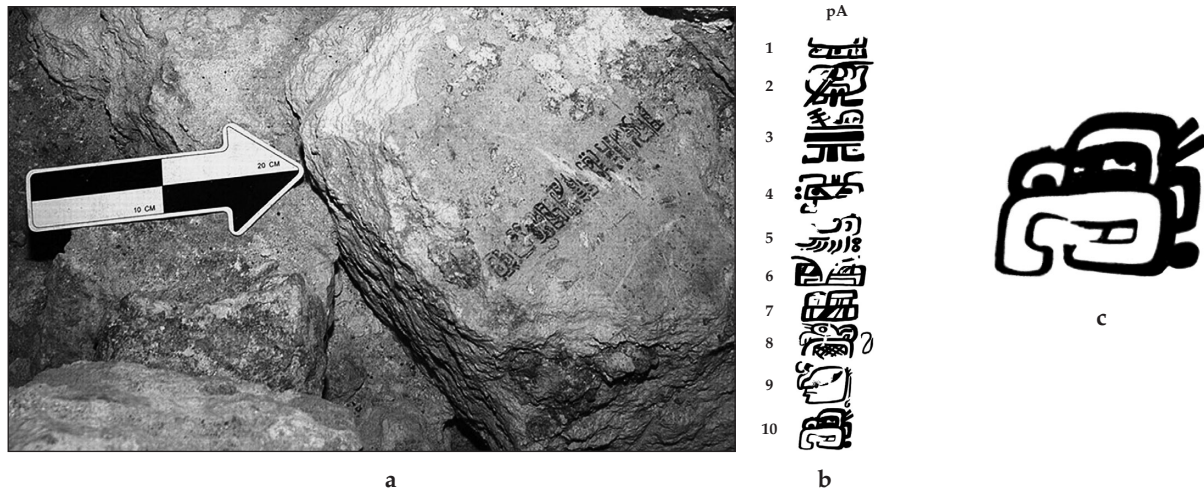




# On a Preclassic Long-Lipped Glyphic Profile

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**Figure 1:** (a) The San Bartolo stone block text in the context where it was found in 2005 by Boris Beltrán (photo by Boris Beltrán, courtesy of William Saturno); (b) the San Bartolo stone block text (modified from drawing by David Stuart in Saturno et al. 2006:Fig. 4); (c) enlarged pA10 glyphic profile.

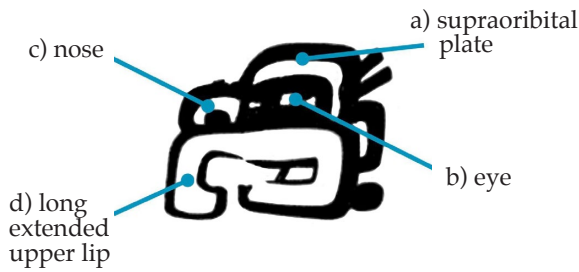
In this note, I would like to call attention to an early glyph and compare its morphology to the graphic characteristics of the long-lipped profile motif often identified as the Principal Bird Deity (see Bardawil 1976). In 2005, a painted stone block was found by archaeologist Boris Beltrán at the site of San Bartolo, Guatemala (Figure 1a), while tunneling into one of the earlier architectural phases of the pyramidal structure known as “Las Pinturas” (see Beltrán 2005; Saturno et al. 2006).<sup>1</sup> The block was part of a dismantled wall that once stood atop the Sub-V platform and was later reused in a subsequent architectural phase (Str. Sub-IV), resulting in the incidental preservation of its column of painted glyphs (Figure 1b). The date of the block, and by extension the text it carries, was established by accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) radiocarbon dating of associated charcoal samples, which conservatively placed the execution of this early inscription to ca. 300 BCE (see Saturno et al. 2006:1281). Glyph pA10 is the last collocation on this partially abraded single-column text (Figure 1c). Here I elaborate on the proposal that this glyphic profile represents another Preclassic example of Bardawil’s Principal Bird

Deity, a “super-natural face with [a] characteristic long extended snout-like upper lip” (Bardawil 1976:195),<sup>2</sup> and will also attempt to elucidate its function within this text.

