

Ritual and History in the Stucco Inscription from Temple XIX at Palenque

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Before 1999, Temple XIX drew little attention from archaeologists and visitors to Palenque. Its location within the larger architectural complex of the Cross Group, and its orientation facing directly toward the imposing Temple of the Cross, gave some indication that it was an important building, but as a fallen structure nothing more could be said of its date or significance. Thanks to the recent efforts of the Proyecto de las Cruces, under the auspices of INAH and PARI, Temple XIX's anonymity has completely changed. With its four important inscribed monuments, this building can now be appreciated as one of the major ritual structures of the ancient city.

This paper examines one of Temple XIX's inscriptions, the text on the stucco panel decorating the east side of the temple's interior central pier (Figure 1).¹ The immense modeled and polychrome sculpture depicts a striding figure clad in a very unusual costume. The theatrical dress is designed as a representation of a huge bird's head that seems to consume the wearer, whose upper body emerges from the open beak. The stone panel attached to the front of the very same pier depicts the Palenque ruler K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb' in a similar bird head costume showing some differences in detail.

A text of sixteen hieroglyphs accompanies the stucco portrait (Figure 2), each glyph painted dark blue against a red background. The inscription is difficult to read in places, yet enough is understandable to reveal several new insights into the ritualism and dynastic history of Late Classic Palenque.

The Three Dates

Three Calendar Round dates appear in the inscription, each accompanied by a short verbal statement (Figure 3). No dis-

tance numbers connect the dates, but they can nevertheless be securely placed in the Long Count as:

A1: 9.13.17.9.0 3 Ajaw 3 Yaxk'in

B2: 9.14.0.0.0 6 Ajaw 13 Muwan

C2: 9.14.2.9.0 9 Ajaw 18 Tzek

The middle of these can only be the K'atun ending 9.14.0.0.0, as confirmed by the glyph which follows at C1, **CHUM-TU:N-ni** or *chum-tu:n*, "stone-seating." Such expressions are used throughout texts at Palenque, Pomona and some neighboring sites to describe the initiation of a series of twenty ritual stones that symbolized the twenty units of the K'atun period (Stuart 1996). The Period Ending in the second date therefore serves as a welcome anchor for the placement of the other two dates in the Long Count, as given above.

Significantly, all three dates are earlier than most others cited in Temple XIX's inscriptions. The building's dedication ceremony — what the Maya called an *och k'ak'* or "fire entering" — was on 9.15.2.7.16 9 Kib' 19 K'ayab', recorded in the three other texts of the temple. The building therefore dates to nearly twenty years after the latest of the three dates in the stucco inscription. Evidently, the stucco panel commemorates times and events that occurred significantly before it was made. It is difficult to know at present if the stucco panel was produced at the time of the temple's dedication or, alternatively, was a somewhat later addition.

A simple but interesting numerological pattern links all three dates. Taken in sequence, each is separated by the same interval of 2.9.0, or 900 days. While never noticed before as a meaningful subdivision in Classic Maya time reckoning, 2.9.0 is a "half hotun," the exact midpoint within the ritually important span of five Tuns (5.0.0). Exactly five

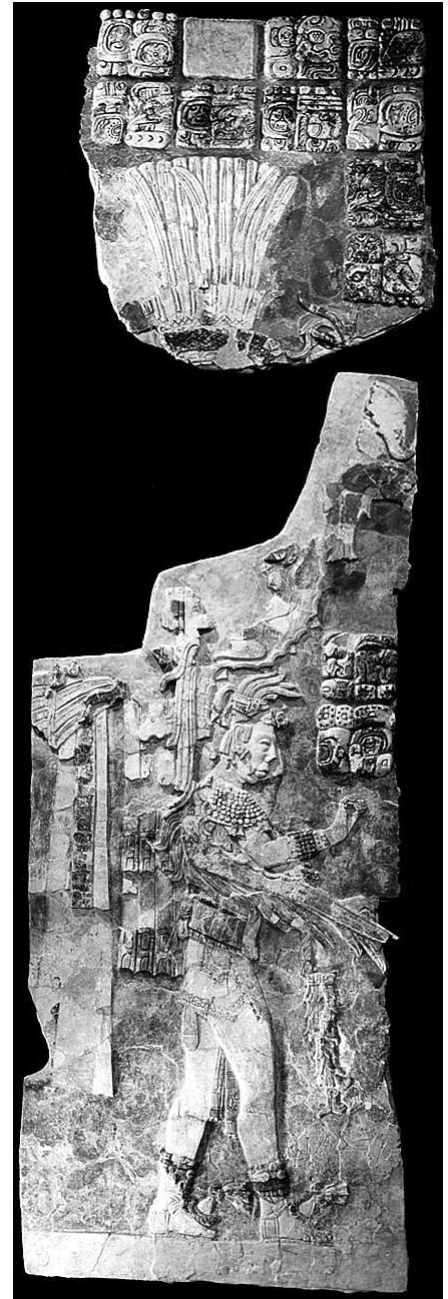


Figure 1. General view of the Temple XIX stucco panel (photograph by Mark Van Stone/Mesoweb).

