

Some Problems in the Interpretation of the Mythological Portion of the Hieroglyphic Text of the Temple of the Cross at Palenque

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The problems to which reference is made in the above title are in the second, third, fourth, and fifth passages of the glyphic text from the Temple of the Cross. These will occupy sections II to V. A review of the first passage of the text precedes, in section I, to provide the setting for those which follow.

I. The Initial Passage (A1–C1)

The values of the head-variant numerals of the Initial Series were established during the last decade of the nineteenth century. J. T. Goodman had them essentially correct in "The Archaic Maya Inscriptions," published as an appendix (vol. VI) to Maudslay's *Archaeology* in 1897. If we ignore Goodman's interpretation of the introducing glyph (A1–B2), and revise his notational device for what amounts to a "zero" in the lowest order of digits, his interpretation of the Initial Series was that which all accept today and which is now well proven: 12.19.13.4.0 8 Ahau 18 Tzec (A3–B9). This specifies a date toward the end of the last preceding chronological era, antedating the close of that era and the beginning of the new (on the epoch day 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu 13.0.0.0.0) by an interval of 6.14.0 or 2440 days. If we accept any of the Goodman-Martinez-Thompson family of correlation constants, this would be a date in the year 3120 B.C. It is necessarily a mythological date, or a retrospective projection of some thirty-eight centuries into the past as compared with the probable dedication date of the temple (9.13.0.0.0 or A.D. 692).

Goodman's interpretation of the initial date was at first accepted (1900) but then rejected (1904)

by Cyrus Thomas of the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology, whose work is of interest to look back to now. His ideas about this date will be discussed in connection with the problem of section II.

Immediately following the expression of the Long Count and the Calendar Round components of the date is the supplementary series: glyphs G8 and F (conflated at A10), specifying dominion of the eighth lord of the night; glyph D (at B10), specifying five nights since the "birth" (A11) of the current moon; glyph C (at B11), specifying two more full months elapsed in the current lunar half year; glyph X (at A12) and glyph B (at B12), of unknown significance; and glyph A (at A13), specifying twenty-nine days as the duration of the preceding month in the lunar calendar.

Following this is another "supplementary" series (B13–B16), specifying that the date of the Initial Series is 20 days after the last previous station in the 819-day cycle, which was a station to the south (A15) and was on 1 Ahau 18 Zotz (A16–B16).

Then, with all significant aspects of the date made known, there is the declaration of the event that occurred on that date: the birth (A17) of the ancient female (B17) whose name glyph follows (at C1). Some other aspects of this date and its significance to the Palenque Maya have been treated previously (Lounsbury 1976).

II. The Number 8.5.0 (D1–C5)

All students of this inscription have found a

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problem inhering in the Distance Number with which the second passage of the text begins: 0 days, 5 uinals, and 8 tuns (D1–C2), or 8.5.0 in ordinary notation. The trouble is that it does not mediate properly between any two of the dates recorded in this and adjacent passages. Each decipherer consequently has attempted to resolve the problem by positing errors and proposing corrections either in the number or in its context. Thus J. T. Goodman (1897), after transcribing the Initial Series which terminates on 8 Ahau 18 Tzec, and noting the reckoning back twenty days to 1 Ahau 18 Zotz, proceeded to this passage as follows:

. . . there is a reckoning of 8.5.0 . . . to 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu . . . This reckoning is a mistake. It should be either 6.14.0, the distance from 8 Ahau 18 Tzec to 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu, or 6.15.0, the distance from 1 Ahau 18 Zotz — more likely the latter. (Goodman 1897: 135, with notation revised to current usage)

And a bit further he remarked:

It will be evident pretty soon that the sculptors got their copy mixed up. (ibid.)

Cyrus Thomas, in the nineteenth annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (1900), tentatively accepted Goodman's interpretation of the values of the head-variant numerals in the Initial Series and of the date that results from these (12.19.13.4.0). But he was uneasy about the adequacy of the evidence upon which these hypothetic values rested; and so he attempted to find additional evidence and a stronger argument to support Goodman's conclusion. He approached it as follows:

But here the question arises, what evidence have we that the numbers assigned to these face glyphs are correct? . . . If 8 Ahau 18 Tzec could be connected by intervening numbers with a following date, this would be a demonstration that the numbers given to the date symbols are correct. (Thomas 1900: 736)

At this point he appealed to the number in this passage and to a date in the next. He didn't quite succeed in his demonstration, but he came so close to it that he felt justified in positing a small error in the text:

By simply adding two days to the first numerical series, connection will be made with the date of the third series. (ibid.: 737)

Thus he proposed to change the 8.5.0 of the text

to 8.5.2 and to add it to Goodman's Initial Series date so as to arrive at the 13 Ik end-of-Mol date, at 1.9.2 after 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu, which is recorded in the next passage:

12.19.13. 4. 0	8 Ahau 18 Tzec (IS., A3–B9)
8. 5. 2	(emendation, in place of 8.5.0, D1–C2)
13. 0. 1. 9. 2	13 Ik 0 Chen "end-of-Mol" (C9–D9)

Not long after having made this proposal, Thomas had another idea, which he published in the twenty-second annual report of the bureau (1904); and now he rejected Goodman's readings of two of the faces in the Initial Series:

Goodman's interpretation of the initial inscription of the Tablet of the Cross, which is . . . 12.19.13.4.0, 8 Ahau 18 Tzec, is not satisfactory. (Thomas 1904: 220)

whereupon he offered another alternative, which he favored over his first proposal:

Change the terminal date of the initial series from 8 Ahau 18 Tzec to 1 Ahau 8 Muan, and the following numeral series [8.5.0] will then connect the succeeding dates with it ... This, however, will slightly change the initial series from the numbers given by Goodman. (ibid.: 221)

It will indeed. We now have:

12.19.11. 13.0	1 Ahau 8 Muan (emendation of I.S.)
8. 5.0	(D1–C2)
13. 0. 0. 0.0	4 Ahau 8 Cumhu (D3–C5)
1. 9.2	(D5–C6a)
13. 0. 1. 9.2	13 Ik 0 Chen = "end-of-Mol" (C9–D9)

Eric Thompson, in his article on the dates of the Temple of the Cross (1936), and again in his *Maya Hieroglyphic Writing* (1950), and yet again in his *Commentary on the Dresden Codex* (1972), opted for Cyrus Thomas' first proposal. Thus:

Glyphs D1–C2 record 8.5.0, but to link the Initial Series with 13 Ik Mol-concluded, this must be amended to read 8.5.2. (Thompson 1936: 287, n. 1; cf. also 1950: fig. 53.1 annotations; also 1972: 21)

Heinrich Berlin, in his study of the inscription of this tablet, let the matter rest with Thompson:

From D1 to C2 follows a DN of 8.5.0. Thompson . . . corrects this DN to 8.5.2, which would connect

12.19.13.4.0 with (13.0)1.9.2, 13 IK End-of-Mol given below. (Berlin 1965: 330)

In summary, all have perceived a problem here, and three different manners of coping with it — all involving emendations of the text — have been proposed:

1. Change the Distance Number from 8.5.0 to either 6.14.0 or 6.15.0, and let it lead respectively from the Initial Series date or from the second date (which we now know to be the 819-day station) to 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu. This was Goodman's solution.

2. Change the Distance Number from 8.5.0 to 8.5.2, and let it lead from the Initial Series date to 13 Ik end-of-Mol at 1.9.2. This was Thomas' first solution and Thompson's.

3. Change the Initial Series from 12.19.13.4.0 8 Ahau 18 Tzec to 12.19.11.13.0 1 Ahau 8 Muan, and let the Distance Number as recorded lead from that to 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu. This was Thomas' second solution.

The first and the third of these involve rather drastic emendations and for that reason recommend themselves at best dubiously. The second, because of the relatively small magnitude of its prescribed emendation, has been regarded as more acceptable; but there is a reason why it cannot be accepted, unless we are to posit yet another error in the text. The glyph at C3 carries as a prefix the sign T679a, which is a reliable indicator that the glyph to which it is attached signals the posterior date or names the posterior event to which a preceding Distance Number is to lead. Thus the text requires that the Distance Number 8.5.0 lead to the "4 Ahau 8 Cumhu — completion of 13 baktuns" that is stated in the following four glyphs (D3–C5) and *not* to 13 Ik end-of-Mol, as would be required by the second of these hypotheses (Thomas' first and Thompson's).