The long-lipped motif complex has a long history in Maya iconography (e.g., Kidder et al. 1946; Maudsley 1889-1902; Schele 1974; Spinden 1913, to name a few). In his seminal paper, Lawrence W. Bardawil (1976:196) observed that this creature seemed to hold the most prominent hierarchical position of the several avian supernaturals portrayed in Maya iconography, and he coined the term “Principal Bird Deity” (PBD) to refer to it. He went on to note a list of facial components that distinguished this important character: a) a supraorbital plate, b) a supernatural eye, c) a vestigial nose, and d) a long

<sup>1</sup> I have not had the opportunity to inspect the text on the block in person, and thus the proposed interpretations and decipherments have relied primarily on the published drawings by David Stuart (Saturno et al. 2006:Fig. 4).

<sup>2</sup> Independently, Christophe Helmke has also identified this glyphic profile as the supernatural Principal Bird Deity or PBD (see Helmke 2012:106).

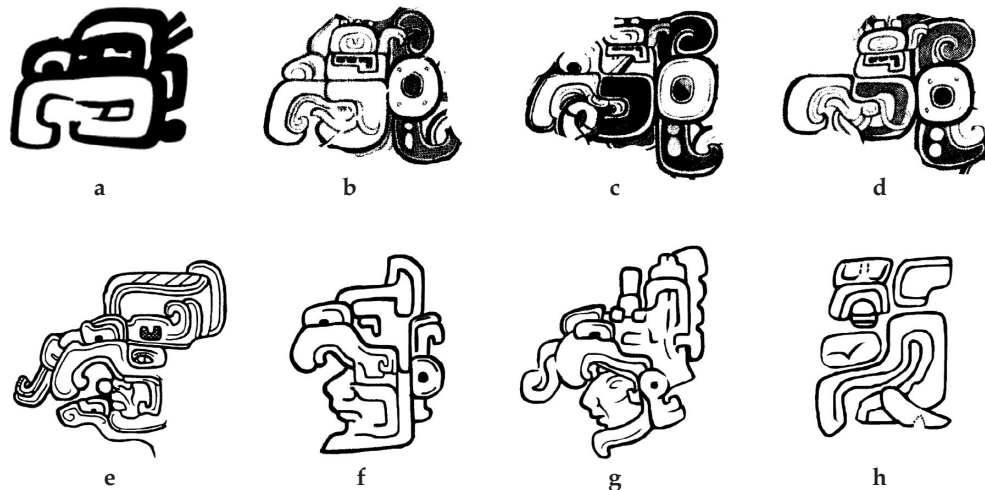


**Figure 2:** Enlarged pA10 glyph showing the diagnostic characteristics of the long-lipped motif as outlined by Bardawil (1976).

extended upper-lip (Bardawil 1976:196). The facial components identified by Bardawil are clearly discernible on pA10 (Figure 2). Its morphology shows a supraorbital plate or forehead enclosing the supernatural eye, a vestigial nose, as well as the single most distinctive and diagnostic feature of this supernatural, a long extended upper lip. Additionally, a side-by-side comparison of pA10 to several well-known contemporary and later depictions of the Principal Bird Deity highlights their graphic similarities (Figures 3 and 4). Most revealing are the heads of the full-figure forms of this avian creature from the West Wall mural at San Bartolo (Figures 3b-d). Apart from the temporal difference of about two centuries—and despite the polychromatic format, greater scale, and more sophisticated and intricate painting technique on the later murals—these portraits are strikingly similar to the glyph pA10 (Figure 3a). This comparison suggests that, on the one hand, stylistic differences between the various long-lipped figures

are matters of regional and temporal iconographic and calligraphic conventions. On the other hand, the striking continuity of these basic features support Bardawil's (1976:200-202) observations that the long-lipped monster is composed of basic elements which characteristically define the motif throughout the different time periods and regions in Mesoamerica, from at least the Middle Preclassic far into the Late Classic and even the Postclassic (see also Taube 1987).