Tuns thus separate the initial and final date. More of this will be discussed as we consider the details of the narrative and the glyphs within the text.

Notes on the Inscription

The opening date 3 Ajaw 3 Yaxk'in precedes an unusual verb or predicate at B1. The glyph block is partially lost, but the upper left corner displays a man's head turned upward, and enough details are

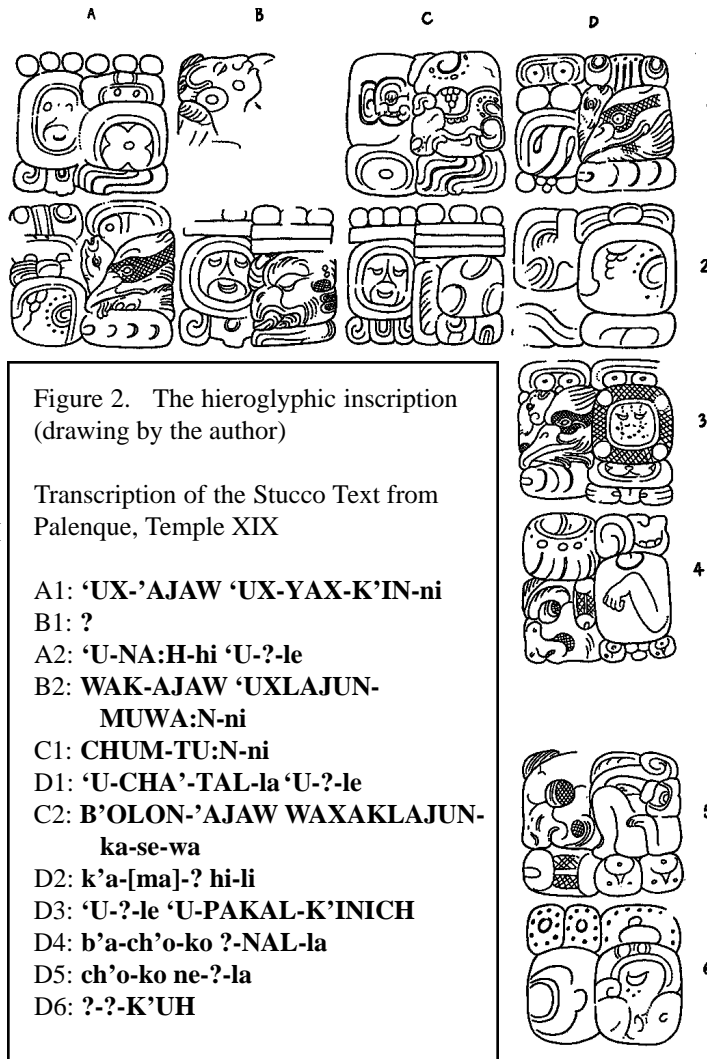
left to indicate the presence of a feathered wing a little below. Full examples of this odd “bird man” are attested in other inscriptions from Palenque, Tonina and possibly Tikal, but its reading remains problematic. One comes from the fragment of a stone slab, possibly a throne or sarcophagus lid, found on Temple XXI at Palenque (Schele and Mathews 1979: no. 553) (Figure 4a). Its incomplete text shows only the end of a Supplementary Series and “3 Yaxk’in,” followed by the bird man glyph. Given the month and verb combination, the Temple XXI text very likely recorded the same date we find in Temple XIX, 9.13.17.9.0 3 Ajaw 3 Yaxk’in.

The full-figure bird man also occurs as a verb or predicate in two Tonina inscriptions. Monument 141 cites it in connection with the date 9.13.7.9.0 4 Ajaw 13 Ch’en (Figure 4b). It stands alone without any other verb or protagonist, suggesting that it somehow describes some general characteristic of the date, rather than an action of any kind. Another Tonina stela (as yet undesignated) bears the date 9.14.12.9.0 8 Ajaw 8 Zip on its base, once more with the bird man glyph.² Here it follows a standard half-period glyph (*‘u-tanlam-il*), indicating that the Maya themselves viewed the date as the midpoint of the 5 Tun period, as already described.