This impasse leads us to ask whether there may not be some other resolution of the problem. We may put the question this way: is there some fact which, if only we were aware of it and took it into account, would cause this problem to vanish? The answer, happily, is yes. It can be found from an examination of the structure of the prevailing type of textual units in the hieroglyphic inscriptions-units which we might as well call sentences, though their variety is limited.

One may first distinguish between those that make chronological statements and those that do not. We are concerned here only with the former, which are the vast majority. Among these, a second distinction can be made, between those that predicate only a single event, chronologically anchored, and those that make reference to two events, chronologically related to each other by means of a Distance Number expressing the interval between their respective dates, at least one of which can be anchored by reference to its surrounding context or by an anchor contained within it. In the inscriptions at Palenque — especially in the earlier ones — the two-event variety is by far the more frequent. The general formula for such statements can be expressed as follows:

Distance Number—Prior Event—Posterior Event

in which an event expression may in turn contain a verb, its subject, and the date of the event (given usually in the Calendar Round). Thus there are the following possible smaller constituents in such a statement:

DN – Verb₁ – Subject₁ – Date₁ – Verb₂ – Subject₂ – Date₂

It should be understood that this represents the overall pattern — the maximal form — of such two-event chronological statements. Occurring sentences exhibit abbreviations of this scheme in which one or another item (predictable and therefore redundant) is omitted and in which certain inversions of order are also allowable. For example, one of the subject slots may be unfilled for any of a variety of reasons, such as (1) both verbs may have the same subject, in which case it may appear either in the first or in the second subject position, but rarely in both; (2) one of the subjects may be the same as the last-mentioned one in the preceding sentence, so that it is obvious from context and need not be repeated; or (3) one of the verbs may be an impersonal verb, such as that expressing a katun-ending, or the "completion" of so-and-so many periods of some particular order. Similarly, *one or the other date slot in the scheme may also be unfilled*. This kind of abbreviation is particularly frequent. It entails, however, no loss of information. Given the Distance Number and either of the two dates between which it mediates, the other is recoverable. It is almost as though the scribes had edited out redundant information.

The point of this digression may now be stated:

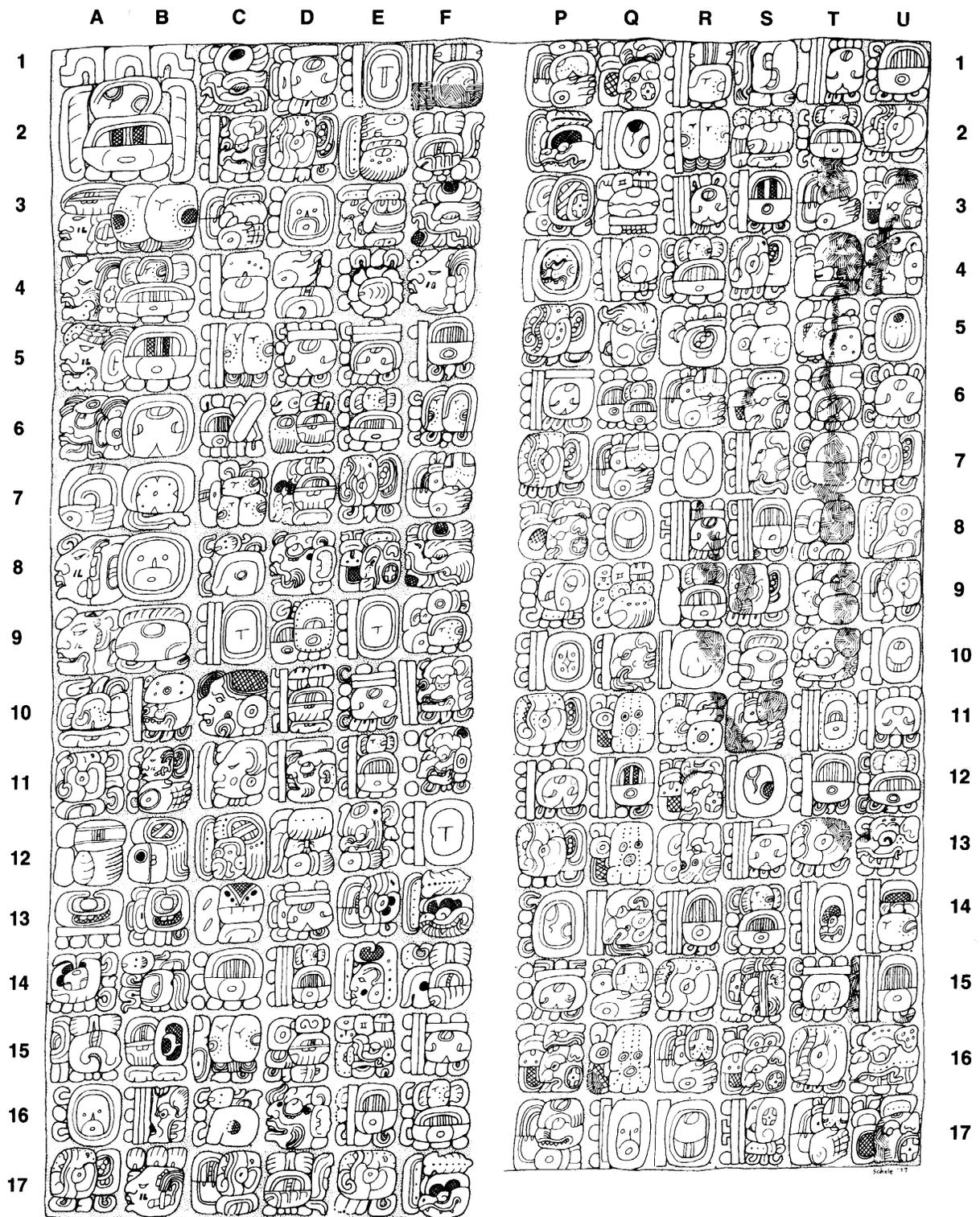


Fig. 1. Tablet of the Cross. Drawing by Linda Schele.

the passage which we have been considering contains no inconsistency at all. There is no problem that calls for emendation of the text. We have here merely one example out of many in the inscriptions of Palenque, particularly in the earlier ones, where one out of a pair of dates connected by a Distance Number is left unexpressed. We are led then to Cyrus Thomas' *second* hypothesis (1904) as containing the necessary and proper interpretation of this passage, except that this does *not* entail any change in the Initial Series date as he supposed that it would. His mistake was only in the assumption that the prior date of the pair in this passage had to be identified with one of those previously mentioned in the text. It does not. Rather, we have here to do with three different dates: the initial date on 8 Ahau 18 Tzec at 12.19.13.4.0; the preceding 819-day station, twenty days earlier, on 1 Ahau 18 Zotz 12.19.13.3.0; and the prior date of the next passage, the implied but unrecorded 1 Ahau 8 Muan 12.19.11.13.0, all of these before the beginning of the current chronological era. It makes no difference that there is no explicit recording of 1 Ahau 8 Muan in the text. Precedent for this kind of suppression of redundant information is abundant in the Palenque texts.

It is surprising that Eric Thompson didn't take up this solution, for he came very close to anticipating it. He was aware of the Palenque habit of suppressing redundant chronological specifications, and in 1936 he wrote:

Furthermore, in this inscription [of the Temple of the Cross], as in others at Palenque, a sort of shorthand system is employed, dates being given without any position in the Long Count, and Secondary Series [i.e., Distance Numbers] *which lead to suppressed dates*. (Thompson 1936: 287; bracketed notes and emphasis added)

What Thompson overlooked in this statement is that there are also Distance Numbers that lead *from* suppressed dates to recorded ones. Cyrus Thomas' 1 Ahau 8 Muan, at minus 8.5.0, or 12.19.11.13.0, is just such a "suppressed date" — in fact, only one of many in this inscription. It can never have been intended to be equated with the date recorded in the Initial Series.

All three previous hypotheses about this passage have posited errors in the text and have required amending it in one or more ways so as to fit whichever one of them is entertained. The one offered

here accepts the text as it is, positing no errors and prescribing no corrections. Should so easy a way out of the dilemma seem suspect, perhaps judgment can be reserved till the rest of the evidence is in.

Neither Cyrus Thomas in 1900 and 1904 nor Eric Thompson in 1936 and 1950 could have known what is common knowledge now, since Tatiana Proskouriakoff's discoveries (1960, 1963–64) about the nature of the events proclaimed by the glyphs at D2 in the present passage and at B17 in the initial passage. These are births — imaginary ones, of course, pertaining to mythic times. The one of the initial passage has already been noted as the birth of the ancient lady who is named at B17–C1. The one in the present passage has now to be taken as a different birth. But one thing is missing. There is no identifiable name glyph in the passage nor even any room for one. Which leads to the next problem.

