the non-military contexts at Palenque (Temple XIV, Tableritos, Palace Tablet) that the inappropriateness of ‘edge-of-the-lance’ is so patently visible.

On the other hand, Bernal’s 2015a paper is copiously illustrated with almost all known examples of T78:514 and its alleged equivalents, including whole texts in many cases. His data includes complete transliterations, transcriptions, and translations—all of which are very reliable, as he was an excellent epigrapher. For these many contributions we have great appreciation. Had he not been so attached to his **YEJ** ‘molar’ idea, he might have become more open to the *’e’tej* ‘work, authority’ suggestions of which he was aware, amid the considerable discussion his proposal had stimulated. Though we disagree with it, we still consider his *y-eh te’* ‘his edge-of-the-lance’ idea an important step forward among the *te’* terms, and it has gained provisional acceptance by some epigraphers.

Alexandre Tokovinine’s y-eh-te’ and y-aht-te’ Proposals

Two nearly-identical considerations of the problem of T78:514 and related spellings have recently been published by Alexandre Tokovinine (2019a, 2020) as parts of different chapters in edited volumes. The 2019 article focuses on aspects of Classic Maya warfare as documented in hieroglyphic texts. It is a concise summary of prior studies infused with updated decipherments and identifications of place names, featuring the same military actions we have cited in our foregoing review of intersite alliances and hostilities: capture, cave-entering, chopping of heads, and the “star-war” event, as well as others (burning, ‘downing’) which are well known but not relevant to our investigation. He includes a brief discussion of weapons as a lead-in to the T78:514 problem, with a proposal similar to that of Bernal that the elusive term when prefixed by **ye-** is a weapon, specifically a halberd, *y-eh-te’* ‘his tooth-spear,’ but when prefixed by **ya-** at Dzibanche’ is instead a tally device (or tallied captive) whose root is *’aht* (**aj.t*) ‘count’ (Kaufman and

⁶⁷ At Tonina there is an achronological progression from possessed nominalization **ye-T78:514-je** (Krempel et al. in press:Fig. 17b, a diminutive stela of unknown provenance naming the Tonina king Tun Chapat) to participial T78:514 (e.g., Mon. 27) *’e’tej* to a unique hybrid T87:514 (Mon. 172), thence to **ye-TE’** (T87) in other (later) cases. This hybrid has no **ye-** prefix; thus it cannot be **’eht-te’*, which is an incorporation and syntactically a noun requiring an ergative. Both Mon. 27 and Mon. 172 feature the capture of K’awil Mo’, a war captain from a polity allied with Palenque. In Krempel et al. in press, Figure 9c includes a fragment with T78:514 which is almost identical to the corresponding text on Mon. 27.

⁶⁸ The *’ej* sources discussed here are dictionaries which merge the original *h/j* contrast into [j]. The archaic term in Mayan is **e’eh* (Kaufman 2003:256), and we will refer to it as *’eh* when not citing sources.

Justeson 2003:185).

Tokovinine's 2020 article develops the less-well-studied topic of Classic Maya accounting, and takes an innovative and productive direction into Classic market economies via a compendium of cross-cultural, archaeological, ethnographic, and epigraphic evidence for tallies, accountants, and various tools employed in counting. Included (Tokovinine 2020:292-294) is a discussion of T78:514, virtually the same as in the 2019 article but here tailored to the main theme via the **ya**-initial cases as *y-ah-t-* (*'aj.t-) *te*' 'counting stick' > 'captive as tally person.'

Tokovinine's proposals substantially parallel the work of Bernal, whom he cites several times. We appreciate that he offers yet another two-term approach to T78:514 and its alleged substitutions, but it should be no surprise that we accept neither his 'tooth-spear' nor his 'counting-stick/tally-person' as viable hypotheses. While he takes issue with Bernal's understated assumption of an embedded ergative—because the script does not allow it except in complex royal nominal phrases—his stance serves mainly to dispute the concept of "edge" or "sharpness" of a spear in favor of the '*eh*' 'tooth' component as representing the blades or shark teeth embedded in a halberd ('*eh-te*' 'tooth-spear,' transliterated **EH-TE**'). He unexpectedly changes to ***he** the long-established **je** value of the T69 syllabogram in support of the **EH** component and applies the 'tooth-spear' reading to all **ye**-initial spellings, be they **ye**-T78:514(-**je**) or **ye**-T78:513-**je** or **ye-he/je-TE**' or **ye-TE**'. He must have considered the plausibility of building dedications as linked via this term to the celebration of military victories, but in these articles he does not explain the dedication of structures. We will demonstrate its inapplicability here, but from this constraint it follows that 'tooth-spear' cannot apply to any context for T78:514, as these are all the same term.