Grouping the bird man references from Palenque and Tonina, we find that the dates fall into a possible pattern:

- 9.13.7.9.0 4 Ajaw 13 Ch’en/
TNA: M.141
- 9.13.17.9.0 3 Ajaw 3 Yaxk’in/
PAL: T.XIX stucco; T. XXI slab
- 9.14.12.9.0 8 Ajaw 8 Zip/
TNA: undesignated

Precisely ten Tuns (10.0.0) separate the first and second date, and fifteen Tuns (15.0.0) fall between the second and third. The common denominator is five Tuns, and all the dates again fall on the midpoints (2.9.0, 7.9.0, 12.9.0, and



17.9.0) of the four standard hotun subdivisions of the K’atun. It seems, then, that the bird man marks a previously unknown ritual or calendar cycle. It is interesting, however, that the last date in the stucco text from Temple XIX, 9.14.2.9.0, fell on the same kind of station, but that no bird man glyph accompanies that statement.

The third glyph of the stucco text (A2) follows the bird man and presumably provides more specific information about the opening date. Its first part is ‘U-NAH-hi, ‘u-nah, “(it is) his/her/its first.” The second half of A2 is also prefixed by ‘U- (though a different sign variant) before an intriguing main sign showing a crested bird consuming a fish. The water bird sign has no known reading, but the darkened banding around the eye strongly suggests its species identification as a blue heron, or *Ardea herodias* (Figure 5). This is followed in turn by the suffix -le.

Jumping ahead somewhat, we will come to find two other examples of the same ‘U-“heron”-le glyph in this inscription (at D1b and D3a) - a remarkable fact considering that this represents one quarter of the entire text. Each appears in direct association with one of the three dates, and it is probably no coincidence that these dates are all connected numerologically. With the ‘u-nah “first” modifier beforehand, I suspect that ‘u-“heron”-le can be analyzed as a noun derived from an intransitive verb (“it is his first ‘x’-ing”).

Whatever action the heron records, it is the key topic of the inscription. Unfortunately, its decipherment is unlikely until more examples can be found; only one other case of the glyph is known, also from Temple XIX at Palenque (Figure 6). There, on the inscribed platform, the heron occurs in the name caption of a seated noble, but without any of the affixation seen in the stucco inscription. It occupies a very different syntactic position, therefore, as a title or personal reference.

The heron sign, with its image of the bird taking a fish in its beak, may be connected to the distinctive costume worn in the scene below. Although damaged and incomplete, the huge outfit worn by the walking male figure represents a kind of water bird, as indicated by the fish dangling from the upper hooked beak. (The same attire is found on the main stone panel of the same pier, but shown in front-view.) But there are a few different details visible in this bird head to suggest it is not the blue heron of the glyphs above, but rather a species of cormorant (*mat*) commonly found as the main sign of the toponym *Matawil* or *Matwil*, so

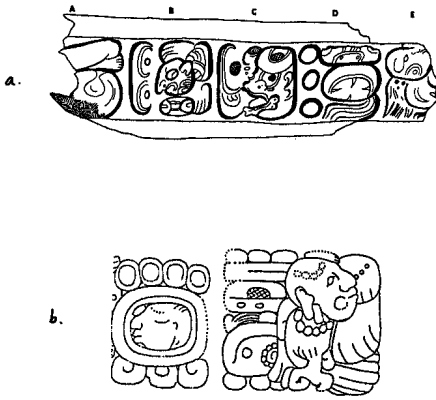


Figure 4. “Bird man” glyphs from Palenque and Tonina: (a) from a slab from Temple XX at Palenque (drawing by Linda Schele), and (b) from Tonina, Monument 141 (drawing by Peter Mathews).

often cited in Palenque’s inscriptions.³ The heavily lidded eyes (visible on the stone panel’s view) and the teeth in the beak are distinctive characteristics of cormorants in Maya art, and not at all like the details of the heron. I believe that the ritual costume is somehow a reference to Matwil, the place of Palenque’s mythological origins, as will be discussed further in the forthcoming study of the other Temple XIX monuments.

The stucco text continues with the second date at B2, 9.14.0.0.0 6 Ajaw 13 Muwan, with its accompanying statement of a *chum tu:n*, or “stone seating.” Reading on to D1, we find that this day saw the second of the three “heron events.” The heron glyph itself carries the ‘U- and -le affixes, and the preceding ordinal modifier ‘U-2-TAL-*la*, for ‘*u-cha’-tal*, “the second...”. As with the initial section, this second sentence or passage ends abruptly without any subject named.

