

The Hieroglyphic Text of Stela 9, Lamanai, Belize

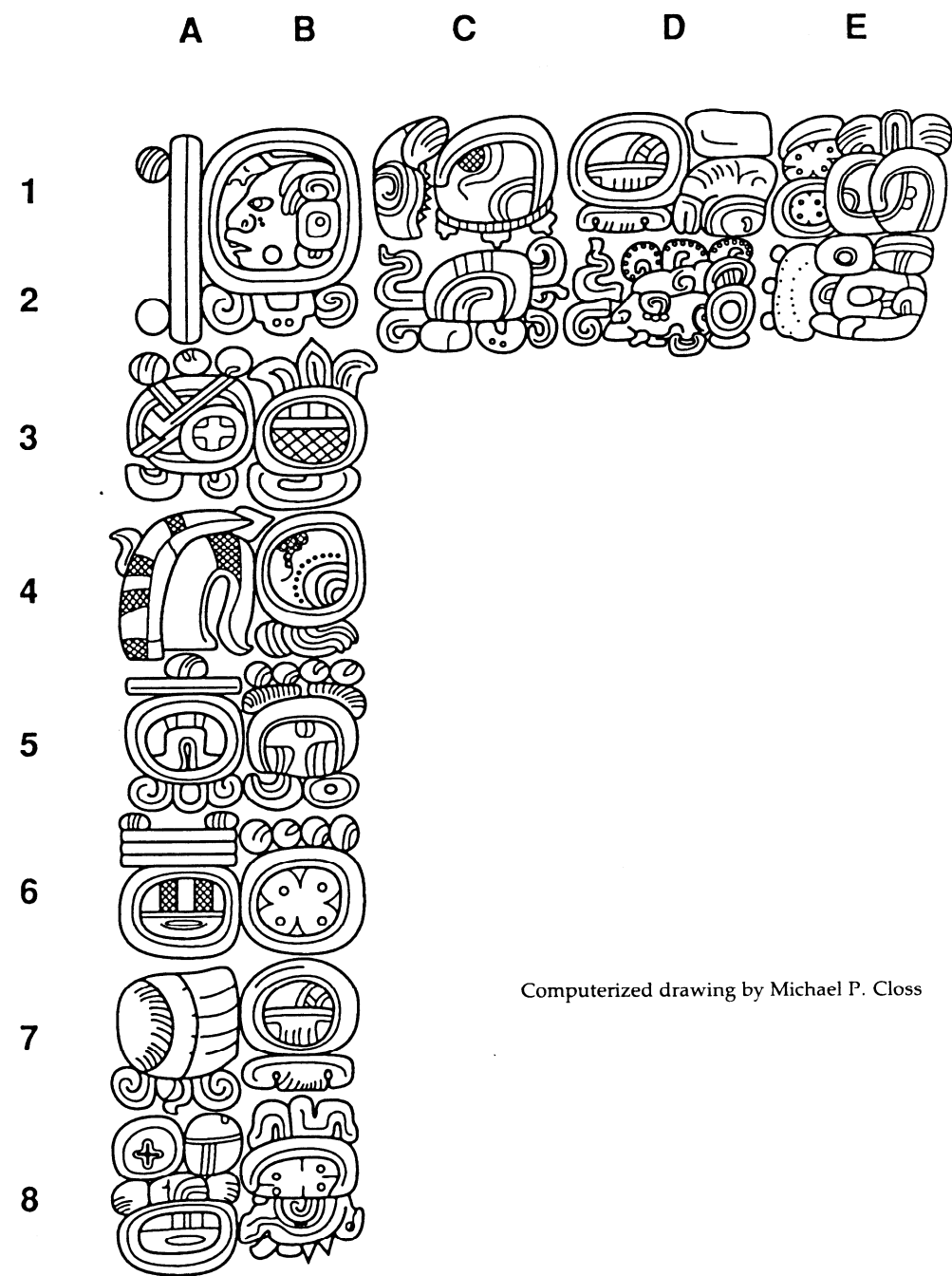
MICHAEL P. CLOSS
Department of Mathematics
University of Ottawa

THE HIEROGLYPHIC TEXT OF STELA 9 is shown in Figure 1 (next page), along with a transcription and paraphrase. In that transcription, hieroglyphic signs are labeled according to the Thompson (1962) catalog; those which do not appear there are represented by the designation **nn** (for “no number”).