We have previously contextualized and interpreted all cases of T78:514 and its variants. Here, for example, is the transcription and translation of the Palenque Tableritos text with 'tooth-spear' inserted as the dedicatory term:

la[h]jaj u-may-tun-a' nah cha' winikhab 'ajaw k'inich janab pakal k'uh[ul] bak[a]l 'ajaw

'It was completed his *May Tun-a'* house, the two-*k'atun* lord K'inich Janab Pakal, Holy Lord of Palenque'

u-pak'il y-eh-te' cha' winikhab 'aj k'uh[u]n 'aj sul
'his construction was **his tooth-spear (halberd)?** the two-*k'atun* *aj k'uhun* Aj Sul'

If an equivalence of the *subterraneos* construction with a halberd is not sufficient disconfirmation of the reading, here is the pertinent text from the Palenque Palace Tablet, wherein a three-day fire-entering dedication is equated with a halberd:

'ux k'in ja(b)' ta y-otot pul-tzin 'ux yop hun
'three days it (the rite) occupied in his house, Provider-of-Sustenance Three-Leaf Paper'

y-eh-te' k'inich k'an joy chitam k'uh[ul] bak[a]l 'ajaw
'it was the **tooth-spear (halberd)?** of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam the Holy Lord of Palenque'

Other points of disagreement:

(1) Even when both arguments of a stative construction are related war events, one cannot grammatically equate a capture or a hostile cave-entering with a weapon or a device. One is a verbal phrase; the other is a simple noun and not a nominalization. Mayan languages and the script are precise in their use of statives. The re-labeling of a noun such as 'halberd' as '*halberd person*' in order to tie this to the aforementioned captive is a forced and unsupported strategy, and misses the target in non-military contexts.

(2) With regard to embedded ergatives, the author waves away the Yaxchilan Early Classic lintels and other participial cases without mention, obscuring their fundamental syntactic clues amid a statement that "conflations, flexible reading order, and underspellings...are all attested for T78:514 and its variants."

The claim that the T78:514 term is plagued by *underspellings* obscures the fact that T78:514 '*e'tej*' may operate as a predicate with no ergative. It is the participial function contrasting with a possessed nominalization *y-e'tej* which characterizes the syntax of the Early Classic lintels at Yaxchilan and which decisively constrains what T78:514 can and cannot be. It is the failure to recognize this grammatical evidence and the ubiquitous willingness to interpret these as "underspellings" which have kept many epigraphers wallowing in the quagmire. The only *conflation* which characterizes the T78:514 constellation is *T78:514 itself*. We are not the first to observe this; we follow in Schele's early footsteps, noting that Yaxchilan and Palenque scribes "unzipped" it into **ye**-T78:513-**je**. We have identified this as the *only de facto* substitution. With this recognition, the decades-long assumption of "flexible reading order" evaporates. The **ye-he/je-TE**' and **ye-TE**' spellings now stand together across multiple cities as a different term in which **TE**' always comes last. We have explained their phonological variation elsewhere.

In briefly considering the Dzibanche' texts, we note that throughout his discussion of these terms Tokovinine candidly expresses doubt about the interpretive path he has chosen, as in:

"If such interpretation of the T78:514 and related glyphs is correct, the captives were referred to as people who pertained to the weapons and the accounting devices of the captor, his "halberd (person)" and "tally (person)" (Tokovinine 2020: 293).

We have demonstrated the improbability of 'halberd (person)'. Amid the confidence we now have in

ye-T78:514(-je) as *y-e'tej* 'his sacred service,' it is difficult to entertain **ya**-T78:514 as anything other than its cognate *y-a(b)'tej* 'sacred service' term. But given the format of the Dzibanche' steps, an equation between the *depicted captive* and an *agentive noun* would be grammatical, and might explain the -aj suffix—which is significantly absent on any other site's examples of T78:514. This is of course not our interpretation. The stretch of credibility still lies with the term *y-aht-te' as 'his captive (tally person).' Were we to further contemplate this course, we might suggest 'u ho'tal **ya**-T78:514-AJ *y-aj.t-te'-aj* as 'it was the fifth of his warrior(captive) counts... ', because we have also determined that *te'* may represent 'warrior' or 'soldier' (and 'captive' by circumstance). This would be a nominalized antipassive (and not an agentive noun) and as such, a proper stative counterweight to the 'och-ch'en cave-entering. But at this juncture, there is no credible pairing of 'captive count' at Dzibanche' with T78:514 'sacred service' anywhere else, and we do not accept 'tooth-spear,' so we will set the proposal aside as unproductive.