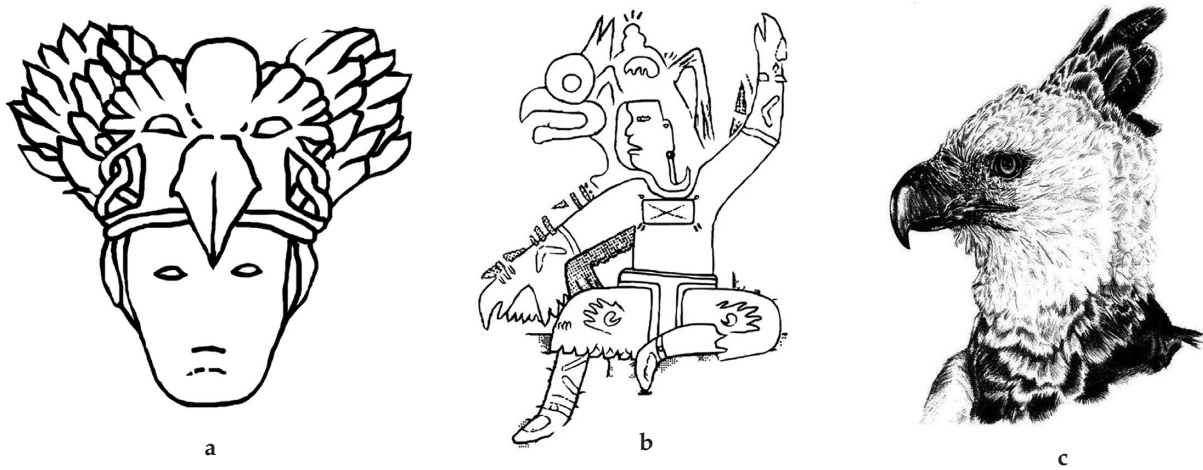
On that account, the avian long-lipped headdresses, masks, pectorals, and belts flamboyantly displayed by rulers suggest that this Preclassic ornamental complex was a pervasive insignia of rulership and authority, not only in the Maya area, but in most of Mesoamerica (Cortez 2005:44-45; Estrada-Belli 2011:84-90; Guernsey 2006; Guernsey Kappelman 1997:220-221; Guernsey and Love 2005:40-41). This is unmistakable on monuments such as Izapa Stela 4, Kaminaljuyu Stela 11, Cival Stela 2, and on San Bartolo's West Wall coronation scene, as well as on the back of a pyrite mirror from Zaculeu. At the same time, and in slightly different form, a type of long-beaked avian headdress, possibly representing a harpy eagle (*Harpia harpyja*), is also worn by the individual seated within the niche of the jaguar-monster face of La Venta Altar 4 (Figure 5a). The interlocking scrolls on the side of the headdress are similar to the so-called 'pop motif' or JAL glyph, which symbolized chieftainship and authority (Grove 1973:130; Stone and Zender 2011:81). Guernsey and Reilly (2001) also associate these interlocking scrolls with the twisted cords



**Figure 3:** Some examples of the long-lipped motif profile: (a) glyph pA10 from the San Bartolo stone block text; (b-d) PBD profiles from the West Mural at San Bartolo (adapted from Taube et al. 2012); (e) mask worn by ruler on Kaminaljuyu Stela 11; (f-g) face of the flying being and mask worn by the standing figure, both on Izapa Stela 4 (drawings e-f by Ajax Moreno [after Guernsey 2006:Fig. 5.18]); (h) glyph A9 on Monument 1 from El Portón, Guatemala (after Sharer and Sedat 1973:Fig. 5a).



**Figure 4:** Two angles (K8130a and K8230b) of a face mosaic made of large jade pieces from the Maya area, depicting the PBD with incising highlighted in red, perhaps cinnabar. Measuring 16.5 cm. in height, it was probably worn as a belt mask. Photos © Justin Kerr, courtesy of Justin Kerr.



**Figure 5:** (a) Line drawing and close-up of the long-beaked avian headress on La Venta Altar 4 (after Grove 1973:131); (b) ruler in avian costume from the Oxtotitlan mural C-1 (after Grove 1973:132); (c) illustration of harpy eagle (*Hapia harpyja*) (adapted from a drawing by Ana Elisa Soares).





a



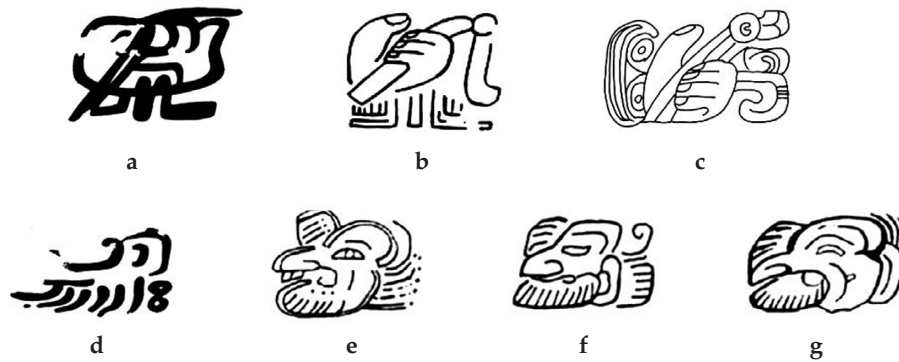
b

**Figure 6:** (a) “Avian dancer” in full motion as depicted on an Early Classic stucco vessel from Kaminaljuyu (from Guernsey 2006:Fig. 5.25); (b) “Bird-Man” from a Zaculeu pyrite mirror wearing a long-lipped headdress or mask, as well as wings under both arms (from Guernsey 2006:Fig. 5.5).

that are sometimes dropped by the PBD, not dissimilar to those hanging from the jaws and talons of the avian monsters on the West Wall mural at San Bartolo (see Taube et al. 2010), a motif believed to be related to rain-making rituals.