Block C2 is the third of the evenly

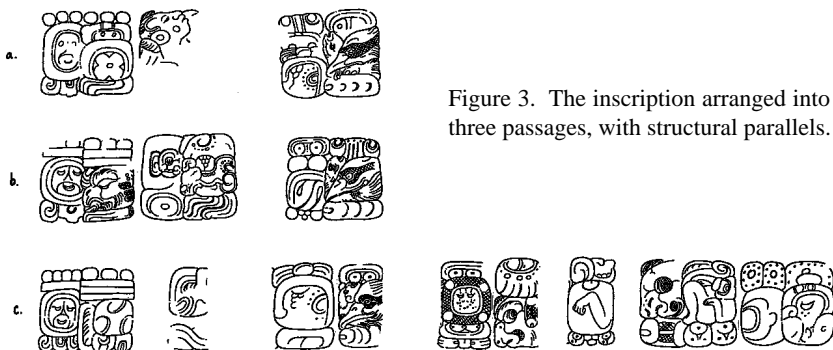


Figure 3. The inscription arranged into three passages, with structural parallels.

spaced dates, 9 Ajaw 18 Tzek, or 9.14.2.9.0. The accompanying verb phrase at D2a is a slightly damaged glyph, consisting of the sign *k’a*, a second missing element, and a sign resembling a twisted or looped cord (I will refer to it as the “cord” sign simply as a term of reference). Enough of the glyph survives to allow reconstructing it as *k’a-ma*—“cord,” an important event expression cited in two other inscriptions of Temple XIX (Figure 7b). The first two signs spell the transitive root *k’am*, “to take or receive something,” and the cord or rope suffix likely indicates the object of the verb. Such an unmarked verbal form, stripped of temporal and person markers, seems a nominalized form similar in structure to other impersonal events such as *chum tu:n*, “stone seating,” *och k’ak’*, “fire entering” and *k’al tu:n*, “stone binding.” Like the bird man and *chum tu:n* verbs of the initial two passages, “cord taking” (?) seems to serve here as a general descriptive term for the date, as in “9 Ajaw 18 Tzek (is) the rope taking.”

Another record of the *k’am*—“cord” event appears in a block from the Temple XVIII stucco inscription, but spelled somewhat differently (Figure 7c). Here *k’am* is the familiar “ajaw-in-hand” logograph, replacing the *k’a-ma* syllables of other examples. Using a pictographic convention, the scribe has placed the rope-like element, the direct object, within the hand, much as we find in common spellings of the “God K-in-hand” accession glyph read *k’am k’awil*, or “the K’awil taking.”

The “rope” sign somewhat resembles the “figure eight” logograph **TAL**, but it is

likely to be different, being open at one end. This sign appears elsewhere in Maya texts, but it is rare and its reading still seems difficult to establish. Perhaps its best-known usage before now was in the spelling of a name of a particular serpent *way* (animal co-essence) shown on some Classic ceramics where it refers to the draping and braided snake “collar” worn by a fantastic deer (Schele 1990; Nahm and Grube 1994: 693). A similarly twisted cloth adornment is worn around the neck of two figures on the platform of Temple XIX (see Figure 6), and also on the younger (shorter) Kan B’ahlam II portrayed on the main tablets of the

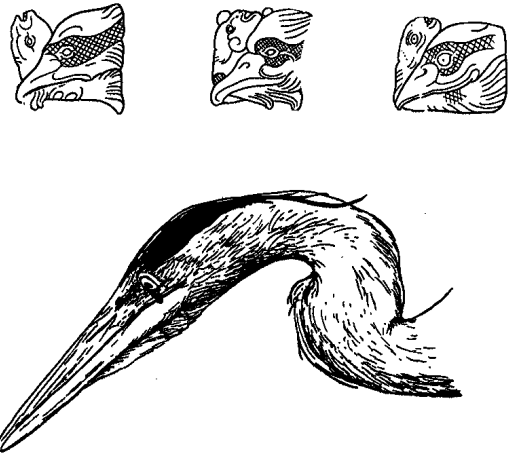


Figure 5. Water bird signs from the stucco inscription compared to the blue heron, *Ardea herodias*. Subtle differences among the bird glyphs may be due to different artisans who crafted the individual glyphs (drawings by the author).

Cross Group. It is likely that the hieroglyphic expression *k’am* and “twisted cord” refers to the wearing of this looped costume device.

The spelling *k’a-ma* raises an important issue about linguistic variation in the Classic inscriptions. We are accustomed to reading this “receive” verb in its expected Ch’olan form *ch’am*, which has for several years been the more established value of the “ajaw-in-hand.” This was based originally on an example from Panel 2 from Piedras Negras, where the logograph takes the prefix **ch’a-** and the suffix **-ma** as phonetic complements, clearly indicating the Ch’olan pronunciation. *K’am*, however, is the Yucatekan cognate. The situation is not unique, for Palenque is unusual for its occasional use



Figure 6. Left portrait on the Temple XIX platform, west panel (from a preliminary drawing by the author)

of Yucatekan spellings in place of expected Ch'olan forms. Other examples include **zu-ku** for *zukul*, “elder brother” (elsewhere spelled as Ch'olan **za-ku**, *zakun*) and **ka-b'a** for *kab'*, “earth” (in Ch'olan this would be *chab'*). These words alone do not indicate that Palenque was a Yucatekan site, for the overwhelming phonological and morphological patterns in Palenque's inscriptions are decidedly Ch'olan (Houston, Robertson and Stuart, in press). Rather, such spellings are best seen as subtle indications of close language contact between Ch'olan and Yucatekan speakers in the northwest lowlands during Classic times, if not earlier. The same connection is reflected in Chontal, a Ch'olan language, where “earth” is *kab'* instead of *chab'* (Kaufman and Norman 1984), exactly as indicated in Palenque's texts.

