

December 7, 1990

Hieroglyphic Miscellany

The epigraphic observations in these pages are not necessarily linked by any common threads. Rather, they derive from various jottings, old and new, and are simply compiled here with the design to foster more dialogue among all of us. Please feel free to let me know of comments you may have.

- D.S.

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AN ORTHOGRAPHIC CONVENTION FOR DOUBLED SIGNS IN MAYA SCRIPT

Syllabic and logographic spellings in the Maya script often call for doubled signs. We are familiar with many such syllabic combinations (k'u-k'u for *k'uk'*; ma-ma for *mam*; etc.), and on rarer occasions morphemic signs such as u, for *u* "his, her, its," may be doubled within the same glyph block. A simple example might be the combination u-to-k'a / u-pa-ka-la for *u tok' u pakal*, "his flint (and) his shield," where two *u* signs are shown side-by-side. In such morphemic constructions, it is not at all unusual to have a single *u* sign perform the work of two, as in the spelling u-tok'-pakal, where we might conclude that the second *u* sign (before *pakal*) has been dropped for the sake of space. Either this, or that the second *u* is indeed redundant in the spoken language, and in certain contexts need only be present once (herew with essentially the same meaning, "his flint and shield"). Note that a single page of the Chilam Balam of Chumayel contains both the forms *u hol u pop* and *u hol pop*. I would like to know if this differences is a feature of the spoken languages or just an example of scribal economy.

In any event, I propose below an interesting method by which ancient scribes could indicate that a sign is to be read twice without having to render a doubled element, as in k'u-k'u for *k'uk'*. This rather rare feature of the script involves the attachment of two small dots (the number two) to the sign in question, usually on its upper left corner. Here I present all cases of this convention known to me. (Signs used in this way are transliterated using a superscript '2').

1. ka²-wa for ka-ka-wa, *kakaw*



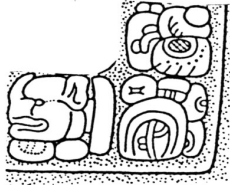
PN: Lut. 3



TIKAL: MT 9



5. bu²-lu-ha' for bu-bu-lu-ha', *bubul ha'* "water bug" (a place name associated with the Lacanha EG)



PN : Lnt. 2



As with *kakaw* and other spellings, the 2 seems optional in this spelling.

6. u²-kab-X for u-kab-u-X



COPAN : SI.



COLLECTIONS: Brussels (Stela from Bonampak region)

This is an important example pointed out to me by Steve Houston. Rather than indicating the doubling of a syllabic element, the "2" here clearly must show that each of the logographic main-signs carry the prefix *u*. This indeed should be expected on the basis of parallel examples.

7. ku²-la for ku-ku-la (?) (a place name at or around Tikal)



TIKAL : SI. 3)

8. u-ne² for u-ne-ne (?), *unen* "child" (a designation for GII of the Palenque Triad)



PALENQUE : TFC

Assuming this interpretation is valid, it is interesting to note that GII is also called a *ch'ok* in other inscriptions. Needless to say, I disagree with our traditional view that this passage from the TFC names GIII and GII. Based on the individual orientation of each tablet, only GII by himself would be expected.

9. wa²-li for wa-wa-li, perhaps a personal name.

KERR
no. 1092



An extremely nice contrast is shown here. Two glyphs on the whole vessel carry the pair of dots, both appearing to be wa²-li. Another glyph on the vessel is wa-wa-li. Given their restricted use here, it seems clear that the dots are not elements of calligraphic decor.

10. tsu²-ha for tsu-tsu-ha, *tsuts-ah* "was completed"



PN: Lut. 3



POMONA

See below for an outline of the main evidence for this particular *tsuts* reading.

11. u-su²-lu for u-su-su-lu (?), *u sus-ul*



CARACOL: Ballcourt marker

I'm not sure how to read the *sus* stem in this context, but it may be related to the ha-a verb of this sentence (note the related glosses for *haa* and *sus* in the *Cordemex*).