Another example of this avian motif is found on the Oxtotitlan polychrome mural C-1. This mural depicts an individual wearing an avian costume where his face is seen in x-ray-like fashion within the headdress, and he is seated

on a jaguar-face throne, very much like La Venta Altar 4 (Grove 1973:132-133). The dynamic nature and avian attributes of the Oxtotitlan character are highly reminiscent of the Avian Dancer from a Kaminaljuyu vessel (Bardawil 1976:Fig. 10e; Taube 2009) and the Zaculeu pyrite mirror “Bird-Man” (Bardawil 1976:Fig 5), both of which wear variants of long-lipped avian masks and headdresses (Figures 5b, 6a-b). It seems then that the presence of these similar avian long-lipped headdresses,



**Figure 7:** (a) Glyph pA2 from the San Bartolo stone block text; (b) glyph A2 from Dumbarton Oaks Jade Celt; (c) glyph on the back of Tikal Stela 39 (*a-c* adapted from Giron-Ábrego 2012:Fig. 1); (d) glyph pA5 from San Bartolo stone block text; (e) glyph A1 from the Peabody Museum at Yale Jaguar Figurine; (f) glyph A4 from Museo del Jade Fidel Tristan spoon; (g) glyph A1 from unprovenienced jade pendant (K763 in Justin Kerr's Precolumbian Portfolio) (*e-g* drawings by David Mora-Marín [from Mora-Marín 2008a:Fig. 2a-c]).

explicitly associated with authority and rulership, can hardly be a fortuitous occurrence for they reveal the imperative nature of this motif throughout Preclassic Mesoamerica.

In light of these associations, it is hardly surprising to find a logographic head variant of this prevailing motif on the San Bartolo text dating to the Late Preclassic, for it fits within the parameters of what was significant in matters of rulership and thus considered essential to articulate through iconography and text at this early stage of Maya society. In fact, glyph pA7 (Figure 1b) represents one of the earliest known examples of the **AJAW** "lord" logogram (Houston 2006:1249; Mora-Marín 2008a:Fig. 8; Saturno et al. 2006:1282). This increases the likelihood that this text dealt with regal affairs and, more importantly, the *ajaw* glyph anchors pA10 into an epigraphic context of lordship. It is also important to note that the presence of this glyph may suggest that the closing glyphs of this text correspond to a nominal phrase. This nominal, to which I will return, would provide the name of an individual who held the title of "lord" or "king," and the proposed long-lipped logogram would be an additional royal epithet, as well as the last section of his/her personal name.

In another context, there is at least one more example of a long-lipped profile positioned as the last glyph of a single-column Preclassic inscription (see Figure 3h). This glyph (A9) is found on the highly battered Monument 1 from El Portón, Guatemala (Sharer and Sedat 1973). The carved inscription, broadly contemporaneous with the painted San Bartolo block if not older, was part of a longer text that unfortunately has not survived. Following Lathrap's (1971) arguments, Sharer and Sedat (1973:181) interpret this glyph as "a representation of the harpy eagle, a sky manifestation of the reptilian deity of Chavin as

well as Olmec art." Interestingly, this is the same raptorial bird Grove (1976:130) suggested for the man's headdress on La Venta Altar 4 (Figure 5c). Sharer and Sedat (1976:178, 180), based on a single Polaroid photograph taken by the looters who initially discovered the monument, also mention a "hand, paw, or paw-wing" as the uppermost glyph of this incomplete text. Unfortunately, they did not provide an image of this "hand or paw," but it is interesting to wonder if this glyph was at all similar to glyph pA2 from the San Bartolo stone block text, which in fact does represent a hand. As I have argued elsewhere (Giron-Ábrego 2012), it may in fact be an early example of the **TZUTZ** logogram common to calendrical statements of the completion of time periods (Figures 7a-c).