The chronology and calendrics of Stela 9 are clear. The text opens with the Calendar Round date 7 *Ahau* 3 *Pop* at A1-A3. The date occurs at a *tun* ending in the Long Count as indicated by the enlarged “young lord” variant of the *Ahau* glyph in initial position, and by the Period Ending phrase at B3-B4. The glyph at A4, a variant of T213/767, is a realistic Maya representation of a tree, *che'* or *te'* in Yucatec (Barrera Vásquez 1980:85,782). The glyph at B4, T528:116, often represents the end of a 360-day period in Maya chronology and has the linguistic value *tun*, which also signifies “stone” in Yucatec (Barrera Vásquez 1980:822). In this instance, it is apparent that the glyph signifies “stone” since the preceding glyph stands for “tree,” and the word pair *te'-tun* is one of the most frequent combinations in Yucatec. Indeed, in a study of paired words in the manuscript of the *Ritual of the Bacabs*, I have found that *te'-tun* is the second most commonly encountered pairing, occurring 44 times (Closs 1981:26). The *te'-tun* glyph pair is found as an ingredient in period-ending phrases in other Maya texts. Schele (1982: Charts 26:13-14, 68:3, & 69:3) has noted the occurrence of such period-ending phrases on monuments from Arroyo de Piedra, Copan, and Pusilha. Schele and Stuart (1985) have argued that the *te'-tun* compound signifies “stone tree,” that is, “stela.” It can be concluded that the glyphs at B3-A4 refer to rites associated with a *tun* ending and to the erection of the monument at that time. The only possible *tun* ending position of the Calendar Round date 7 *Ahau* 3 *Pop* is at 9.9.12.0.0 of the Long Count, and this may be taken as the dedicatory date of Lamanai Stela 9. In the Thompson 584,285 correlation, that date corresponds to March 7, A.D. 625, Julian (March 10, Gregorian).

A second Calendar Round date, 6 *Cib* 4 *Zec*, appears at A5-B5 followed by a chronological count of 17 *tuns* and 4 *k'ins* at A6-B6. Since the date is precisely 6,124 days (17.0.4 in Maya notation) prior to the opening date on the monument, it can be secured in the Long Count at 9.8.14.17.16. In the Thompson correlation, this corresponds to May 31, A.D. 608, Julian (June 3, Gregorian).

The chronological count at A6-B6 is peculiar in two respects. First, it is written in *descending* order, contrary to the general practice of writing Distance Numbers in *ascending* order, from the smallest period to the largest. There are precedents for such reversed Distance Numbers (Thompson [1950] 1971:158), but they are rare. The second unusual feature is that the zero



Computerized drawing by Michael P. Closs

FIGURE 1. THE HIEROGLYPHIC TEXT ON LAMANAI STELA 9

A1-A3	(9.9.12.0.0) [May 7, A.D. 625, Julian]	[It is] 7 Ahau 3 Pop
B3	T340:689:19	[period ending event]
A4	T213/767, TE' , <i>tree</i>	tree
B4	T528:116, TUN-(ni) , <i>stone</i>	stone.
A5-B5	(9.8.14.17.16) [May 31, A.D. 608, Julian]	[Since] 6 Cib 4 Zec
A6	TXVII.548, 17 <i>tuns</i>	[it has been] 17 tuns
B6	TIV.544, 4 <i>kins</i>	[and] 4 kins
A7	T77:125, XIK'-a , <i>principal lord (?)</i>	[that] he is principal lord (?)
B7	T561:23, KAAN-(na) , <i>sky</i>	sky
A8	T168:74[528]:548, AHAW-KATUN , <i>katun lord</i>	katun lord
B8	T122:544.nn, x:K'IN:x , <i>sun + deity head</i>	divine sun.
C1	T204:526, U-KAB , <i>his territory</i>	[It is] his realm
D1a	T561:23, KAAN-(na) , <i>sky</i>	sky
D1b	T115:761, (tu)-TON , <i>penis</i>	penis
C2	T122.(575:?).125 [name glyph of ruler]	"SMOKING SHELL"
D2	T122.44.nn, x:to:x , [to + deity name]	the divine one
E1a	T183:544, LAK'IN , <i>east</i>	east
E1b	T74:528?.nn, "makuch"	[title]
E2	T35var.168.nn [emblem glyph]	Lord of Lamanai.