III. Whose Birth? (D5–C8)

What we have so far from the passage under consideration above can be interpreted and paraphrased as follows:

It was 0 days and 5 uinals (D1) and 8 tuns (C2) from the birth (D2) [on 1 Ahau 8 Muan 12.19.11.13.0 (implied)] to ..?. (C3) on 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu (D3–C4) at the completion (D4) of 13 baktuns [13.0.0.0.0] (C5).

There are two problems in this. One is the lack of any indication of whose birth is recorded here. The other is the glyph at C3, which is represented in the above paraphrase only by the question mark. These will be dealt with in order. First the question of "who?"

If a name were found in this passage to accompany the "birth" glyph, and if it were a different name from that (at B17–C1) which follows the "birth" glyph of the initial passage, then we could be reassured that the proposed way out of the impasse of the "8.5.0" passage (D1–C5) is correct. But that confirmation is lacking; and under the circumstances it might be argued that the birth sign of the second passage (at D2) should then have the same referent as the one of the initial passage (at A17), which only re-creates the problem we had hoped to escape and presses us toward either Goodman's solution (change the Distance Number) or Thomas' 1904 solution with all that he took it to entail (change the Long Count number and the Calendar Round day of

the Initial Series).

But before yielding to that pressure we should ask again whether there may not be some fact which has escaped consideration so far, which, if taken into account, would cause this problem too to vanish. Again it turns out that the answer is yes.

This time the pertinent fact is one of Maya syntax, having to do with the order of nouns in relation to the words or phrases containing pronouns or pronominal inflections of which the nouns are the grammatical antecedents. Actually, Maya syntax is very flexible in this respect, allowing for several alternative orders, depending in part on the context and in part on what is to be emphasized or "topicalized" in the given sentence; but the order, which may be called basic, or neutral, or "unmarked," is one in which the noun is placed last. This is manifest in several kinds of constructions, such as in phrases with possessed and possessor nouns or in clauses with predicate and subject (which in Maya have several points of affinity with noun phrases which they do not have in English or in Spanish). Thus, for example: Yucatec *u yotoch Hwàn* or Chol *i yotot Wan*, literally "his house, John" (rather than "John's house" or "la casa de Juan" or the older and still regionally colloquial "su casa de Juan"); similarly, Chol *i bvk'tal ch'uhlelv*, literally "su cuerpo, el finado." So also in simple sentences: Yucatec *h lúbi le tùnicho'*, "It fell, that stone"; *ch'ùl le luuma'*, "It is soaked, this ground"; Chol *chvktihan i hol hini ch'iton*, "Ese niño tiene el cabello rubio" or, literally, "Rubia su cabeza ese muchacho."

We come now to the pertinent fact (for the problem in the glyphic passage) when we observe that the same word order that is valid for simple phrases and clauses, such as illustrated above, is valid and normal also for complex phrases and clauses — that is, for phrases having two or more possessed nouns with a common possessor and for clauses with compound predicates — especially when the conjoined parts are genuinely coordinate or simply sequential, rather than one dominant and the other subsidiary. Thus, Yucatec *u yatan yéte! u pàlil Hwàn* or Chol *yihñam yik'ot yalobil Wan*, "John's wife and his child," literally, "his wife and his child, John"; Chol *tsii bahbe chowal i tsii pvk'v yixim, htat*, "Hizo su roza y sembró su maíz mi padre."

In this potentiality of Maya grammar we may find license now to look somewhat further afield for

a subject to go with the seemingly unaccompanied predicate, the anonymous "birth" glyph (D2) of the passage that has given trouble. There is the possibility that this may not be a complete sentence in its own right but may be only one of two conjoined predicates sharing a common subject, in which case the subject might be found only after the second of the predicates. Proceeding then to the next predicate, we find that it begins — as do virtually all of them in this inscription — with a temporal phrase (D5–C7), this followed by an event glyph (D7), and then the name of the protagonist (C8–D8). Each of these calls for comment.

The temporal phrase consists of a Distance Number, 1.9.2 (D5–C6a), and a reference to the prior date from which it is counted. This latter (C6b–C7) is a glyphic phrase which occurs only in contexts which require that its reference be to the epoch day 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu (cf. Thompson 1962: 96). Another example at Palenque, in only slightly variant form, is in the inscription of the Temple of the Sun, at D16–N1–N2, where it stands as a descriptive modifier of "4 Ahau 8 Cumhu."

The event glyph (D7) is of unknown meaning. Since, however, its main sign and suffix constitute the usual "sky" sign, it may be presumed to contain some reference to that region. For now it can suffice to refer to it merely as the "sky" event, without further speculation as to the nature of the event.

The name of the protagonist (C8–D8) will be recognized by readers familiar with Heinrich Berlin's article on the Palenque Triad (1963). It is that of Berlin's "GI" (we might as well say "God I") of the Triad. It comprises two glyphs, the principal one of which is a portrait glyph (D8). This is present in all citations of the name in the Palenque inscriptions, of which there are at least sixteen. The first part of the name (C8) — a composite glyph with three components, including a numerical prefix 1 — must be either an optional part or else a gloss prescribing the reading of the portrait glyph. It is present in only four of the citations (TC:C8–D8, D16–D16; Pal. Tabl.: E10–F10, H15–16). Without venturing yet a reading of the name, we can refer to it here — for short and following Berlin — as "GI."

Assuming now that this clause is to be joined with the preceding predicate, we have for the sequence D1–D8 what may be expressed as fol-

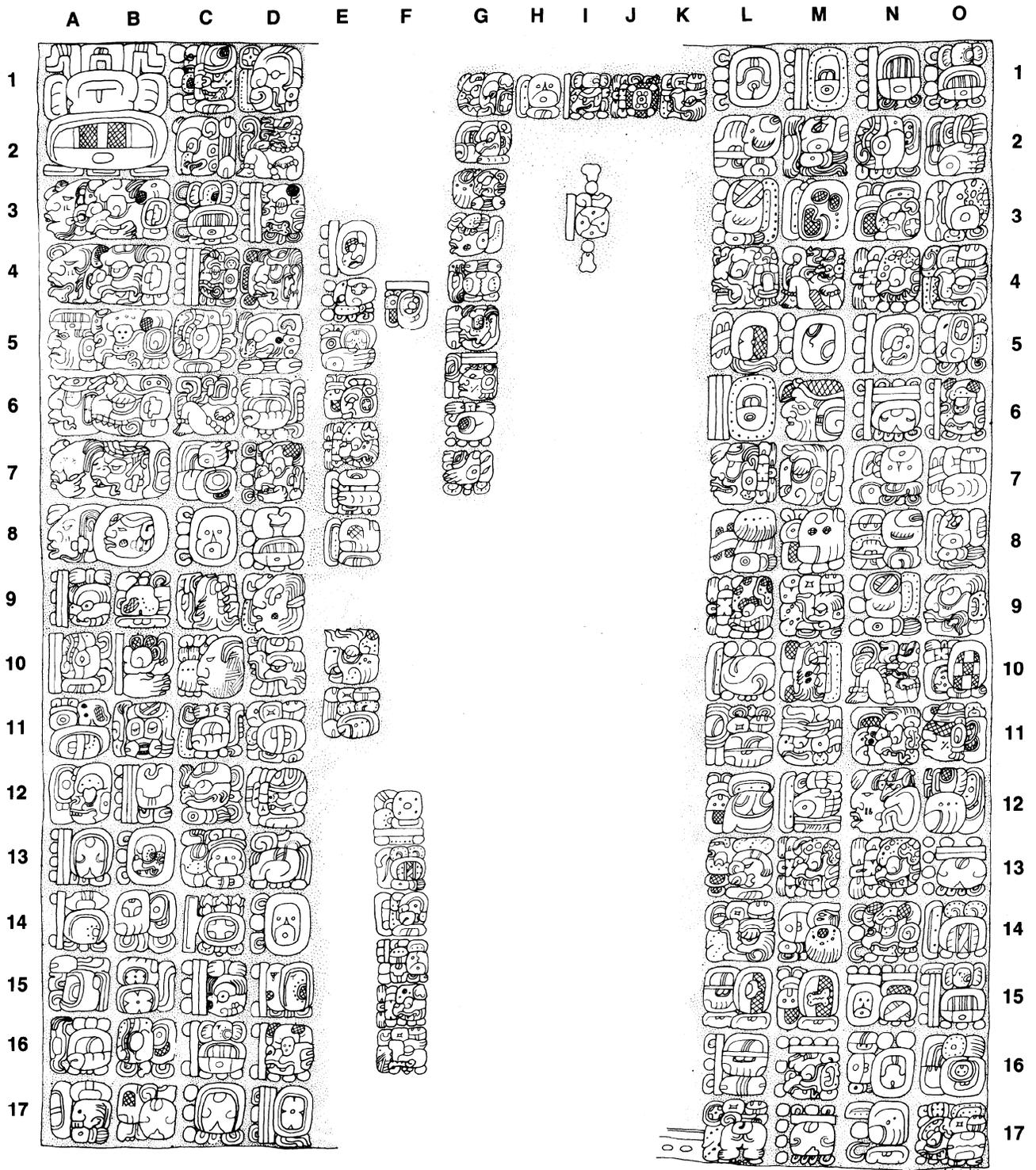


Fig. 2. Tablet of the Foliated Cross. Drawing by Linda Schele.