La Venta Monument 13 presents us with a second Preclassic example of a long-snouted or long-beaked profile as the last collocation of a linear sequence of signs. This monument depicts a striding person holding a banner, often called "The Ambassador," who is framed on the left by a human footprint, perhaps implying direction or travel, and a column of three signs on the other side (see Houston 2004:292). The first two signs on the right side show no internal details due to their abraded state, which presently precludes their identification, although the first one is of circular shape and the second one is trilobed. The third sign clearly portrays the profile of a long-lipped creature. This column of symbols may also represent a nominal phrase recording the name of the central anthropomorphic figure, with the long-lipped profile being the last section of his name. The visual arrangement of these symbols may in fact provide clues to their syntactical organization and furnish further details about their meaning. Assuming a left-to-right reading format based on the direction the man is headed,

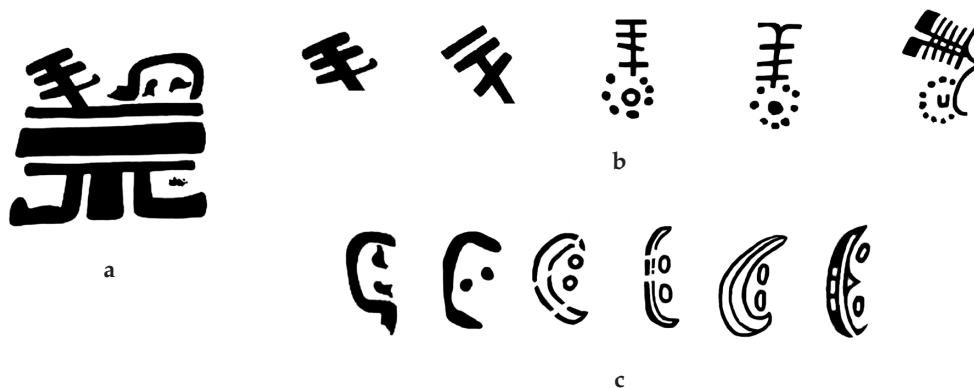
if the human footprint that precedes him stands for an action, and if the three symbols that follow display his name, then an intransitive VO (verb-object) structure can be cautiously hypothesized. Presumably, it could be interpreted in English as something along the lines of “so-and-so walks/travels”: an interpretation broadly agreeable with the associated portrait of a striding man. This carved stone monument may date to about 600-400 BCE (Houston 2004:276), although stylistically Karl Taube (cited as personal communication 2002 in Houston 2004:276, 292) considers a later placement of 300-200 BCE. Taube’s assessment would make Monument 13’s symbols roughly coeval with El Portón and the San Bartolo painted stone block.

As an analytical exercise, assuming a Ch’olan-Tzeltalan (Greater Tzeltalan) linguistic affiliation for the stone block text based on geographic and temporal propinquity (García de León 1979; Kaufman and Norman 1984:82),<sup>3</sup> if the San Bartolo stone block inscription is then divided into the glyphic segments pA1-pA3, pA4, pA5, and pA6-pA10, we can further explore the possibility that pA6-pA10 represents a nominal phrase (Figure 1b). Starting with pA1-pA3, I have elsewhere argued that these should be seen as a self-contained clause (Giron-Ábrego 2012, 2013). Unfortunately, pA1 is too damaged to be adequately analyzed, but glyph pA2, judging by its morphology, depicts a hand presumably clutching a weaving pin or bodkin, representing an archaic variant of the TZUTZ ‘completion’ logogram. In this case, the *tzutz* glyph may be cast in the future aspect, as perhaps indicated by the suffixed *ma* providing an *-oom*. Thus TZUTZ-*ma* *tzutz[j]oom* or “it will be completed” (see Giron-Ábrego 2012).

The verb is immediately followed by glyph pA3 (compare Figure 1b and Figure 8a). In an

earlier study (Giron-Ábrego 2012), syntactic and morphological parallels were drawn to the text on the Dumbarton Oaks jade celt, and pA3 was argued to represent a unit of time, possibly a *katun*. It was also suggested that pA3 was superfixed by an early form of T53 *ta*, probably to represent the *ta/tä* ‘generic preposition’ in Ch’olan-Tzeltalan (Kaufman and Norman 1984:139). The diachronic graphic development of T53 supports this identification (Figure 8b), establishing that pA3’s left superfix is graphically similar to both contemporaneous and later examples of *ta* from controlled contexts. The main sign of pA3 was identified as a bar for the number five, and the pedestal-like subfix was interpreted as a reference

<sup>3</sup> Robert Wald (personal communication 2013) believes the initial split from Greater Tzeltalan into Ch’olan and Tzeltalan would have happened somewhere around CE 100. He also thinks that the fuller realization of this split would have occurred around the end of the Preclassic (ca. CE 200), making the break begin at a time when a number of Preclassic sites were abandoned, for example El Mirador, or at least underwent drastic changes. Nevertheless, he cautions that not enough data has been gathered yet to adequately back this up, until we are better able to figure out the vocabulary and grammar of the Preclassic corpus. At this time, his working hypothesis suggests that around 400-200 BCE they wrote a form of Greater Tzeltalan (Ch’olan-Tzeltalan), although he notes that it may not have yet undergone all of the critical sound changes shared by the two language families. At the same time, it is recognized that a comprehensive paleographic analysis is merited in which the diachronic development of each glyphic element of this text is adequately explored. A study of this sort, as brilliantly demonstrated by Alfonso Lacadena (1995), reveals the effectiveness of contextual graphic analogy, capable of showing the gradual and regular change of the graphic forms of signs over time. Such endeavor, however, lies beyond the scope of the present analysis and will be presented in another forum.



**Figure 8:** (a) Glyph pA3 glyph (drawing by the author after drawing by David Stuart); (b) glyph pA3’s left superfix and a few examples of T53 from portable objects stylistically dated to the Late Preclassic/Early Classic; (c) glyph pA3’s right superfix and a few examples of T1 from portable objects stylistically dated to the Late Preclassic/Early Classic. Some of these TA (T53) and U (T1) glyphs have been rotated and resized for the purpose of comparison, as well as to illustrate a tentative diachronic development of each of these signs (*b-c* drawings by the author).



to a unit of time. With this understanding of pA3, a tentative interpretation of “on/at the fifth katun” was proposed.

Upon closer inspection of pA3, based on published photographs and drawings, it is possible that the element to the right of the locative *ta* is a small representation of an archaic and calligraphic T1 *u* glyph, which in Classic-period inscriptions often indicates the third-person singular pre-consonantal ergative/possessive pronoun. The superfix clearly shows a bracket or C-like shape, engulfing two dot-like elements. These traits are also diagnostic of some of the earliest variants of T1 (Figure 8c). Of particular relevance to this discussion, it is also known that when the *u*-glyph prefixes cardinal numbers it modifies them into ordinals. Seen in this light, the identification of *u*-provides additional support for the earlier tentative reading of pA3 as “on/at the fifth katun.” If pA2-pA3 do in fact refer to a period ending, then the most likely placement would have been 7.5.0.0.0. Using the 585,286 correlation recently proposed by Martin and Skidmore (2012), this would have fallen on December 29th, 256 BCE, neatly postdating the conservative ca. 300 BCE dating of the text on the basis of AMS radiocarbon dating.

Glyph pA4 starts a new sentence, and seems to serve as a transition between the glyphic sections pA2-pA3 and pA5-pA10. Indeed, pA4 may well represent a Distance Number (see Giron-Ábrego 2013), as indicated by its prefix in the form of the coefficient two, marked as two dots, perhaps serving to project the narrative into an anterior or posterior event, although it remains uncertain what period is represented by the main sign (e.g., days, twenty-day periods, years, etc). Alternatively, the two dots could function as a syllable-doubling diacritic. However, this glyphic innovation is not attested until the fourth century CE, thus increasing the likelihood that the two dots merely stand for the number two. This temporal link is followed by pA5 (compare Figure 1b and Figure 7d), which should correspond to a verb. The sign in question bears strong graphic similarities to the so-called ‘Bearded God’ glyph. Fahsen (1988) and Chinchilla and Fahsen (1991) were the first to analyze this glyph, arguing for a verbal function and a possible correlation to the God N verbal dedicatory glyph of the Classic-period Primary Standard Sequence. The God N glyph is generally read as **T’AB(-yi)** *t’ab(aay)*, meaning “to ascend, to raise, to dedicate” (Kettunen and Helmke 2011:100; compare Proto-Ch’olan *\*t’üb*, Kaufman and Norman 1984:133). Macri andLooper (2003:141) catalog a variant of this Bearded God as their ‘PH3’ and describe it as a verbal suffix as well as an ergative third-person prevocalic. More recently, Mora-Marín

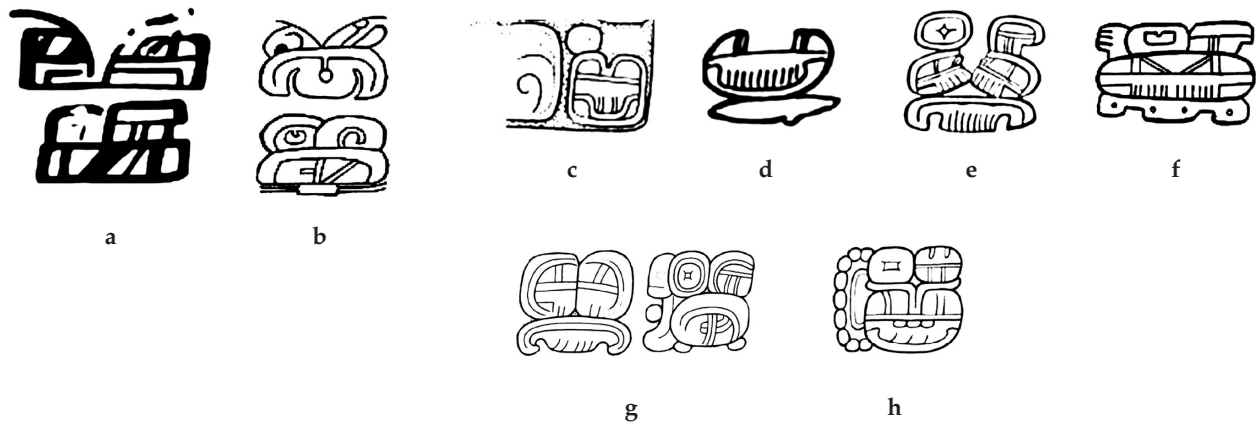
(2008a:1062-1064) contends that, on the basis of its contexts in a number of early texts, the Bearded God glyph represents a verbal dedicatory glyph introducing nominal phrases.<sup>4</sup>

All things considered—i.e., pA2-pA3 as a self-contained period-completion clause, pA4 as a possible distance number, and pA5 as a second verb—these tentative glyphic identifications provide a syntactical and grammatical context framing pA6-pA10 as a plausible nominal phrase, the subject of the verb at pA5. The first constituent of this nominal phrase, pA6, was tentatively identified by Erik Boot as an early instance of the **PA’-CHAN** “split-sky” place name and dynastic title (see Mora-Marín 2008b:1), perhaps the ancestor of the well-known Classic-period dynastic title of the kingdoms of El Zotz and Yaxchilan (see Figure 9) (Boot 2004; Houston 2006:1249; Martin 2004). More recently, Mora-Marín (2008b:2-3) explored the similarities between pA6’s main sign and the Classic-period T561 **CHAN** “sky” glyph, noticing that its closest resemblance was to the precursor of the sky sign, the Middle Preclassic so called ‘Olmec-style’ forms of the ‘sky-band’ motifs. If these graphic similarities are not merely fortuitous, the first section of this nominal (pA6-pA7) might therefore read **PA’-CHAN AJAW** *pa’ chan ajaw* or “split-sky lord.”<sup>5</sup>

I am less certain about the identification of the following glyph pA8. The superfix bears some resemblance to the Classic-period T236 **YAXUN** glyph, apparently representing a cotinga bird. Nevertheless, there are other possible readings for these glyphic birds. The main sign, with its cross-hatching section, is evocative of the T586/T602 **pa** syllabogram, although the glyphic compound as a whole, including its inverted-S-like postfix, remains difficult to assess, and I pass over it for now. For the next glyph, pA9, I have suggested that it might be an archaic variant of the logograph **AKAN** (Giron-Ábrego 2014). This is based on this profile’s darkened upper half and the detail on its forehead, possibly an enucleated eyeball, two of this Dionysian deity’s glyphic diagnostics (see Grube

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Houston (personal communication 2012) cautions that this sign is very similar to later glyphs for **MAM** *mam* “grandfather, ancestor.” Absent a clear decipherment, these suggestions should all be taken under advisement.

<sup>5</sup> This specific *pa’ chan* place could be the original or ancestral location for the later Classic-period *k’uhul pa’ chan ajaw* emblem glyphs of El Zotz and/or Yaxchilan (see Helmke 2012:105-107). The lack of the *k’uhul* prefix on the *pa’ chan ajaw* from San Bartolo might simply represent the conventional way of recording “emblem glyphs” during the Late Preclassic and the Early Classic. Moreover, this prefix was not widely employed in the formula until the fifth century CE (Bíró 2011:57; Houston and Stuart 2001:54-83).



**Figure 9:** A number of glyphic texts displaying the *pa' chan* and *pa' chan ajaw* titles or “emblem glyphs”: (a) glyphs pA6-pA7 from the San Bartolo stone block text; (b) Glyph A6-7 reading *pa' chan* from unprovenanced Late Preclassic jade clamshell K763, possibly from El Zotz (Drawing by David Mora-Marín from Mora-Marín 2001:Fig. 33); (c) Glyph B9 from Waxaktun Stela 2 (Drawing by Ian Graham 1984:136); (d) *pa' chan* glyph on Dedicatory Formula from Waxaktun-style vessel (Drawing by Marc Zender from Boot 2003:Fig.3a); (e) *pa' chan* on the Canberra vessel (K8458), possibly from El Zotz (Drawing by Stephen D. Houston from Houston 2008:Fig. 5); (f) Glyph B3 on a slate mirror disk (INS 6528), possibly from El Zotz (Drawing by David Mora-Marín from Mora-Marín 2001:Fig. 20); (g) Early example of Yaxchilán’s “emblem glyph” (Drawing by Ian Graham from Martin 2004:Fig.5a); (h) Late Classic Yaxchilán’s *pa' chan ajaw* (Drawing by Simon Martin from Martin 2004:Fig. 1d).

2001, 2004; Stone and Zender 2011:38-39; Taube 1992:14-17). Finally, although still undeciphered and therefore lacking a transcription, I would identify pA10 as a prototypical representation of the PBD complex as observed in Maya writing and art, but cautiously keeping in mind the possibility of alternative long-lipped characters.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, I agree with Bardawil (1976:200) that there is “an archetypal long-lipped monster composed of basic elements which characteristically define the motif.” The morphology of pA10 appears to me to be singularly representative of this definition, thereby adding one more instance of this supernatural to the Preclassic repertoire.

### Final Comments

Aside from its early date of execution, this text is noteworthy because of the historical content that its tentative glyphic sections may reveal, including a direct reference to a specific Late Preclassic *ajaw*. There is no doubt that the Preclassic glyphic sample available is inadequate and until more comparative glyphic data of this sort is uncovered, no irrefutable decipherment of this partial text can be established. Some speculation is therefore inevitable to flesh out these concluding comments.

We can say that the specificity of an *ajaw*’s history on a Late Preclassic text stands in sharp contrast to the general contention that Late Preclassic Izapan, Highland, and Pacific Coastal as well as Lowland Maya regal imagery typified and focused on the “office” of rulership, rather than on biographical information of a particular ruler (Guernsey 2006; 2011). Considering the arguments presented here, it is at least plausible that this early Lowland Maya text provides not only a generic kingly reference, but rather the actual personal name of an early lord, with a presumed but still not very well understood link to a *pa' chan* lineage. Thus, at this point, the nominal phrase here proposed (pA6-pA10) can be cautiously glossed as follows:

**PA'-CHAN AJAW ... AKAN? ...**

*Pa' Chan Ajaw ... Ahkan?...*

“... Ahkan? ‘PBD profile,’ Split-Sky Lord”

Beyond that, the mere existence of this early text offers interesting insights as far as the origins of writing in the Maya area is concerned. As Saturno et al. (2006) have noted, it suggests that a well-developed scribal tradition was already in place by at least the early third century BCE, a specialization thought to have only coalesced centuries later. Its stylized calligraphic consistency tells us that it is hardly the work of a neophyte scribe. Nor does it seem to reflect crude or experimental attempts in the direction of phonetic writing. Instead, it is a dynamic and complex glyphic system, with perhaps decades if not centuries of development already

<sup>6</sup> Fields and Tokovinine (2012:183, Fig. 99c) identify a long-lipped face on a jade belt plaque as **CHAPAHT** “centipede,” and this is somewhat similar to pA10. The **CHAPAHT** glyph also resembles a long-snouted face with skeletal jaw on El Mirador Stela 2, sometimes referred to as the PBD (Estrada-Belli 2011:111; Hansen 1991).



behind it, showing clear signs of grammatical affixation, syntax, and possibly even linguistic affiliation, as hinted at by the future-ending *-oom*, locative *ta*, and ordinalizing *u-*. If the *ajaw* glyph and the PBD profile are any indication, then it is very probable that this early Lowland Maya scribal community was commissioned with the essential duty, as their Classic-period counterparts were to be centuries later, of recording and extolling the histories and deeds of early Maya lords in the form of sophisticated glyphic narratives. In the case of the San Bartolo text, we appear to have an aesthetically captivating early glyphic sequence that incorporates time-period completions, verbal glyphs, *ajaw* titles, and supernatural epithets several centuries before their routine appearance in Classic-period inscriptions.

### Acknowledgements

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