In sum, the assumptions about this agency expression which enabled Tokovinine's 'tooth-spear' and 'tally-person' proposals: *conflation, underspelling, and flexible reading order*—have been the enduring vexations of epigraphers for decades. Amid our points of disagreement, we hope to have clarified our own position that—except for the conflation visible in T514—these *are not* attributes of this set of spellings.

Albert Davletshin's 'Cautivo de Mucho Premio, Cautivo de Muchas Insignias' at Tonina

The article of this title by Albert Davletshin (in press) features the author's proof for the decipherment of the sign T674 as **tz'o** in Mayan spellings of the name "Spearthrower Owl" and other known environments. In mustering evidence for T674 as **tz'o**, Davletshin examines the other contexts for the sign, notably the **tz'o-no** spellings on the "shield" texts at Tonina which we have considered at length in a prior section of this essay. We have understood the root *tz'on* to be the indigenous Lowland Maya 'cerbatana' (blowgun) for hunting birds and small mammals, with its use in these texts generalized to 'a hunt [for captives]'. Its Colonial Yucatec entries include nouns meaning 'the hunt' and 'hunted/killed prey' (Arzápalo Marín 1995:1640-1642), and in Modern Yucatec *tz'on* is 'gun' (rifle, shotgun), an antipassive verb/nominalization '[to] hunt', and a transitive root 'to hunt/shoot' (Barrera Vásquez 1980:889). In our analysis of the Tonina "shield" phrase, *tz'on* is compounded with *e'tej* 'sacred service' to produce *balun e'tej tz'on* 'nine-sacred-service-hunt,' with *balun* 'nine' an intended mockery of Palenque's Temple of the Inscriptions, given that these particular captives were allies of Tonina's paramount enemy.

Davletshin (in press:6, Supplementary Materials:3) prefers for *tz'on* in these texts a meaning 'flaco'/desnutrido' (think, malnourished) found only in several highland Mayan languages. While a captive would be malnourished if held for months and tortured before death, we otherwise find surprising this suggestion in a context where a lowland 'hunt' word should suffice. The author then translates the entire 9-T78:514-**tz'o-no** phrase as 'el cautivo de mucho premio' and also—as if these were equivalent—'el cautivo de muchas insignias', invoking in the first case a unique term '*atal*' in Colonial Yucatec (Arzápalo Marín 1995:1490) 'ser pagado, o galardoneado y la tal paga o flete que uno paga (*Material Suplementario* 2024: 2)', and in the second, extending the term '*ehtal* 'semejanza/seña' to '(military) insignia'. This is the same '*ehtal*' entry found in Ch'ol and Highland Mayan (Kaufman and Justeson 2003:191) which we reviewed above and had found too limited in meaning to explain any context beyond that of the nine stucco portraits in the tomb of Pakal at Palenque. Also considered in detail earlier, these are the same nine '*e'tej* 'sacred servants' of the dynasty who dress and adorn the Triad gods in that temple's lengthy inscription, and who are the antecedents of Tzotzil '*ab'tej* 'religious authorities' of the *cofradías* who care for the saints. In a nod to William of Ockham, '*ehtal* 'semejanza/seña' cannot even explain these portraits, because a single solution must apply to all cases of T78:514[-je].