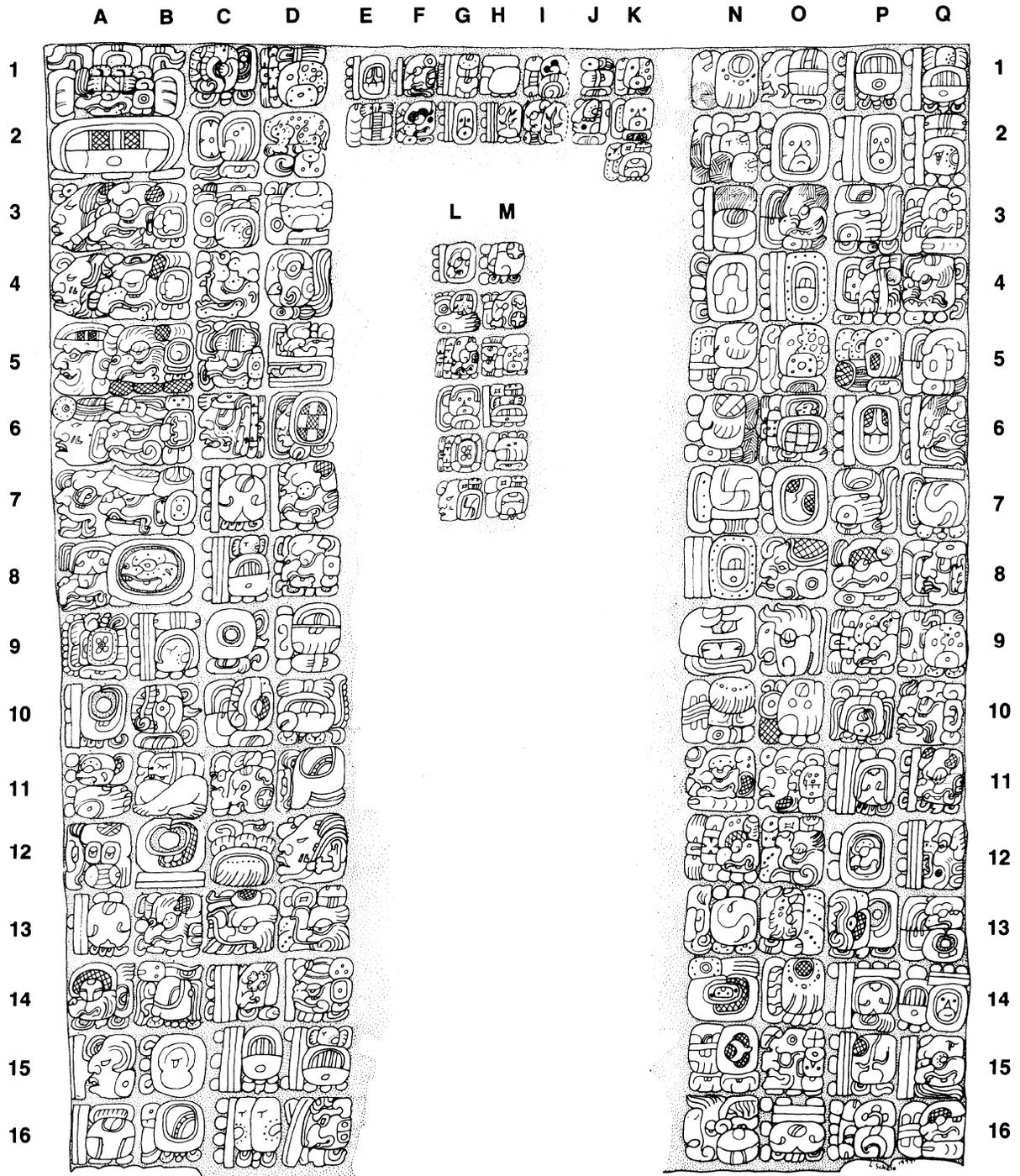


Fig. 3. Tablet of the Sun. Drawing by Linda Schele.

lows (including in the paraphrase this time only the information recorded, omitting the insertion of predictable details):

8.5.0 after his birth was . . . ? . . . on 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu, at the completion of thirteen baktuns, and 1.9.2 after the epoch was his "sky event," GI.

In this paraphrase the event expressions have been treated as nouns, their pronominal subjects as possessive pronouns, predication as the verb of occurrence or existence, and the explicit subject of the two personal event expressions as the grammatical antecedent of the possessive pronouns-*postposed* as in the grammatical order discussed above. This is in accord with the patterns of Maya grammar. Now we know the name of the one who was born at 8.5.0 before the epoch day, on 1 Ahau 8 Muan 12.19.11.13.0.

The glyph at C3 has still to be considered. (It is represented in the above paraphrase only by ellipses with a question mark.) Its prefix, marking it as representing the posterior of a pair of dates and/or events, was cited earlier as a reason for requiring that 8.5.0 lead to 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu (as Thomas in 1904 had it) rather than to 13 Ik end-of-Mol (as Thomas 1900, and Thompson, had it). Its central components — a deerhoof over an open hand (seen from the back) — correspond to the kernel of the event expression. Here it appears with affixes appropriate to its position as the second in a pair of event expressions that are linked by a preceding Distance Number, but where it is not preceded by a date with a posterior date indicator. Elsewhere at Palenque (Pal. Tabl.: E8; T-XVIII door jambs: B17) it appears with inflectional affixes appropriate to several other syntactic positions, including the one it occupies in those instances, viz., preceded by a date which in turn is preceded by a posterior date indicator. In those instances the designated event was one of those that take place in the early life of a prince before his accession to rule (in these particular cases at ages seven and fourteen, respectively, long before their accessions). There is no very good reason for interpreting the "deerhoof-over-hand" compound any differently in the present case; so it may be supposed that a corresponding event was narrated for the mythological protagonist of this passage. If this is correct, it would seem to be an important and momentous kind of event, for this marks the installation of the new chronological era.

IV. About the "Sky" Event (C9–C13)

In the text segments just reviewed (D1–C5 and D5–C8), there have been found references to three events in the career of the second mythological personage to be named in this inscription: his birth, his "deerhoof" event, and his "sky" event. At least the first two of these have analogues in the lives of human rulers. The passage continues with the notation of the day 13 Ik end-of-Mol (C9–D9). Our segmentation of the text — not having included this in the last segment discussed and paraphrased above — may have seemed arbitrary, for 13 Ik end-of-Mol is the Calendar Round position of (13.0)1.9.2, the day of the "sky" event of this second-named mythical personage. Under some circumstances it might well have been included (there is precedent for passages with just that order of constituent parts); but in this case the Calendar Round specification clearly belongs with what follows. We can recognize here, in a glyphic text, an example of a rhetorical pattern that is both widespread and ancient — in the Americas as in the Old World — and that is very much in evidence still in spoken Maya today, especially in ritual discourse, traditional narrative, oratory, prayers, and other formal uses of language. It is the pattern of the parallel couplet, consisting of a pair of words, phrases, or strophes having the same reference but contributing different aspects of the meaning, where the second repeats the essential content of the first while expressing it in a different or partially different manner. Examples from modern Maya communities have frequently been reported by linguistic fieldworkers, and examples from the *Popol Vuh* and from some of the books of Chilam Balam are well known. Though it may not have been anticipated in as unwieldy a medium as hieroglyphic writing, its presence yet ought not surprise us. So far it is known (to the writer) from two examples in the present text (the other will be encountered shortly), from several in other texts at Palenque, and from a few at Copán. Some of these show a further elaboration of the couplet form, with a lesser couplet incorporated into the second strophe of the principal couplet. The instance at hand is such a one, in this case having the following form:

Temporal phrase — Event — Protagonist
Temporal phrase — Event — Place — Protagonist
— Event — Place

Two different expressions locate the event in

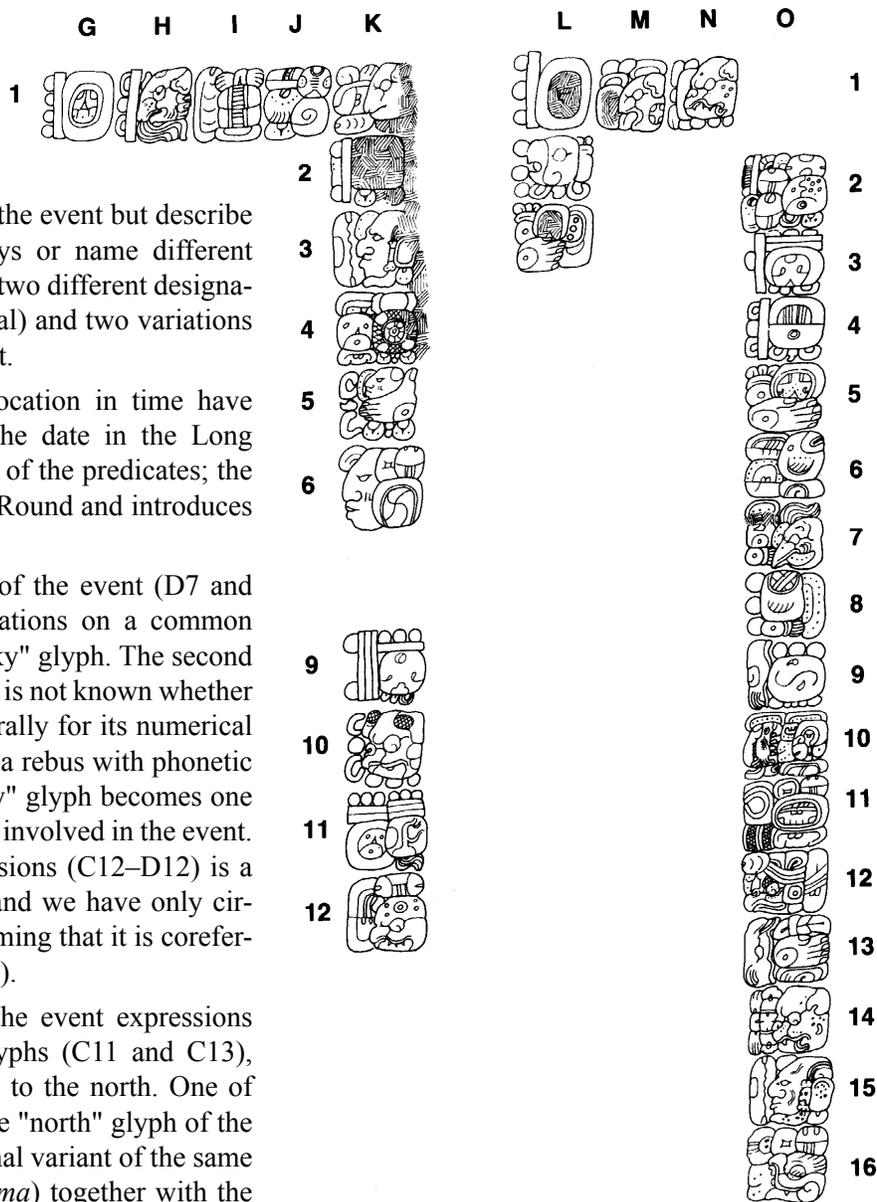


Fig. 4. Temple of the Cross, secondary texts. Drawing by Linda Schele.

time; three make reference to the event but describe it in somewhat different ways or name different aspects of the event; there are two different designations of its location (directional) and two variations on the name of the protagonist.

The two expressions of location in time have been noted. One expresses the date in the Long Count and introduces the first of the predicates; the other gives it in the Calendar Round and introduces the second.

The first two expressions of the event (D7 and C10–D10) appear to be variations on a common theme, both containing the "sky" glyph. The second has a numerical prefix 6, but it is not known whether this should be understood literally for its numerical value or whether it is there as a rebus with phonetic transfer. Elsewhere this "6 sky" glyph becomes one of the appellatives of the deity involved in the event. The third of the event expressions (C12–D12) is a wholly different expression, and we have only circumstantial evidence for assuming that it is coreferent with the others (see below).

The second and third of the event expressions are qualified by direction glyphs (C11 and C13), both of which have reference to the north. One of them (C11) is equivalent to the "north" glyph of the codices, having the inscriptional variant of the same prefix (a rebus for *xam* or *xama*) together with the head which in the inscriptions takes the place of the one in the codices that serves as the main sign of the glyph for "north," *xaman*. Another example attesting to the identification of this glyph is in the direction slot of the 819-day passage in the inscription of the Temple of the Sun, where the required direction is north. The other direction glyph here (C13) — a totally different expression — is one that has been posited as a "north" glyph by Thompson (1950: 251 and fig. 41.35) on the basis of its occurrence on Copán Stela A in a context in which it contrasts with recognized glyphs of the other three directions, complementing them and completing the set of four. It is composed of two signs, both with "serpent" associations. The prefix is the reduced conventional variant of Chicchan, and the main sign is one of the

"serpent segments." Thompson suggested that the ultimate reference of the glyph might be to some northern constellation, quite likely Draco.

The two expressions of the name of the protagonist (C8–D8 and D11) both incorporate the familiar portrait glyph of "GI" of the Triad, but with different modifiers. The modifiers clearly are optional, for the majority of the citations of this name in the Palenque inscriptions consist of the portrait alone.

The third of the event expressions (C12–D12) is postulated to be such for the following reasons: (1) it occupies a position in the structure of a recognized

rhetorical form, one that has precedent elsewhere in Maya inscriptions, that calls for it to be such; (2) like the second of the event expressions, this one also precedes a direction glyph with the same reference; (3) its constituent parts appear as event expressions, or as components in event expressions, in other inscriptions. It is not supposed that this third event expression is exactly synonymous with the other two, but only that it is co-referent. Its meaning can hardly be guessed at now but, as a first step toward its delimitation, the context of some other occurrences of its parts can be pointed out. It consists of two glyphs, the so-called "god C under sky-elbow" glyph (C12) and an inscribed and somewhat deviant form of the "house" (or "temple") glyph. In the Palace Tablet there is a two-glyph phrase in which the radical parts of the first glyph are a knot over a hand (these combining with apparently inflectional affixes) and in which that of the second glyph is the "god C under sky-elbow" compound (also with affixation). This appears in two different passages, each with couplet arrangements that delimit its reference if not its meaning. In the first (Pal. Tabl.: K10–L10) it recapitulates the import of one of the well-established "accession" expressions (at K7; see Mathews and Schele 1974) and is recapitulated by yet another (at K12–L12). In the second (Pal. Tabl.: O10–P10) it recapitulates a third of the recognized "accession" expressions (O1–P4). In still another passage it occurs (Q14–R14) in a context where its reference has to be to an accession but where it appears with a different head (an equivalent?) under the "sky-elbow"; and here it is followed by another pair of glyphs that includes the "house" glyph. In the Temple XVIII jambs (D4) the "god C under sky-elbow" glyph occurs in connection with a preaccession event at age sixteen in the life of the prince Chàhcal Ah Nabei, who is the subject of that inscription; but the immediately preceding glyphs are destroyed, so the remainder of the phrase is not known. In the Tablet of the 96 Glyphs (at B8) the "house" glyph occurs in a context that implies some action by Pacal in relation to his second-in-line heir Kan-Xul when the latter was ten years of age. Thus, from the fragments of circumstantial evidence that are available, it can only be concluded so far that the glyphs in the third event expression in the passage under consideration in the inscription of the Temple of the Cross (C12–D12) may be in some way appropriate in certain expressions that relate either

to occupancy, or to designation or preparation for future occupancy, of royal office. If this is so, and if it does indeed function as a gloss or recapitulator of the two previous parallel event expressions, then this third event in the early career of the mythical male personage — the "sky" event — is also one that, although mythico-cosmological in reference, is or was interpreted as in some respect analogous to an important event in the life of a king.