Returning to the stucco text, the second portion of block D2 is **hi-li**, which precedes the third and final example of the heron glyph with its familiar affixes, at D3. The preceding passages have already talked of the “first” and “second”

instances of this heron event or action, and it seems that **hi-li** here is somehow parallel to those ordinal numbers (see Figure 3). Significantly, *hil* is an intransitive root in Ch'olan Mayan languages meaning “to end, rest, finish” (Kaufman and Norman 1983), and in this setting it probably refers to the “ending” or “resting” of the three-stage ritual process involving the “heron” action. In the stucco inscription from Palenque, it would appear that the act of “cord taking” saw also the “resting” of the ceremonial cycle tied to the half-hotun interval of 2.9.0.

Following the last of the heron glyphs is the first personal name of the stucco inscription, written **'U-PAKAL-K'INICH** *'Upakal K'inich*, “The Sun God's Shield.” The name takes the title **b'a-ch'o-ko**, for *B'a(h) Ch'ok*, here meaning “Principal Heir.” Although this person is not among the familiar characters in Palenque's history, recent

suggestions by Martin (1998) and Bernal Romero (1999) have convincingly shown that *'Upakal K'inich* is the name of a lord who eventually ruled at Palenque under the royal name *'Upakal K'inich Janahb' Pakal* (Figure 8). Being the only name in the stucco text, we must conclude that the portrait on the stucco pier is *'Upakal K'inich* as the heir apparent, shown before assuming the throne.

This ruler remains very obscure, documented only from a tablet fragment from the Palace and in the so-called “K'an Tok Panel” excavated from Group XVI. No accession date is known for *'Upakal K'inich*, but he was in office on 9.15.10.10.13 8 Ben 16 Kumk'u, a date cited on the K'an Tok panel for the accession of a junior lord under the auspices of the Palenque king (Bernal Romero 1999).⁴ This falls only a few years after the last known date from Temple XIX, 9.15.5.0.0, when *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb'* celebrated the

Period Ending. Evidently *'Upakal K'inich Janahb' Pakal* succeeded *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb'* as king at some point between these two dates.

The title *B'ah Ch'ok* shows us that *'Upakal K'inich* was considered the heir to Palenque's throne, but it is difficult to interpret this given the final date cited in the stucco inscription. 9.14.2.9.0 9 Ajaw 18 Tzek fell within the reign of *K'inich K'an Joy Chitam*, when that king was nearing seventy years of age. The man who would eventually take the name *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb'* was in his mid-thirties at this time, and would assume the throne about eight years later. It is therefore difficult to see how *Upakal K'inich* could be named as a *B'ah Ch'ok* at a time when his own predecessor in office still had not yet assumed the throne. It instead seems likely that *Upakal K'inich* was the “Principal Heir” during the reign of *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb'*, when the text was written and produced. We know the three dates on the stucco panel record retrospective history, but the *B'ah Ch'ok* title is probably to be considered “contemporary” with regard to the stucco panel's later composition. It is reasonable to suppose that *Upakal K'inich* was the first son of *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb'*, and the elder brother (or at least half-brother) of *K'inich K'uk' B'ahlam*. *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb'* was thirty-six at the time of the last date and ceremony recorded in the stucco text, and if *'Upakal K'inich* was indeed his son, he must have been no older than an adolescent. The scale of the portrait perhaps indicates his young age, for it is noticeably smaller than the

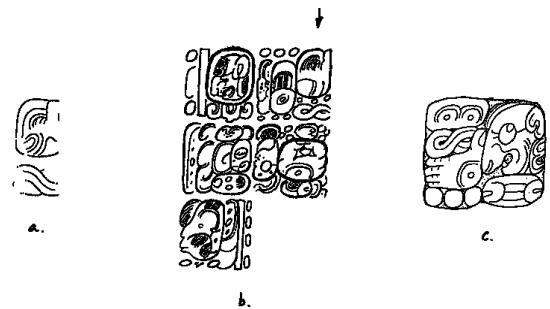


Figure 7. “Cord-taking(?)” events at Palenque: (a) from the stucco text, (b) from the inscription on the Temple XIX platform, blocks E2-E4 (drawings by the author), (c) a stucco block from Temple XVIII (drawing by Linda Schele).