With regard to Colonial Yucatec '*atal*' and related forms, among his relevant etymologies (Davletshin in press, Supplementary Materials), under a generalized reconstruction *eht- (s.), Davletshin implies cognacy between the Colonial Yucatec <atal> 'recompensa, premio' and Kaufman and Justeson's (2003:191) *ehtal 'semejanza/seña' (likeness/sign) with no explanation. One might suggest as a counterpoint that Colonial Yucatec '*atal* 'reward, payment'—which concerns monetary transactions—could be related to Tzeltalan '*at* 'account' and 'to sum, count' (Laughlin 1975:19), but candidly, we see the former's pedigree as too uncertain to be relevant. While the Dzibanche captive statements (Nalda 2004:13-55) have apparently motivated the author's quest for a new /a/-initial etymon, in our view the strategy fares no better than Tokovinine's because (1) when tested in non-military contexts it misses the mark, and (2) we conclude with abundant evidence that '*ab'tej/e'tej* explains the full range of contexts for T78:514 [-je]. On this point, Davletshin does not once mention the function of the recurring -je suffix. He also states (in press:6) that in spellings like **ye-TE'**, the final **TE'** has lost its 'wood' value in service to a possessed word *y-eh* which also explains T78:514 (-je), and that both refer across the corpus to all captives as 'reward' and 'payment'. Ironically, he endeavors (in press:6) to explain the graphic form of T514 as a type of "insignia" with its **TE'** infix indicating it to be a pendant of wood. As with

Bernal's spear and Tokovinine's halberd, we consider this to be overly concrete, inappropriate in non-military contexts, and bound to the "red herring" of a single solution which presumes to explain both *-ej-final* and *-te'-final* terms without considering that these are features of two sets of spellings. Not least, Davletshin offers no comment about the Early Classic lintels of Yaxchilan and other contexts, such as Stela 12 of Piedras Negras, where T78:514 has no ergative pronoun.

Finally he states (in press:6, translated from Spanish): "The term can also be compared with the chol word *ʔeʔtel*, 'work', which comes from **ʔab-te-*, 'to work', though it may be linked to that root."

Spatio-Temporal Distribution of Spellings

From our collected data, we now list the spatio-temporal distribution of spelling forms for *(y-)e'tej* and *yeht te'*, respectively:

T78:514 (Western Maya Region, Early and Late Classic)

ya-T78:514 (Dzibanche', Early Classic)

ya-T514 (Dzibanche', Early Classic)

ya-T78:514-**AJ** (Dzibanche', Early Classic)

ya-T78:514-**je** (Dzibanche', Early Classic)

T78:514-**je** (Western Region, Late Classic)

ye-T78:514 (Western Region, Early and Late Classic)

ye-T78:514-**je** (Western Region, Late Classic)

ye-T78:513-**je** (Yaxchilan, Late Classic)

ye-T513-**je** (Palenque, Late Classic)

ye-T78:513 (Palenque, Late Classic)

ye-T87 (Western Maya Region, Dos Pilas, and Caracol-Late Classic)

ye-he-T87 (Yaxchilan, La Pasadita, Late Classic)

ye-je-T87 (Yaxchilan, Late Classic)

After compiling spellings of T78:514 and its variations and analyzing them in different contexts, we have concluded that they are distinct expressions: one is *(y-)e'tej* his '(sacred) service (for the gods)' and the other *y-eh-t-te'* 'his battle trial' (as an extension of *te'* 'spear' to 'battle' and 'warrior'). While previous interpretations suggest that these occur with no pattern, their chronology demonstrates their use in different periods, with *(y-)e'tej/y-a(b)te'* being the earliest, and specific to military contexts, while *(y-)e'tej* continued at Palenque with both military and non-military use. At Tonina (but not Palenque) the term *y-eh-t-te'* eventually superseded *(y-)e'tej* in military contexts after having occasionally preceded it. The phonological features of these terms, as well as their overlapping use in captive-taking texts, had led us and previous epigraphers toward a default but erroneous assumption that the spellings referred to

one expression.

The terms *(y-)e'tej* and *y-eh-t-te'* pattern geographically. Apart from the Dzibanche' examples of T78:514 in the Early Classic, it appears only in the Western Region, save one case at Tikal in the *'e'tej nah* expression. The use of T78:514 in dedication contexts occurs only in Palenque and Pomona—a rather small area. At Palenque its application is highly developed and associated with acts of great reverence: only at Palenque do gods enact *'e'tej*.

The expression *eh-t-te'* appears almost exclusively in the Western Region, apart from two examples at Dos Pilas and Caracol. Thus both expressions were used in a geographically restricted manner. At most cities and in most periods, the ubiquitous agency expression *u-kab-ij(-iy)* 'he has overseen it' served for a wide range of hierarchical stewardship relations. The domains of both *(y-)e'tej* and *y-eh-t-te'* were narrow culturally and reserved for high-status and/or enduring special circumstances, such as the years-long campaign of Tum Yohl K'inich to restore Caracol to a powerful state again.