Only eleven contexts have been noted, so I cannot say that this orthographic principal for the doubling of signs, if indeed valid, is very widespread. It appears to be most common in the Early Classic, and even then is optional.

One might raise skepticism by claiming that the two dots do in fact represent the number two in some of the examples cited. True enough. Numbers can certainly appear in names of both persons and places. In unique contexts such as no. 4 and 7, above, this is indeed a possibility. Only where comparisons are possible, as in nos. 1, 2, 6 and 9 does the doubling function appear convincing to me.

If this principle for indicating the doubling of signs is borne out by later research, it should prove to be one of the only examples I know of a determinative element the Maya script.

Another that comes to mind is the "mirror" attached to some god names and to "holy" animate objects in general.

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READINGS WITH THE SYLLABLE TSA



Several months ago I considered the possibility that this sign carries the value *tsa* (un-glottalized). The reading was then based upon two independent contexts: (1) the spelling *ma-tsa* at Xcalumkin for *(ah) mats* "doctor sagrado," an appropriate title given that it is paired with *its'at winik* "sabio" as titular references to an individual; and (2) the spelling *tsu-tsa-ha* for *tsuts-ah*, "was finished," in a period ending verb known from the inscriptions of the western lowlands. (The original hand-written notes of these observations are attached).

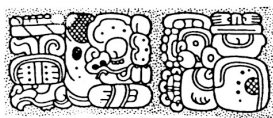
Since then I have come across a few other interesting applications of the *tsa* reading. One appears at Tikal, on Lintel 3 of Temple IV, in a glyph that is part of a rather mysterious verbal phrase that includes the prepositional phrase *ti kan*, "at/for/with the serpent." I assume that this verb, and the final passage as a whole, refers to the scene of the lintel, dominated by the arching serpent over the figure of Ruler B. Associated with this verb phrase is a glyph that may specify or name the snake. Note that below the *kaan* sign of this compound we find the "mirror" element that, rather than being *li*, is often a determinative for gods and other holy beings and objects. The initial elements in this glyph seem to be a conflation of the putative *tsa* syllable and *ba*. I would read this entire compound as *tsa-ba-kan*-[GOD] or *tsab kan*, "rattlesnake." The "rattle" in this instance is animated as a God C/skull/flower.

The same term appears to name a woman mentioned on one of the bones from Burial 116 at Tikal. Again, the components seem to be *tsa*, *ba*, and *kan*, possibly for *tsab kan*.

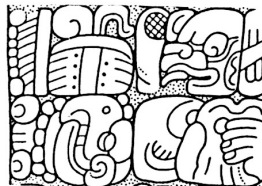
Most importantly, I have found that the *tsa* reading works especially nice in its use to spell the root of the "hand-grasping-fish" verb, *tsak*, "to grasp, to follow, to conjure up, etc.". In an independent effort, Nikolai and Werner have arrived at this reading, based on my earlier *tsa* proposal, and I think all three of us have realized its very interesting implications for the study of shamanistic and sacrificial rituals.

Interestingly, none of us were the first to consider the *tsak* reading. Several weeks ago, while perusing David Kelley's *Deciphering the Maya Script*, I was struck to see that an obscure Dutch epigrapher by the name of de Gruyter had proposed *tsak* as the value of the hand-grasping-fish as long ago as 1946! (See p. 139 and 155). His evidence was based on the use of the sign in the G1 variant of Glyph G, where he noted that *tsak* was "small fish" thus indicating the reading *Bolon Ts'akab*. We can reject

his rationale outright, but I think de Gruyter deserves due credit for being right for the wrong reasons.