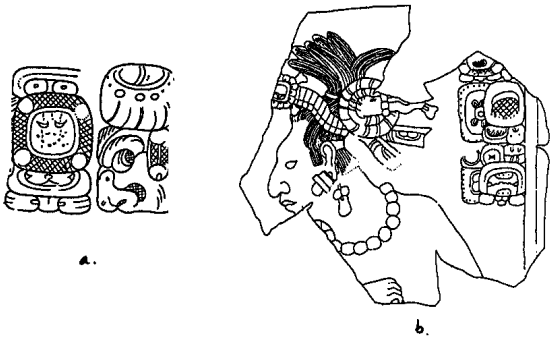


Figure 8. Two citations of the ruler 'Upakal K'inich Janhab' Pakal: (a) from the Temple XIX stucco text, and (b) on a fragmentary panel from the Palace (drawing by Linda Schele)

image of the standing ruler depicted on the pier's stone panel.

Back now to the stucco inscription. In the second half of block D4 is a familiar glyph with a main sign representing a left arm, ending with **-NAL-la**. A **yi-** prefix is found on other examples of this "arm" glyph, sometimes infixed into the neck area of the main sign, as may be case here. The glyph customarily intercedes between two names, the second often being a god's designation, and it seems to be some sort of possessed noun or "relationship" glyph (Figure 9).

The environment of the arm glyph, along with the **yi-** prefix and **-NAL** ending, raise the possibility that it is a variant of *y-ichnal*, "together with, in the company of," but on closer review this seems a problematic connection. The arm seems more thematically restricted than the widespread *y-ichnal*, for it regularly appears after the names of children or young people. For example, on the jamb inscription of Temple XVIII (Figure 9b) it follows the pre-accession name of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb' as a boy, and on the Palace Tablet it follows the youth name of the preceding king, K'inich K'an Joy Chitam (Figure 9c). In both instances the event is a youth's ceremony perhaps called *k'al may*, "hoof binding." The Temple XIX example provides a third case from Palenque where the arm relationship glyph appears with youth or pre-accession rites. It is probably no coincidence that the arm sign is visually similar to the pose of infants in Maya art and iconography (Figure 9d), as we see in the portrait name of GII of the Palenque Triad, given later in block D5.⁵

Despite such contextual and visual clues, it is difficult to establish a viable reading of the arm relationship glyph, if it is in fact distinct from *y-ichnal*. In the cases from Palenque and elsewhere, the name written after the arm expression is of a god or a lord of higher rank than the youthful protagonist, suggesting that, like *y-ichnal*, the arm glyph helps to specify who sanctioned, oversaw or attended to the ritual concerned.

The name after the arm glyph in the stucco inscription is, as noted, GII of the Palenque Triad (D5). Like 'Upakal K'inich, GII bears the designation **ch'o-ko**, *ch'ok*, "young one," presumably because of his infant aspect. The inscription closes at D6 with a "title" or designation for GII based on the sign **K'UH**, "god," with two prefixed signs of unknown value. The second of these prefixes, the larger of the two, resembles Maya representations of an eye, so perhaps the title designated GII as the "?-eyed god." The singling-out of GII as the divine participant in, or overseer of, the final of the "heron" events is extremely interesting, but once more not easy to explain.

Conclusions and Half-Formed Thoughts

In summary, the stucco inscription relates a narrative of three evenly spaced rituals, the "first," "second," and "last" of a series spanning five years. All three events are described by a heron sign,

which is likely to be related conceptually to the water bird costume worn by the protagonist, 'Upakal K'inich. The dates of the three rituals are each spaced 2.9.0 (900 days) apart, and fall over two decades before the dedication date of Temple XIX. They are therefore retrospective records of a specific ritual cycle involving the would-be heir to the throne, possibly the first son of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb', who came to rule sometime after his father's death and before the accession of his younger brother, K'inich K'uk' B'ahlam. The deity GII has some involvement with these rituals, but it is difficult to know in what capacity. The last of the heron events also involves a curious rite