Among the known examples of *(y-)e'tej*, in only three cases did a non-royal noble enact 'sacred service' for the gods: in Palenque (Aj Sul and Chak Sutz') and in Pomona (a *ti' sak hun*, with the Pomona and Palenque kings present). In all other cases, either kings or gods were the agents. Amid the status-signaling of agency expressions (*kabi*, *'ichon*, *'ita'*, and *'ila'*) we rank *'e'tej* in highest position, with its appearance demarcated to a specific area.

It seems both *(y-)e'tej* and *y-eh-t-te'* were used by scribes in a literary style whose eastern extent was the area between the Usumacinta and Lacanha' Rivers. it is possible that the territory of the two terms indicated a language dialect area. This would correspond to the historical range of the Ch'ol and Tzeltalan languages (the latter at Tonina) with some overlap with Chontal to the north. Within the daughter languages of Greater Tzeltalan, *'abtej* and *'abtel* have continued productively into present times as 'work' (in general) and syncretic 'religious authority.' The military expression *y-eh-t-te'* has not endured, perhaps due to being selectively targeted for extinction by the Spanish conquerors.

Mary Kate Kelly (2022) refers to the area in question as the "Western Corridor," extending from Comalcalco to the Petexbatun area (including Cancuen)—basically the Usumacinta and Pasión rivers and their tributaries. Although from our viewpoint she has incorrectly merged our *(y-)e'tej* and *y-eh-t-te'* with the *y-itaj* expression as versions of the same word, it is true that *(y-)e'tej* and *y-eh-t-te'* occur primarily in the above-named corridor. She argues (2022:117-118, 155-156) that *yeht* (her preferred stand-in for the dataset) functioned like the conjunction *y-itaj* 'with' (we see *y-itaj* as a derived transitive 'he has accompanied it/him' and have assessed this "conjunction" proposal above), and because she accepts that the three expressions are essentially one, her

distributional analysis creates a false range for *(y-)e'tej* and *y-eh't-te'*. She did not consider the earliest examples at Dzibanche', whose location was far away from the Western Corridor.

Sven Gronemeyer (2014:443 n. 942, 577) merged the spellings **ye-te-ji/ja** (on Uxul Ring 8 and Jimbal Stela 1) with **ye-T78:514-je**, which he transcribes as *y-el[h]-t-[al]j*. We disagree with this grouping (we would extract T78:514 (ZZ5) from the set), but accept that **ye-te-ji/ja** was the Classic Yucatecan language equivalent of **yi-ta-ji y-itaj** 'he accompanied it.' In Modern Yucatec 'éet is 'equal, same' and the core of the conjunction *yéet-el* (Bricker et al. 1998:9). These Yucatecan spellings at Uxul and Jimbal are an important discovery with implications we cannot consider here.

The possessed form *y-eh't-te'* 'his battle trial' is specific to the kings. In the special Caracol case, Tum Yohl K'inich was of the K'antu Mak royal lineage, but never held the throne. In our understanding of the term, it applied not to a specific battle but to a campaign against a major enemy and beyond; this may have extended over months or years embracing all the obligations of warcraft including attendance on the battlefield, but not least the original war-charter handed down from on high to a new king, or in his case to a regent. In the broader military sense, *y-e'tej* 'his sacred service' was the *original* term, as all its Early Classic contexts feature warfare, with both captives and kings—later only kings—enacting this blood-offering service for the gods. We revisit in this light the extended name Y-Ajaw E'tej K'inich Ahkul Mo' Nahb on the platform of Palenque Temple XIX as not only intentional but representative of a set of kingly war-related obligations embedded in his accession re-enactment.

If we consider the different scribal schools of the Western Corridor (see Kelly 2022) with regard to the variants (original or unpacked, possessed or not) of *(y-)e'tej* spellings, we observe that Palenque had a distinct scribal tradition which used *(y-)e'tej* in non-military contexts, while the other major sites avoided it in those contexts. It is remarkable that T78:514 *(y-)e'tej* occurred so rarely in the inscriptions of Piedras Negras (twice as a participle 'e'tej on Stela 12) and when it was used, the most conservative form was chosen. This is a hint that 'e'tej at Piedras Negras was a poke at the defeated Pomona king/warriors and by extension, Palenque. Its very late appearance is in the discourse of the war with Pomona, which for most of the Late Classic was an ally or vassal of Palenque, whose scribal school often employed *(y-)e'tej* in both war and non-war contexts. We speculate that the archaic (participle) form of T78:514 on Stela 12 entered the Yokib dynasty lexicon at an earlier horizon, when we believe Pomona occupied a superordinate position vis-à-vis Piedras Negras, also recounted in the history of Stela 12.