YAX : Lint. 25



YAX : Lint. 42

Long before I had considered the value *tsa* for the sign in question, I had noted the substitution indicated by a comparison of the texts from Yaxchilan Lintels 25 and 42. Here the hand-grasping-fish seems to be replaced by *tsa-ku*. Note that the spelling *tsa-ka* appears at Copan presumably as the same term, and that *ka* is a phonetic complement to the hand-grasping-fish in the Casa Colorada inscription from Chichen Itza. The phonetic evidence is therefore straightforward. The related meanings of *tsak* for "to grasp" or "to conjure" are very appropriate for the contexts of the verb, as Nikolai and Werner have shown in their letter (no reason to repeat all that here).

I have one other item of evidence for the *tsa* reading. The sign appears at Pomona and a few other sites in the spelling *tsu-tsa-ha*, for *tsuts-ah*, "was ended...." This is a verb that consistently works with PEs, as, for example, at Pomona, where it precedes "18th Katun." The stem *tsuts* "to finish, close" is widespread, appearing throughout Yucatecan and the greater Tzeltalan languages, including Tojolabal. In Colonial Tzotzil the entries are quite what we would expect for a PE verb:

tzutz, die, finish (work)

etzutz jk'optik our business is concluded.

tzutzeb, completion, end, outcome

tzutzel, end

tzutzes, end, finish

The spelling *tsu-tsa-ha*, if I am right in this interpretation, is very rare. But I think we can expand the application of this reading to the so-called "completion hand" glyph. The telling clue is found at Lacanja in this example.



LACANJA : St. 1

If *tsuts* can be applied to the hand, it may also be used for the inverted bat head with which it seems to freely substitute.

I have never been able to accept the value *hom* for the completion hand, and *tsuts* seems to me to have much more going for it in terms of glyphic evidence.

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POSSIBLE REFERENCES TO TWO INSCRIBED BONE BLOODLETTERS AT
YAXCHILAN

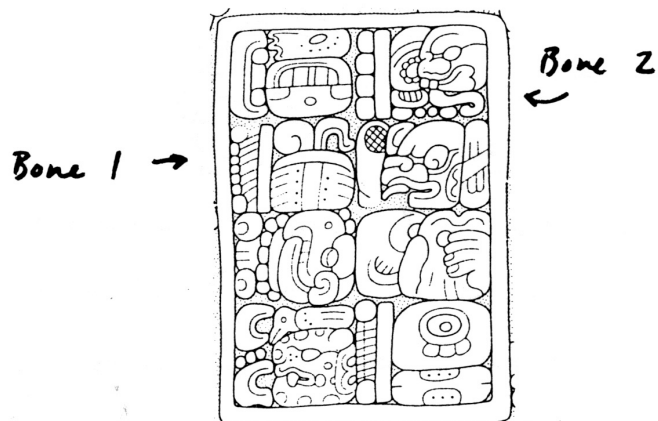
Here I want to continue discussing the parallel passages from Lintels 25 and 42, and propose an interpretation of the signs that precede *u ch'ul hul tsak* ("his holy 'pricker'(?)" in each text.

Both texts make reference to something or someone called *ah-buts'* (or *k'ak'*) *o-chaak-ki*. Given the God B component, I assume that this is a supernatural's name, being some aspect of Chaak. The only other reference to this character appears on one of the inscribed bones excavated in the last decade from Burial 2 of Structure 23 at Yaxchilan. We have good reason to believe that this was the tomb of "Lady Xoc," or *Na K'abal Uk* as she might properly be called. The text from this bone and a ~~sketch~~ photo of its overall appearance is provided here.

Because the head carved at the top of this bone is that of Chaak, I would assume that the Chaak name inscribed on the bone makes some reference to him. The same pattern can be found on other bones, where, for instance, *to-k'a-la ahaw, tok'al ahaw* "flinty lord" refers to the supernatural portrayed on the object (see attached drawing). The *tok'al ahaw* entity often appears on the "scattering" stela of Yaxchilan (St. 1, 4, etc.) between the representations of the solar "ancestor cartouches" above the scene. Appropriately enough, he is shown with a flint forehead (not so clear in the bone, but there I believe). In any event, I merely wish to establish the pattern that some glyphs on these bones actually name them or, more precisely, the gods represented on them.