The paraphrase of these structurally linked text segments can now be completed, including this time its final installment:

8.5.0 after his birth was his "deerhoof" event on 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu at the completion of thirteen baktuns, and 1.9.2 after the epoch event was his "sky" event, "GI"; on 9 Ik end-of-Mol was his "sky" event in the north, "GI," his "sky-elbow" event in the house of the northern region.

Needless to say, the paraphrase leaves much to be desired. It is no more than the merest beginning. The chronology has been straightened out; the structure of the passage has been discerned and exposed; and its content has to some slight degree been adumbrated. The meaning of this bit of mythology, however, is far from clear. But, with what we have, we can pass to the problem of the next passage.

V. Who Is It This Time? (D13–F4)

Another Distance Number begins the next passage, which is of the same general form as noted previously: Distance Number — Prior Event — Posterior Event. Its first part is transparent, and a tentative paraphrase may begin somewhat as follows:

It was 0 days and 12 uinals (D13) and 3 tuns (C14) and 18 katuns (D14) and 1 baktun (C15) from the "sky" event (D15) of "GI" (C16–D16) to the birth (C17) of . . . ? . . . (D17) on 9 Ik 15 Ceh (E1–F1).

There is in this (at D15) yet another variation on the theme of the "sky" event, employing the same main sign as in the first two occurrences (D7 and D10) but with a different set of preposed and affixed modifiers. The assumption that the glyph refers to the same event is verified by the arithmetic. The stated interval, when applied to the date of the "sky" event as known from the preceding passage, does indeed lead to a day 9 Ik 15 Ceh as here recorded:

1. 9. 2 13 Ik end-of-Mol (D5–C6a,

C9–D9)

1.18. 3. 12. 0 Distance Number (D13–C15)

1.18. 5. 3. 2 9 Ik 15 Ceh (E1–F1).

The new event is yet another mythological "birth" (C17), and the glyph referring to the one born follows immediately (D17). Given just what is in this inscription, it could well be supposed that this glyph was the name of the personage whose birth is recorded here; but comparison with the inscriptions of the Temples of the Sun and the Foliated Cross shows that this is not the name of a unique individual but is, rather, a common appellative or a descriptive expression that applies also to two other characters, whose births are recorded in those inscriptions at intervals of four and eighteen days respectively after the birth recorded here. In those cases, a full complement of names and individualizing appellations is given for each of the other two personages *in addition to* this common appellative; but here, in the inscription of the Temple of the Cross, there is only the common appellative. One must wonder why the personage whose birth is recorded here is distinguished from the other two of this set of three only by the *absence* of a specific name. The appropriate logical inference for the unmarked member of a set is that it is in some way the member par excellence. Is that the case here?

Before attempting to provide an answer to this question, it is necessary to consider the remainder of the passage, that is, up to the next Distance Number. In the tentative paraphrase that was given above for the first part, the Calendar Round day 9 Ik 15 Ceh (E1–F1) was included — as it can be, and as it would have to be if the passage ended there, that is, if the next Distance Number immediately followed it. But the passage does not end there. Six more glyphs (E2–F4) intervene before the next Distance Number. This is a probable indicator of another parallel-couplet structure.

The consequences of such an assumption can be stated and tested. If the passage does indeed exemplify the couplet pattern, then (1) its first clause ends with the reference to the subject (D17), not with the Calendar Round day as in the above paraphrase; (2) the Calendar Round day 9 Ik 15 Ceh (E1–F1) constitutes the temporal phrase that begins the second clause of the couplet; (3) the glyph which follows this, at E2, has to be a second expression of the event, that is, it has to be a glyphic synonym for

"birth"; and (4) one or more of the glyphs which follow, beginning with F2, must make reference again to the same personage as was the subject of the "birth" expression in the first clause. Whether or not a third expression of the event may be found in these glyphs would depend on whether the second strophe is bifurcated in its predicate (as was the case in our first example) or whether it is of the simpler form. Either is within the range of expectation.

A crucial test of the hypothesis obviously would consist in the proof or disproof of consequence 3 above, that is, in a demonstration that the glyph at E2 is or is not a synonym for the "birth" glyph, as at C17. It will be shown that it is. The demonstration requires drawing upon information that is contained in the first pair of passages from each of the other two Temples of the Cross group and in the *alfardas* of all three temples. But, before proceeding to these, the remaining glyphs (F2–F4) of the passage at hand need to be reviewed.

The glyph at F2 is the same as that at D17, the common appellative of the three in this generation. It appears probable, then, that there is a second reference here to the personage whose birth was recorded at C17–D17. The glyph at E3 is a relationship glyph — one that expresses the relationship between a given individual and one of his parents, where the parent may be of either sex. A convenient paraphrase for it, if not a translation, is "child of." (This claim will not be defended here. It is one of the subjects of a forthcoming paper by Linda Schele, Peter Mathews, and the present writer.) The glyph at F3 is the same as that at C1. It is the name of the female personage born on the date of the Initial Series of this inscription, the mythological progenitrix. The glyph at F4 is the head that elsewhere serves as a title accompanying female names. Its reading can be shown to have been *Na'*, a word that means "mother" in several Maya languages and which is known from post-conquest vocabularies to have been used also as a title for ladies of high station. At B17, with a special superfix, this glyph appeared as a preposed modifier or title with the name of the lady. Here at F4 it follows as an appositive modifier. As such it is a substantive in its own right and is in turn modified by the preceding glyph. This modifier, at E4, has as its central element a sign, T188, which appears widely elsewhere in expressions of accession to royal office (cf. Proskouriakoff 1960). Current hypotheses associ-

ate with it a meaning pertaining to such office, especially as the prerogative of a ruling line or lineage. These glyphs (F2–F4) therefore do apparently constitute a second reference to the subject of the "birth" glyph, this time adding the information that the subject is the offspring of the lady of the initial passage, the ancestral mother.

Evidence bearing on the value of the glyph at E2 may now be adduced. On the basis of its position, and on the assumption that the passage at hand is of the parallel-couplet form, it was hypothesized that this should be another "birth" expression. Further evidence in support of the hypothesis comes from other inscriptions. The argument follows.

The date of the Initial Series of the Temple of the Sun is 1.18.5.3.6 13 Cimi 19 Ceh. The event ascribed to it is the birth of the mythical personage or deity whom Berlin has identified as "GIII" of the Palenque Triad. His birth is declared twice, in two successive passages that constitute yet another parallel couplet. The first of these has the Initial Series date as its introducing temporal phrase (TS: A3–B17, including lunar and other data), the ordinary "birth" glyph for its event expression (C1), and a name-and-epithet phrase eleven glyphs in length to designate the subject (D1–D6). The last of these glyphs (D6) is the name by which "GIII" is commonly known in other inscriptions, and it is preceded by the head-variant of the *Mahkina* title which either in this or in the simple affix form regularly accompanies the name glyph. The second statement is in the "Distance Number — Prior Event — Posterior Event" form (TS: C6–D13), with the first two of these parts constituting the temporal phrase and the last part the main predication. Here the "birth" glyph (C10) is in the inflected form for a posterior event, and the designation of the subject is a phrase (D10–D13) similar to the second designation of the still anonymous one of the Temple of the Cross. That is, this time "GIII" also is referred to by means of the common appellation together with the genealogical phrase describing him as the offspring of the ancestral lady of Palenque.

The date of the Initial Series of the Temple of the Foliated Cross is 1.18.5.4.0 1 Ahau 13 Mac. The event ascribed to it is a birth (B16), characterized here as "the third" of a series (A16) and introducing yet another mythological personage onto the scene. He is here designated by a six-glyph phrase (A17–

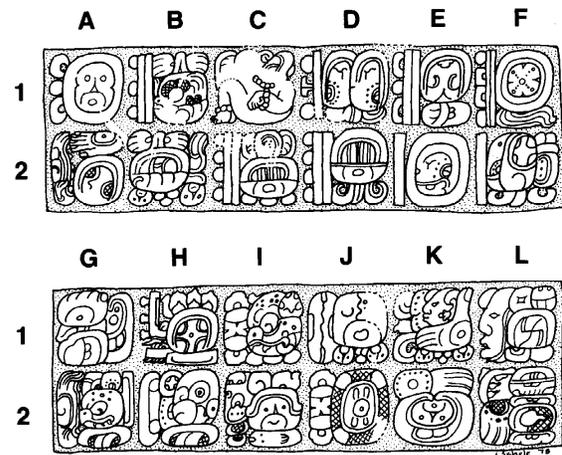


Fig. 5. Temple of the Foliated Cross, *alfardas*. Drawing by Linda Schele.

D2), of which the last glyph — a reclining infantile figure with torch and mirror symbols — is the indispensable component that is present in all citations of this name (sometimes abbreviated to just the torch-mirror device, minus the body of the figure). The second-last glyph of the phrase (C2) is a frequently accompanying praenomen. There is a second reference to the event and its protagonist (C5–D6), but it is not in a coordinate strophe of a couplet as it is in the Temple of the Sun. Instead, it is in the prior-event statement contained in the next passage. That passage, another in the couplet form, tells us that "1.14.14.0 after the birth of 'GII' was the completion of two baktuns (2.0.0.0.0)" and that "on 2 Ahau 3 Uayeb (also 2.0.0.0.0) was the 'hand-fish' event of the ancestral mother." There is much of interest in this passage, but what is relevant right now is the manner of designating the two personages named in it. The first of these is named (at D5–C6) by the same pair of glyphs as terminated the previous reference (C2–D2), though this time the last glyph has the torch-mirror device replacing the entire head of the reclining figure. But, in addition, his name phrase here includes also the common appellation (D6), which was used also in references to the other two of this set of quasi triplets, in the other temples. It will be seen further on in the passage that the ancestral mother also has this incorporated into her appellation phrase (at C11); but this one has an added component, the prefix that is a characteristic part of Emblem Glyphs. This puts it into a different category. This glyph and the one that immediately follows it (C11–D11) function here as an equivalent

of the Palenque Emblem Glyph with the heron head (T793a, Thompson's "Upturned Snout, no. 3"), substituting for that form which occurs after the same lady's name in the Temple of the Sun (TS: D13). (For some other examples of the substitution of the kernel components of the common appellative [T74:565 or T502:565] for the Palenque Emblem Glyph bird [T793a, with or without a T74 superfix], see figures 20 and 21 in Linda Schele's paper in Volume IV of this series.)

In summary, for the members of the second mythological generation we have the following identifying information:

Firstborn. Birth date 1.18.5.3.2 9 Ik 15 Ceh. Designated by the common appellative, and by relationship to the mother, but without any individualizing proper name or epithet (TC: D13–F4).

Secondborn. Birth date 1.18.5.3.6 13 Cimi 19 Ceh. Designated by the common appellative, by relationship to the mother, and by the name of "GIII" of the Palenque Triad (TS: A3–D13).

Lastborn. Birth date 1.18.5.4.0 1 Ahau 13 Mac. Designated by the common appellative, and by the names of "GII" of the Triad, but relationship to the mother is not specifically stated. Possibly it could be understood as implied by the context (TFC: A3–C15).

The firstborn so far remains anonymous. But further information is found in the *alfardas* from the three temples. These paired balustrade slabs have (or had) inscriptions of twenty-four glyphs each, twelve per slab in each pair. (See figs. 5–7; cf. Ruz Lhuillier 1958: 86–87, 141–142.) Each text contains two passages: a brief one of five glyphs and a longer one comprising the remainder. Only the first passage in each case is immediately pertinent to the questions here under consideration. The composition of these brief passages is as follows:

1. Each begins (in A1–B1) with one of the dates enumerated above, given in the Calendar Round: 9 Ik 15 Ceh in the TC *alfarda*, 13 Cimi 19 Ceh in the TS, and 1 Ahau 13 Mac in the TFC. That these are the Long Count dates 1.18.5.3.2, 1.18.5.3.6, and 1.18.5.4.0 respectively, is guaranteed by the content of the second passage in each case, together with the two surviving Distance Numbers (TC and TFC) that lead to a common posterior date, 5 Eb 5 Kayab 9.12.19.14.12.

2. Each of these dates is followed (at A2) by a common event glyph. This latter is composed of three parts: (1) the prefix T204, which is one of the third-person-pronominal set, that is, one of those that alternate seemingly freely with T1, *u*, in prefixed position (in the TC *alfarda* this is mostly obliterated but is assumed to have been the same or, at least, to have been one of the same substitution set); (2) a superfix T217, which is the "open hand" viewed from the back; and (3) the main sign T526, which is the Caban day-sign, also known with the reading *cab* for either of a pair of homonyms: *cab*, "earth" or "pueblo," and *cab*, "honey" or "bee."

3. This event glyph is followed in each case (at B2–C1) by a pair of glyphs designating a protagonist, the subject of the event glyph. One glyph of each of these pairs is T74:565.117.178b. This is the "common appellative" to which repeated reference has been made in the review above. The other glyph is variable. In the TFC *alfarda* it is T1030g, the reclining infantile "torch-mirror" figure, which is the principal name glyph of GII of the Triad. The TS *alfarda* is broken off at this point, but, by analogy with that of the TFC, one supposes that the name glyph of GIII of the Triad must have followed the common appellative in this case. In the TC *alfarda* the name is given by T1011, the portrait glyph of GI of the Triad!

The implications are clear. (1) The hand-over-Caban sign designates the event that took place on 1.18.5.4.0 1 Ahau 13 Mac, involving GII. This, as we know from the main TFC inscription, was his "birth." Therefore the hand-over-Caban sign is a probable synonym for "birth," substitutable for the usual upended-frog sign for "birth," T740. (2) The hand-over-Caban sign designates also the event that took place on 1.18.5.3.6 13 Cimi 19 Ceh. This confirms the inference just drawn; for this also, according to the main TS inscription, was a "birth," that of GIII. (3) The hand-over-Caban sign further designates the event that took place on 1.18.5.3.2 9 Ik 15 Ceh. Again there is confirmation; for according to the main TC inscription this was a birth. But there is also contradiction, for the *alfarda* attributes the 1.18.5.3.2 birth to GI, while the main inscription assigns the birth of GI to a date at minus 8.5.0, which was 12.19.11.13.0 1 Ahau 8 Muan. Therefore, either one or the other of the two inscriptions is in error, or else there were two "GI's." Whenever possible, it is preferable to choose the alternative that does not

require positing an error. The preferred hypothesis at this point, then, is that there were two mythological personages who bore the name of "GI."

It was the glyph at E2 in the main inscription of the Temple of the Cross that prompted this line of argument, the immediate purpose of which was to demonstrate that the glyph was another "birth" glyph, synonymous with the so-called upended-frog glyph and coreferent with the one at C17. The steps taken in the argument so far have shown instead that the hand-over-Caban sign is such a synonym. Remaining to be shown is a basis for equivalence between this latter and the glyph at E2.

The components of the glyph at E2 are the following: (1) the prefix T11, which is another member of the third-person-pronominal set; (2) the open-hand sign, T217, the same as that in the hand-over-Caban sign; (3) Landa's *ca* sign, T25; and (4) the Imix sign, T501. For this last, when employed as a phonetic sign rather than as a logogram, a value of *ba*, or of syllable-final *b* after a medial vowel *a*, was first posited by Kelley (1962: 306–307; cf. Proskouriakoff 1968: 250). It is now well attested in that value. Also well attested is Landa's value of *ca* for the immediately preceding superfix. The two together (T25:501) then spell *cab*. As such, the pair constitute a phonetically derived compound logogram that is equivalent to the simple logogram T526 in its reading *cab* and that is an eligible substitute for it. It is thus clear that the glyph at E2 in the main inscription of the Temple of the Cross (T11.217:25:501) is equivalent to that at A2 in each of the three *alfarda* inscriptions (T204.217:526), inasmuch as T11 and T204 are both substitutable for T1, and T25:501 is equivalent to T526 in its value *cab*. It has been shown that the glyph at A2 in each of the three *alfarda* inscriptions must be in some way equivalent to the usual "birth" glyphs with the upended-frog sign T740, probably representing a synonymous expression. This being so, the glyph at E2 in the main inscription of the Temple of the Cross is then similarly equivalent to the usual "birth" glyphs. This is what was posited earlier, but then only on the basis of a tentative hypothesis that the passage D13–F4 was of the parallel-couplet form and that the part E1–F4 was a recapitulation and rephrasing of the part in D13–D17. The test that was there proposed for the hypothesis has now confirmed it.

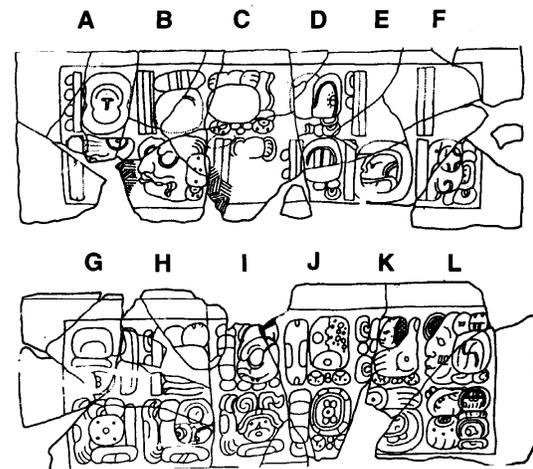


Fig. 6. Temple of the Cross, *alfardas*. Drawing by Linda Schele.

Words for "birth" and "to be born" in the Maya languages are numerous and varied. A few of the verb roots employed are Yacatec *zih*, Tzeltal *tohk*, *behk'*, Tzotzil *wok'*, Jacaltec *pitzk'a*, and Cakchiquel *ala*. These are but a sample. It is one of the most unstable items in the comparative lexicon. Other words for birth are derived from verbs meaning to "be" or to "exist" ("come into being"), to "live" ("become alive," "begin life"), "burst," "sprout," "emerge," etc., or from the noun for "human being" ("become a person"). In some cases, basic words for birth have come to be restricted to use in reference to animals, while other expressions — euphemistic or poetic in origin — have taken over in the human domain. In Chol, for example, the ordinary expressions for human birth are *ilan pañimil*, *k'el pañimil*, and *huli ti pañimil*. These are idioms whose literal meanings are "to see (or visit or experience) the world," "to see (or look at) the world," and "to arrive here in the world," respectively. Also recorded — as parallel expressions coupled with *huli ti pañimil* — are *k'el k'in*, literally, "to see the light of day," and *tvil lum*, "to touch earth."

The noun *cab* — or its expected cognate, *chab* or *chvb* — does not survive in Chol, either in the sense of "the earth" or "the world" or in any of the presumably related special senses that it has in some of the Maya languages, such as "region," "territory," "dwelling place," "pueblo," "house," etc. The word *pañimil* (or *pañvmil*, *pañamil*, *pañumil*), which takes its place, is derived from a root whose elementary senses include "front side," "top side," and "surface" ("exposed side"). Its use for "the

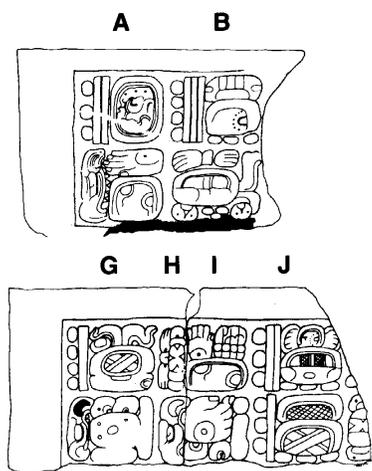


Fig. 7. Temple of the Sun, *alfardas*. Drawing by Linda Schele.

world" is analogous to the Yucatec *yok' ol cab* for "el mundo," literally, "its surface, the earth" (cf. English "the face of the earth"). It is analogous also to Chol *panchan* for "the sky," literally, "its surface, or its expanse, the sky."

The noun *cab* does survive in Chontal, however. Surprisingly it is in just that form (phonetic *kab*) rather than in the expected form *chab*. This implicates it as a borrowing from Yucatec. As such, it is assuredly an early one, very likely preconquest. It occurs as *cab* for "pueblo" and in *cabil* for "country" and "territory" in the 1610 document of the Chontal of Acalan in southern Campeche (Smailus 1975). La Farge recorded it as *kab* and *kaap* for two dialects of the Chontal of Tabasco for "tierra." The more general term for "the earth" or "the world" in the Chontal of Tabasco is *pancab*, a compound that incorporates the same root for "surface" as appears in the Chol word. From this compound noun (with an automatic vowel alternation) is derived the term for "birth" or "to be born" which is used in reference to humans: *apvncvbi*, literally, "to earth," that is, "to appear on the earth" or "to come into the world."

There is thus ample evidence from the most pertinent Maya linguistic area for idiomatic expressions for "birth" employing vocabulary items for "earth." It should then not be difficult to accept as "birth" expressions the glyphs at A2 in each of the three *alfarda* inscriptions and at E2 in the main inscription of the Temple of the Cross. These must be graphic representations of some Maya idiomatic expression similar to one or another of those that are documented for Chol and Chontal. The glyphs

depict "the earth" or "the world" either by means of the conventional logogram (the Caban sign) or by means of the phonetically derived alternative that can only represent the syllable *cab*. (The Chol expressions may be replacements or loan translations for analogous idioms with *cab*.) It would be tempting to take the hand sign that is over the "earth" signs as iconically motivated, that is, literally "touching the earth" (cf. *tvI pañimil* above). But it must be remembered that that hand sign, T217, is a glyphic affix that can be rotated, appearing in four different orientations. Here it is a super-fix and could be fancied to "touch"; in various other occurrences it is a subfix (e.g., in A7, B11, C3, and F7 of the same TC inscription), rotated 180 degrees, and if iconically interpreted would suggest "holding or receiving." But, if the value of this affix (like the values of others) is invariant to rotation, its position in any given case being a function only of the order of the constituent parts in a Maya linguistic expression, then the hypothesis of iconicity here should not be embraced too eagerly. Its value might equally well be phonetic. But, if so, a satisfactory hypothesis still escapes us.

Aside from the identification of some new "birth" glyphs, and the finding of another example of the parallel-couplet text form, the principal conclusion of this section has been that there are two "GI's." There remains the question of why the junior "GI" was not so named in the passages recording his birth in the Temple of the Cross (D13–D17, E1–F4). A tentative answer to that question is that, as the namesake of his sire and as the member par excellence of the class designated by the common appellation, it was simply understood in this locus where the sire's name is in the immediately preceding context. In all other inscriptions, where that context and the common appellation are absent, his name is given. Of these two mythological personages bearing the same name, only the junior is a member of the "Triad."

A still thornier question is the one concerning the significance of the glyph that here has been called the "common appellation" (T74:565:178b.118). No further attempt on that riddle will be made now.

An approximate paraphrase of the coupled strophes of this passage can now be given, though still with gaps at the loci of the common appellation and with a bit of invention in rendering the reference to

the ancient lady:

1.18.3.12.0 after the "sky" event of "GI" senior was his birth, . . . [common appellative, in reference to "GI" junior]; on 9 Ik 15 Ceh was his coming into the world, . . . [common appellative with same reference], progeny of the Ancient One, of the Mother of the Lineages.

IV. Conclusion

This is not the end of the problems in the mythological portion of the inscription of the Temple of the Cross. But it will suffice for the present. Solutions to some once seemingly intractable problems have appeared when consideration was given to certain basic facts of Maya syntax, poetic form, and text structure. "Suppressed dates" are no longer mysterious or suspect. They are merely what can be inferred from other information that is recorded. For example, if a ruler's age at accession is given, together with the accession date, obviously one can determine the date of his birth. Neither is subject ellipsis any more a source of bewilderment. It follows naturally from grammar, knowledge of which will assist in identifying the elusive subject. Nor is the string of noncalendrical glyphs following an already complete predication quite so opaque, when it can be shown that it is a recapitulation in other terms of the content of that predication.

This last feature offers opportunities to the decipherer not previously exploited, except in dealing with a different kind of text. Munro Edmonson has remarked on its utility in the decipherment of the romanized text of the *Popol Vuh*, where, because of the serious phonological inadequacies and ambiguities of the spelling, "often a dozen or more quite disparate meanings may legitimately be proposed for a particular monosyllabic root." But, "Knowledge that the author was writing in couplets may diminish this near-hopeless ambiguity by half or even more" (Edmonson 1971: xi–xii). The analogy in the hieroglyphic texts is obvious. If it can be known where to expect synonymies, there is at hand an opening wedge into some of the problems of glyph interpretation.

Finally, it deserves to be noted that the solution to the composite glyph at E2 (pronoun + hand-*ca*-Imix) bears on a question that has long been a sore point of disagreement in regard to the nature of the Maya writing system, namely, whether a grapheme in that system could ever be employed phonetically to represent something less than a morpheme of the

language.

As for the content of the inscription so far, the cast of characters that is before us includes a senior-generation pair who came into being before the beginning of the current chronological era, the male at 8.5.0 and the female at 6.14.0 before 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu, and a second-generation triad born at 1.18.5.3.2, 1.18.5.3.6, and 1.18.5.4.0. The intergenerational time span has mythico-cosmological dimensions. Evidence bearing on the identities of these five beings, and on the reading of their name glyphs, will be presented on other occasions.

Acknowledgments

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