With this one exception, the scribal school of Piedras Negras and its allies El Cayo, La Mar, and Sak Tz'i'

(see Kelly 2022:214-234) utilized neither *(y-)e'tej* nor *y-eh't-te'* in its discourse, while other sites in the Western Corridor, in particular its arch-enemies Palenque and Yaxchilan, often did: Palenque eschewed *y-eh't-te'* with one exception, and Yaxchilan demoted *(y-)e'tej* in favor of *y-eh't-te'* in an apparent shift away from the gods and toward the kings.

In anticipation of retiring the **(ye-)T78:514(-je)** *(y-)e'tej* term (because they were already using its **ye-he-TE'** *y-eh't-te'* replacement on HS. 3), the Yaxchilan scribes did something innovative under the direction of Yaxun Bahlam IV which bound the now-retiring 'sacred service' term to the earliest kings of the dynasty. On Hieroglyphic Stair 1 (Nahm 2006), they created a retrospective history which reiterated the narrative of the four Early Classic lintels of Structure 12: the accessions of the first ten kings and 'sacred service' of all the captives with names and polities of origin who were sacrificed amid those celebrations. It is thus a document of not only their accessions but also the major war campaigns of the early kings. Whereas T78:514 and occasionally **ye-T78:514** had been the predicates on the lintels, on HS. 1 the predominant form of 'his sacred service' was now a disassembled form of T514: T513:69. It retained T78, a sign with no apparent lexical or phonetic value of its own (thus T78 and T514 are lumped under ZZ5 in the Macri-Looper system). This new "unpacked" spelling required an ergative; the whole was **ye-T78:513-je**. We propose its reading to be *y-e'tej*. It occurs many times on the six steps of HS. 1, well into the contemporary history of Yaxun Bahlam IV; its subjects are now *not only the captives as before, but also the kings*. Significantly, occasional **ye-T78:514-je** *y-e'tej* substitutions *also* appear on these steps, as noted by Martin (2004); see Footnote 15. We and other epigraphers have overlooked these critical data for decades, in part because HS. 1 is terribly eroded, but also because of the erroneous assumption that **ye-T78:513-je** is semantically (and somehow phonologically!) equivalent to **ye-T587.87** and **ye-T69.87**. We have concluded that the **ye-T78:513-je** spelling is the *only de facto* substitution for T78:514, and all its occurrences save two at Palenque (Tableritos and Skull) appear on Yaxchilan HS. 1. We agree with Werner Nahm (2006:36) that the early narrative of HS. 1 was probably copied from an older codex, as must have also been true of the four Early Classic lintels. It bears restating that Martin brought to our attention the unique example of **ye-T587.87 ye-he-TE'** *y-eh't-te'* on HS. 1 Step VI (Block 25): a near-homophonic harbinger of the shift from 'sacred service' to 'battle-trial.' From this point forward at Yaxchilan the term in use was *y-eh't-te'* and it referred only to the kings.

Yaxchilan scribes now used the spelling **ye-he-TE'** consistently on HS. 3 as well as once on HS. 1 Step VI as mentioned; on the retrospective Lintel 16; and at La Pasadita, which confirmed anew that a subordinate site's monuments frequently aligned with the sovereign's

writing and carving styles. Later, the **ye-je-TE'** spelling of the same term appeared on HS. 5. These spellings marking a medial spirant are unique to Yaxchilan (see Footnote 21 for more detail on this spirant). All other cities' scribal schools—from Tonina to Caracol—employed the **ye-TE'** spelling, which was likely as simple as *y-ete'* (< *y-eeh/j-te' < *y-eh-te').