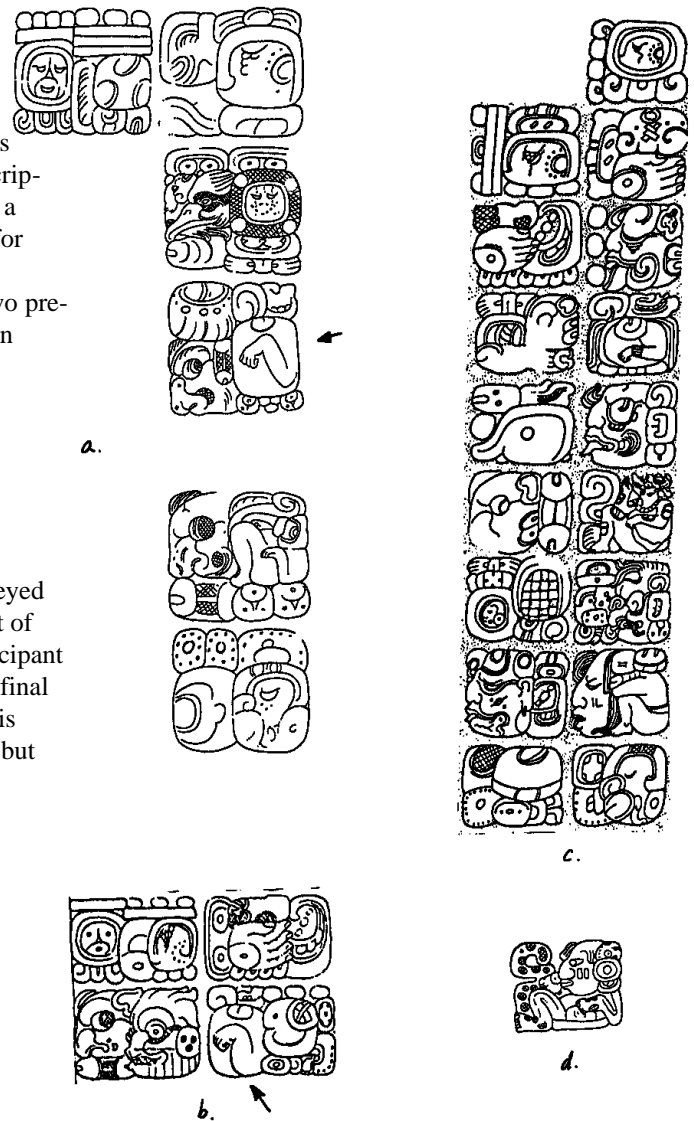


Figure 9. The "arm" relationship glyph with youths' names: (a) from the Temple XIX stucco text, (b) from the Temple XVIII jams, and (c) from the Palace Tablet (drawing by Linda Schele); (d) a "jaguar baby" glyph from Tikal, Stela 29.

described as something like “cord taking,” an event mentioned in another text from Temple XIX in connection with another date, 9.15.2.9.0 7 Ajaw 3 Wayeb’, precisely one K’atun later.

I am inclined to see the glyphs that immediately follow the first and last dates in this inscription - the bird man verb and “cord taking” - as structural partners to the “stone seating” glyph used simply to describe the calendrical significance of the middle date. All would serve like-in-kind roles as descriptions of stations within the K’atun period, like the far more common and familiar “hotun” marker glyphs used to name the quarters of the K’atun. The bird man is found in three cases at Palenque and Tonina to mark dates that are divisible by 1/8 portions of the K’atun. The two known instances of “cord taking” events (if this is the true reading) fall on dates that fall on 2.9.0, or the initial 1/8 within a K’atun. It is possible that “cord taking” therefore describes a specific rite associated with the first 900 days of a K’atun, but this remains to be established.

At any rate, there is now good reason to believe that the Maya recognized the 1/8th subdivisions of the K’atun as ritually significant, even if these were not so routinely commemorated in texts throughout the Maya area. Joel Skidmore (personal communication, 2000) has recently pointed out to me an example that proves the point very well. The east tablet of the Temple of the Inscriptions cites the Calendar Round 13 Ajaw 18 Mak (M7, N7), corresponding to 9.8.17.9.0, or 7/8ths of the K’atun. The text does not mention any event for this date; instead, it is a self-evident sort of Period Ending that provides a chronological anchor for the event recorded in the next blocks, namely Palenque’s conquest at the hands of Calakmul on 9.8.17.15.14.

Interestingly, Stela J of Copan presents a list of individual Tuns within a K’atun period, each accompanied by its proper “designation.” Three of these terms describe actions or rituals involving the word *ch’am* or *k’am*, “take, receive,” perhaps strengthening the notion that “cord taking” event is a similar sort of term used to designate or describe a set period or sub-division of the K’atun.

The stucco panel must be considered in the context of “pre-accession” rituals involving young kings-to-be, for the “cord taking” event recorded in the Temple XIX stucco seems to concern young or yet to be established rulers. We cannot know ‘Upakal K’inich’s age at the time of the ritual cycle commemorated (his birth date is unknown), yet there are important connections to be drawn between the dates and events of the stucco pier and other known rituals involving youngsters. We have already seen, for example, that the “cord” sign may specifically refer to the looped, almost braid-like cloth bands depicted in the costume