On Lintel 25 and 42, I would read the parallel passages as "*ah buts' o-chaak* is the holy pricker of..." By short extension, I believe that they are naming the very bone found in the queen's tomb, and that this object was used in the rites depicted on these lintels. *Na' K'abal Uk* herself is portrayed on Lintel 25, but on 42 we see Bird-Jaguar IV and one of his *sahals* taking part in a ritual dance on 9.16.1.2.0, a little over two years after the death of *Na' K'abal Uk*. I initially questioned, then, how Lintel 42 could possibly refer to the the bone found in her tomb, but then I noted that her *muknal* was not "dedicated" until 9.16.4.6.17, as recorded at the end of Lintel 28. Here the event is *och-i buts'* or *och-i k'ak' t-u muknal* ("the smoke/fire entered her tomb..."), suggesting that the tomb was re-opened or finally closed at this late date. We have precedence for such long-term burial rituals at other sites, most notably at Naranjo and Tikal, where they directly refer to the opening of tombs (see attached sheet). I won't go far[^] defend this last point, but it's well worth considering. _{to}

Yet another bone may be mentioned in the Lintel 42 text. Before the *ah buts' o-chaak* name, we find the combination 9-



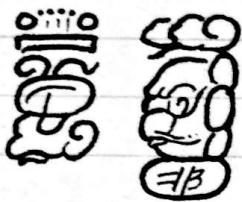
"cauac-skull"-ne?-la. The "cauac-skull" is actually a discrete sign, most often seen in variants of the so-called "macuch" title, which is in turn equivalent to "Batab." This title, in both forms, has had various proposed readings, though the best candidate so far is something like *kalom te'*, referring to a directional tree, and based on a purely syllabic spelling of the glyph at Copan: *ka-lo-ma-te* (I seem to remember discussing this unique spelling in a "Copan note"). How then, does the "cauac-skull" element work in the *kalom te'* title? To answer this, we can return again to the Yaxchilan bones. Another bone seems to take the name 9-ka-la-ne?-la with *chaak-ki*, and I suggest that this is the same as the Lintel 42 glyph that precedes the other bone reference. That is, that we see a substitution of the "cauac-skull," probably read *kal*, by the syllabic combination *ka-la*. This would produce a reading for the more common variant of the "macuch" title as *kal-am-te*, or *kalam te'*. The substitution rests on the assumption that the glyphs on Lintel 42 and the bone are the same, and that, just perhaps, two of the bones that found their way into the Structure 23 tomb were used in the ritual discussed on the lintel.

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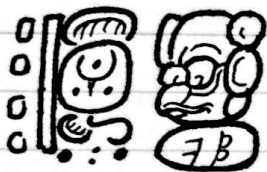
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While once glancing at some photos of the inscribed bones from "Lady Xoc's" tomb at Yaxchilan (in Structure 23, dedicated on 9.16.4.6.17 6 Cabun 10 Zac) I noticed that some of the bones appear to be named. Or more precisely, the deity heads carved on the bones are identified by name.

Three names are most clear:



(A)



(B)



(C)

I interpret the first two (A and B) as deity names because the heads carved on these bones are clearly God B, or Chaac, and his glyph appears as the last element in both examples. The deity head that would correspond to the name at C, above, is clearly not Chaac, and here it can be seen that no Chaac glyph is present.

Something can be said of the identity of the deity portrayed and named on the C bone, however. The glyphs are clearly readable as to-k'a-la ANAW-wa, or tok'al ahaw. Tok' is, of course, "flint," and I see in the photographs of this bone that the upper head of the deity's headdress is marked by a flint representation. A very similar figure appears in the upper registers of Stelae 1, 4, and 6 at Yaxchilan, and I believe it is probably tok'al ahaw as well.