We have seen that with a few exceptions, the two expressions were limited to the Western Region. This signals that this area functioned in the past as a cultural-cum-geopolitical zone apart from the other regions of the Classic Maya Lowlands (see Bíró 2011:3). Both the interaction and the non-royal monument patterns confirm the existence of a political arena or region within which the elite maintained closer contacts than outside it. Naturally there were cities such as Tonina whose geographical location made them uniquely connected to this region, while others farther east had wider connections, such as the sites of the Selva Lacandona which interacted at times with the neighboring Pasión Region. We do not know—and do ask—why the terms (*y-)**e'tej* and *y-eh-te'* were not used in the other regions of the Classic Maya Lowlands even though their polities—Naranjo, for example—participated vigorously in the same warfare and war-literary genre which occupied the Late Classic inscriptions of the Western Region. In this regard, Dzibanche' represents a mystery in yet another way. For all that we know, we are left with more than a few unanswered questions.

Reciprocity

We include this term in our title, and have thus far mentioned it in passing, but it is the subtext of all the monuments we have considered and many more besides. Some polities whose texts feature 'sacred service' or 'battle trial' also speak eloquently of the returns from the gods of earth and heaven, and from the patron deities of the lineage and of its sacred mountains and caves, but only occasionally are the two streams of warfare and sustenance confluent in the same text. Among the most direct testimonies to the eternal reciprocity between humans and gods features hardly any humans at all: it is the Codex-style narrative of the Sacrifice of the Baby Jaguar and its companion, the conjuring of the Old God by the Snake Lady (MacLeod 2021:173-221). The core themes are the cycle of transmuted infant sacrifice and rebirth of the Old God jointly with the rains and arboreal fecundity; the latter appear as infants embodying *tzin* 'sustenance.' The occasional inclusion of an excised heart in an incensario reminded the vase's ancient viewer what sustained the world order.

One text which dramatically entangles the themes of warfare and divine sustenance is Monument 6 of Tortuguero (Gronemeyer and MacLeod 2010). It is a pure distillation of the three pillars of royal authority and power: lineage history, agricultural fecundity, and

precious offerings—especially the blood of war captives—to Balun Yokte' K'uh, the paramount god of war and transition and an underworld aspect of the Sun God. This god is mentioned as a coeval agent of the campaign of the Palenque Hieroglyphic Stairway and the West Tablet of the Inscriptions. On Tortuguero 6 this god is to be the recipient of the new temple housing the monument, with the commemoration to be re-enacted at the turn of the thirteenth *bak'tun* in December, 2012. The discourse of Monument Six reveals nested relationships between the ancestors of the lineage, its patron gods, the gods of the cycles who set "eight thousand bak'tuns" in order—and the belligerent living king, who indulged equally the "piling of skulls, the pooling of blood" and the heaping up of "force and breath" in the heavenly reservoir of his forebears. These pillars are symbiotic; none exists without the others.

As we have seen, nowhere is the formality and reverence attached to '*e'tej* 'sacred service' more evident than at Palenque. This city's sculptural expression of divine reciprocity is without parallel. The temples of the Group of the Cross (Stuart 2006) are urban analogues of these three pillars of Classic Maya ritual. Complex and sharing a common mythological if uncertain historical ancestry, the panels of Palenque and Tortuguero encapsulate these imperatives in both text and iconography as they bind the current king to the historical dynasty, to the ancestors and the land, and to the patron gods. The Tablet of the Cross contains interlocking commensurations of vast calendric and ritual cycles (Lounsbury 1976) and features the themes of dynastic charter and the resurrection of ancestors as deities who continue to direct the actions of living heirs. The Tablet of the Foliated Cross, with its central motif of a maize plant whose ears are heads of the Maize God, emphasizes the themes of the life-giving Earth: water, maize, agricultural fecundity, and metaphysical sustenance (*k'awil*). The Temple of the Sun is the lowest of the three, within whose sanctuary the Jaguar God of the Underworld—the nocturnal sun and the Old Fire God—and symbols of war are manifest. Stuart states:

"The theme is very different from the other two temples, with their respective emphases on ancestral regeneration and agricultural fertility. But taken together we see that warfare adds a basic element to the tripartite categorization of royal authority. Power derives from ancestry, from the forces of the fertile earth, and also from the duty to conduct war" (Stuart 2006:161).

Conclusion

It has seldom been necessary in Maya epigraphy to backtrack through decades of both valid and errant assumptions, including one's own, in order to establish the veracity and productivity of a reading. But this set of signs has presented a singular challenge to our understanding of script anomalies as well as a window onto

ancient scribal strategies for negotiating them. Not least, it has required a review of our collective methodology as we all persisted in a futile quest for a single term to explain all spelling variants.