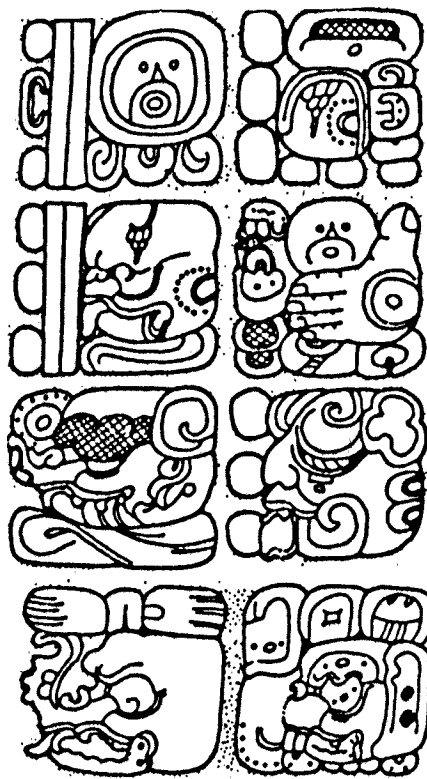


Figure 10. Record of a youth ceremony involving the future king K’inich K’an Joy Chitam, from the Palace Tablet at Palenque (drawing by Linda Schele).

of the young K’inich Kan B’ahlam II, as portrayed on the tablets of the Cross Group. The same type of neck ornament can be seen on each of the flanking figures on the west side of the Temple XIX platform, both of whom are named *ch’ok*, “youth, emergent one.” This distinctive element of ritual dress may be associated with youth rituals, therefore.

On the Palace Tablet, we read of a “cord taking” rite involving K’inich K’an Joy

Chitam as a young man, on 9.11.13.0.0 12 Ajaw 3 Ch’en, many years before his accession (Figure 10). Here the event is somewhat different, however, written ‘U-K’AM-wa CHAN-?, or ‘*u-k’am-aw chan ...?*, “he takes the snake ‘cord.’” The combination of CHAN and the “cord” recalls the imagery on the “serpent deer” *way* entity mentioned above, and we can perhaps imagine that the object taken in this ceremony was a snake or snake effigy worn around the heir’s neck, like on the deer figure.

On the Hieroglyphic Jamb of Temple XVIII we read that the young K’inich ‘Ahkal Mo’ Nahb’ participated in a pre-accession event on 9.13.2.9.0 11 Ajaw 18 Yax, when fifteen years of age, nearly three decades before his own accession to office. Most of the associated text in the upper portion of the south jamb is missing, unfortunately, but the date once more is significant, ending in 2.9.0. The final date of the Temple XIX stucco text (9.14.2.9.0) comes one K’atun afterwards. We therefore have two independent records of royal heirs participating in rituals on this chronologically significant station. One wonders if perhaps these less important stations of the K’atun were considered the ritual responsibilities of rulers-in-training.

As noted, the other “cord taking” cited on the Temple XIX platform (9.15.2.9.0) is one K’atun later still. Is it possible, then, that the west panel of the platform, with its “youths” draped in braided cloth, depicts another pre-accession ritual of some sort? This point will have to be considered at another time. For now, it is clear that any effort to understand one of the challenging Temple XIX monuments, be it the stucco panel, the stone panel, or the magnificent platform, must involve a deep awareness of the ritual and history recorded in the others.

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Endnotes

¹ A much longer study encompassing all of the Temple XIX inscriptions is now in preparation, and will be published separately by PARI.

² This small monument was displayed at the Museo Arqueológico de Palenque in June, 1999, as part of a special exhibition organized for the Tercera Mesa Redonda de Palenque. The dates and interpretations given are based on my inspection of the monument at that time.

³ In the Matwil toponym and in personal names, the cormorant sign is read **MAT** (occasionally it is replaced by the syllables **ma-ta**), and the species identification is confirmed by the attested word *mach* in Yukatek for “cormorant” (Hartig 1979). The mythical toponym is spelled in a variety of ways: **MAT-la**, **ma-ta-wi-la**, **ma-ta-wi**, or **ma-MAT-wi-la** (the last from the recently discovered platform text from T. XIX). I cannot at present explain the **-wil** ending.

⁴ The K'an Tok panel records a series of “junior-level” accessions overseen by Palenque kings over the course of several centuries. Bernal Romero (1999) interprets the protagonists as rulers of a subordinate site under Palenque's domain. It is more likely that the accessions pertain to a sub-royal office or position within Palenque's local court society.

⁵ At Piedras Negras, two other examples of the “left arm” relationship glyph seem to be related to young people. On Panel 3, it occurs in the main text in a passage describing an Early Classic ritual that is probably depicted on the accompanying scene. At least one figure, standing behind the ruler, is a young boy. On the shells of Burial 5, the twelve-year old “Lady K'atun” is named beside another example of the “arm” relationship glyph (here a right arm, it seems), which apparently establishes some connection between the girl and a woman named in the next block.