Transliteration and paraphrase by the author

count of *uinals* is suppressed. Although this, too, has parallels elsewhere (Thompson [1950] 1971:159), the practice is rare. I have argued that the *uinal* and *k'in* counts were perceived by the Maya as distinct from the *tun* count (Closs 1977), and the present omission of the *uinal* count supports that notion. Examples of the suppression of a zero count of *uinals* and a zero count of *k'ins* not included in the two references cited occur on Hecelchakan Column 1 (Closs 1983) and Oxkintok Stela 21 (Houston 1984a). It may be pointed out that non-zero counts of *uinals* and *k'ins* are suppressed on Palenque's Tablet of the Slaves, at B2 and H2a.

The syntactic structure of the text of Lamanai Stela 9 calls for a verb at A7. The main sign there represents the wing of a bird, *xik'* in Yucatec (Barrera Vásquez 1980:943). The T125 postfix may have the phonetic value *a*, as suggested by some epigraphers (Justeson 1984:325). Although the *xik'* reading for the main sign has not been validated in other contexts, the value is appropriate in the present case. Indeed, the combination *xik'-a* may represent the Yucatec term *xik'al*, meaning "cacique" or "principal lord" (Barrera Vásquez 1980:943). I suggest that the verb in question is a stative construction asserting that the lord depicted on the monument is, and has been, ruler throughout the period spanned by the Distance Number at A6-B6.

It may be noted that the most common events commemorated on stelae, aside from period endings, are accessions and anniversaries of accessions. Since the only event recorded on Lamanai Stela 9 (not counting the period ending) occurred some 17 years before the dedication of the monument, it must have been an exceptional event in the life of the ruler. From this point of view, the most fitting event would have to be the ruler's accession, and this is consistent with the interpretation of the verb which has been offered.

The proposal is also compatible with the portrait of the ruler who is depicted holding a "ceremonial bar." In work on the inscriptions of Naranjo, I have shown that the wielding of the ceremonial bar is a motif associated with monuments which refer to accessions or to anniversaries of accessions (Closs 1985:70-71). This custom was initiated at Naranjo as early as 9.9.2.0.4 on Naranjo Stela 25, only a short time before the erection of Lamanai Stela 9. Given the relative proximity of the two sites, it is reasonable to suspect that a similar practice may also have been in effect at Lamanai.

One more argument that supports the interpretation of Lamanai Stela 9 as commemorating an accession is based on an interesting numerical relationship. The presumed accession at 9.8.14.17.16 is precisely four days before the quarter-*katun* calendrical station at 9.18.15.0.0. An exact parallel to this situation is found at Tikal, where Ruler A mounted the throne at 9.12.9.17.16, precisely four days before the mid-*katun* station at 9.12.10.0.0 (Jones 1977:36). This relationship need not be accidental. Indeed, it is known that the celebration of period endings by the erection of monuments dedicated to themselves was one of the most conspicuous activities of Classic Period Maya rulers. Of the various period endings which were celebrated, *katun* endings were most favored, closely followed by mid-*katun* and quarter-*katun* endings. If a ruler was due to be inaugurated at a time near one of those calendrical stations, there was some need that his accession take place before the period ending itself in order that he be able to preside over the festivities associated with the occasion.

The glyph at B7 is a continuation of the verbal phrase, while the glyphs at A8-B8 constitute the nominal phrase associated with the preceding verb (Note 1). At B7 one finds a T561:23 glyph signifying *kaan*, or "sky." This is followed by a *katun ahaw* glyph at A8, and what should be the name of the ruler at B8. In this instance the *katun* portion of the glyph at A8 is rendered with the prefix T74[528], an early form of T28, which signifies **ma-tun**, for *maytun*, "twenty tuns" (Justeson 1974:249). In Maya writing the *katun ahaw* notation is generally preceded by a numeral, say *n*, which is often interpreted to mean that the person in question is in his or her *n*th *katun* of life (Mathews & Justeson 1984:213-14). In the present case, the only candidate for a numeral is the sky glyph at B7. It is known that on a number of occasions Maya scribes did use the glyph T561 or T561:23, *kaan*, "sky," to represent the homophonous term *kan*, "four," or vice versa

(Houston 1984b: Figs. 2, 11, & 13). Thus, it is possible that the glyphs at B7-B8 indicate that the ruler is a “four *katun ahaw*,” that is, that he was between 60 and 80 years old when the monument was dedicated.

However, an alternative interpretation is possible and this I think is more likely to be correct. In several cases, the numbered *katun ahaw* appellatives do not refer to the age of the ruler, but rather to the number of *katun* endings which the ruler had celebrated. This can be seen most clearly on Naranjo Stela 38, where “Double Comb,” the great ruler of Naranjo’s early period, is recorded as having presided over the *katun* endings at 9.6.0.0.0, 9.7.0.0.0, and 9.8.0.0.0, and is given the title of “3 *katun ahaw*.” In a reference to the *katun* ending at 9.9.0.0.0 on Naranjo Stela 27, the *katun ahaw* notation is extended to include not only the *katun* endings over which he presided as ruler, but also those he had lived through. Since Double Comb had, by then, lived through five *katun* endings, he received the title “5 *katun ahaw*” (Closs 1984:86-87). In addition, there are occasional records of *katun ahaw* notations without numerical coefficients. One of these occurs on a limestone fragment from Palenque—part of a text pertaining to the ruler “Bahlum K’uk’” (Schele & Mathews 1979: no. 37). This probably indicates that Bahlum K’uk’ had presided over a single *katun* ending—almost certainly 9.17.0.0.0—as ruler, at the time the monument was carved. A more pertinent example, by virtue of its precise and early date, appears on Tikal Stela 31 (at F19) where “Curl Nose” is named as *katun ahaw*, without coefficient. It is clear from the preceding text that “Curl Nose” presided over the *katun* ending at 8.18.0.0.0, the first *katun* ending to occur after his inauguration as ruler of Tikal.

From these precedents, it may be supposed that the *katun ahaw* without coefficient on Lamanai Stela 9, at A8, simply implies that one *katun* ending had already occurred in the reign of the current ruler. From the chronological data in the text, discussed above, that can only have been 9.9.0.0.0. It may be noted that this is one of the *katun* endings also celebrated by Double Comb of Naranjo. Given the close geographical relationship between the two places and the contemporaneous reigns of their two rulers, it is very likely that those rulers were acquaintances. This serves to emphasize that the *katun ahaw* notation in early-period Naranjo, and the even earlier usage at nearby Tikal, are particularly suitable parallels to consider in the present situation.

The glyph at position B8 on Stela 9 should correspond to the name of the Lamanai ruler who is being discussed. It consists of a T122 prefix, a T544 *k’in* glyph, and the head of a supernatural. In some respects, including the presence of a *k’in* “sun” glyph, this name matches an apparent name found in the headdress of the ruler. The appearance of names of rulers in the headdresses of their portraits is known from both Caracol and Tikal, and the same practice appears to have been followed on Lamanai Stela 9. The occurrence of a *k’in* sign on a deity head is a common determinative for the sun god (see, for example, Thompson [1950] 1971: Figs. 15 [nos. 15, 16], 17 [no. 5], 24 [nos. 20, 22, 25], & 27 [nos. 60, 62]).

The next glyph in order, T204:526, occurs at C1 and can be read as *u kab*. The term *kab* signifies variously “world, city, region, earth” (Barrera Vásquez 1980:277) and the *u* prefix functions as the third person possessive pronoun. *U kab* expressions are very common in Maya hieroglyphic texts, and are followed by nominal phrases. In the present case, such a phrase runs from C1 to the end of the text at E2.

The glyphic combination at D1 is a known title consisting of a T561.23 *kaan*, or “sky,” glyph followed by an eroded T115 prefixed to a T761 penis-and-testicle glyph. The “sky-penis” title is found elsewhere in the Maya area (Schele & Miller 1986:326-27). The “spelling” of the title which is found here is characteristic of Yucatec texts, and indicates that the inscription on Lamanai Stela 9 is written in Yucatec (Closs 1987).

The name of the Lamanai ruler is given in two parts at C2-D2. The prefix of the first part at C1 is T122, commonly interpreted as “smoke,” and the main sign T575 is known to represent a univalve shell. For these reasons, I have glossed the name of the ruler as “Smoking Shell.” The

second part of the name is composed of a T122 “smoke” prefix, a T44 to phonetic sign, and the head of a supernatural, possibly the rain god Chaak. The structure of the name is fairly typical of those found at Dos Pilas, Naranjō, and Tikal. These consist of two parts, the first being a personal name and the second a deity name. The use of the T122 “smoke” prefix is also common in names from those sites. In many cases, the deity name appears unchanged among successive rulers at a given site, whereas the personal names vary. This suggests that the rulers may have adopted the deity name upon their accession and were to be identified in some sense with that deity during their rule.

In the present case, the deity names at B8, D2, and in the headdress exhibit a strange mixture of similarities and differences. I believe the use of the deity name at B8, without an accompanying personal name, emphasizes that, at his accession, Smoking Shell was identified with the sun god. At the time of the erection of Stela 9, about 17 years later, he is emphasizing an identification with the rain god. The interlocking relationships among the deity names at B8, D2, and the headdress are illustrated in the following tabulation:

	B8	D2	Headdress
First glyphic prefix	T122	T122	double volute
Second glyphic prefix	T544	T44	T544
Curl eye	yes	yes	yes
Extended snout nose	yes	yes	yes
Fang, teeth, and mouth curl	yes?	yes	yes
Lower jaw	no	no	yes
Shell ear	no	?	yes
Ear ornament postfix	no	yes	yes

The glyph at E1a is a directional glyph for east, T183:544, *lak'in*, and is followed at E1b by a title frequently found in the name phrases of Classic Maya rulers. It has been argued by some that the latter glyph, T74:528?.nn, may be phonetically transcribed as **ma-ku-ch(u)** to yield *makuch*, although that reading has not been generally accepted (Mathews & Justeson 1984:212). Nevertheless, epigraphers have often used “makuch” as a convenient jargon-label for the glyph. It is fairly common to find this “makuch” glyph coupled with the directional glyph for west (see, for example, Naranjo Stela 24, E9-D10 and Naranjo Stela 29, E9-E10), but more unusual to find it coupled with east, as is the case here. The usage may be related to the fact that Lamanai is situated on the eastern edge of the Maya region.

The glyph at E2 is an Emblem Glyph with a characteristic T35var. “blood group” prefix and T168 *ahaw*, “lord,” superfix. The main sign is not identifiable in the Thompson catalog. However, being the main sign of the Emblem Glyph, it serves as a site referent for the polity centered at Lamanai. The Emblem Glyph can be interpreted as a title which indicates that Smoking Shell, the ruler named at C2-D2, is “Lord of Lamanai.”

The text on Stela 9 contains two nominal phrases, at B7-B8 and C1-E2, both referring to the same ruler. A question arises about the syntactic structure of the text and the relationship between these two phrases. In the typical syntactic structure of dynastic texts, the dedicatory date

of a monument is followed by period ending glyphs and then by a minimal nominal phrase which includes the name of the ruler and the local Emblem Glyph. The present inscription opens with the dedicatory date of the monument at A1-A3 and continues with a period ending phrase at B3-B4, but does not include such a nominal phrase in the initial portion of the text. However, a phrase of this type is found at C1-E2, at the end of the text. It is possible to accommodate this syntactic structure with the expected pattern by positing that the principal sentence begins at A1-B4 and ends at C1-E2. As a result, the glyphic sentence at A5-B8 would have to be regarded as a parenthetical reference to an earlier event in the life of the ruler. Given this analysis of the structure of the text, it is possible to understand the *u kab* glyph at C1 as a stative verb construction which functions as the verb of the principal sentence associated with the dedication of the monument. This interpretation has been incorporated into the paraphrase of the text given at the beginning of the paper.

A reviewer of an earlier version of this paper has suggested that the date at A5-B6 may refer to a previous ruler at Lamanai. There are sufficient differences in the deity names at B8 and D2 to warrant the consideration of this hypothesis. However, the image and text as a whole do not support such an interpretation. I think it likely that the name glyph in the headdress of the ruler on the monument gives the deity name of the ruler who is shown. This ruler must be Smoking Shell since he presided over the *tun* ending celebrations and the monument was erected for his glory. The glyph at B8 is sufficiently similar to that in the headdress, making it probable that both refer to the same person. I emphasize that deity names are not exclusive to an individual ruler and, in general, cannot be used to identify an individual. Therefore, the absence of a personal name in the nominal phrase at B7-B8, not to mention the absence of an Emblem Glyph title, indicate by default that it is the current ruler who is being mentioned. Similarly, given the parenthetical nature of the clause at A5-B8, it is best interpreted as a reference to the same individual who appears in the principal clause. Finally, there is ample evidence that Maya rulers referred to earlier events in their own lives, particularly births and accessions, in period ending monuments of this type. By contrast, references to previous rulers are usually embedded within parentage phrases attached to a ruler's nominal phrase, or within inscriptions which specifically record dynastic histories.

SUBMITTED DECEMBER 1988

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work has been supported by a research grant (410-84-0506) from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.



PRINTER'S ORNAMENT FROM THE PROSPECTUS OF THE REGISTER OF CANADA, 1845

NOTE

1. The glyphs at A7-B7 on Lamanai Stela 9 are found in a variant order, as T125.(77.561), on an Early Classic inscription from Tikal (Fahsen 1988: Fig. 4, C7). The glyphic collocation occurs as the prior event in a compound sentence (Fahsen 1988: Fig. 4, D5-F2) whose syntax is familiar from other Maya texts (see, for example, the sentence on the Tablet of the Temple of the Cross at Palenque [R8-R13]). In the Tikal inscription, the beginning of the sentence in question can be paraphrased as follows:

D5-D6	[It was] 7 <i>k'ins</i> , 5 <i>uinals</i> , and 3 <i>tuns</i>	
C7	[from] <i>a-xik'-kaan</i> (?)	[prior event]
D7	[on] 10 <i>Chicchan</i> (18 <i>Zec</i>)	[8.18.7.3.5]
C8- . . .	to the seating. . .	[current event]

The current event occurs on 1 Eb 10 Yax [8.18.10.8.12]. This is also the date of the preceding and opening sentence of the text which refers to "Curl Nose," Lord of Tikal. Fahsen (1988:7) raises the possibility that the prior event may refer to "death." However, because the subject of the prior event is not specifically named or alluded to, it should be the same as the subject of the seating event. Because of the three-year gap between the two events, if the subject of both events is a single individual, it is unlikely that the prior event is death. Perhaps the protagonist of this sentence was made a "principal lord" at the time of the prior event but was still subject to the authority of Curl Nose. Three years later, at the time of the current event, he may have come into his proper rule.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- BARRERA VÁSQUEZ, ALFREDO
1980 *Diccionario Maya Cordeex. Maya Español, Español-Maya*. Mérida: Ediciones Cordemex.
- CLOSS, MICHAEL P.
1977 The Nature of the Maya Chronological Count. *American Antiquity*, 42:18-27.
1981 Las palabras pareadas en el Ritual de los Bacab y las implicaciones para los estudios glíficos. *Boletín de la Escuela de Ciencias Antropológicas de la Universidad de Yucatán*, vol. 8 [nos. 46-47]:2-27. Mérida.
1983 A Truncated Initial Series from Xcalumkin. *American Antiquity*, 48:115-122.
1984 The Dynastic History of Naranjo: The Early Period. *Estudios de Cultura Maya*, 15:77-96. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
1985 The Dynastic History of Naranjo: The Middle Period. In *Fifth Palenque Round Table, 1983*, edited by Virginia M. Fields, pp. 65-78. San Francisco: Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute. [volume 7 of the series]
1987 *Bilingual Glyphs*. Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing, No. 12. Washington, D.C.: Center for MAYa Research.
- FAHSEN, FEDERICO
1988 *A New Early Classic Text from Tikal*. Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing, No. 17. Washington, D.C.: Center for Maya Research.
- HOUSTON, STEPHEN D.
1984a An Example of Homophony in Maya Script. *American Antiquity*, 49:790-805.
1984b Another Example of a "Truncated" Initial Series. *American Antiquity*, 49:401-403.
- JONES, CHRISTOPHER
1977 Inauguration Dates of Three Late Classic Rulers of Tikal, Guatemala. *American Antiquity*, 42:28-60.
- JUSTESON, JOHN S.
1978 Mayan Scribal Practice in the Classic Period: A Test-case of an Explanatory Approach to the Study of Writing Systems. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Stanford University. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International.
1984 Interpretations of Mayan Hieroglyphs. Appendix B in *Phoneticism in Mayan Hieroglyphic Writing*, edited by John S. Justeson and Lyle Campbell, pp. 315-362. Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York at Albany, Publication No. 9. Albany.
1984 Patterns of Sign Substitution in Mayan Hieroglyphic Writing: The "Affix Cluster." In *Phoneticism in Mayan Hieroglyphic Writing*, edited by John S. Justeson and Lyle Campbell, pp. 185-232. Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York at Albany, Publication No. 9. Albany.
- SCHELE, LINDA
1982 *Maya Glyphs: The Verbs*. Austin: The University of Texas Press.
- SCHELE, LINDA, AND PETER MATHEWS
1979 *The Bodega of Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks.
- SCHELE, LINDA, AND DAVID STUART
1985 Te-Tun as the glyph for "Stela." *Copan Notes*, 1. Report on file at Kinko's Copies, 2914 Medical Arts Street, Austin, TX, 78712.
- THOMPSON, J. ERIC S.
1962 *A Catalog of Maya Hieroglyphs*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
1971 *Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: An Introduction*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. [Originally published by the Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1950]