Following a collaboration extending over five years, the authors' decision to write this essay obligated a firm commitment to a short list of sequential and interdependent knowns amid a quagmire of unknowns. The first of these—for which there was no alternative and which proscribed **TE'** as its reading—was a grammatical form which explained (**ye-**)T78:514 on the Early Classic lintels at Yaxchilan without recourse to underspellings or embedded ergatives. This datum led to the next, which was that these terms throughout the Classic Period ended in <-ej>. Another was to recognize the Dzibanche' **ya**-initial spellings as the earlier form of a cognate etymon which underwent vowel assimilation via a known process in Ch'olan. Of those reflecting a shift from [a] to [e] in initial position, only two were available. We chose the "work, authority" candidate for several reasons—the foremost being the syntax and semantics of the early lintels and then of all other contexts—while giving the 'companion'/'to attend' term due consideration and rejecting it because it denies agency to the *de facto* agents of these events.

Once we were certain of (**ye-**)T78:514(-**je**) as *y-e'tej* 'sacred service' in all Classic contexts, we identified its only equivalent **ye**-T78:513-**je** *y-e'tej*; thereafter the other spellings had to be a term which was <te'>-final. This led to *y-ehl-te'* 'his battle-trial.'

The T78:514 **E'TEJ** logogram was already an archaic conflation at first appearance in the Early Classic. It incorporated a derivation no longer productive in Epigraphic Mayan, yet it continued to function as a potent venerable anachronism encoding a charter between men and gods which could not be superseded by the common *u-kabij* agency expression. For reasons signaling a shift in the politics of reciprocity, Late Classic scribes at Yaxchilan first reconstituted a syllabic equivalent, then carefully shuffled the agent of 'sacred service' from captive to king, then elected and promoted a near-homophonic innovation *y-ehl-te'* 'his battle trial' whose agent was exclusively the king. This superseded **E'TEJ** and its syllabic equivalent in substitutions bemusing to epigraphers, and became the high-status term in captive-taking texts at that city and elsewhere. Meanwhile, the conservative and deity-focused (*y*)-*e'tej* 'sacred service' continued in use at Palenque, accoutred in its orthodox associations with kings and gods as its agents.

The Classic Period might on one level be interpreted as an incessant struggle between humans and gods in which the intermediaries were the rulers; these in the early phase conceded most authority and awe to the gods. *A(b)'tej*—later *e'tej*—originated archaically in Epigraphic Mayan before its first appearance in the texts known to scholars. In these earliest texts, the kings

appealed the hearts of the gods with human sacrifice but credited the captives with their fundamental roles in it. We may assume that kings also engaged in autosacrifice on these occasions, and thus directly shared the obligation of 'sacred service' as on Yaxchilan Hieroglyphic Stairway 1.

The paramount god of Palenque (GI) shaped the earth from the body and blood of the mythical caiman; this act was termed *y-e'tej* 'his sacred service.' While the new king assumed the identity of this god at his accession and uniquely termed himself *y-ajaw e'tej k'inich* 'sacred-service lord of the Sun God' he arranged for the construction of a temple and an exquisite exemplar of sculpture to venerate this god and his archaic act of world-renewal, but also to reinforce the legitimacy of his own bloodline.

Over centuries, as reflected in the abundant archaeological evidence for the self-obsession of Maya elites in competition with one another for labor resources, grand temples, and high-status goods, the power and glory of the gods was gradually appropriated by the kings. We propose that this shift—with the expected lag in a highly conservative and formal language—led to the promotion of *y-ehl-te'*—a term highlighting the achievements of the king among the nobles and his displays before the common people in the forecourt of the temple pyramid. As we understand it, the battle-trial itself was a lifelong burden assigned to the king by the gods via the ancestors.

We might not have had to elaborate every known context for both terms and to position them in their local and regional political history, but in doing so, we came to appreciate the nuances of their use, the implications of networks of friendship and enmity which they shared, gaining clarity regarding their separate paths through the Classic with only rare crossover. We also wished to share the historical and cultural yield of the two proposals within the dynamic relations between polities, between kings and gods, and in the realm of gods alone. Being storytellers at heart, we also wanted to tell a good story—one which Maya archaeologists, epigraphers, linguists, other scholars and aficionados alike might enjoy. This is our *e'tej* in that regard.

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Bonampak Lintel 1. Rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson.