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Aj-Ts'ib, Aj-Uxul, Itz'aat, & Aj-K'uhu'n: Classic Maya Schools of
Carvers and Calligraphers in Palenque After the Reign of Kan-Bahlam

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Aj-Ts'ib, Aj-Uxul, Itz'aat, & Aj-K'uhu'n: Classic Maya Schools of Carvers and
Calligraphers in Palenque After the Reign of Kan-Bahlam

by

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To Mom and Dad, who have always been proud of me.

Aj-Ts'ib, Aj-Uxul, Itz'aat, & Aj-K'uhu'n: Classic Maya Schools of Carvers and
Calligraphers in Palenque After the Reign of Kan-Bahlam

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Ancient Maya inscription carvers at the city of Palenque in what is now Chiapas, Mexico worked in teams to complete large and complex stone tablets. Like artists everywhere, they each had developed idiosyncratic habits which the modern connoisseur can learn to discern, in order to identify which parts of a particular monument were sculpted by one or another artist. The author scrutinized several eighth-century CE inscriptions, panels in stucco and limestone, analyzing how many artists worked on each, to wit: the *Temple XVIII Stuccos*, the *Temple XIX Platform*, the *Temple XIX Stuccos*, the *Temple XIX Panel*, the *Panel of the 96 Glyphs*, the *Lápida de la Creación* and associated fragments, the *Palace Tablet* and its associated fragmentary panels, and the *Tablet of the Slaves*. The ensemble whose main components are the *Panel of the 96 Glyphs* and the *Lápida de la Creación* are all by one hand, and the *Tablet of the Slaves* was the work of four carvers, but the *Temple XIX Platform* surprisingly employed fourteen carvers, and the *Palace Tablet* over a score. Their territories were not divided textually, and display idiosyncratic spellings of glyph compounds as well as carving habits. The conclusion discusses possible reasons for these findings, relating them to the unusual Maya practice of never correcting mistakes in monumental inscriptions. A likely reason seems to be that the ancient Maya considered these

texts not merely as a permanent record, but as ongoing, living repetitions of the ritual in question, and had to be completed in a very short time.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	x
Introduction & Chapter 1	1
0.1. Introduction	1
0.2. Acknowledgements	5
0.3. Author's note on punctuation and other conventions	6
1.1. The Idea: <i>Temple XVIII</i> Stucco Glyphs	11
1.2. <i>Temple XIX</i> Stuccos	18
1.3. Stone Inscription Sculptors	25
1.4. <i>Temple XIX Platform</i>	38
1.5. Comparisons with other inscription-carving traditions	60
1.6. <i>Temple XIX Limestone Panel</i>	74
1.7. The Palace <i>North Gallery Tablets</i>	81
1.7.1. Overview: The <i>Palace Tablet</i> and its cohorts	81
1.7.2. The Artists of the <i>North Gallery Panels</i>	83
1.7.3. Artists who got around	86
1.7.4. Further comparisons	89
1.7.5. Finally, the <i>Palace Tablet</i>	93
1.7.6. A clear initial example	93
1.7.7. Comparing Initial Series full-figure coefficients	94
1.7.8. Comparing <i>Ajaw</i> superfixes	94
1.7.9. Comparing phonetic spellings of <i>Janab Pakal</i>	96
1.7.10. Comparing 'dark spots' and ears	97
1.7.11. So why the big crowds?	100
Chapter 2 — Criteria for Distinguishing Maya Artists' Hands	102
2.1 Scope of this Inquiry	102
2.2. Background of Connoisseurship	103
2.2.1. Morelli, Oriental Experts, Beazley	103
2.2.2. Layout-Artists & Sculptors in an Egyptian Tomb	104
2.2.3. Hellenistic Inscriptions & European Medieval Manuscripts	106
2.3. Connoisseurship Applied to Maya Script	109
2.3.1. Zimmermann & the <i>Dresden Codex</i>	109
2.3.2. Styles and Materials Peculiar to Locales	110
2.3.3. A Tentative Morellian Approach; Hints of a 'Style Manual'	111
2.4. Maya Writing Technique and its Relevance to Form	121
2.4.1. European Writing Technique	121
2.4.2. Scribal Self-Consciousness and its Expressions: Chinese, Muslim, and European Examples	123
2.4.3. Maya Scribal Self-Consciousness and its Expressions	126
2.5. Criteria for Distinguishing/Identifying Maya Hands	127
2.5.1. Identifying Distinctive Characteristics of a Maya Artist Despite Deliberate Variation: <i>Panel of the 96 Glyphs</i> group	127
2.5.2. Tz'ak / DNIG Glyphs on the Palace Tablet by Different Artists: Six Elements or Aspects of Comparison	135
2.5.2.1. Introductory, "sign form"	135
2.5.2.2. 'Band width'	136

2.5.2.3. Favorite allographs	137
2.5.2.4. Modeling	137
2.5.2.5. 'Swastikas'	137
2.5.2.6. More favorite allographs	138
2.5.2.7. Caveats	138
2.5.3. Two u-Tz'ak-aj Glyphs by the Same Artist... maybe	139
2.5.4. Assumptions About Scribal Methods	141
2.5.5. The Glyphs Carved by One Artist: E15 and Its Neighbors	146
2.5.5.1. Method	146
2.5.5.2. F15, E16, ... to the End of the Double Column	148
2.5.5.3. F14, E14, ... Upwards to the Next Artist's Territory	149
2.5.5.4. Different Artist Continues Text at Top of Next Column; Same Artist Carves Lower Part of This Next Column	152
2.5.6. Another Artist Whose Work Abuts the E15 Hand	155
2.5.6.1. The Hand at H14 and Up	155
2.5.7. General observations on Palenque carving practice	159
2.6. The Full-Figure Initial Series Hand(s)	163
2.6.0. Introduction	163
2.6.1. From the Top	163
2.6.2. The Full-Figure Initial Series Hand(s)' Other Glyphs: Columns C & D	182
2.6.3. Summary of Initial Series Attributions (<i>See also</i> Section 3.07)	182
2.7. The Artists of the <i>Tablet of the Slaves</i>	185
2.7.1. Description and Statistics	185
2.7.2. Carving process	187
2.7.3. Hand 1	188
2.7.4. Hand 4	196
2.7.5. Hands 2 and 3	199
2.7.6. Attribution of Central Panel Glyphs to Hands 2 and 3, and the figures below to Hands 1, 2, 3, and 4	202
2.7.7. Details of Attributions	205
2.7.7.1. D2	205
2.7.7.2. <i>ya</i> and other 'curls'	206
2.7.7.3. Hand 4 at work on the 'drum major' headdress and glyphs associated with it.	206
2.7.7.4. Hand 1's image of the Father, Hand 4's Mother.	207
2.7.7.5. Details of Attributions: Hand C's image of Ahkal, 'Slave' 2, etc.	208
2.7.8. Some Problems With my Attributions	209
2.8. Technical Matters	211
2.8.1. The Style Manual for the <i>Tablet of the Slaves</i>	211
2.8.2. The <i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> ' production process	212
Chapter 3 — Commentaries on Tables and Figures comparing similar glyphs, assembled for the purpose of identifying individual Hands in the <i>Palace Tablet</i>	215
3.1.1. Lunar Series	215
3.1.2. Lunar Series Conclusions	220
3.1.3. Characteristics of the artist of the N16-M17 Lunar Series fragment	225
3.1.4. Surprising result	226
3.1.5. Characteristics of the artist of the R9-R12 Lunar Series fragment	227
3.2. Assign the 30 glyphs with <i>-la</i> or other 'Ajaw faces'	228
3.2.1. Four <i>-la-ta</i> suffixes	229

3.2.1.1. <i>-la-ta</i> suffixes, Hand M6-N6	229
3.2.1.2. <i>-la-ta</i> suffixes, The J14 and M13 Hands	231
3.2.2. Different elements identify different Hands: Return to the <i>96 Glyphs</i>	233
3.2.3. Hand M6-N6's other 'faces'	236
3.2.4. The other 'Ajaw face' Hands	237
3.2.5. Abstract <i>la</i> 's (Fig. 3-28).	239
3.3 <i>-ni</i> suffixes	240
3.4. Some Animal Heads of the L14 <i>Itz'i-Winik</i> Master	244
3.5. Distance Numbers	250
3.5.1 Hand-assignments according to the <i>Winik</i> glyphs	250
3.5.2. Assigning some other DN glyphs, the <i>Tz'ak</i> (or DNIG) glyphs	256
3.5.3. Assigning other DN glyphs	258
3.6. Calendar Rounds, etc.	261
3.6.1. The first three CR's	261
3.6.1.1. Standard 'Stone sign'	263
3.6.1.2. Various evidence grouping various other glyphs: <i>t</i> 's at E6, H9, and I9; the <i>Ik'</i> glyph (I11, C1 and D9);...	268
3.6.2. K6, M8, N9, and M15: Intrusion of One Hand Into Another's 'Territory'	269
3.6.2.1. Agreement	269
3.6.2.2. Conflict	270
3.6.2.3. Abrupt change	272
3.6.2.4. M15-N15	273
3.6.3. A Look Back: C1-D1 and F16-F17	275
3.6.4. Hand C1-D1's 'Territory'	277
3.6.5. The K7 "Fat/Flat" Master	286
3.6.6. Return of the L14 " <i>Itz'i-Winik</i> " Master	290
3.6.7. Hands' Individual Repertoires of Line-Qualities	292
3.7. 'Jawbones' and 'Skulls': ...	293
3.7.1.	293
3.7.2 'Skull Headdresses' in The Full-Figure Glyphs	304
3.8. <i>t</i> 's and <i>u</i> 's	312
3.9. <i>Nal</i> , <i>Nal + li?</i> , <i>Naab</i> , & related signs	314
3.10. Royal Names, EG's, <i>Mat</i> 'Birds,'	323
3.10.1 Introduction	323
3.10.2. Phonetic spelling of K'inich Janab Pakal	326
3.10.3. Kan-Bahlam's name	329
3.10.4. K'an-Joy-Chitam's name	331
3.10.5.	337
3.11. Workshop practice	337
3.12. <i>Te'</i>	338
Chapter 4. — Summary, Conclusions, etc. — What do we <i>do</i> with this information?	342
4.0. Introductory	342
4.1. We can better estimate/imagine the pool of high-quality artists in Palenque.	343
4.1.1. Production during a golden age	343
4.1.2. Modern carvers in Palenque	346
4.1.3. Why?	347
4.2 We can better estimate the production time of a major inscription.	349
4.2.1. Assumptions	350
4.2.2. How much was actually produced	350

4.2.3. Color painted on these reliefs	352
4.3 We can better understand the relationship between the artistic Master of the project and his Carvers.	355
4.3.1. The Palenque form of the 'daysing cartouche	355
4.3.2. Artists enjoyed some freedom	358
4.3.3. Individual spelling styles	360
4.4. We can better understand the Carvers' attitude toward their texts.	361
4.4.1. Trying to read minds across gulfs of time and culture	361
4.4.2. The <i>Palace Tablet</i> Carvers	363
4.4.2.1 A closer estimate of the time required	367
4.4.3. Artists' territories are generally contiguous	368
4.4.4. Limestone not in infinite supply	368
4.4.5. K'an Joy Chitam's capture	369
4.4.6. Falling through the cracks	370
4.4.7. Carving <i>in situ</i>	371
4.5. A word about errors and corrections.	372
4.5.1. The European tradition	372
4.5.2. Maya scribes made no corrections	374
4.5.3. Deliberate "errors"	375
4.5.4. Jewish and Chinese scribal corrections	380
4.5.5. Guided by forces beyond oneself	381
4.5.6. Motivation for artists' signatures	382
4.5.7. Patronage versus authorship	386
4.5.8. Complete erasures and other destruction of inscriptions.	386
4.5.8.1. Unlike correction, <i>erasure</i> was frequent	386
4.5.8.2. Aztec destruction of art	387
4.5.8.3. Maya destruction of art during "star wars"	387
4.5.8.4. Yaxchilan <i>Hieroglyphic Stairway 1</i>	388
4.5.8.5. Olmec ritual destruction and monument recycling	389
4.5.8.6. Maya ritual defacement of monuments	395
4.5.8.7. Mesamerican ritual art-sacrifice	397
4.5.8.8. Patterns (or lack of them) in reconstruction of pyramids	398
4.5.8.9. Late Preclassic inscription-erasure	399
Bibliography	401
Author's Vita	406

List of Figures

Fig. 1-01.	Part of Zimmermann's table of idiosyncratic glyphs distinguishing eight Hands	2
Fig. 1-02.	<i>Piedras Negras Stela 14</i>	4
Fig. 1-03.	Close-up details of left 'Slave', Woman's ear from Palenque <i>Tablet of the Slaves</i>	6
Fig. 1-04.	Seven glyphs containing the (<i>Kawak</i>) 'stone sign' or its diagnostics	9
Fig. 1-05.	<i>Temple XVIII Stuccoes</i> , 80 on display in the Palenque Museum	11
Fig. 1-06.	<i>Temple XVIII Stucco Glyphs</i> : 'Distance Number Introductory Glyph' <i>U-Tz'akaj</i>	13
Fig. 1-07.	<i>Temple XVIII Stucco Glyphs</i> : 'Long Lips'-Chan-Mat, father of Ahkal Mo' Naab	14
Fig. 1-08.	<i>Temple XVIII Stucco Glyphs</i> : Name glyph of (Ahkal) Mo' Naab	15
Fig. 1-09.	Four adjacent glyphs in Palenque <i>Temple XIX Platform/Throne</i> , with three different forms of the 'u' syllable	16
Fig. 1-10.	Palenque <i>T XIX Stucco Panel</i>	18
Fig. 1-11.	Palenque <i>T XIX Stucco Panel</i> : top panel with ten glyphs	18
Fig. 1-12.	Palenque <i>T XIX Stucco Panel</i> : middle with two glyphs	18
Fig. 1-13.	<i>Temple XIX Stucco Relief</i> : A2, D1, D3. Three examples of 'Bird-with-Fish' glyph	19
Fig. 1-14.	D2 <i>hi</i> syllabogram	20
Fig. 1-15.	<i>Chum-mu-Tuun-ni</i> at C1	20
Fig. 1-16.	<i>Temple XIX Stucco Relief</i> : D4 and D5, two <i>Ch'ok</i> collocations at D4 and D5.	21
Fig. 1-17.	<i>Ch'ok</i> examples from <i>T. XVIII</i> .	21
Fig. 1-18.	<i>Temple XIX Stucco Relief</i> : three <i>Ajaw</i> daysigns.	22
Fig. 1-19.	<i>Temple XVIII Stucco Glyphs</i> : 'Ajaw' daysign and related <i>la</i> glyphs.	22
Fig. 1-20.	<i>Temple XIX Stucco Panel</i> : Attributions of the 12 glyphs to four Artists, with detail from <i>Tablet of Slaves</i>	24
Fig. 1-21.	<i>Panel of the 96 Glyphs</i> , detail: lower part of columns K-L.	26
Fig. 1-22.	<i>Panel of the 96 Glyphs</i> .	26
Fig. 1-23.	<i>Lapida de la Creación</i> (found with <i>Panel of the 96 Glyphs</i>). Composite photograph	27
Fig. 1-24.	<i>Lapida de la Creación</i> Right text detail (found with <i>Panel of the 96 Glyphs</i>)	27
Fig. 1-25.	Trapezoidal slabs bearing images of Chaak, now housed in San Diego Museum of Man and Palenque Bodega	28
Fig. 1-26.	Fragments found near Façade of the <i>Palace</i> (Schele & Mathews, 1979, item #37), now housed respectively in the Palenque Bodega and Villhermosa Museum.	28
Fig. 1-27.	Incised and Relief glyphs comparison: Palenque 'Rabbit Skull'-type Emblem Glyph, from <i>Tablet of 96 Glyphs</i> , and <i>Panel</i> and <i>Platform</i> from <i>Temple XIX</i> .	29
Fig. 1-28.	Incised and Relief glyphs comparison: Two versions of <i>Yo-ko-2ne -Tal Yajaw K'ak's</i> name, from Temple XIX, compared with detail of <i>Naj Tunich Cave Drawing 82</i> .	29
Fig. 1-29.	Kalak'mul Stela 51, detail: Engraved text (scribal signature[s]), with one "normal" (sculptural) glyph.	31
Fig. 1-30.	Yaxchilan Lintel 46, detail: Scribal signature and part of a "normal" text glyph	32
Fig. 1-31.	PN Panel 3, detail, engraved text.	33
Fig. 1-32.	Piedras Negras engraved shell.	33
Fig. 1-33.	Early Classic Greenstone Engraved Belt-Celt from Kalak'mul.	34
Fig. 1-34.	Caracol Stela 6 incised text.	35
Fig. 1-35.	K3409, Slate Scepter with incised text, private collection.	36
Fig. 1-36.	Reverse of Palenque stone incensario:, drawing and photograph	37
Fig. 1-37.	<i>Temple XIX Platform</i> South Side.	38
Fig. 1-38.	<i>Temple XIX Platform</i> West Side.	38
Fig. 1-39.	Unfinished area near base of the <i>Dumbarton Oaks Palenque Panel</i> .	39

Fig. 1-40.	Glyphs from 96 Glyphs and <i>T. XIX Platform</i> at the same scale.	40
Fig. 1-41.	<i>T. XIX Platform</i> - Eight examples of the god G1 — C6, H1, Label 4 gl. 2, J1, P5, T3 [sans title], V1 [sans title], W7.	41
Fig. 1-42.	<i>T. XIX Platform/Throne</i> - Four examples of the Sajal collocation.	43
Fig. 1-42.	<i>T. XIX Platform/Throne</i> - Four examples of the Sajal collocation.	43
Fig. 1-43.	Details of the four <i>Sajal</i> glyphs in 1-42, showing four different sets of tools.	44
Fig. 1-44.	<i>T. XIX Platform/Throne</i> with delineation of work areas	47
Fig. 1-45.	<i>T. XIX Platform/Throne</i> : work of the “Fine Hatching Master”, Columns UVWX & Label 11 (Stuart’s West Columns EFGH & N).	49
Fig. 1-46.	<i>Temple XIX Platform</i> : Glyphs of the “Fine Hatching Master”.	50
Fig. 1-47.	<i>Temple XIX Platform</i> : More glyphs of the “Fine Hatching Master”.	51
Fig. 1-48.	<i>Temple XIX Platform</i> under excavation, South Side.	52
Fig. 1-49.	<i>T. XIX Platform</i> : Heads of the three figures on West side (Personages 8, 9, and 10) with <i>pentimenti</i> .	52
Fig. 1-50.	<i>Temple XIX Platform</i> : hands, purses of three figures on West side.	54
Fig. 1-51.	Hands and purses (incense-bags?) of Personages 1, 2, and 3 of <i>Temple XIX Platform</i> ’s South side.	55
Fig. 1-52.	<i>Temple XIX Platform</i> : Labels of three figures on West side...	57
Fig. 1-53.	<i>Temple XIX Platform</i> : faces of seven figures on South side.	58
Fig. 1-54.	Labels of seven figures on South side.	59
Fig. 1-55.	Roman inscription, carved calligraphic lettering.	60
Fig. 1-56.	Rubbing-exemplar of carved calligraphic writing. Chinese, Tang Dynasty.	61
Fig. 1-57.	Egyptian drawing for carving, unfinished 18 th -Dynasty tomb TT92.	62
Fig. 1-58.	<i>Xcalumk’in Monkey-Vessel</i> . Fort Worth, Kimbell Museum.	64
Fig. 1-59.	<i>Xcalumk’in Monkey-Vessel</i> , detail of monkey in headdress.	65
Fig. 1-60.	<i>El Peru Stela 34</i> , three of the eight <i>Yuxul(?)</i> signatures. Cleveland Museum.	66
Fig. 1-61.	<i>El Peru Stela 34</i> , a <i>Yuxul(?)</i> signature inside the mouth of the Lady’s <i>Xok</i> -belt-mask.	67
Fig. 1-62.	<i>T. XIX Platform/Throne</i> : Table of idiosyncratic glyphs distinguishing fourteen Hands.	68
Fig. 1-63.	<i>T. XIX Platform/Throne</i> : Table of idiosyncratic glyphs, upper left corner.	69
Fig. 1-64.	<i>T. XIX Platform/Throne</i> : Table of idiosyncratic glyphs, upper right corner.	70
Fig. 1-65.	<i>T. XIX Platform/Throne</i> : Table of idiosyncratic glyphs, lower left corner.	71
Fig. 1-66.	<i>T. XIX Platform/Throne</i> : Table of idiosyncratic glyphs, lower right corner.	72
Fig. 1-67.	<i>Temple XIX Limestone Panel</i> . Drawing of whole. Inset: portrait of Ahkal Mo’ Naab.	73
Fig. 1-68.	<i>Temple XIX Limestone Panel</i> . Details of face with ‘eccentric obsidian’ earflare of, and ‘purse’ of, Personage 3 (Yok-Nen-Tal-Yajaw-K’ak’).	74
Fig. 1-69.	<i>Temple XIX Limestone Panel</i> . Detail of headdress of Personage 3 (Yok-Nen-Tal-Yajaw-K’ak’).	75
Fig. 1-70.	<i>Temple XIX Limestone Panel</i> . Photo-montage of Yok-Nen-Tal-Yajaw-K’ak’, with his name label, just after excavation.	76
Fig. 1-71.	Ahkal Mo’ Naab’s unusually-spelled name from <i>Temple XIX Throne & Panel</i> .	77
Fig. 1-72.	<i>T. XIX Panel</i> : <i>ch’o-ko</i> title, from uppermost text and lower label.	77
Fig. 1-73.	<i>T. XIX Panel</i> : Initial series and part of a name and <i>Ajaw</i> title from lower label.	78
Fig. 1-74.	<i>Temple XIX Panel</i> : peculiar glyphs, from centered upper text.	79
Fig. 1-75.	<i>Temple XIX Panel</i> , Emblem Glyphs. Three different Hands.	79
Fig. 1-76.	<i>Temple XIX Panel</i> , faces of the three figures; two different Hands.	80
Fig. 1-77.	<i>Temple XIX Panel</i> , comparison of glyphic ‘faces.’	80
Fig. 1-78.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , Drawing by Merle Greene Robertson.	81
Fig. 1-79.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , Detail of upper portion showing parents (?) presenting the ‘Drum-Major Headdress’ and <i>Took’-Pakal</i> .	82

Fig. 1-80. <i>Palace North Gallery Tablets.</i>	83
Fig. 1-81. <i>Palace North Gallery Tablet #39, DN & i-u-ti glyphs.</i>	84
Fig. 1-82. <i>Palace North Gallery Tablets #39, 40 & 44.</i>	85
Fig. 1-83. <i>Palace North Gallery Fragments</i> surrounded by details of upper <i>Temple XIX</i> .	86
Fig. 1-84. <i>Temple XIX Tablet.</i> Comparison of the 'pierced leaves' seen in Figs. 1-83 and 1-85.	87
Fig. 1-85. <i>Temple XIX Tablet.</i> 'Xok fish' at top of the backrack that dominates this sculpture	88
Fig. 1-86. <i>North Gallery Panel #40, Temple XIX Tablet, Palace Tablet.</i> Three 'Xok fish' by the same Artist	89
Fig. 1-87. <i>North Gallery Panel #44, Temple XIX Tablet, Palace Tablet.</i> Foliage and foliate-like <i>ja</i> glyphs from <i>Temple XIX Tablet's</i> "Xok Monster Master" ...	90
Fig. 1-88. <i>Palace Tablet,</i> The four heads of Jaguar, Xok, Xok and Snake on the three 'Thrones of Creation.'	91
Fig. 1-89. <i>Palace Tablet,</i> The heads of Jaguar and Snake projecting from the first and third 'Thrones of Creation.'	91
Fig. 1-90. <i>Temple XIX Panel</i> and <i>Palace Tablet.</i> Glyphs by the "Xok-Monster Master" of <i>Temple XIX Panel</i> ...	92
Fig. 1-91. <i>Palace Tablet,</i> Tz'ak glyphs differentiating hands.	93
Fig. 1-92. <i>Palace Tablet,</i> Initial Series glyphs by different Hands.	94
Fig. 1-93. <i>Palace Tablet,</i> six selected <i>Ajaw</i> superfixes.	95
Fig. 1-94. <i>Palace Tablet,</i> all <i>Ajaw</i> superfixes.	96
Fig. 1-95. <i>Palace Tablet,</i> phonetic spelling of Janab Pakal's name.	96
Fig. 1-96. Faces of various figures carved in Palenque reliefs.	99
Fig. 1-97. <i>Palace Tablet,</i> Various treatments of 'dark areas' such as bands or 'spots.'	98
Fig. 2-01. Two Ancient Greek inscriptions by same carver, 194-147 BC.	107
Fig. 2-02. Colophon page of <i>Codex Amiatinus</i> , top seven lines.	108
Fig. 2.03. (= Fig. 1.01). Upper part of Zimmermann, plate 5; characteristic glyphs of his designated scribes	109
Fig. 2-04. Ears from various Palenque monuments.	111
Fig. 2-05. Ears from two Palenque monuments, enlarged	112
Fig. 2-06. Feet from various Palenque monuments.	113
Fig. 2-07. Eyes from various Palenque monuments.	114
Fig. 2-08. Profiles, and especially mouths, from three Palenque monuments.	114
Fig. 2-09a. Hands carved on Palenque Figures and on glyphs: <i>Palace Tablet.</i>	115
Fig. 2-09b. Hands carved on <i>Temple XIX Platform</i> and <i>Tablet of the Slaves.</i>	116
Fig. 2-10. Palenque <i>Palace Tablet,</i> God GI (<i>Jun-ye-Nal Chaak[?]</i>).	117
Fig. 2-11. Varied Spellings of name of Copan lord Yax-Pasah-Chan-Yopaat.	118
Fig. 2-12. Part of Full-Figure Inscription on Quirigua Monument 2 (Zoomorph P).	119
Fig. 2-13. <i>u-Tz'ak-aj</i> from <i>Panel of 96 Glyphs.</i>	120
Fig. 2-14. Painted ceramic glyphs reveal the order and direction of brush-strokes.	121
Fig. 2-15. Stroke-direction for letter A, E, S, G, H through history.	122
Fig. 2-16. <i>Cataneo Copy-Book</i> , folio 2v. Written by Bennardino Cataneo of Siena, 1545.	125
Fig. 2-17. <i>Ni</i> suffixes of the <i>96 Glyphs Master</i>	128
Fig. 2-18. Three <i>ba</i> 'gophers' carved by the Master of the <i>96 Glyphs.</i>	129
Fig. 2-19. <i>u-Kab-ji-ya</i> "agency" collocation on the <i>Tablet of the 96 Glyphs</i> and the <i>Creación Panel</i> , respectively	130
Fig. 2-20. <i>Tablet of the 96 Glyphs.</i> five 'skull'-type Emblem glyphs.	131
Fig. 2-21. <i>Tablet of the 96 Glyphs.</i> K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab's name.	132
Fig. 2-22. <i>Tablet of the 96 Glyphs.</i> <i>Sak nu-ku Nah</i> "house event" collocation.	133
Fig. 2-23. (=Fig. 1-91). Eight <i>Tz'ak</i> collocations, and a similar glyph, from the <i>Palace Tablet.</i>	135

Fig. 2-24.	<i>Tz'ak</i> collocations, highlighted to emphasize the "sign form," from the <i>Palace Tablet</i> .	136
Fig. 2-25.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> . Three "identical" u-prefixes from the above collocations.	137
Fig. 2-26.	(right). The same collocations scrutinized for details of carving finishes.	137
Fig. 2-27.	(detail of 2-23). Two pairs satisfy criteria for attribution to the same Hand.	139
Fig. 2-28.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>Aj</i> 's, see also Fig. 2-23.	140
Fig. 2-29.	Cursive slanted sign-forms in painted glyphs, echoed in E15 Master.	146
Fig. 2-30.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , E15 Master: His distinctive slant and cursive "sign-forms." Also his distinctive form of the <i>wa</i> -syllable.	148
Fig. 2-31.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , E15 Master: Glyphs E13-F15.	149
Fig. 2-32.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , E15 Master and other(s): Glyphs E12, F12, F10.	150
Fig. 2-33.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , E15 Master and other(s): Comparing the width of the arched forms in Glyph E15 (wide, slanted) with those in E12, O13, and O15 (narrow, vertical).	150
Fig. 2-34.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , E15 Master and other(s): Crosshatched 'dark' areas on glyphs in E15's neighborhood.	151
Fig. 2-35.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> . Comparing <i>Ajaw</i> superfixes F13 & H7, E17 and G10 12- <i>Ajaw</i> dates; F10 & H10 earflares, E19 <i>Ch'ok</i> 'scattering' & G15 <i>K'uh</i> .	152
Fig. 2-36.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : G15 <i>u-K'uhul-li</i> cf E19 'scattering' & F14 <i>K'uhul</i> .	153
Fig. 2-37.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : H15 & E10 <i>Hun-ye-Nal</i> , and <i>li</i> 's,	153
Fig. 2-38.	H14 & F9 <i>Yichnal</i> , other <i>Naks</i> and <i>Naabs</i> , and comparable glyphs.	155
Fig. 2-39.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : EG's at H13, H7 & K11. ... the "Blunt Corner Master."	157
Fig. 2-40.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Edge-molding details of H14 & H7 & E15 & neighbors.	158
Fig. 2-41.	T12 'a or 'Aj glyphs from <i>Tablet of the 96 Glyphs</i> , <i>Palace Tablet</i> , <i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> , and the <i>Temple XIX Platform</i> .	160
Fig. 2-42.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Four rare <i>la-ta</i> suffixes on Distance Numbers (counting toward death dates), and a comparable calendric.	162
Fig. 2-43.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , The 'Initial Series Introductory Glyph' A1-B2.	164
Fig. 2-44.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , The Second Initial Series Glyph, "9 'Bak'tun' (9 <i>Pih</i>)" A3-B4.	167
Fig. 2-45.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , Third Initial Series Glyph, "11 'K'atuns,'" A5-B6.	169
Fig. 2-46.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , Initial Series 'Birds' and 'claws.' Three different artists...	170
Fig. 2-47.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , Initial Series 'Bird heads.' Three different artists.	171
Fig. 2-48.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , Fourth Initial Series glyph, 'Tun' (<i>Haab</i>) glyph & coefficient 11, A7-B8.	172
Fig. 2-49.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> Initial Series 'mandibles' on K'atun coefficient and on 'Tun Bird' (<i>Haab</i>): glyphs A5, B7.	174
Fig. 2-50.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , The fifth IS glyph, A9-B10, '17 Winal.'	175
Fig. 2-51.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , Comparison of 'skull' headdresses on numerical coefficient figures.	177
Fig. 2-52.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Sixth IS glyph, "Zero <i>K'in</i> ," A11-B12.	178
Fig. 2-53.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Seventh IS glyph, 11 <i>Ajaw</i> , A13-B14	179
Fig. 2-54.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Initial Series and adjacent columns with attributed territories.	182
Fig. 2-55.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> .	184
Fig. 2-56.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> , Hand 1: first column of glyphs, head of left Personage.	188
Fig. 2-57.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : 'Moons.'	189
Fig. 2-58.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : Spirals, <i>ya</i> and 'spacers.'	190
Fig. 2-59.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : Hand 1's carving of Ahkal Mo'Naab's Father & the 'Slave' supporting him.	191
Fig. 2-60.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : Details of the 'Drum-Major headdress' and associated glyphs	192
Fig. 2-61.	<i>Temple XIX Panel</i> & <i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : Comparing serpentine feathers.	193
Fig. 2-62.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : Glyphs by Hand 4.	193
Fig. 2-63.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : Ahkal's Mother by Hand 4.	194
Fig. 2-64.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : Faces of the three main Figures.	196
Fig. 2-65.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : Faces of three 'slaves.'	196

Fig. 2-66.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : Name of Ahkal's Father.	197
Fig. 2-67.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : Comparison glyphs, Hands 1 and 4.	195
Fig. 2-68.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : 4 <i>Ajaw</i> & 6 <i>Ajaw</i> , adjacent titles by Hands 3 and 4.	198
Fig. 2-69.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : 'Hand' glyphs (<i>K'al</i> and <i>Tzutz</i>) by Hands 1, 2, & 3.	198
Fig. 2-70.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : Chak-Zutz's name by Hands 2 & 3. With comparable 'small-mammal' heads and indented bars.	199
Fig. 2-71.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : <i>Kab</i> glyphs, Hands 2 & 3 (& yet another Hand?).	199
Fig. 2-72.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : <i>Chak</i> and <i>ko</i> glyphs and related 'bars' in <i>sa</i> .	200
Fig. 2-73.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> , Ahkal Mo' Naab, Slave 2, and Slave 3: their faces, hands, feet.	201
Fig. 2-74.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> , <i>Temple XIX Panel</i> : 'incense purses,' Bodega Fragment #45.	202
Fig. 2-75.	Drawing of <i>Tablet of Slaves</i> with attributions.	203
Fig. 2-76.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> . The 'Shell-Wing Dragons' atop the head of Ahkal's Parents	206
Fig. 2-77.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> . Carving details on the 'Drum Major Headdress	206
Fig. 2-78.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> . Comparable glyphs by Hand 2: <i>K'ayab</i> , <i>Ik'</i> , <i>'a</i> , <i>ya</i>	209
Fig. 3-01a.	Comparison: Three Lunar Series. (M16-N17, A15-B17, & R9-R12.) First part: Glyphs G, F, E, (Y?), D, & C	213
Fig. 3-01b.	Comparison: Three Lunar Series. (M16-N17, A15-B17, & R9-R12.) Second part: Glyphs X, B, and A.	214
Fig. 3-02.	Comparison: Glyph X of the Lunar Series. A <i>K'uh</i> within a 'jaguar' mouth, both within the mouth of an 'ophidian monster.'	215
Fig. 3-03.	Comparison: The <i>Palace Tablet</i> Lunar Series A15 – B17, characteristic details.	215
Fig. 3-04.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : The second Lunar Series. (M16-N17)	216
Fig. 3-05.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>na</i> glyphs.	216
Fig. 3-06.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Bubble' element of some glyphs.	216
Fig. 3-07.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Jaguar spots' elements of some glyphs.	217
Fig. 3-08.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Jaguar spots' elements	217
Fig. 3-09.	<i>Nah</i> affix and comparable elements of some glyphs.	217
Fig. 3-10.	<i>Temple XIV Tablet</i> , glyph B3: <i>-ja</i> suffix with crosshatching	219
Fig. 3-11.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : ' <i>K'uh</i> heads'.	220
Fig. 3-12.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : (<i>u-Ch'ok-ko-</i>) <i>K'aba</i> 'elbows.'	221
Fig. 3-13a.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Royal names, <i>Mat</i> -bird,' 'Skull,' and comparable Emblem Glyphs.	221
Fig. 3-14.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'K'an Crosses' in context.	222
Fig. 3-15a.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Royal names, <i>Mat</i> -bird,' 'Skull,' and comparable Emblem Glyphs.	223
Fig. 3-15b.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Royal names, <i>Mat</i> -bird,' 'Skull,' and comparable Emblem Glyphs.	224
Fig. 3-16.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : careful, fine lines skillfully paralleling bolder lines.	226
Fig. 3-17.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : ' <i>Ajaw</i> -faces': daysign <i>Ajaw</i> , syllabic <i>la</i> , and "son of father," assigned to various Hands.	228
Fig. 3-18.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Four <i>la-ta</i> subfixes, and a comparable calendric, by three Hands.	230
Fig. 3-19.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : ' <i>Ajaw</i> -face' glyphs with wide, round 'eyes,' concave triangular 'nose,' characteristic of the Hand of M6.	231
Fig. 3-20.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'inverted- <i>Ajaw</i> -face' <i>-la</i> glyphs. The first three are by the Hand of M6, the others by two different Hands.	231
Fig. 3-21.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : some numerals and 'god-marks.'	232
Fig. 3-22.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Details of <i>Winik</i> glyphs.	232
Fig. 3-23.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Details of <i>ta</i> glyphs.	232
Fig. 3-24.	<i>Panel of the 96 Glyphs</i> : Four "poetic" <i>U-Tz'akaj</i> glyphs.	234
Fig. 3-25.	<i>Panel of the 96 Glyphs</i> , <i>Palace Tablet</i> , and <i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : <i>Aj</i> glyphs.	235
Fig. 3-26.	'Bone beads' by the Master of <i>96 Glyphs</i> from <i>Throne Legs</i> and <i>Lapida de la Creación</i> .	236

Fig. 3-27. (=3-17). <i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Ajaw-faces' assigned to various Hands.	238
Fig. 3-28. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Abstract syllabic <i>la</i> suffix, arranged into three categories	240
Fig. 3-29. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>la</i> suffix, levels of increasing abstraction.	240
Fig. 3-30. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>ni</i> suffix/postfix, arranged by form.	241
Fig. 3-31a. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>ni</i> suffixes/postfixes, upper half; in context of full glyphs, arranged more or less in text order.	242
Fig. 3-31b. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>ni</i> suffixes/postfixes, lower half; in context of full glyphs, arranged more or less in text order.	243
Fig. 3-33. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>ni</i> glyphs compared to similar 'hairy' elements in the upper-center and upper-right neighborhood of the Tablet.	244
Fig. 3-32. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Mammals by the L14 (<i>itz'i-Winik</i>) Master; and a flatter glyph for comparison.	245
Fig. 3-34. <i>Temple XVIII Stuccoes</i> : <i>ba/Bah</i> glyphs with long 'tongues'.	248
Fig. 3-35. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Three glyphs by the L14 <i>Itz'i-Winik</i> Master—probably	250
Fig. 3-36. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Thirteen Distance Number clauses & comparable glyphs.	251
Fig. 3-37. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>Winik</i> glyphs, arranged by relative location, grouped by Hand	252
Fig. 3-38. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>Winik</i> glyph 'side curls,' nine varieties	252
Fig. 3-39. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>Winik</i> glyphs. Interior panels arranged by 'side curl' forms, 9 varieties	253
Fig. 3-40. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>Winik</i> glyph 'side curls.'	253
Fig. 3-41. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Whole <i>Winik</i> glyphs arranged by form of 'side curls.'	254
Fig. 3-42. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>Winik</i> & <i>Tzak</i> glyphs arranged by Hand	256
Fig. 3-43. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Distance Number clauses attributions.	258
Fig. 3-44. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : A15 Master habits	259
Fig. 3-45. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : L14 Master habits	259
Fig. 3-46. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Calendar Rounds, sundry comparisons. Enlargements below.	261
Fig. 3-46a. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Calendar Rounds, left half.	262
Fig. 3-47. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Stone signs' and their 'arches.'	264
Fig. 3-48. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Cursive <i>Ik's</i> isolated	265
Fig. 3-49. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Cursive <i>Ik's</i> in context	265
Fig. 3-50. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Relating glyphs in the middle of Columns F, G, & H.	265
Fig. 3-51. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'stone sign' dots, 'grapes,' and 'whiplash' lines in upper & middle of Columns E, F, G, H, & I	265
Fig. 3-52. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : peculiar 'stone signs.'	266
Fig. 3-53. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'stone signs' arranged by location, more or less	267
Fig. 3-54. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'stone signs,' full glyphs.	268
Fig. 3-55. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : fine crosshatching, 'beetling brows' and other comparisons in the middle-right area.	271
Fig. 3-56. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : The L14 Master "invading" his colleague's "territory."	273
Fig. 3-46b. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Calendar Rounds, right half. The left half of this table can be found a few pages earlier.	274
Fig. 3-57. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : First five glyphs of Columns C & D.	275
Fig. 3-58. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : comparing GI, <i>K'in</i> , & <i>K'inich</i> glyphs and their 'eyes.'	276
Fig. 3-59. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : The Hand of C1-D1 on the upper left corner of the middle slab.	277
Fig. 3-60. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : The Hand of C1-D1 tends to draw his "doubling lines" far from primaries.	278
Fig. 3-61. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : Sculptural details of C3's 'hair' and C4's 'moon' seem to be by the L14/N15 Master rather than the Hand of C1-D1	279
Fig. 3-62. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : C10's & E8's 'moons' compared.	282
Fig. 3-63. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : C10, D10 & H6.	283
Fig. 3-64. <i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>Ch'ok-ko</i> , <i>to-ko-Tan</i> , & comparables	283

Fig. 3-65.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : various Comparisons: 'Ajaw faces,' <i>i-u-ti</i> , 'daysign' details...	284
Fig. 3-66.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : various Comparisons: The <i>Ek</i> "black" glyphs atop F12 and H10...	285
Fig. 3-67.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>ko</i> glyphs.	286
Fig. 3-68.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Comparison of <i>Yax</i> and <i>Nah</i> glyphs.	287
Fig. 3-69.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : two kinds of <i>u</i> , by several artists.	287
Fig. 3-70.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : territory of the "Fat/Flat Master"	288
Fig. 3-71.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : central territory of the "Fat/Flat Master."	289
Fig. 3-72.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : comparing 'ophidian heads' of "Fat/Flat Master" & colleague.	289
Fig. 3-73.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>ya</i> 's of the "Fat/Flat Master" (J8, K7) & colleagues (G9, L6).	290
Fig. 3-74.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : The 'downstairs neighbor' of the "Fat/Flat Master."	290
Fig. 3-75.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Five pairs of glyphs by five different Hands.	293
Fig. 3-76.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Skulls' and 'mandibles.' Enlargements below.	296
Fig. 3-76a.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Skulls' and 'mandibles,' left third of table.	297
Fig. 3-76b.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Skulls' and 'mandibles,' middle third of table.	298
Fig. 3-76c.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Skulls' and 'mandibles,' right third of table.	299
Fig. 3-77.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Two carvers interpret the same idealized drawing.	299
Fig. 3-78.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Skull' glyphs sorted by 'jawbones' (four enlarged sections of this Table below, slightly rearranged).	300
Fig. 3-78a.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Skull' glyphs sorted by 'jawbones,' upper left corner.	301
Fig. 3-78b.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Skull' glyphs sorted by 'jawbones,' lower left corner	301
Fig. 3-78c.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Skull' glyphs sorted by 'jawbones,' upper right corner.	302
Fig. 3-78d.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'Skull' glyphs sorted by 'jawbones,' lower right corner.	302
Fig. 3-79.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Selected 'Skull' glyphs and 'jawbones.'	303
Fig. 3-80.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Full-figure glyphs with 'skull' headdresses, coefficients of K'atun & Winal	304
Fig. 3-81.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : full-figure glyphs.	305
Fig. 3-82.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : full-figure glyphs: Comparing human and humanoid coefficients, calendrical creatures, hand, wings, claws, faces, & hands	306
Fig. 3-83.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : full-figure glyphs: Comparing 'birds.'	307
Fig. 3-84.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : full-figure glyphs: Comparing 'faces' & 'hands.'	307
Fig. 3-85.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : full-figure glyphs: Division of labor sometimes cuts across a glyph.	308
Fig. 3-86.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Comparing 'spots' of in the upper left area of the Tablet.	309
Fig. 3-87.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Full Figure Glyph A9-B10, 10 Winal.	310
Fig. 3-88a.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Full Figure Glyphs A1-B8, (and adjacent Column C): attributions.	311
Fig. 3-88b.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Full Figure Glyphs A9-B14, (and adjacent Column C): attributions.	312
Fig. 3-89.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Eight <i>ti</i> glyphs, four <i>u</i> 's, and 'deer hoof.'	313
Fig. 3-90.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>Nal</i> , <i>Naab</i> , and comparables, whole glyphs.	314
Fig. 3-91.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>Nal</i> , <i>Naab</i> , and comparables, specifics.	315
Fig. 3-92.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : detail of Fig. 3-91: <i>li</i> glyphs seen in conjunction with <i>Nal</i> .	315
Fig. 3-93.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : a kind of foliate 'ear' or 'ear' covering might have been identical with <i>Nal</i> 'foliage.'	317
Fig. 3-94.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : the foliate 'ear' covering might be identical with the upper element in a standard earflare assemblage.	317
Fig. 3-95.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : six glyphs from Columns E, F, & G, and some neighbors.	319
Fig. 3-96.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : the unusual 'shell-earflare' assemblage.	320
Fig. 3-97.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : 'hands' from two full-figure glyphs.	321
Fig. 3-98.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>Nal</i> 'foliage' and comparables.	322
Fig. 3-99.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Block of glyphs A15-B19 / C15-D19, compared with C4-D7...	323
Fig. 3-100.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Royal names, titles, & comparable glyphs.	324
Fig. 3-100a.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Royal names, titles, & comparable glyphs. Left half.	325

Fig. 3-100b.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Royal names, titles, & comparable glyphs. Right half.	326
Fig. 3-101.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : logographic <i>K'inich</i> , phonetic spelling of Janab Pakal.	327
Fig. 3-102.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>Ajaw</i> superfix.	328
Fig. 3-103.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>K'inich Janab-Pakal</i> , logographic form.	329
Fig. 3-104.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>K'inich</i> variations.	329
Fig. 3-105.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Kan-Bahlam's name, plus two <i>ja-na-bi</i> 's for 'ophidian' comparison.	330
Fig. 3-106.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : K'an-Joy-Chitam's name.	331
Fig. 3-107.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : The 'Bone' Emblem Glyphs, all in Column Q.	331
Fig. 3-108.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : The (<i>Tok'</i>) <i>Pakal</i> shield offering by Ahkal's mother.	332
Fig. 3-109.	<i>Tablerito</i> : The early phonetic spelling of <i>Pakal</i> .	333
Fig. 3-110.	<i>Tablerito</i> , whole.	333
Fig. 3-111.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : upper half of Columns OPQR.	334
Fig. 3-112.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Youth names of K'an Joy Chitam.	335
Fig. 3-113.	<i>Temple of Inscriptions</i> , <i>Palace Tablet</i> , & <i>Tablet of the Slaves</i> : Examples of Palenque <i>Te's</i> .	338
Fig. 3-114.	<i>Tablet of the Slaves C1</i> : 9- <i>Ik'</i> , 5- <i>Te'-K'an-a-si-ya</i> , a later Palenque <i>Te'</i> .	339
Fig. 3-115.	<i>Temple of the Inscriptions</i> , earlier Palenque <i>Te's</i> .	340
Fig. 3-116.	<i>Temple of the Inscriptions</i> , ' <i>K'an</i> -crosses.'	340
Fig. 3-117.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>wa</i> and <i>na</i> glyphs.	341
Fig. 4-01.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : The glyphs carved by the L14 / <i>Itz'i-Winik</i> Master.	342
Fig. 4-02.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : The L14 / <i>Itz'i-Winik</i> Master (J15) and the E15 Master (F18).	343
Fig. 4-01a.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : The glyphs carved by the L14 / <i>Itz'i-Winik</i> Master, Left half.	344
Fig. 4-01b.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : Glyphs by the L14 / <i>Itz'i-Winik</i> Master, Right half.	345
Fig. 4-03.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : ' <i>u</i> glyphs assigned to prominent Carvers.	347
Fig. 4-04.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : glyphs carved by the E15 Master.	348
Fig. 4-05.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> : <i>Hu'n</i> 'heads.'	352
Fig. 4-06.	Plate with stuccoed rim from Tikal Burial 195, and details of 8 glyphs	354
Fig. 4-07.	<i>Palace Tablet</i> , distribution of major Hands' work-'territories.'	364
Fig. 4-08.	Glyphs for 'Star War' (left) and for <i>Ch'ak</i> "Decapitation"	388

Aj-Ts'ib, Aj-Uxul, Itz'aat, & Aj-K'uhu'n: Classic Maya Schools of Carvers and Calligraphers in Palenque After the Reign of Kan-Bahlam

by Mark Van Stone

Chapter 1: Introduction

0.1 Introduction & Acknowledgements

In the history of art and especially of art-making, it goes without saying that an individual artist will have produced a substantial body of work in his or her lifetime. Any masterpiece from any age invites comparison with other pieces from the same context, and art-historians dealing with the Renaissance commonly (figuratively) collect several pieces from the same artist to help their analyses. The body of work thus collected is far more useful to the scholar than the individual work. The group reflects upon itself, each individual piece enhanced by comparison to its siblings. Often works of art are unsigned, or forged, and need the eye of an expert to determine whether they ought to be included in one of these groups. The process of identifying the artist of a particular piece is called *connoisseurship*, from the French *connaître*, "to know, to recognize."

Applying connoisseurship principles to Medieval or Ancient or non-Western art provides more general insights. Nearly all this work is unsigned, and often unsung—one rarely reads about art-making and individual artists in, say, Babylonian literature—and in many contexts the original people have not vouchsafed us a single word of explanation. I am thinking here of the art of non-literate peoples, the awesome stones of Rapanui and Zimbabwe, the pottery and textiles of the Mimbres or Moche. In these cases, art-historians draw more broadly, collect the artifacts of a whole style and draw less-specific conclusions from this corpus. Rarely in the Mesoamerican field do we have the opportunity to examine the collected works of a particular individual, partly because of the simple accidents of survival: when one deals with a period from which only a hundredth of a percent of what once was still survives, the likelihood of finding two works by the same hand becomes negligible, and the exercise moot.

Even so, in certain ancient cultural contexts, we have enough well-preserved items to venture to identify works by individual artists. This is true, for example, of Ancient Greek vase-painting and sculpture. A few researchers have attempted this with individual Maya artists who appear

to have authored a number of works. Two pioneers, Spinden in 1913 and Proskouriakoff in 1950, while classifying types and trends in Maya art, mention in passing the likelihood that, for example, some monuments standing in the Copan Plaza, of strikingly similar sculptural style, were likely sculpted by the same hand. (Spinden 1913; Proskouriakoff 1950). Günter Zimmermann identified eight scribes at work in the *Dresden Codex* ([Fig. 1-01](#)). (Zimmermann 1956)





































Variationen häufiger Hauptzeichen und Affixe (Die Schreiber der Dresdener Handschrift)								
Dresden Seite:	2	3-23	24, 45-63 29-44	65-69	69-74	25-28	32-35a	42-45c
126 (Gott E)								
169 (Gott B)								
128								
1								
60								
79								

Fig. 1-01. Part of Zimmermann's table of idiosyncratic glyphs distinguishing eight Hands

Marvin Cohodas identified hands of individual Yaxchilan artists in 1972 and, with his students in 1983-84 attributed the paintings on several score 'Codex Style' vases to perhaps a single workshop containing only six master artists (Cohodas 1984). In the early 1990s, Carolyn Tate, using Morellian connoisseurship methodology,¹ not only identified a dozen or so individual sculptors working at Yaxchilan, but distinguished between the work of carvers of these reliefs and of the scribes who laid them out. Beginning with *Yaxchilan Stela 12*, (the texts heading whose two sides are clearly by different Artists), she showed that in ambitious productions such as stelae and lintel-sets, that it was the rule, rather than the exception, for several expert artists to work together (Tate 1994, and 1992 pp. 38ff.). More recently, David Stuart and John Montgomery have looked at artist's signatures, especially in Usumacinta region

¹ See below, sections 1.1.2 and 2.2.1.

sites such as Piedras Negras (Stuart 1989, Montgomery 1995). A surprising number of these monuments bear multiple signatures, sometimes as many as eight or ten ([Fig. 1-02](#)).

It has been the aim of this research project to follow a similar course of inquiry in Palenque, focusing mainly on the monuments of Palenque's K'an Hok' Chitam and Ahkal Mo' Naab (ca. AD 715 - 745). Palenque has bestowed upon us a substantial body of excellently-preserved, beautifully-wrought relief sculptures from the late Classic era, and none of it bears signatures as we know them.² However, individual artists' styles here are distinctive enough to permit a Morellian analysis, and I, for one, was surprised how many different Hands worked on a single monument.

In this chapter, I briefly introduce the idea of examining the different handwritings on stucco and carved Maya texts, and demonstrate how even a neophyte can distinguish the more obvious examples, without any special training. I include a table of characteristic glyphs of the fourteen Artists who engraved the *Temple XIX Platform*, and briefly examine the relief glyphs on the *Temple XIX Panel*, and on the *Palace Tablet* and associated Palace panels.

The second chapter describes Morelli's connoisseurship method and how I apply it to Maya glyphs, and briefly introduce the Maya scribal *ductus*, or process of handwriting. In Section 2.5 I apply connoisseurship to carved handwriting, explaining my criteria for distinguishing one Artist from another. I apply this method to the *96 Glyphs* group, the *Palace Tablet*, and the Tablet of the Slaves.

The third chapter constitutes an excruciatingly detailed examination of the glyphs of the Palace Tablet, and my observations in their various Artists.

The fourth chapter attempts to provide an overview of this data and how it affects what we know about Maya culture and art.

² One or two small inscriptions, on stone incensario stands, are signed with the usual formula. And the *Sarcophagus of Pakal* bears, in relatively inconspicuous corners, images of otherwise-unmentioned gentlemen, two of whom bear the scribal title *Aj-K'uhuun*. These will be mentioned again. But no accompanying text tells us why they are there.



Fig. 1-02. *Piedras Negras Stela 14*
Upper signatures (Morley's glyphs 1-4, 5-10),
Lower signatures (Morley's glyphs 11-14, 15-18, 19-20 [missing 21-22], 23-26).
University Museum, Philadelphia. Photo by author.

0.2. Acknowledgements

I am grateful for generous sponsorship and support from Joel Skidmore and from the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc. Joel and his employees digitized five thousand or so photographs for me. These digital files (a small portion of which can be seen in the "Resources" area at **Mesoweb.com**) truly made my hundreds of comparative illustrations possible. Without his generous contribution, my dissertation would look *very* different.

I am also especially indebted to the crucial and enthusiastic personal sponsorship of Alfonso Morales in Palenque and of Sofia Paredes, former Acting *Directora* of the Instituto de Antropología e Historia in Guatemala City. At more fundamental levels, Norberto Tesucun at the Museo Sylvanus Morley and Don Florentino in the *bodega* of the Museo Nacional in Guatemala City cheerfully accompanied me for the duration of my study, and tirelessly fetched scores of priceless objects in their charge. This assistance allowed me to take some 5000 detail photographs of inscriptions, comprising nearly every surviving glyph and relief fragment from Palenque (and Tikal) within my purview.

Although I accomplished this task with the simplest of equipment —35 mm camera, close-up lenses, tripod, and a hand-held high-intensity camera floodlight— the resulting photographs reveal sculptural and technical details to a degree never heretofore published. Most previous photographs of inscriptions have aimed to capture an entire monument in a single image, and even detail photographs tended to be wide-angle, such as a half-length figure or a column of glyphs. Fine details such as individual carving-strokes or other micro-idiosyncrasies almost never showed. Further, due to inevitable compromises inherent in photography of large complex sculptures, almost no single glyph can be lit ideally. My photographs complement the existing corpus of inscriptional images because I restricted my efforts mainly to individual glyphs or glyph-pairs —each with optimal lighting. These photographs, most for the first time, specifically reveal the small-scale peculiarities and tool-strokes, subtle details of carving technique, the complex of tiny habitual behaviors which define the personality of an individual artist's handwriting.

The *Slaves* panel ([Fig. 2-55](#)) was preserved in virtually pristine condition, and one can readily discern here the marks of the carver's tools. For some reason the artist never got around to final-smoothing the sloping surface around the woman's face. One can also see that the original planed surface of the Tablet had slightly weathered before carving; the texture of the carved area

is distinctly "harder," with a smoother, finer grain than the pitted background. This slab was clearly lying outside in the "warehouse" for some time, perhaps years, before being selected for carving. One commonly hears in art-historical circles that limestone hardens soon after quarrying, and that one must carve it while it is still fresh from the ground for maximum ease and efficiency. Any carver will tell you this is a myth. Even years after it has been quarried, limestone still cuts like butter.



Fig. 1-03. Close-up details of left 'Slave' and Woman's ear from Palenque *Tablet of the Slaves*. Photos by author.

A process that marble and limestone do undergo under certain humidity conditions causes some dissolved minerals to migrate to the surface, or in other conditions to leach out of the surface (in marble this is called *de-dolomitization*), but these processes, while possibly making the surface brittle, causes only a minimal change in hardness, and can take hundreds of years. De-dolomitization, for example, is one of the proofs of an ancient Greek statue's antiquity.

0.3. Author's note on punctuation and other conventions

The conventions for describing Maya hieroglyphs have evolved along with their decipherment. For a quarter-century after Thompson (1967) assigned catalogue numbers to

every glyph he could distinguish, any detailed discussion of a glyphic text necessarily involved referring to each element by its “T-number.”³ But many glyphs, particularly those which portray identifiable items such as hands, heads, birds, etc., rapidly acquired nicknames, which Thompson himself duly recorded: T519 he calls “Chuen with dots,” T227 is “seated man,” T74 “Down Balls,” T77 “Bird Wing,” T110 “Bone,” T539 “Half-spotted Ahau,” T684 “Toothache,” T713 “Flat Hand,” etc. Some of his nicknames were tentative Maya readings, such as T17 “Yax,” T59 “ti,” and T748 “Muan bird,” which readings have turned out to be correct, or at least to have stood the test of time till now.⁴

Then, with the cavalcade of translations and firm phonetic readings in the 1970’s and 1980’s, epigraphers found it easier to remember glyphs by their readings, like *Ch’ok*, *ha* (later *ja*), *tzu* and *lu*, than by their T-numbers. Leading epigrapher David Stuart, for instance, prefers not to refer to T-numbers at all if he can help it.⁵ The generation of decipherers who entered the field since the mid-1980’s (including myself) have been able to get along without learning more than a handful of T-numbers. But not every reading is firm, and many glyphs remain undeciphered, either in their Maya pronunciation or their translated meaning, or both. For these, we still use nicknames, such as the T628b ‘Casper glyph’ (so dubbed by Linda Schele and associates), which resembles a ghost, and constitutes the “main sign” of the name of a legendary Palenque ruler on the *Tablet of the Cross*.

In this investigation, I frequently need to refer to specific elements of hieroglyphic collocations, many of which are easily described, such as dots, ‘mirror,’ ‘hand,’ ‘eye,’ and inline. When I refer to a part of a collocation which constitutes a well-known glyph, I shall refer to it by its reading, such as *ti*, *K’al*, *Way*, or *-ja* suffix, italicizing the Maya pronunciation. A capitalized italic word refers to a logogram such as *Way* or *Balam*, uncanceled is a syllabic reading like *u* or *ta*. English letters I render in boldface to distinguish them from Maya syllables (e.g., “a sound like short **a**” or “retroflex **b**”); likewise, English and other non-Maya words used as examples I shall also render bold (as **Hawai’i** below). I give ordinary descriptive terms (e.g., “outline” or “inline” or “row of dots”) no distinguishing treatment.

³ Zimmermann (1956) led Thompson in this; he catalogued every glyph in the *Dresden Codex*, assigning each a “Z-number.” His system, however, found limited use in Classic monuments. Thompson used Zimmermann’s system as a template for his own, much more comprehensive *A Catalogue of Maya Hieroglyphs* (1967).

⁴ Others, instead of nicknaming, he translated, such as T644 “Seating,” T95 “Black,” T112 “Flint Knife,” T561 “Sky,” T181 “Moon,” and T568, “Sacrifice.” The first four of these turned out to be correct translations, but though T181 (and its whole analogue T683) indeed appear to portray the crescent moon, its slight variations read *K’AL* (the number 20), part of *HUL* (“arrive”) and syllabic *ja*. These appear to have nothing at all to do with the moon or any lunar metaphor, as far as we can discover. Last on this list, T568, is simply syllabic *lu* and has no greater affinity for sacrifice texts than any other syllable.

Epigraphers employ a fairly strict convention to distinguish *logograms* (single signs such as our numerals which stand for a whole word) from *phonograms* (also known as “syllabic glyphs,” “syllables,” or “phonetic characters”): They italicize both, but spell phonograms entirely in lowercase letters, and logograms entirely in uppercase or capital letters. Thus *CHUM-wa-n(i)*, and *(ka)-KAN-BALAM-m(a)*, etc. At this moment, however, controversy about the existence of “morphosyllables” leads some epigraphers to render syllabic glyphs in certain contexts as if they were logograms: *U-TZ’AP-AW* vs. *u-TZ’AP-wa*, or *tu-pa-(A)J* vs. *tu-pa-j(a)*. The distinction between a syllabic sign’s function as a phonetic or logographic role is, to my eye, pettifogging; it is a distinction which the ancient Maya themselves did not recognize. It is like arguing that the letter *s* at the end of English nouns is not strictly a letter, but a logographic sign indicating plural. By this logic, *any* meaningful prefix or suffix is actually logographic rather than phonetic. It’s *both*, okay? For this reason, I here prefer to refer to any collocation by the names of its glyphs as far as possible. Those glyphs which normally have a phonetic function (and which are invariably CV, or consonant-vowel) I shall spell entirely in lowercase italics (*ti*, *na*, *bi*, etc.), and those which are clearly logograms (almost always CVC or CVCVC) I shall italicize and capitalize (thus *Te’*, *K’in*, *Balam*, *Ak’*, and *Hu’un*). As all logograms are already distinguished from phonograms by their 3- or 5-letter structure, for aesthetic reasons I prefer only to capitalize the first letter to emphasize its logographicity (*K’in* rather than the strictly correct *K’IN*). To capitalize a whole word seems too much like shouting.

Also, there are no “pure” vowels. The strictly-accurate prevocalic glottal stop (in words like *’Ek’*, *’Ak’bal*, and *’ut*, and in syllabic “vowel” glyphs *’a*, *’e*, *’i*, *’o*, *’u*) and the apostrophe indicating retroflex *b* (thus, *B’ALAM* and *b’e*) is routinely dropped by all but the most technical linguistic literature. I shall follow the popular convention and omit the apostrophes after *b* and before syllabic “vowel” glyphs, again for aesthetic reasons (that is, I shall write *Balam*, *be*, and *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, just as we conventionally write *Hawaii* rather than the strictly-correct *Hawai’i*). Most of us cannot even *hear* the prevocalic glottal stop, nor do the Mayan languages possess a non-retroflex *b*, so eliminating these apostrophes need not cloud our understanding at all. Mayan languages *do*, however, distinguish between glottalized and non-glottalized consonants, so I shall of course retain them. (*Kan*, “snake,” is a completely different word from *K’an*, “precious” or “yellow.”)

In Maya glyphs there exist several species of polyvalence. Most daysigns, for example have

⁵ Personal communication, 1999.

one reading as a day of the ‘week’ and a completely different one in other contexts: daysign *Imix* (T501) is identical in many cases to syllabic *ba*, but often to the similar glyph logographic *Ha’*. Daysign *Kawak* (T528) appears to read *Sihom* in month-signs, *Tuun* (usually, but not always, suffixed with *-ni*), and the syllable *ku*. It also functions as a kind of unpronounced determinative or “carrier” in the “full” syllable *hi* and in the glyphs of the “color months,” and finally, there are a few glyphs which carry diagnostic ‘stone signs,’ such as the ‘bunch of grapes’; these are usually objects made of stone, like *Witz* (“mountain,” T529) and altars (T530). (Fig. 1-04.)

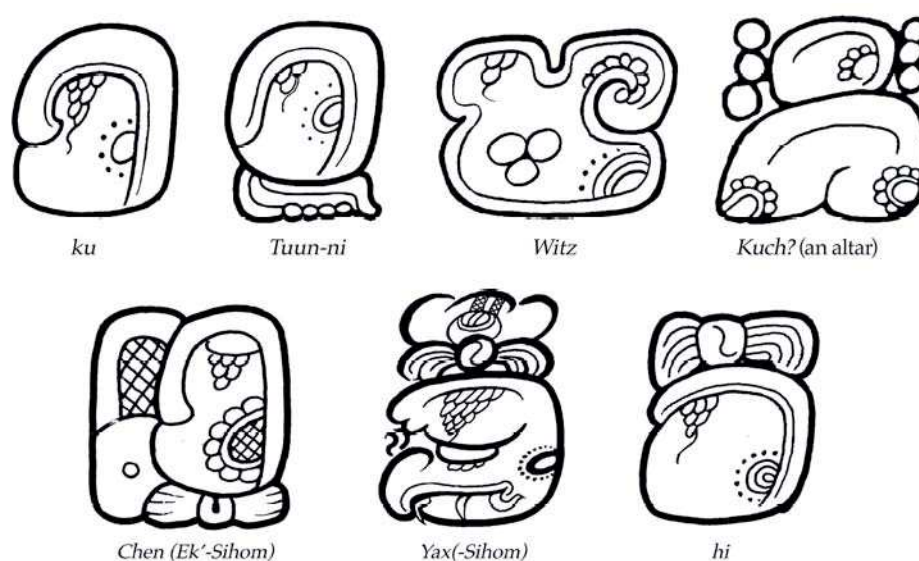


Fig. 1-04. Seven glyphs containing the (*Kawak*) ‘stone sign’ or its diagnostics.

The first and last are syllabic, the third (*Witz*) is T529, the fourth (“an altar”) T530; *Chen* and *Yax* are month-names. Drawings by author.

Some daysigns’ other readings are akin to their calendric ones: outside the cartouche, daysign *Kaban* reads *Kab* (both mean “earth”), *Ak’bal* reads *Ak’* (both mean “darkness”). To this category must be added non-calendrical glyphs like *Te’* (“tree”) which might appear as syllabic *te* in non-arboreal contexts (and certainly as the rebus for the preposition *Te’* in dates), or the male agentive *Aj*, which often serves as an *a* syllable or a rebus (see below). Many such logograms can be used acrophonically like this as syllabic glyphs: the ‘gopher’ head which more commonly reads *ba* than *Bah* (“gopher”), or the Waxaktun Vases’ PSS collocations which appear to substitute *ts’i-Balam-li* or *ts’i-Baak-li* for *ts’i-ba-li*. Finally, *Aj* and *Taj* (“torch”) also appear as rebuses in verbs where they serve phonetically, but not strictly as CV syllables; as in *u-Tz’ak-Aj*

or *Ak'-Taj*. There are differences, some very subtle, between these logographic signs-used-phonetically and purely phonetic signs. The linguistic categorization of these types of glyphs is the realm of another paper, and I shall avoid it as much as possible here. When a glyph such as *Aj* or *Te'*⁶ appears to be logographic, referring to a person or to a tree, I shall render it as a capitalized word, but otherwise I shall treat it as a phonetic syllable: *a* or *te*.

When I wish to refer to a glyph or part of a glyph which appears to portray a real item, such as 'finger' or 'nose,' I shall enclose it in single quotes (' ' —also known as *inverted commas*). Single quotes also indicate the use of a nickname for a glyph, such as 'propeller' (T627) or 'Casper' or the 'checkered shield' of GIII. When I use double quotes (" "), it means I am directly quoting another author (e.g., Coe's "sign-forms") or referring to the translation of a specific glyph (e.g., T561 "sky" or T624(d)⁷ "shield"). A single quote or apostrophe is also used for the glottal stop, as in the vowel syllables 'a and 'e, and in glottalized consonants, such as k' and ch'. The possessive form of nouns also uses an apostrophe (as in the panel's carvers), and occasionally I shall need to put a nickname in the possessive (e.g., the 'hand's modeling). This need cause no confusion, even though the second inverted comma is playing both roles. Occasionally, a Maya word ending with a glottalized consonant will need to be enclosed in inverted commas or put into the possessive (e.g., the *K'ak's* 'nose,' or the '*Te'*-like element). Again, I will not add a second apostrophe after the glottal stop, as context almost always makes the proper spelling clear.

In keeping with the attitudes of the Maya themselves (and of most pre-modern cultures), I shall use the terms *artist*, *artisan*, *craftsman* and *craftswoman* interchangeably. Specific art-trades like *weaver*, *painter*, *calligrapher*, *scribe*, and *carver* will apply only to the artisans working in particular media, though I present evidence that some scribes were also sculptors.

As far as we know, the Maya word *tz'ib* and its derivatives refer to both painting and writing. This evidence suggests that, as in China, a Maya painter was expected to be a calligrapher as well, and vice versa. There may yet appear, however, textual and other evidence that they distinguished between the two arts after all. Certainly some artists were better at one of these arts than the other. For example, a number of "glyphoid"-adorned ceramic vessels display very competent illustrations. And, ironically, of the score or more surviving ceramic paintings

⁶ For example, the royal titles *Kalom-Te'*, *Yok-Te'* and *ya-Ajaw-Te'*, have something to do with family *trees*, and therefore their *Te's* should be rendered as logograms. Nikolai Grube presented a paper on the topic of tree-metaphor in Classic Maya lineage titles at the "New Edgewalkers" Conference in San Antonio, Texas, Nov. 3, 2001, and is readying it for publication at this writing.

⁷ Which technically has no T-number, though it constitutes part of T624.

illustrating scribes at work, very few have any inscription at all. (see Robicsek and Hales 1981 or Coe and Kerr 1997, *passim*, and the Kerr Vase Database)

Finally, this is an investigation into the work of individual nameless artists. I shall have to bestow upon them appellations of some sort, just to be able to refer to them. Whether I call them by a nickname, such as the "Fine Hatching Master" or "Hand B" or even just refer to this "Hand" or that "Artist" or the other "Scribe," I shall capitalize whatever word or nickname I use at that moment, partly as a nod to their individuality, but particularly to indicate to you, dear Reader, that I am speaking in that instance of a specific Individual.

1.1. The Idea

1.1.1. The unique arrangement of the *Temple XVIII* Stucco Glyphs



Fig. 1-05. *Temple XVIII* Stuccoes: 80 glyphs mounted in wall of Palenque Museum. Photo by author

The peerless stucco sculptors of ancient Palenque produced abundant glyphic inscriptions during the Late Classic. The artists formed the glyphs individually, allowed them to harden, and then set them into a wet stucco substrate on walls, piers and roofcombs of various

structures.⁸ This procedure differs from their method of sculpting stucco figures, which they formed directly on the walls. The imperfect bond between glyph and substrate allowed the glyphs over the centuries eventually to fall to the floor. Very few of these glyphs remain *in situ*.

The longest stucco text yet found hung originally in Palenque *Temple XVIII*, on the southeast corner of the long plaza before the *Group of the Cross*. Some of these beautiful glyphs were first excavated by Blom and La Farge in 1925 (Blom and La Farge 1926-7). Later, in 1954, Ruz and Fernández (Ruz 1958) fully excavated the Temple and found many more, bringing the total to a hundred or so. In that less sophisticated age, the archaeologists neglected to collect and save the interstitial fragments of the substrate, and the glyphs, found in disarray, have never been put into proper reading order. Though some glyphs can be paired by context, the repetitive formulaic discourse structure of this inscription will almost certainly forestall any full reconstruction of the text's original order by context and syntax clues alone.

The glyphs' faces are about five by six inches; each is about an inch thick. They balance charming individuality and liveliness with formality and strength of design. They are sculpted in fairly high relief (roughly half their thickness, or half an inch deep), considerably higher than any of the stone inscriptions at Palenque, approaching that of the later glyphs at Copan. The sculptors had to work fast, and a good part of the charm of these objects derives from the immediacy of their construction. One can see the individual strokes left by the tools. One can sense the deft motions of the artists' hands, the graceful, rapid dance of his tools as he expertly punched and patted the material into shape; its crevices and bulges retain some of the life of the plaster as it sprang back slightly after each forming stroke.

To display this collection of fine miniature sculptures in the Museo, curators and restorers arranged 80 of them by type, and mounted them together⁹ into a large wall panel: the numerous distance numbers in the first row, calendrical glyphs in the next, then signs containing the

⁸ One can conclude this from examination of what remains on the walls which once held these long stucco texts. For example, on the *Temple of the Inscriptions* (Robertson 1983, pll. 18-20), the *Olvidado*, *Temple XVIII*, and the *Temple of the Sun* (Robertson 1991, pl. 120), one can see the indentations in the plaster where individual glyphs once hung. In many of these cases one or more of the glyphs remain *in situ* (or did so, up until modern times). I also had the opportunity to examine the reconstruction of the stucco panel from *Temple XIX*, and examined closely the individual glyph-blocks, front and back, before they were mounted into their present configuration. The back side of any of these is flattened by the table on which it was fashioned, often slightly and deliberately roughed so it would adhere better to its position on the wall. These glyphs must have been allowed to harden before mounting, because they have been sunk into the surface of the panel. The figural relief in the same panel, by contrast, was *not* sunk into the surface, but rather built up wet directly on the wall. Merle Greene Robertson describes this process in detail in her *Sculpture of Palenque*, particularly the first volume on the *Temple of the Inscriptions*. The same process can be seen to have obtained throughout Palenque's construction period, including on Temple XIX, as can be deduced from the many remaining stucco reliefs in various states of repair. (Images in Robertson, all volumes, *passim*)

⁹ In addition to my Figures, see Robertson 1991, pll. 274-276, and Schele and Mathews 1979, nos. 395-548. Also, a pretty image of 48 of these can be seen in Stierlin 1981, pll. 113, and three details pll. 114-116. Early editions of Stierlin enlarged this image for the endpapers. It was this book, in 1983, that first exposed me to the visual beauty of Maya calligraphy; Thank you, Henri.

'Moon', signs containing face-profiles together, and so forth ([Fig. 1-05](#)). This arrangement fortuitously allows the observer to compare various examples of the same glyph, side by side. It was there that I first noticed the variety of styles juxtaposed in a single inscription.

For instance, the so-called Distance Number Introductory Glyph or DNIG (read *U-Ts'akaj*), exists in several adjacent examples ([Fig. 1-06](#)).



Fig. 1-06. Temple XVIII Stucco Glyphs, 'Distance Number Introductory Glyph' *U-Tz'akaj*.

It will be immediately obvious to anyone upon comparing these four, that at least two and perhaps all four were fashioned by different individual artists. A quick comparison of calendric glyphs, of the repetitions of names of Ahkal-Mo'-Naab's father 'Long Lips' and of Ahkal himself, reveals a similarly diverse team of artists ([Fig. 1-07](#) and [1-08](#)).

1.1.2. Consistency and variety

Standard Morellian practice (see below, section 2.2.1) suggests we examine simple, repetitive forms such as the shape of the *-Aj* and the *Tz'ak* glyphs to begin to recognize individual artistic habits. The second example of *Tz'ak* 'swastika' in [Fig. 1-06](#) is rigidly straight, while the other three are curved. The other three differ less dramatically, but the fourth's 'swastika' has curved corners, and in all of these, the treatments of the 'hairs' and 'pellets' in the final *-a* syllable also strikingly differ from each other. The first two prefixed *u*'s—two toothy 'fish (shark?)' profiles—disagree in the shape and texture of their every detail—'eyes', 'whiskers', 'teeth', 'forehead-fins'.

In spite of their differences, these glyphs *do* have enough similarity of style to appear to belong together; the sculptors have rendered their volumes to a similar depth and roundedness, and apparently employed similar tools. This indicates the existence of a master plan, a "house style" or "manual of style", as it were; one which defined the depth of relief, the use of head-variant rather than abstract numerals, and so forth. Obviously, one high-ranking artist defined a

format, and made certain that the work of every member of the team followed this format. Even so, he tolerated a rather wide range of interpretations. The graceful style of the third example stands out: this artist preferred to sculpt tiny, 'laughing' eyes and subtly modeled features.

1.1.3. Other comparisons

A quick comparison of the repetitions of names, or of calendric glyphs, revealed a similarly diverse team of artists ([Figs. 1-07, 1-08](#)).



Fig. 1-07. Stucco glyphs from *Temple XVIII*: 'Long Lips'-Chan-Mat, father of Ahkal Mo' Naab

Comparing the four examples of the name of Ahkal's father 'Long-Lips'-Chan-Mat, one's gaze is drawn to the 'laughing eyes' of the last head; this appears to be by the same artist as noted in the third example in [Fig. 1-06](#). Contrasting with the subtle excellence of this 'Master of the Laughing Eyes' are the boldly-drawn 'eyes' and 'mouths' of the first and second examples. Here we see gorgeous clarity, strong simplicity of line and form. These qualities suggest another nickname —the 'Clarity Master'— and both appear to have been done by this single master, though minor interior details of the *ma* and *ta* glyphs invite caution.

The third 'Long-Lips', stripped of fine details of eyebrow and wrinkles, presents us with an even more minimalist example of the same aesthetic. Comparing the subtle concave 'bulges' on their respective *ta* glyphs, I vacillate. I cannot say for certain whether to assign this bare-minimum glyph to yet another hand. My criterion is guided mainly by Occam's Razor: I assume that two very similar glyphs from the same inscription are by the same hand, unless compelled to conclude otherwise. What compels such a conclusion is a combination of identifiable differences —a syndrome, if you like—, such as we see distinguishing the masters whom I have just nicknamed. There are not enough differences here to insist that this plain glyph represents a separate artist. So I conclude that this very minimalist glyph is by the same hand as the other two.



Fig. 1-08. Stucco glyphs from *Temple XVIII*. Name glyph of (Ahkal) Mo' Naab

The first two versions of Mo'-Naab appear to agree in most details, though the first perhaps is arguably more assertive and expertly-formed than the second, especially in the 'macaw's beak' and the '*bi*-monster's mouth'. The third example is clearly by a different hand, who preferred strongly-modeled relief, a stiff, formal 'macaw beak' and a '*bi*-monster's 'eye' almost hidden by a bulging 'brow.' To fine-tune our comparison of the first two, compare their details: the *na* glyph, the 'quincunx' in the 'forehead', the form and details of the 'maize foliage' hanging down the back of the 'monsters' heads.' Even the way the two Artists—for I am sure now that they are separate individuals—draw the tiny circles in the *bi* and in the 'macaw beak' are consistently distinct: the second makes careful, stiff, nearly-perfect circles; the first, lively ellipses slanted at a jaunty 45°.

1.1.4. Caution

A study like this must proceed with extreme caution, especially because late Classic Maya artists clearly valued a certain level of creative improvisation and variety for what appears to be its own sake. They deliberately used variant allographs—different spellings if you like—of many glyph collocations. Even when drawing the same exact glyph, an artist often seemed to revel in deliberately varying minor details.¹⁰ [Fig. 1-09](#) shows a detail from the text of *Temple XIX Platform*. Of four glyph-blocks, three begin with the syllable '*u*,¹¹ using three different

¹⁰ It occurs to me that, particularly in stucco inscriptions, having different artists make repeated glyphs (such as our 'bird-with-fish') also serves to create a lively variation in form. To prove that they did so consciously, however, would be very, very difficult.

¹¹ In lowland Maya languages, verbs in the third person singular all begin with the person-marker '*u*'. Furthermore, the same syllable stands for the third-person possessive pronoun 'his/her/its'. Thus, almost any historical narrative sentence could begin with this syllable. It is by far the most common initial syllable in Maya inscriptions. It also happens to have the largest number of allographs of any glyph (including T1, T2, T3, T7, T10, T11, T13, T105, T191, T204, [T205], T211, [T230], T232, [T265]

allographs.



Fig. 1-09. Four adjacent glyphs in Palenque *Temple XIX Platform/Throne*, with three different forms of the 'u' syllable. The text reads, "*U-??-ka-ba, ma-Mat-wi-li, u-ba-hi, u-Ch'ab...*" The undeciphered "??" is the so-called 'touch-earth' "birth" glyph.

When decipherers first proved the equivalence of various glyphs to each other, they did so by compiling *substitution sets*. They were very careful to include in these sets only glyphs which "freely interchanged" with each other, that is, glyphs whose substitution clearly did not affect the meaning of the sentence in the slightest. That is, we are pretty certain that these three

T513, and several others). This is probably no accident; the scribes invented so many ways to indicate this syllable so their texts would avoid excessive repetition.

allographs were literally equivalent in the minds of their makers. If there existed a connotation to the use of the 'fish' glyph which colored the interpretation of the "bloodletting" verb to which it is here attached, or any subtle specific reason they chose in this case the 'inverted-skull-on-a-rope' glyph for the *U-Bah* collocation, it is so insignificant that it flies beneath our radar.

Temple XVIII's stucco texts comprise more than a hundred glyphs; lengthy but by no means extraordinarily so. A single artist could easily have made them all in the space of a few days. Possibly there may have existed some yet-unknown or -unguessed ritual or technical motive for rapid production—some religious requirement that the whole text be completed between sunup and sundown, for example. Or, perhaps to achieve a better bond between partly-cured glyph and stucco bed, the artisans might have wanted all of the glyphs curing relatively simultaneously.

But the technical circumstances of their assembly into a text—prefabrication, drying, then insertion into place in a bed of fresh stucco—does not on the face of it demand such alacrity. Further, the bond between glyph and matrix was *not* decidedly strong, or the glyph-blocks would not have fallen off and become jumbled in the first place. The realization dawned on me that, possibly the large team of stucco artists working on *Temple XVIII* simply reflected the large pool of available talent. Obviously there was a sizeable number of first-rate stucco sculptors working at Palenque at this time. The *Palace* alone had 48 exterior piers—presumably all decorated as gloriously as those that survive—and uncounted stucco reliefs on a comparable number of interior piers, and on walls, soffits, lintels, jambs, mansard roofs, and and roof-combs. Creating and maintaining such a display would occupy full-time an army of first-rate stucco craftsmen. With such a pool of talent to draw on, to imagine an example, an architect or priest could have had the means to decide in the morning to install a 100-glyph inscription in his new temple, and have it done by nightfall.

1.2. Temple XIX Stuccos

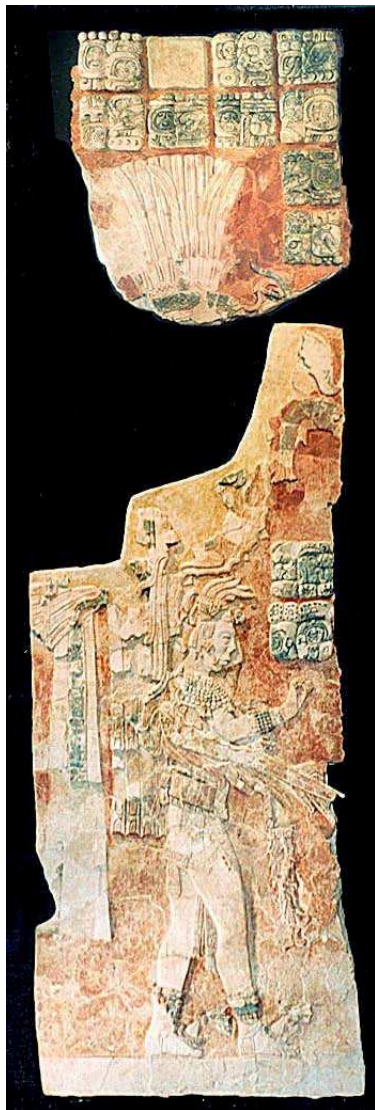


Fig. 1-10. Palenque *T XIX Stucco Panel*

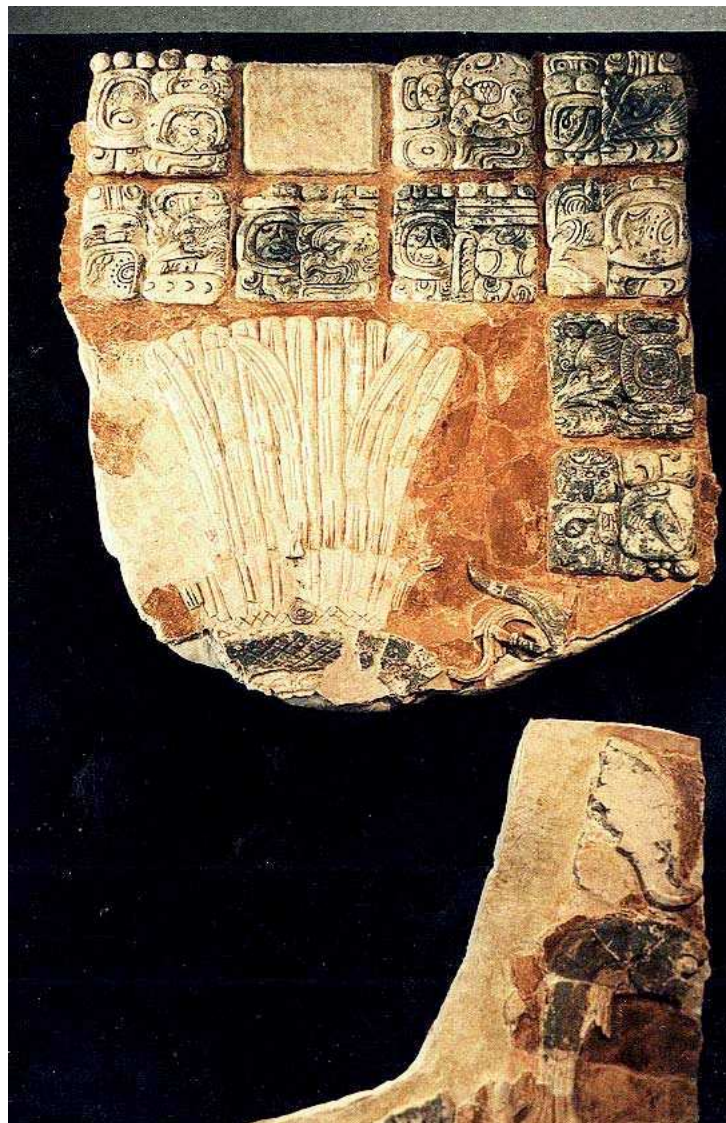


Fig. 1-11. Palenque *T XIX Stucco Panel*: top panel



Fig. 1-12. Palenque *T XIX Stucco Panel*: middle with two glyphs

The discovery and reassembly¹² of *Temple XIX*'s well-preserved stucco relief ([Fig. 1-10](#)) offers an opportunity to compare styles. *Temple XIX* is next door to *Temple XVIII*, it was built under the same ruler at roughly the same era, and its artisans were presumably drawn from the same pool of talent.

Partly because of its brevity (only 12 glyphs), it offers few points of comparison with the 100-glyph *T. XVIII* text. The textual content and discourse of the two texts have little in common. The numerals in *T. XVIII* are usually head-variants, while no head-variant numerals appear on the *T. XIX Stucco*. The *T. XIX* relief never mentions Ahkal Mo' Naab, nor his parents, focusing instead on a different set of characters than that of *T. XVIII*, including his successor. Finally, the *T. XIX* text repeats thrice a striking glyph heretofore completely unknown: a heron or osprey holding a fish in its mouth, apparently a kind of title.



Fig. 1-13. *Temple XIX Stucco Relief*: A2, D1, D3. Three examples of 'Bird-with-Fish' glyph

David Stuart (private communication, October 2000) pointed out that each of these three examples seems to be by a different hand. The second example, at D1, exhibits the same strength of line and form that we see in the glyphs of the 'Clarity Master' in *Temple XVIII*. All three differ from each other in their treatment of 'eyes', 'fins', *u*-syllables, and *le*-syllables. The 'Clarity Master's' 'bird head' and 'fish tail' are strikingly simple and smooth in outline, his sculptural quality of 'eye' of both 'bird' and 'fish' are crisp and effective. The other two examples are more realistic, but more diffuse. The finely-detailed head of the third 'fish' reminds me of the

¹² In spite of the fine state of preservation of its parts, this huge relief (some eleven feet high and four wide) had largely fallen from its stone support and lay in a thousand pieces on the floor. Thanks to an emergency grant from FAMSI, a team of six trained Mexican conservators labored eight months to reconstruct it. With rare foresight, setting a standard for this type of archaeological excavation, Proyecto Director Alfonso Morales insisted on the laborious collection and preservation of every scrap and chip of stucco. Many of these were the consistency of toothpaste, requiring extreme care and skill to preserve and dry out without further damaging them. Preserving the undecorated and interstitial fragments of the stucco bed allowed the team eventually to reconstruct the entire text in order, unlike the *Temple XVIII* texts.

'Laughing Eyes Master', though there is just not enough data here to support a definite attribution. Certainly the 'eyes' on the 'shield' do not resemble the sensitive 'laughing eyes' we identify with him.

The three collocations are each divided into two phrases: an 'u'-bird with fish'-*le* plus another collocation beginning with 'u'. In this case, the six 'u's consist of two 'death eyes' T13's and four 'bracket' T1's, making them easy to compare. The T13's are definitely from different Hands. As an example of two glyphs from the same Artist, we have in the third example (D3) two T1 'brackets' side by side. Observe that, though not identical, they resemble each other much more than they do the other two 'brackets.' Of these other 'brackets,' the first (A2, really closer to T7 than T1) is obviously a different Hand, but the second (D1) seems so like the pair on D3 that it takes some scrutiny to see that the small differences (mainly in the shape of the spherical elements) are fundamental. As we already concluded by comparing the 'bird-with-fish's, it is surely by a different Hand. For further confirmation, look down at the three *le* glyphs: The three 'parentheses' are quite distinct on each of them: tiny and almost semicircular on A2, huge and almost segmenting the *le* at D1, and gracefully tapered, somewhere in between, at D3.



Fig. 1-14. D2 *hi* syllabogram



Fig. 1-15. *Chum-mu-Tuun-ni* at C1

However, one sees many strongly-flavored glyph elements in this inscription which are difficult to parallel in *T. XVIII*. For instance, the slightly-anthropomorphized 'stone sign' of D2 (actually part of a *hi* syllabogram, [Fig. 1-14](#)) seems to display characteristics of



Fig. 1-16. *Temple XIX Stucco Relief*: D4 and D5, two *Ch'ok* collocations at D4 and D5.
Color photographs by author.

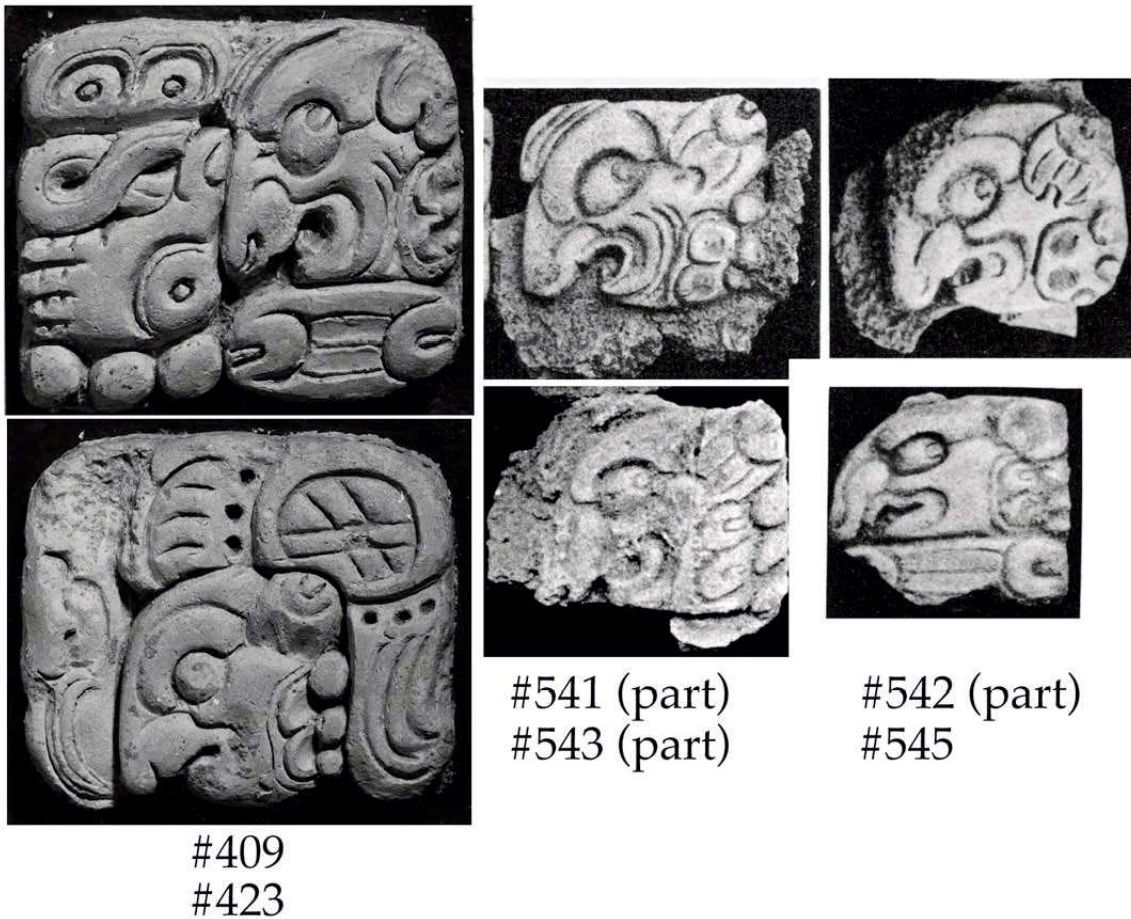


Fig. 1-17. *Ch'ok* examples from *T. XVIII*. (Black-and-white photographs by Linda Schele and Peter Mathews, (Schele & Mathews 1978, #409, 423, 541, 542, 543, & 545).

the 'Clarity Master', but finds no close analogue in *T. XVIII*. The beautiful *Chum-Tuun-ni* at C1 ([Fig. 1-15](#)), displays an anthropomorphic "stone" and elegant *ni*-suffix without peer on *T. XVIII*. The two *Ch'ok* collocations at D4 and D5 clearly are by two distinct Hands, of which D4 *might* be our 'Clarity Master' ([Fig. 1-16](#)), but they are just as clearly by different Artists than the *Ch'ok* examples surviving from *T. XVIII* (Schele and Mathews 1979, #409, 423, 541, 542, 543, & 545, [Fig 1-17](#)).



Fig. 1-18. Temple XIX Stucco Relief: three Ajaw daysigns. Color photographs by author.



Fig. 1-19. Temple XVIII Stucco Glyphs: 'Ajaw' daysign and related *la* glyphs. Black-and-white photographs by L. Schele and P. Mathews. Color photographs by author. (Schele & Mathews 1978).

The three daysigns (all *Ahaw*, [Fig. 1-18](#)) spring from two different Hands, the first of whom (A1) also appears to be our 'Clarity Master'. The second and third *Ajaw* examples (B2, C2) are similar enough to each other that they probably spring from the same Hand, though the differing details of the cartouche bother me. This Artist (or artist-and-slavish-follower) favors crescent-shaped eyes and mouths, and the inline border of the cartouche is a distinct organic crease, while the artist of A1 prefers round eyes and a shallow-groove inline. The well-formed, single stroke mouth of A1 and the crisp grooves in the adjacent *ni*-suffix suggests this is another glyph by the 'Clarity Master.' Comparing these with a pair of *Ajaw* daysigns and four related *la* glyphs from *T. XVIII*, we find that one of these 'faces' (#441) has round 'eyes' and a 'smile' rather like that on *T. XIX* A1, but it does not exhibit the bravura line quality and simplicity of the 'Clarity Master.' If any of the six glyphs from *T. XVIII* has those qualities, it is the first *K'inich Ahkul* glyph (#434). One might argue that the lower *K'inich Ahkul* glyph (#518) is quite close in style and clarity, but details of its 'stone' diagnostics and its *la*-face' show it to be a different Hand, and one slightly less assured. Yet another Hand must be at work in the 'surprised'-looking *Ajaw* daysign in the "9 *Ajaw*" (#458); it is nothing like the 'smiling' three from *T. XIX*, nor the two *K'iniches*. For confirmation, compare the 'daysign cartouches' of *TXVIII* (#497 and #458) with those of *TXIX* and with each other. The Palenque House Style here seems to favor a specific type of lower 'trefoil'—the inner details of each correspond closely, in particular including a kind of stepped central 'leaf'—but just as clearly there are four Hands at work in these five Daysigns. And the four *la* glyphs (#434, #441, #518, and #472) are by three different Hands yet. The different types of 'eyes' on these respective 'faces'—the beady 'eyes' of #434 do not match the wide-open 'eyes' of *TXIX* A1's—are not a powerful enough reason to distinguish these as separate Hands.

[Fig. 1-20](#) shows my attributions of the twelve glyphs of the *Temple XIX Stucco Panel* to four Hands. These four Sculptors tended to work on adjacent glyphs, but only just barely; The Artist that made D1 seems also to have made D5 and D6, but none of the intervening glyphs. Hand A, my "Clarity Master" may have done the adjacent 'Bird-Man' glyph (B1, not shown), but I feel it more likely that B1 was the work of Hand B, who is the assertive and skilled sculptor of the group. His glyphs (also scattered a bit) possess a very assured sense of volume, and tend toward intricate and accomplished detailing. The other two Hands, while professionally competent, seem less self-assured, imitating these two Masters and each other in various details. One of these likes to render 'eyes' as a 'swoosh', a kind of 'whiplash line' common in Palenque reliefs

(for a masterful example, the 'eyes' on the *Pakal*'shield' of the *Took'-Pakal* offered by the mother of the ruler in the *Tablet of the Slaves* ([Fig. 1-20](#), lower left corner).



Fig. 1-20. Temple XIX Stucco Panel: Attributions of the 12 glyphs to four Artists, with detail from *Tablet of Slaves*. Photographs by author.

When I first began categorizing the Hands of *Temple XVIII*'s Stucco Glyphs, I hoped I might link together glyphs that once sat side by side, and perhaps help guide epigraphers to a readable arrangement of these dissociated glyphs. I must warn the Reader that my attributions are provisional; these Artists seem unusually influenced by their fellows, and might even have worked on each other's glyphs. In general, I find that these Artists tended to work on adjacent glyphs, but, alas, their patterns of work-distribution are by no means consistent enough to be of much use in this purpose. However, the text in *Temple XVIII* was much longer. Perhaps its Artists, needing to keep their glyphs more carefully in order, were more orderly in their

distribution, and such an attribution can be of service after all. However, I shall leave that analysis for a later project; the usefulness of such an analysis will be better to assess once I have examined a number of intact inscriptions.

1.3. Stone Inscription Sculptors

1.3.1.

The foregoing examples should suffice to show that even in a short 12-glyph text, the foreman working for Ahkal Mo' Naab saw fit to employ three or four expert stucco sculptors. One of these appears also to have worked on the inscription in *Temple XVIII*. But stucco text production was done piecemeal: Glyphs were formed individually, like cookies, dried, and then inserted into a bed of wet stucco on the wall. The drawback to this procedure is that the bond between glyph and substrate is rather weak, and the glyphs later fall off onto the floor. The advantage from a production standpoint is that it is not necessary for any glyph to be made in proximity to any other; one can distribute the work among several artists, and get the job done much more rapidly.

But what about stone inscriptions? Every carver needs a minimum of elbow room. Many stone inscriptions are monolithic, and one would expect any of these that are smaller than, say, the size of a grown man, to have been the work of a single artist.

Indeed, this is clearly the case with the celebrated *Panel of the 96 Glyphs* (124 cm long, made AD 783 for *K'inich K'uk'-Balam* and found in the *Court of the Tower*, [Figs. 1-21 & 1-22](#)). The unique work of its brilliant and flamboyant artist is instantly recognizable. Other pieces by the '96 Glyphs Master' are the *Lapida de la Creación* ([Figs. 1-23 & 1-24](#), found with the *Panel of the 96 Glyphs*), two matching trapezoidal slabs bearing images of Chaak ([Fig. 1-25](#)), and two fragments found around the corner, near the North Façade of the *Palace* (Schele & Mathews, 1979, item #37, my [Fig. 1-26](#)). All of these seem to have once been part of a single throne or platform ensemble.



Fig. 1-21. *Panel of the 96 Glyphs*, detail: lower part of columns K-L. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1-22. *Panel of the 96 Glyphs*. Photograph by Michel Zabé (Miller, Martin, & Berrin , Fig. 71).



Fig. 1-23. *Lapida de la Creación* (found with *Panel of the 96 Glyphs*. Composite photograph, by author.



Fig. 1-24. *Lapida de la Creación* Right text detail (found with *Panel of the 96 Glyphs*), Composite photograph, by author.



Fig. 1-25. Trapezoidal slabs bearing images of Chaak, now housed in San Diego Museum of Man and Palenque Bodega photographs by Dan Kramer, left (Miller, Martin, & Berrin, Pl. 119), and by author, right.

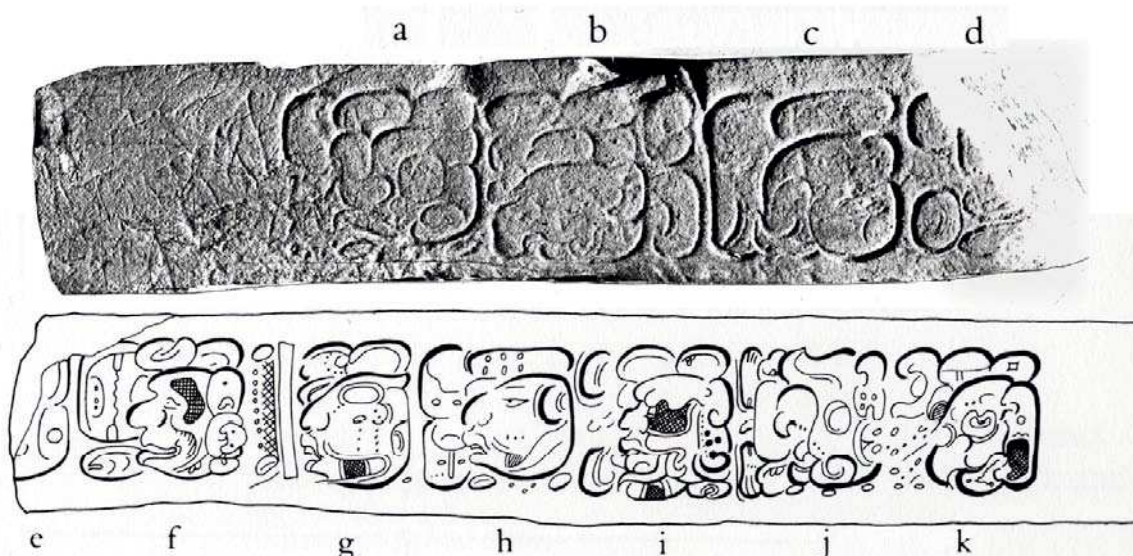


Fig. 1-26. Fragments found near Façade of the *Palace* (Schele & Mathews, 1979, item #37), now housed respectively in the Palenque Bodega and Villhermosa Museum. Photograph and drawing by Schele & Mathews.

The work of this Master is recognizable partly because he (or she) esteems *incised* glyphs and images. Most Maya carvers sculpted glyphs in (relatively) naturalistic relief, relying on

volumetric modeling to enhance and ennoble the forms. The '96 Glyphs Master,' in contrast, *engraves* his forms, precisely copying the bold and modulated



Fig. 1-27. Incised and Relief glyphs comparison: Palenque 'Rabbit Skull'-type Emblem Glyph, from *Tablet of 96 Glyphs*, and *Panel* and *Platform* from *Temple XIX*. Photographs by author.



Temple XIX Platform (Left) & Panel (Upper Right); *Naj Tunich Cave Inscr. 82*, (Lower Right)

Fig. 1-28. Incised and Relief glyphs comparison: Two versions of *Yo-ko²ne -Tal Yajaw K'ak*'s name, from Temple XIX, compared with detail of *Naj Tunich Cave Drawing 82*. Note the *yo* in all three examples. Temple XIX photographs by author, *Naj Tunich* photographs by Chip and Jennifer Clark (from Stone Plate 9).

calligraphic strokes of the painted layout. This carved replication of brushwork is relatively rare among the Late Classic Maya¹³. [Figs. 1-27](#) and [1-28](#) juxtapose comparable Palenque glyphs in their incised and sculpted forms. The first example, from the *Tablet of the 96 Glyphs*, with its dramatically modulated lines, closely approaches painted glyphs such as we see on ceramics or in the Naj Tunich Cave inscriptions (last example in [Fig. 1-28](#)). The other incised glyphs, from the *Temple XIX Platform*, swell and shrink less dramatically, but still reveal their calligraphic origins. The final examples, from the *Temple XIX Limestone Pier Panel*, take the usual sculpted form. [Fig. 1-28](#) compares two versions of the name of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab's right-hand man, *Yok-Nen-Tal Yajaw K'ak'*, and also exhibits the kind of spelling variation one may expect in Maya inscriptions. The kind of modern Western spelling consistency we see in [Fig. 1-71](#) (also drawn from the same two *Temple XIX* inscriptions), or [Fig. 3-02](#) is the *exception*, not the rule. Here, in [Fig. 1-28](#), the two hands differ in their choice of *K'ak'* logograms, and the arrangement of almost everything else.

1.3.2.

The expressive line quality captured in this engraved style implies that these carvers were following a calligraphic layout painted directly on the stone, just as was done in Ancient Rome and, after a fashion, in China.¹⁴

Maya incised texts appear most commonly on non-monumental contexts, such as inscribed shells ([Fig. 1-32](#)), jewelry ([Fig. 1-33](#)), scepters ([Fig. 1-35](#)), and the like.¹⁵ On monuments, as a contrast to the larger main texts in relief, one sees incised writing in artists' signatures and secondary "label" texts, like those from Piedras Negras (e. g., [Fig. 1-2](#) and *Panels 2 and 3*, [Fig. 1-31](#)), Kalak'mul (e. g., *Stela 51*, [Fig. 1-29](#)), Yaxchilan (e. g., *Lintel 46*, [Fig. 1-30](#)), Bonampak' (e. g., *Sculptured Stone 1*, not pictured), and El Peru (e. g., *Stela 34*, a. k. a. the *Cleveland Panel*, not pictured).

¹³ Though it was common in the Late Preclassic and Protoclassic, and it is the rule in China and Japan, whose cultures esteem calligraphy in the highest, far above inscription carving. It was also standard in making the inscriptions of Ancient Rome.

¹⁴ The Chinese calligraphy exemplars were actually brushed onto paper, then the paper was adhered to the stone. The carver cut through the paper into the stone, following the painted layout precisely.

¹⁵ Jade inscriptions, whether on jewelry or royal regalia or recycled Olmec objects, are by necessity engraved rather than carved in relief. This is simply because jade is so hard that it does not lend itself to sculptural carving. All early inscriptions appear consistently to have been lightly but carefully scratched with a fine point, possibly that of a quartz crystal ([Fig. 1-32](#)). Late Classic jade plaques show rulers in relief, usually barely legible, too 'bubbly' looking for my taste, probably due to an overdependence on rotating bits. None of these jades has glyphs carved in comparable relief, probably because glyphs demand a higher quality of line control than the rotating-bit technology afforded at that time.



Fig. 1-29. Kalak'mul Stela 51, detail: Engraved text (scribal signature[s]), with one "normal" (sculptural) glyph (upper left). Photo by author.



Fig. 1-30. Yaxchilan Lintel 46, detail: Scribal signature and part of a “normal” text glyph (upper left). As usual, signature glyphs are much smaller than those of the normal text. Photo by author.



Fig. 1-31. PN Panel 3, detail, engraved text. Upper lines serve as labels for the standing figures whose feet appear here (one coincidentally named *Jasaw Chan K'awiil Aj-K'uhuun*, lower line contains part of an artist's signature. Main text, in the right margin, is sculpted in relief as usual, though these glyphs are only half again as big as the secondary label texts. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1-32. Piedras Negras engraved shell. Photo by author.



Fig. 1-33. Early Classic Greenstone Engraved Belt-Celt from Kalak'mul. Jade inscriptions, whether on jewelry or royal regalia or recycled Olmec objects, are by necessity nearly always lightly engraved rather than carved in relief.



Fig. 1-34. Caracol Stela 6 incised text. University Museum, Philadelphia. Photograph by author.



Fig. 1-35. K3409, Slate Scepter with incised text, private collection. Photograph by Justin Kerr.

One also sees incised texts at Palenque on stone incensario stands, such as those found in the *Temple of the Cross* and *Temple XVIII* (Schele & Mathews 1979, #281 and #391; my [Fig. 1-36](#)). Incised texts of a more prominent purpose are much rarer, and include some Early Classic stelae from Caracol ([Fig. 1-29](#)), *Bonampak' Sculptured Stone 1*, and the *Platform or Throne of Palenque*

Temple XIX, ([Figs. 1-37 ff.](#)), the last of which occupies our attention in the next section.

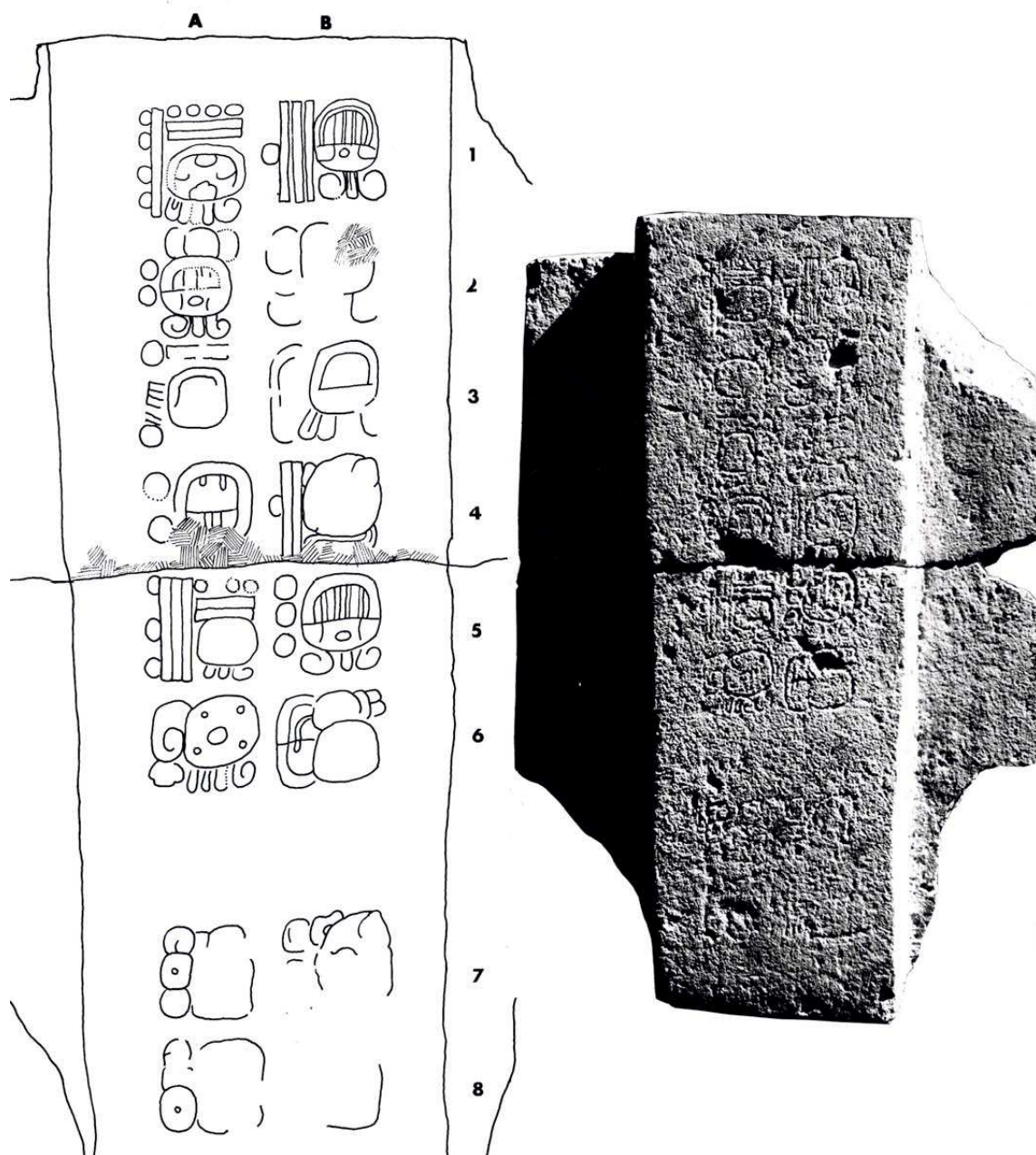


Fig. 1-36. Reverse of Palenque stone incensario: Incised text with a rare (for Palenque) signature (probable *yr'-Bat'-[lu]* at A7). Photo and Drawing by Schele and Mathews (1979).

1.4. *Temple XIX* Platform

1.4.1.

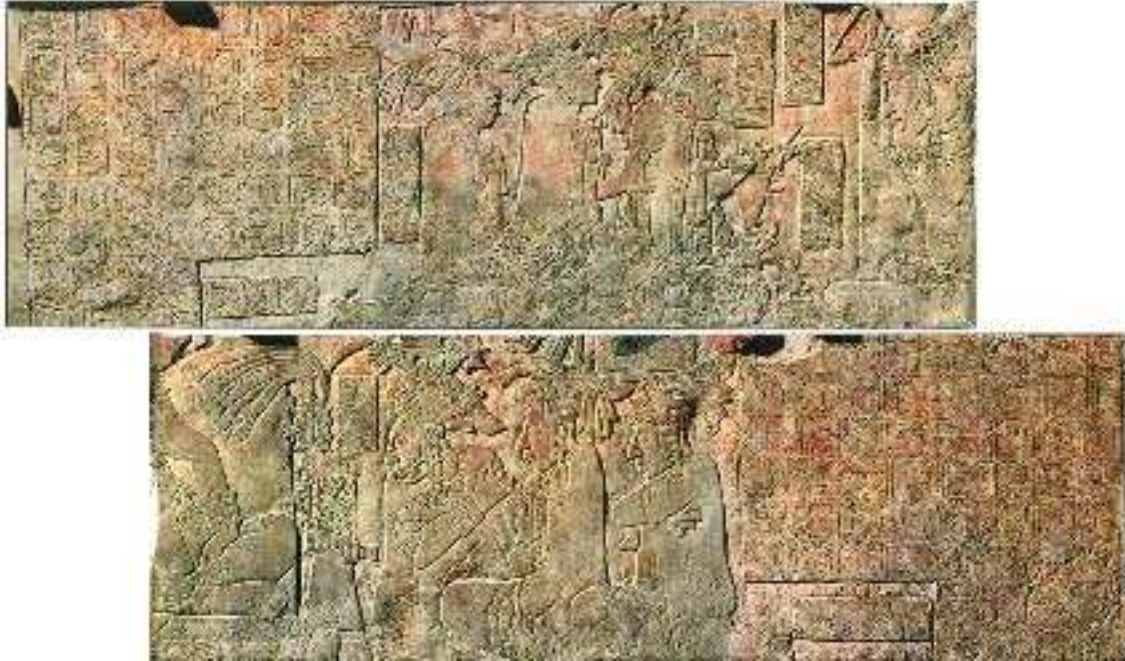


Fig. 1-37. *Temple XIX Platform South Side*, photograph by Jorge Perez de Lara



Fig. 1-38. *Temple XIX Platform West Side*, photograph by Jorge Perez de Lara

The justly-famed *Platform/ Throne of Temple XIX* bears the longest Late Classic incised text yet found (some 200 glyph blocks). It dates to AD 734, during the reign of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab, predating K'inich K'uk' Balam's *Panel of the 96 Glyphs* by almost fifty years. Except for some vandalism¹⁶ and perhaps the effect of the roof of the Temple falling in, it is in

¹⁶ The vandals broke into the stone box whose front and side contain the inscription, scattering its contents and throwing inside a text fragment or two from the front. The only substantial damage they did to the inscribed portions seems to have been directed at the image of Ak'al Mo' Nab, seated in the center of the south side: a frontal blow stove in the image of his head and torso. Fig. 1-47 below shows the broken lid of the Platform, and the damage from this frontal blow.

extraordinarily fine condition. (Apparently the *Platform* was exposed for



Fig. 1-39. Unfinished area near base of the *Dumbarton Oaks Palenque Panel*. In this area near the bottom of *Panel*, the artist has left the clothing ornamental details in a preliminary sketch form. This is the usual case with ambitious Maya artworks, as it is in every culture. Photo by Author.

a relatively short time, perhaps less than a decade¹⁷, before it was buried in the collapse of the Temple.) It also was a first-rate production, employing the finest artisans and a considerable budget. Although close inspection suggests that the carvers were working against a deadline — some portions appear slightly hurried, and some glyphs near the floor seem awkward, as if carved *in situ*— in general, the work is superb and brought to completion. There are no unfinished areas such as we find on the *Dumbarton Oaks Palenque Panel* ([Fig. 1-39](#))¹⁸.

With five decades separating the two, is unlikely that there was a direct relationship between the artists of the *Temple XIX Platform* and the '96 *Glyphs Master*,¹ though it certainly *appears* that the latter was inspired by the work of the former. If *Temple XIX* indeed collapsed in the 730's or 740's, the 96 *Glyphs Master* is unlikely ever to have seen it. However, there must

¹⁷This time span reflects the opinion of the archaeologists who excavated it, communicated to me personally.

¹⁸ This panel was carved in the reign of K'an Hoy Chitam, the immediate predecessor of Ahkal Mo' Naab. It was looted sometime around the middle of the 20th century and consists of a type of tri-figure composition common at Palenque (for Schele's drawing of it, see Schele & Miller 1986, p. 275). Its text indicates that it is incomplete; a preceding and a following panel are still undiscovered.

certainly have been other works like it by the same artists (such as the just-uncovered *Temple XXII* inscription) that survived aboveground long enough to inspire him. In all likelihood, a tradition of engraved glyphs prevailed, carried down from teacher to student, most likely via a Master-apprentice-type situation, or perhaps a more formal Palenque Carvers' Academy.

The glyphs of the *Platform*'s text are small, around 3 cm (1.5 inches) on a side, and sometimes appear to have been carved with some haste. By comparison, those on the *Panel of 96 Glyphs* are almost thrice as wide: 8 - 9 cm wide. And although the *96 Glyphs* is justly admired as much for its exquisite detail as for its brilliant calligraphic line quality, when one compares the two detail by detail, one realizes that the earlier monument indulges in at least as many, sometimes even *more* details per glyph ([Fig. 1-40](#)). In other words, part of the '*96 Glyphs* Master's genius lies in his or her ability to balance fine details with simplicity. In order to reveal better the overall form, he edits out just enough of the details to clarify the whole glyph ensemble, achieving a truly monumental effect.



Fig. 1-40. Glyphs from *96 Glyphs* and *T. XIX Platform* at the same scale. Here they are printed about 80% of their original size. Photographs by Author.

1.4.2.

The *Platform* consists of two carved and two uncarved limestone slabs, built against a north inside wall (which with the floor forms the other two sides) ([Figs. 1-37](#) and [1-38](#)). As the entire text is incised calligraphy, we have here a splendid opportunity to compare long passages of actual handwriting, as well as carving idiosyncrasies. As one might expect on a monument consisting of two carved pieces, a preliminary comparison shows that different hands carved glyphs on the two slabs. When one compares a few collocations ([Figs. 1-41](#) and [1-42](#)) which appear in various parts of the stone, one is in for a surprise.

1.4.3.

Palenque Temple XIX Platform: Eight examples of the GI glyph



Each of the six glyphs above was carved by a different Individual. Compare the 'ear-shells.'
J1 and P5 are closely related, and the two below are by the same Hand, closely related to the Hand of T3.

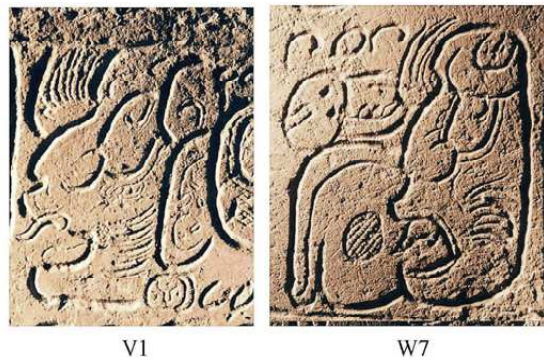


Fig. 1-41. T. XIX Platform - Eight examples of the god *GI* — C6, H1, Label 4 gl. 2, J1, P5, T3 [*sans* title], V1 [*sans* title], W7.

The prominent part played by GI of the Palenque Triad¹⁹ (an aspect of Chaak) in this text provides eight examples of his name for comparison, and a close examination of these names unexpectedly reveals some *seven* individual hands at work.

¹⁹ *Juun-ye-Nal-Chaak* / *Juun-Nal-ye-Chaak*, perhaps "One Kernel Maize(-ear) Chaak" or "One-Tooth-Chaak-Place" or even "One-Tooth-Chaak-Thing." The 'head' in this name does have a prominent single 'tooth' (*ye*).

The Artist responsible for J1 (broken 3rd example) favored lightly-incised details such as the dot on *ye* and the beard-like 'cheek fin'; he also carved uniquely-symmetric 'ear-shells.' The Artist of H1 (2nd example) preferred to render his glyphs in bold, clear, simple lines — hardly a trace of hairy 'barbels'; his *ye* is almost square, but his 'ear-shell' is rather awkwardly drawn. The Artist of C6 (first example) renders a powerfully-outlined *ye*, and gives his god a Neanderthal 'brow' and sharp 'nose', with delicate 'barbels' and 'ear-shell.' The Artist who carved Label 4 (5th ex.) gave the god a bulbous 'nose' and a furrowed 'brow'; his *ye* is yet distinct from the previous three. The Artist of P5 (6th ex.), in the final column of the south side, has many features in common with the Artist of J1; their 'ear-shells' look alike, for example. Also like the first Artist, he favors round 'eye' and 'ear-shell,' but when closely comparing P5's and J1's 'ear-shells', their outlines of *ye*, and the god's 'profile', we find they have strongly different characters.²⁰

The last three examples (T3, V1, W7) come from the West Side, and all feature a distinctly receding 'brow', giving the god a more fish-like appearance. T3 (6th ex.) is from the left text-block of the slab, and the details of its eyebrow and under-eye suggest it may spring from a Hand distinct from that which carved the other two (on the right text-block). (However, it *does* resemble the other two (V1, W7) in *flavor*, and in many details. Perhaps scribe-carvers chose — or were assigned — to work together whose style was similar, or working together inspired them to imitate one another a bit.) V1 and W7, despite different 'eye'- and 'barbel'-shapes, are very much in the same style. The two come from the last four columns of the monument, a block of what I take to be glyphs of homogeneous, distinctive style. These glyphs all display lilting outlines and very fine, very dense hatching; quite different from the style on the rest of the *Platform*. These glyphs are so finely-crafted, so appealingly distinctive that they were the first on this monument to inspire a nickname: the 'Fine Hatching Master'. (See below, Sections 1.4.5 and 1.4.6.)

Caution: One is rarely certain of every attribution on a complex work such as this. When a group of artists work as a team, they influence each other and the boundaries blur. It is entirely possible that, say, Artist A carved his own layouts, and also painted the texts for Artist B and Artist C, or that Artist C carved the 'face' glyphs for his less-competent colleagues Artist B and

²⁰ I earlier suggested that these two (J1 and P5) might be by the same Hand (Van Stone 2000: <<http://www.famsi.org/reports/99027/section04.htm>>), but I no longer believe that possible.

Artist E, and so on. However, unless compelled otherwise, I shall assume that each artist wrote his own layouts, and that they all worked from a master text layout that kept gapping-errors to a minimum. Although I am certain that one artist oversaw the whole project and drew the initial layouts, I am equally sure that his master layout existed mainly on paper.

This is because the *handwriting* and *spelling* habits change at the same boundaries across which the carving style changes (See [Figs. 1-43](#) and [1-44](#)). Each artist was given an assignment, and handed a page with his text laid out on it. The Master may have drawn out the text grids and sketched the figures approximately onto the stone slabs, but he trusted his expert team to interpret and paint their own assignments on the stone. To have accomplished this, the carvers must have been literate — important, high-ranking scribes, exalted in position at court, well-respected and well-fed.

1.4.4.



Fig. 1-42. *T. XIX Platform/Throne* - Four examples of the *Sajal* collocation.²¹ Photos by author.

Comparing these four glyphs from the *Platform*, I think that even a neophyte can tell that they represent four different carvers, and likewise four different scribes. Here is why I think so: looking at the smoothly-engraved, almost abstract lines of the fourth of these (U4) we can infer a

²¹ The *Sajal* title (for a lord subsidiary to an *Ajaw*) can be spelled a number of ways, but by far the most common is spelled *sa-ja-l(a)*, involving a very interesting allograph of the syllable *sa*. It consists of a 'human head' with the "earth/soil" glyph *Kab* in or overlaying his 'mouth.' There are two visually related signs, a 'human head' with the "bread/tamale" glyph *Wah* in its 'mouth,' and a similar 'head' holding the "water" glyph *Ha* in its 'mouth.' These read "eat" and "drink" respectively and only appear on inscribed ceramics, in the Dedicatory Formula (or *Primary Standard Sequence*) section describing the contents of the vessel. One might expect this 'head-eating-earth' glyph to be a logogram as well, but its currency is much wider, and there are ample examples of its use as a syllable, and none for its use as a logogram.

However, it appears originally to have been a logogram, and the syllabic *sa* that we see here derived from it acrophonically. Cortez and other accounts of the Conquest report numerous meetings between lords and subsidiaries. The accounts frequently describe some of the ceremony accompanying such greetings. In addition to their customary exchanges of mantles, jade, gold, and other valuables, two actions by the subordinate lords appear here frequently: while reciting a formal greeting, he holds a forearm across his chest, and sometimes he reaches down to pick up some dirt which he puts in his mouth as a sign of obeisance. This "earth-in-mouth" action may have been the origin of the glyph, and explains its preponderance in the *Sajal* collocation.

skilled engraver. (His touch also informs the last two GI's above, at V1 and W7.) By contrast, the carved lines of the first *Sajal* (Label 7, Gl. 1) are uncertain, scratchy, sloppy. The other two examples are better-carved, but not quite as lyrical as U4.

Examining the sculptural quality of the carved lines that make up these glyphs, it becomes obvious that each of these collocations was carved with a specific set of tools, different from the other glyphs'. Note, for example, the four outlines of these *Sajals* were carved with four different tools; the radii of curvature of the end of each gouge differ from one another. That is, the groove outlining the third example (Label 10, Gl. 1) is



Fig. 1-43. Details of the four *Sajal* glyphs shown above, showing four different sets of tools. Photos by author.

wider and shallower than that outlining S4, and S4's outline-groove is slightly wider in turn than that on U4. The clumsy outline of the first example (Label 7, Gl. 1) could conceivably been done with one of the three gouges we've described, but as a carver I know how jealous we are of our tools. I doubt that any of his fellow sculptors would entrust their fine gouges to the hands of such a clumsy Scratcher.

Let us look at the detail strokes. The hatching on U4 is done with a much finer tool than appears in any of the other examples. The first example has no hatching at all, but the other two each apparently employ a fine point specific to them. I think it safe to say that we are dealing with four different carvers, with varying skill levels and their own personal toolkits.

1.4.4.1. A note about the layout and carving process

In Section 2.8.2, I detail the process by which I believe workers achieved panels such as these. In short, I think that carving projects in Palenque followed much the same patterns as did panel-carvers in Assyria, Egypt, Europe, and China:

A Master Artisan assembled a group of artisans under his authority, and distributed the work-assignments.

The Master produced the overall plan (guided by priests, if a sacred text was involved), drawn to scale on a piece of paper, papyrus or ostraka.

The Master transferred a minimal sketch of the master plan onto the panel. This sketch was usually guided by a scaled grid (as in [Fig. 1-57](#)), then painted freely, (although ancient Chinese artisans made the paper master precisely to scale on a very thin piece of paper, glued it directly to their stone or wooden panel, and carved right through the paper). The Maya appear to have followed the practice of Egypt (see [Fig. 1-59](#)), depending on the skill and taste of the final Carver to position the elements tastefully.

The Carver would complete the painted layout in his assigned area, adding whatever details he felt necessary. Maya carvers—who apparently were also trained artists and calligraphers—enjoyed considerable technical freedom to modify their layouts, since the paint with which they laid out the designs was easily wiped clean. (Ancient Roman *ordinators* were not so lucky; the *minium* which they used soaked into the marble or travertine, and could only be erased by "dishing out"—carving the surface down a millimeter or so.)

Within certain parameters, each Carver could employ his own spelling preferences and drawing conventions. He also had his own personal toolkit, consisting of gravers, chisels, and a gouge or two. Blunt gravers would carve bold lines, sharp ones fine lines. Some carvers

restricted themselves to two line widths: thick or thin. (A few seem to have used one graver for everything.) Many used three or more: broad, medium, and thin gravers, and they were free to employ them in various proportions. (The Artist who carved the bottom of Columns ABCD on the *Palace Tablet* relied mostly on his finest graving tool, while his Colleague at OP 12-19 had an opposite temperament, carving most details quite boldly.)

If we were then to assume that these four carvers were working from a calligraphic Master Layout painted onto the stone by a single individual, we should have to explain why these four 'heads' have such differently-shaped 'profiles', and differently-shaped 'eyes', and why the *ja* suffixes are so differently-drawn in every detail, and so forth. Obviously, not only do we have four different carvers here, but each worked from his own layout, in handwriting peculiar to his own territory.

I think it very unlikely that each carver had a personal secretary. It is only slightly more credible to suggest the situation were reversed, that four calligraphers each worked with a personal carver.²² Occam's Razor demands that we conclude that **each carver was also a calligrapher**, and that he or she brushed his or her own section of text onto the stone before incising it. This situation also demands that a Master probably laid out the whole text on paper, and then assigned each carver-calligrapher a specific section of it. (Or, if there were no official Master, an egalitarian committee of carver-calligraphers all agreed how to distribute the work. They, too, probably worked from one or more paper master-copies of the whole.) Without such a master copy on paper, the text could not have flowed smoothly from one section to the next.

1.4.5.

[Fig. 1-44](#) is a chart showing my interpretations of how the carving assignments were distributed about the throne.²³ The changes in style tend to follow natural divisions of the layout: Hand A took the first four columns of text, Hand B the second four, Hands F, G, H, and I the labels of the figures (and were probably responsible for the figures themselves), and Hand C

²² It *was* the case, by the way, in ancient Roman lettercutting shops: an *ordinator* laid out the text, and his partner, a *sculptor* or *marmorius*, cut it. See below, section 1.5.1.

²³ By the way, one other work by one of these artists can be found in Schele and Mathews' 1979 *Bodega Book*, (item 553) a fragment of a slab, perhaps the seat of a throne, found in Temple XXI, another of Ahkal Mo' Naab's constructions round the Plaza de la *Templo de la Cruz*. Its edge is engraved with several glyphs by one of our artists. At this writing (2004), excavators at Palenque have just discovered the entire *Temple XXI Panel* from which this fragment came. It is comparable to the *Temple XIX Platform* in style and scale, and I think employed some of the same carvers, but appeared too late to be included in this Dissertation.

a heavier load: six columns of the right section of text. Hand C may have suffered some sort of interruption, for a few glyphs in the middle of this passage (I2-J3, K3-L4) seem to have been carved by one or two different Hands.

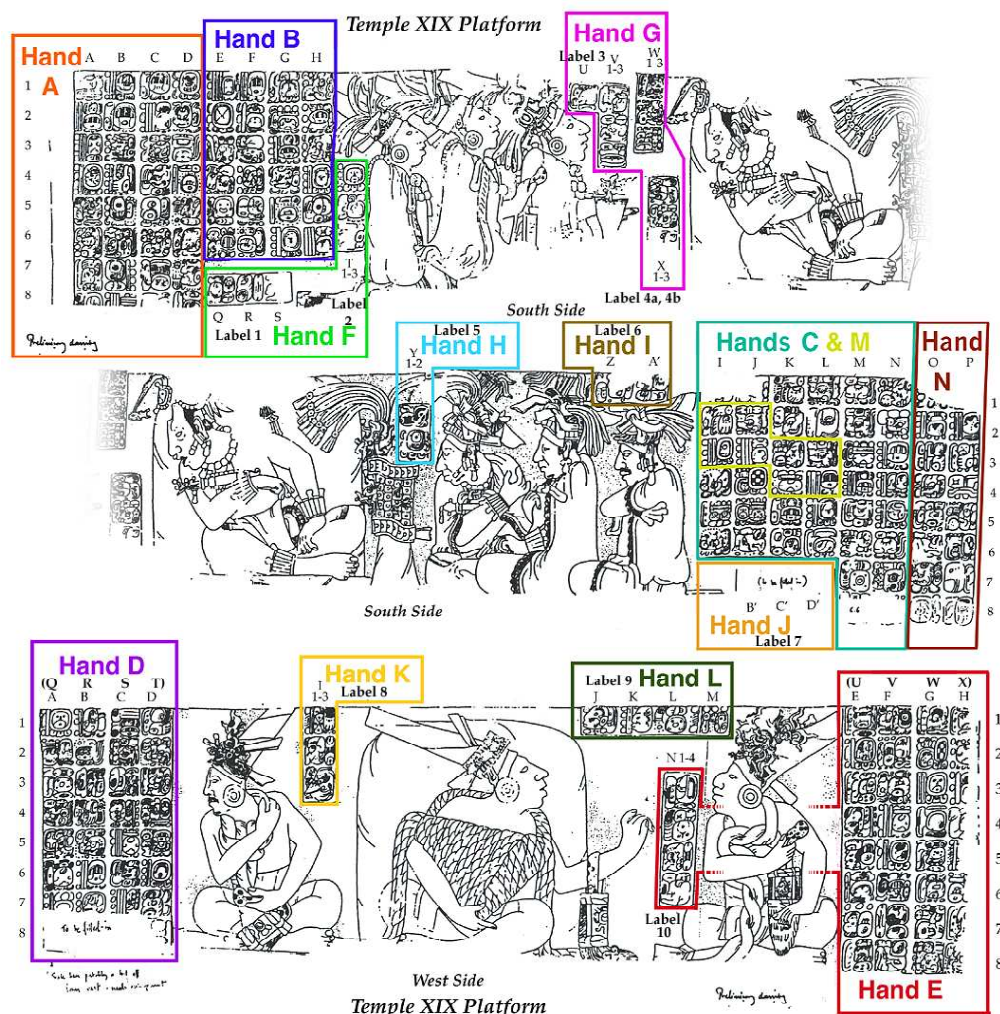


Fig. 1-44. T. XIX Platform/Throne with delineation of work areas. Drawing of carved panels by David Stuart. His West Side Columns ABCD, EFGH are my Columns QRST, UVWX. His Columns IJKLMN correspond to my Labels 8, 9, and 10. On the South Side, Stuart's Columns QRST are my Labels 1 and 2, etc.

Perhaps he had apprentices (Hand M, N, and maybe others) he was training. The interruptions occur unexpectedly, in mid-phrase, for instance, between the *Tuun* and the *K'atuun* parts of a distance number. I imagine him demonstrating, carving the first glyph in a phrase, then handing the tools to his student and saying, "Now, you have a go."

The seven short texts labeling figures on the South Side (my Hands F, G, H, and I) are distinct from those of the main texts. I believe that the first two label texts (both end with a 'bird-with-headband' glyph, a scribal title that for a couple years was thought to read *Its'aat*) are by

one hand (F), as are the three vertical labels to the left of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab (Hand G). I should like to point out that I am more certain that the first (labeled U-V1-V3 on the drawing) and third (labeled X1-X3 on the drawing) of these are by the same Carver, than I am about the middle one (Stuart's drawing W1-W3), which has fewer points in common with its neighbors. However, enough similarities exist that I have finally committed to it.

I suspect that the Artist who carved a particular figure also tended to carve his name-label, so if the two first labels are by the same Hand, likely he also carved the first two figures. My preliminary inspection —starting with the shapes of the feathers— suggests that the first *three* (those to our left of Ahkal Mo' Naab [his right]) were carved by the same Hand. The more-pointed feathers on the three to his left (our right, Personages 5, 6, and 7), link *them* together as well, but in a different group. Ahkal Mo' Naab (Personage 4) appears to belong in a class of his own, though he might have been carved by the Artist of one or the other of these two groups. So we now have tentatively assigned the first four figures (the fourth being the central portrait of Ahkal Mo' Naab) and their labels to Hands F and G. Unexpectedly, the three figures to the right (Ahkal's left), though they are themselves appear similar at first glance, carry labels by three different Hands. I see little reason to ascribe the South figures or labels to any of the carvers of the main text.

Four other artists divided up the work on the West side. Hand D carved the left four columns. Hand E, who wrote and carved the last four columns of text, is to me the most recognizable of the team: his drawing and carving both wallow in fine, delicate details. A good example of his style is seen in the last of the *Sajal* collocations at U4 (see [Figs. 1-42, 1-43](#)). Especially salient is his prolific crosshatching. My nickname for him is the "Fine Hatching Master" ([Fig. 1-45](#)).

(next page:) **Fig. 1-45. T. XIX Platform/Throne: work of the "Fine Hatching Master", Columns UVWX & Label 11 (Stuart's West Columns EFGH & N).** Photograph by Jorge Perez de Lara, composite by author.



This Master is a superlative calligrapher, and appears to revel in fine crosshatching: he *looks* for things to hatch. He hatches the *li* glyph at U1, for example ([Fig. 1-46](#), upper left); rarely elsewhere is this glyph hatched. He deliberately enlarges hatched areas (such as those on the

'cheek' of the U4 *sa* [Fig. 1-47] and those on U5 and V5, Fig. 1-46 lower), apparently to emphasize the hatched areas all the more.



Fig. 1-46. Temple XIX Platform: Glyphs of the “Fine Hatching Master”. Unusual hatched *li* at U1, enlarged hatched areas everywhere else. Photographs by author.

He also has a peculiar habit of enhancing these hatched areas with inserted details not found in other glyphs. For example, inside the 'dark spots' of his *Kab* and '*Kab*-like' glyphs at V7, he inserts blank 'bubbles' (Fig. 1-47). Likewise, the 'dark spots in the '*Kab*' on the cheek of his *sa* glyph contain curved 'worm'-like elements (Fig. 1-43, lower right, Fig. 1-47 lower left). Even the *Tuun* at W4 has a similar 'dark spot' containing a curved 'worm,' which is quite rare. Though the dot-ringed side element of a 'stone sign' often can take a hooked shape, it rarely is a dark crosshatched spot like this —probably too close to the *Kab*. It is interesting that this Artist has in a way combined the two.



Fig. 1-47. Temple XIX Platform: More glyphs of the “Fine Hatching Master”. Enlarged hatched areas on the *Och* at V6, and on the other glyphs. Weird blank ‘bubbles’ and ‘worms’ inserted into hatched areas at V7, U4, W4. Very unusual hatched spot on the *Tuun* at W4. Photographs by author.

I attribute Label 10, the Label for the lord closest to these four columns of glyphs, to the Fine Hatching Master as well ([Fig. 1-45](#)). It is lightly carved, excellently drawn, with lots of energy, and emphasizes crosshatching in precisely the same way as the main text glyphs. This increases the likelihood that he is also responsible for carving the rightmost figure (Personage 10) here, or at least parts of him. Unfortunately, attributing the figures on this relief is *much* more complex than doing so with the glyphs.



Fig. 1-48. *Temple XIX Platform* under excavation, South Side. Central portion with Personages 4 (Ahkal Mo' Naab), 5 (Yok Nen Tal Yajaw K'ak), 6, and 7. Note damage to Ahkal Mo' Naab. Photo by author.

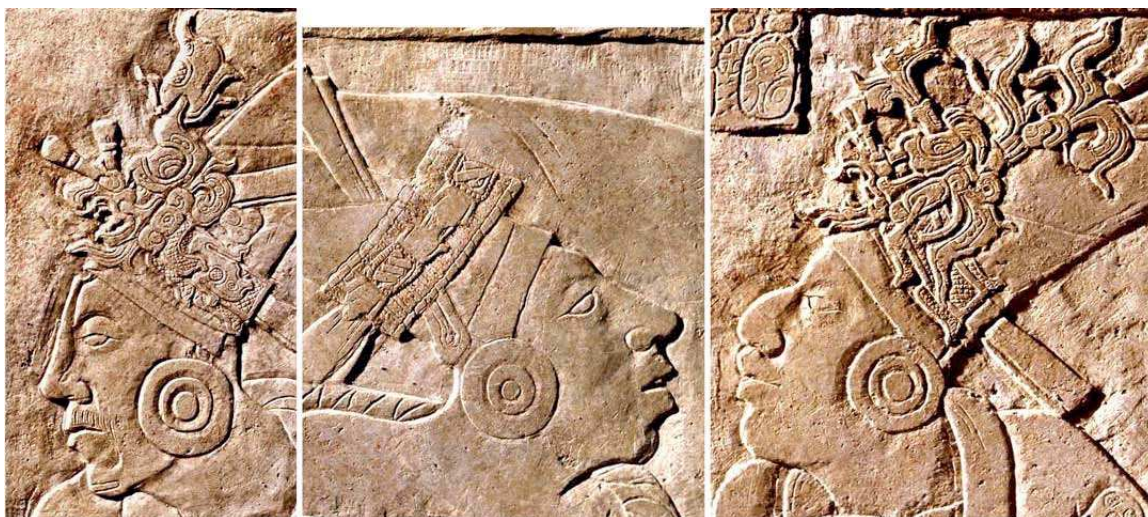


Fig. 1-49. *T. XIX Platform*: Heads of the three figures on West side (Personages 8, 9, and 10). Note that the carver left evidence that he slightly altered the design during production, repositioning the profiles of the two flanking figures, especially Personage 10. Photography by Jorge Perez de Lara.

1.4.6.

The three figures on the West side ([Fig. 1-49](#)) are remarkably individualized portraits.²⁴ Personage 8's face is tall, frowning, thin-lipped and sharp-featured, with a mustache and false nose-bridge.²⁵ Personage 9, the central Lord here, has a rounder face and fuller lips (open in

²⁴ More so than the seven figures on the South side, though the portrait of Ahkal Mo' Naab stands out more than the others. See [Fig. 1-53](#).

²⁵ He is the only one here with a prosthetic nose. Around the corner, on the South Side, the opposite is true; only one of the seven figures —Personage 3, the lord who offers the headdress to Ahkal Mo' Naab— *lacks* a prosthetic nose.

speech or song, as are Ahkal Mo' Naab and one other²⁶ on the South Side. See [Fig. 1-53](#)), with prominent nose and receding chin and forehead. Personage 10 has a large, very round, almost comical nose, and very full lips. Despite these specific efforts to individualize them, they have many nearly-identical features: their clumsy hands, the wrinkles in their garments, the straps on their 'purses,' and especially their target-like earflares are remarkably similar. The earflares are striking in their placement, as well: strategically positioned, almost as if to hide the ears so no-one would have to carve them.²⁷ (Personage 9's earflare is slightly different from the other two—its central circles are smaller and a bit more finely-carved— but hardly enough to distinguish a different Hand.)

So far, one might ascribe these three figures to the same Carver, one with a remarkable sensitivity to portraiture. On the other hand, distinguishing aspects do exist.

The three figures each carry similar fringed purses (or 'incense bags') hung from a loop of stuffed jaguar skin ([Fig.1-50](#)). This is relatively customary. All of these purses are adorned with Teotihuacan-style "sacrifice" symbols, two with an eye-like sign, the other with a triskele 'heart cross-section' (which also marks Personage 2's purse). Under each of these symbols is a triple-lobed 'Teotihuacan-blood-spurt.' Two of these have foliate devices in their long tail-fringes resembling the *Nal* glyph (also as usual, see the similar bags on the *Tablet of the Slaves* and the *Temple XIX Tablet*). It is the fringes themselves that interest me here. Each has a distinct form, the kind of habitual unconscious formal differences that connoisseurs use. Personage 8's purse has a fringe of undifferentiated threads, all more or less the same thickness and length. Personage 9's purse-fringe looks more like feathers, with alternating deep and shallow grooves between them, and each pair of strands drawing together (especially the side-fringe) to form a well-defined point. Personage 10's fringe is different yet. The texture of its long 'tail' looks like that of a Sumerian sheepskin kilt, with overlapping, short, feather-like double strands, and the side-fringes divided into squarish tufts of four or five strands each.

²⁶ Personages 1 and 4.

²⁷ The carvers of the South side have no such shyness. All seven show at least part of their ears, even the three [Personages 1, 2, and 3] with 'target' type earflares.

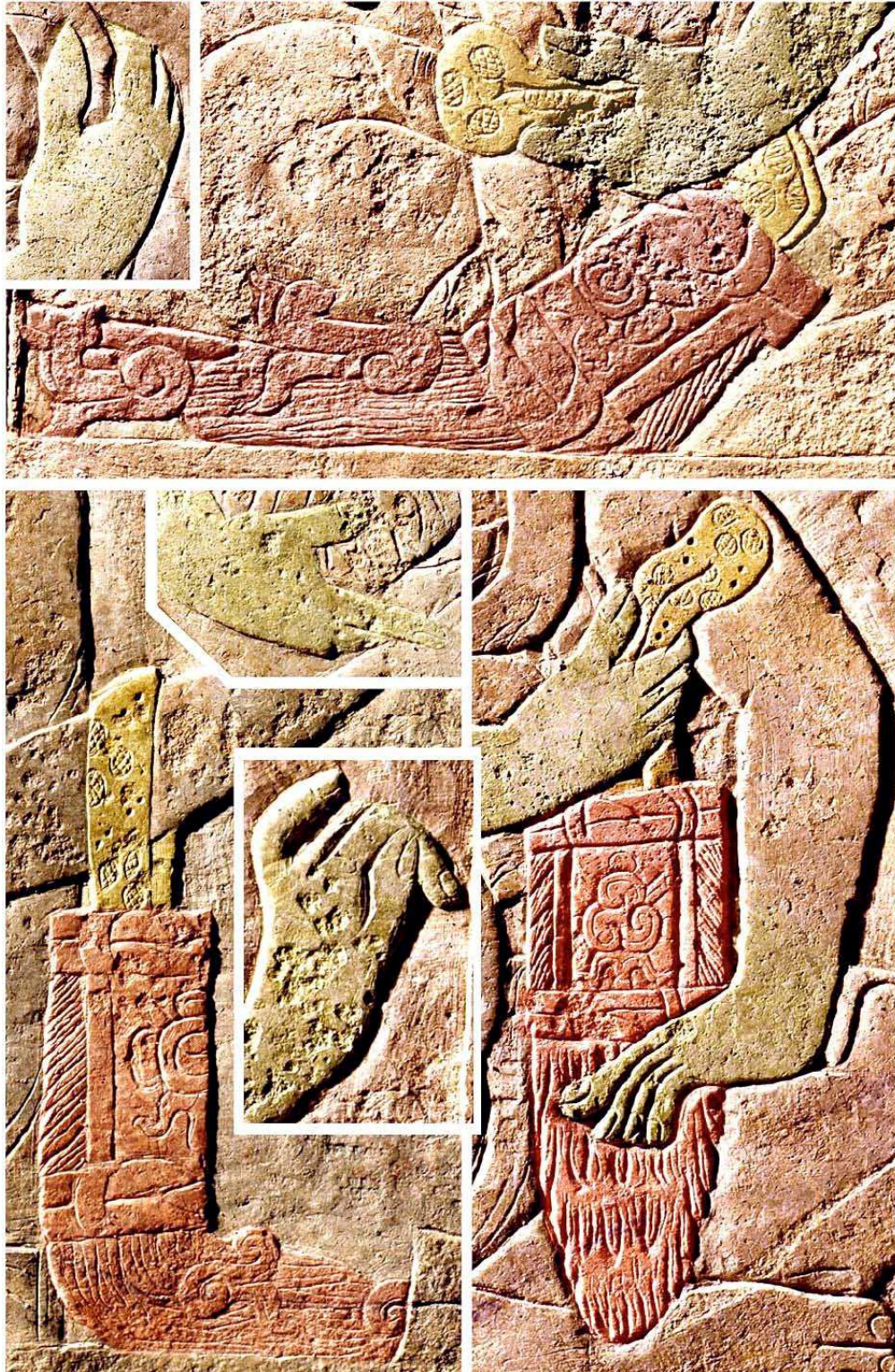
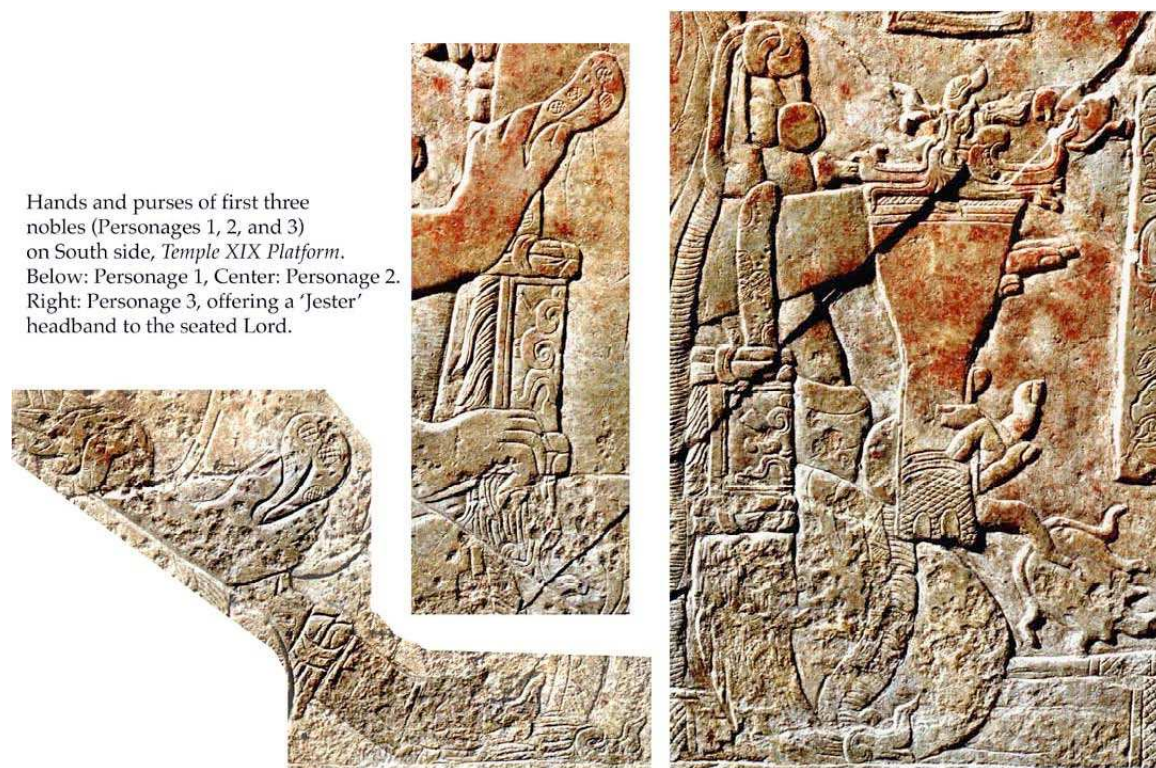


Fig. 1-50. *Temple XIX Platform*: hands, purses of three figures on West side. Top: Personage 8, Bottom left: Personage 9; right: 10. Photography by Jorge Perez de Lara, artificial coloration by author.

While it is possible that a single artist —capable of differentiating three individuals by

capturing their particular facial characteristics— could also differentiate three types of fringe, these distinctions seem rather to be the kind of individual hallmark habit that connoisseurs cherish. Compare, for example, the similar purse held by Personage 2 on the South side: Though identical in its emblem and side-fringes to that of Personage 10, its Artist finished it much more carefully, more three-dimensionally, more realistically, more smoothly ([Fig. 1-51](#), center). Its tail-fringe is likewise more finished, lively, and natural-looking than the others. I do not think that the difference in fringe-type results from a conscious choice for variety's sake. It results from the Artist being a better craftsman, and in the habit of rendering side-fringes this way.



Hands and purses of first three nobles (Personages 1, 2, and 3) on South side, *Temple XIX Platform*. Below: Personage 1, Center: Personage 2. Right: Personage 3, offering a 'Jester' headband to the seated Lord.

Fig. 1-51. Hands and purses (incense-bags?) of Personages 1 (below), 2 (center), and 3 (right) of *Temple XIX Platform's* South side. From photographs by Jorge Perez de Lara.

The hands of these three fellows on the West side appear clumsy, mainly because of the odd shape of their thumbs. Two other figures on the Platform have this odd thumb-shape, Personages 1 and 2 on the South side ([Fig. 1-51](#)). These two and their neighbor Personage 3 (whose thumbs are hidden) also share with the West side lords the carriage of purses and target-

shaped earflares (though in this case we are allowed to see part of their ears).²⁸ Although I am sure we see here the work of at least four different Carvers, they all carved the same type of fat thumb. This suggests that either (1) they all learned to make thumbs with the same rigid conventions from a common teacher, or (2) these four Hands were working from a layout drawing by a single individual, whom they felt obliged to copy, or (3) the large thumbs on these six people was some kind of symbolic or real characteristic of a particular lineage or political group. Or a combination of the three. The fact that the other four individuals on this monument have more normal-looking digits (except Personage 7, nicknamed "Stubby" by the archaeologists), as well as distinctive accessories, suggests intentionality. (See note 28.)

Before we leave the discussion of thumbs, I wish to emphasize that the three personages on the West side were carved by three different Hands (or at least their hands, heads, purses, headdresses and labels were; see just below). Just looking closely at their thumbs, we can see that Personage 8's thumbs have smooth, pointed outlines (one without its nail — the carver never finished it); Personage 9's thumbs have rounded ends and very short nails (like a nail-biter's); and Personage 10's have long overhanging nails (and a left hand that looks like a foot). Again, I think these different thumbs indicate connoisseurship-distinction, rather than the work of a single highly-observant portraitist.

Personage 10's K'awiil forehead diadem has many features in common with the 'Jester God' diadem on Personage 8's forehead (beard, eye, nose beads, incisor, earflare, forehead-mirror, etc.), but differs in style in all of them. On this basis, one must assign these two Personages—or at least their diadems—to different Hands. However, the *headbands* that support these diadems are virtually identical. Further, the crosshatching and other fine details on this Personage 10 do not match the style of the Fine Hatching Master's glyphs in Label 10 at all; they are coarse and deeply-cut, in keeping with the style of the other two personages. So, either he

²⁸ None of the characters' name-labels repeat on the Platform, so the Maya are telling us that these three (Personages 1, 2, and 3) are distinct individuals from the three on the West side. I think, however, it is no accident that they are here appareled in similar outfits (Personages 1 and 2 even have the same 'dunce-cap' headdress, particularly when contrasted with the other three subordinate lords to Ahkal Mo' Naab's left (our right): Personages 5, 6, and 7 have no purses, no counterweights on their necklaces, different ear-jewelry (theirs matches Ahkal Mo' Naab's), different headdresses, and (for the most part) better-rendered hands—even Personage 7, whose deformed or mutilated fingers are portrayed with grotesque, loving accuracy. (One of the figures supporting Ahkal Mo' Naab's 'Big Bird' costume on the *T. XIX Panel* (its Personage 1) has this same stubby-finger-condition, but he is not the same person as this Personage 7—at least he is not so named. Stubby fingers do not appear, so far as I know, anywhere else, and suddenly we find two contemporaneous nobles afflicted with them. Could this signal a familial genetic trait? A passing fashion in self-sacrifice or prisoner-mutilation?) I think that the three nobles to one side of Ahkal Mo' Naab are here deliberately contrasted with those on the other. Perhaps this illustration is signaling that the right-hand group is from a specific lineage or polity, and the other groups from a different lineage or polity. (The other 'supporter' on the *T. XIX Panel* [its Personage 3, named *Yo-ko-Nen-Tal-Yajaw K'ak'*], does appear also, in the same position, in this gathering on the South side of the *Platform* [Personage 5]. He must have been an important colleague—the "right hand man"—of Ahkal Mo'

subordinated his carving style to match that of the other two figures, or someone else carved this figure.



Fig. 1-52. Temple XIX Platform: Labels of three figures on West side, with glyphs Q3-R4 from nearby text panel, and Label 5 from South Side included for comparison. Photos by author.

The glyphic labels for these three gentlemen are by three different Hands, none of them the same as Hand D. I did ascribe the last Label [10] to Hand E, in the previous section. To distinguish Label 10 from the others, compare its *ch'o-ko* collocation with that of Label 9; you'll see that not only are the two carved with different line-quality, but that the *ko*'s are distinguished by subtle but definite idiosyncratic details. Likewise Label 9 over the central Ruler is more crisp and different from its fellows, and from the columns of text. Two of the "*Sajal-9*" texts are found, respectively, in the first four columns here (QRST, at S4) and in Label 9 (first glyph), and they are definitely *not* the same Hand, as we deduced above in Section 1.4.4. Label 8, that closest to Columns QRST, is the most careful and crisply carved of the three. Its excellence compares to that of Label 5 (*Yajaw K'ak' Nen Tah*), which I have included for comparison. It also

Naab, because not only is he the only person mentioned twice in *Temple XIX*, but his name appears a *third* time, on the

has some affinities with the first four columns of text (QRST), but not enough for me to declare the two of a commono Hand. I believe that the three figures were carved by three individual Artists, and that the first two figure-carvers also each carved the label for his figure. And, if the last figure was carved by the Fine Hatching Master (Hand 7, the basis for which see below), he subordinated his style there to that of his fellow figure-carvers, or perhaps abdicated many of the details to them. Glyphs, being smaller, simpler, and conventionalized, are much more likely to have been carved by a single Artist—and recognizable as such— than a figure would be. This is why I am limiting this investigation to the texts.



Fig. 1-53. Temple XIX Platform: faces of seven figures on South side. Note different apparel of left trio (Personages 1, 2, and 3) and right trio (Personages 5, 6, and 7). Ahkal mo' Naab's pose and outfit (Personage 4) more or less matches that of the group to his left (our right). Photographs by Author, except Personage 3 by Jorge Perez de Lara.



Fig. 1-54. Labels of seven figures on South side. Both labels 4a and 4b define personage 4— Ahkal Mo' Naab. Photographs by Author, except Label 4a by Jorge Perez de Lara.

1.4.7.

For some reason, whether by design or miscalculation, the final text-block overshoots the stone it is on. It overlaps the seam between the slabs of stone at the corner of the Platform, and only part of each glyph—less than half— survives.²⁹ (See [Fig. 1-45](#)). The "Fine Hatching Master" had the unfortunate task of providing the carving across this joint. The carved stucco filling then, over the years, completely eroded away.

His patch of glyphs, with both a highly individualistic drawing style and delicate carving style, most emphatically supports my conclusion above that carvers did their own calligraphy. Now, it *is* possible that each calligrapher worked closely with a particular carver, as a defined

team. Ancient Roman sign shops usually consisted of such a team: a calligrapher, called *ordinator* or "layout man", and a *sculptor* or *marmorius*, "marble man", who was subordinate to the *ordinator*. In Roman inscriptions, however, there is no evidence that more than one calligrapher ever worked on a single inscription.



Fig. 1-55. Roman inscription, carved calligraphic lettering. First Century AD, marble. The *ordinator* painted the letterforms directly on the prepared stone. Note the surface was deliberately roughened before carving³⁰, which rendered erasure of the layout very difficult; generally any small errors in design and layout were tolerated. The painted layout was then precisely copied by the *sculptor*, whose result we see here. This retains the *ordinator's* calligraphic style, which sometimes indulges in rather long exit-strokes or 'tails' on his *R*, *A*, and *T*. Photograph by author.

1.5. Comparisons with other inscription-carving traditions

1.5.1.

Alternate methods of working are to be seen in Ancient Egypt, in China, and among modern

²⁹ This also occurred on the *Palace Tablet*, but to a lesser extent. Its right slab is substantially narrower than its "mirror" slab on the left. The scribes adjusted the glyphs to the narrower field, but not quite enough: about 5% -10% of the right edge of the entire Column S of glyphs is lost.

³⁰ Roughening the surface of a carved inscription made it appear a middle grey in value in the bright Italian sun. This was standard practice in Roman inscription-carving. It was easy on the eyes, and made the letters more legible, whether or not they were painted after carving. Both the dark-shadowed and the brightly-sunlit facets then contrasted with this ground.

Western lettercarvers. In China, the calligrapher has traditionally been exalted high above the carver. The latter, like many Chinese craftsmen, was held to a very high



Fig. 1-56. Rubbing-exemplar of carved calligraphic writing. Chinese, Tang Dynasty, *Confucian Classic of Filial Piety*, AD 745, carved from calligraphy of Emperor Xuanzong. Limestone, entire text 11 feet high, each character *ca.* 1.5 x 2 cm. Since Han times, Chinese inscriptions have served not only as monumental announcements, but as calligraphic exemplars, carved with remarkable fidelity to the artists's original brushstrokes, and designed to be copied in ink-rubbings like this one. Note the slight, lively variations in similar characters and similar strokes. From Thorp, p. 110ff.

standard of skill, but expected to remain totally anonymous; his job is subsumed completely in doing justice to the calligrapher's bravura brushstrokes. In modern Britain and America, on the other hand, lettercutters are revered both as carvers and as calligraphers; each artisan is expected to master both skills, and each cutter does his or her own layouts.³¹ As with Roman carvers, these modern lettercutters are slaves to the brushed or drawn designs, though in this case it is their *own* designs. Perhaps some Roman shops were one-man operations, working the same way.

1.5.2. Egyptian practice

Egyptian reliefs occasionally remain partially unfinished, and reveal how closely—or not so closely—the carvers hewed to the original drawing.

³¹ For more on modern lettercutting practice in Europe and the USA, in which British carvers have leadership, see Kindersley and Cardozo 1990.

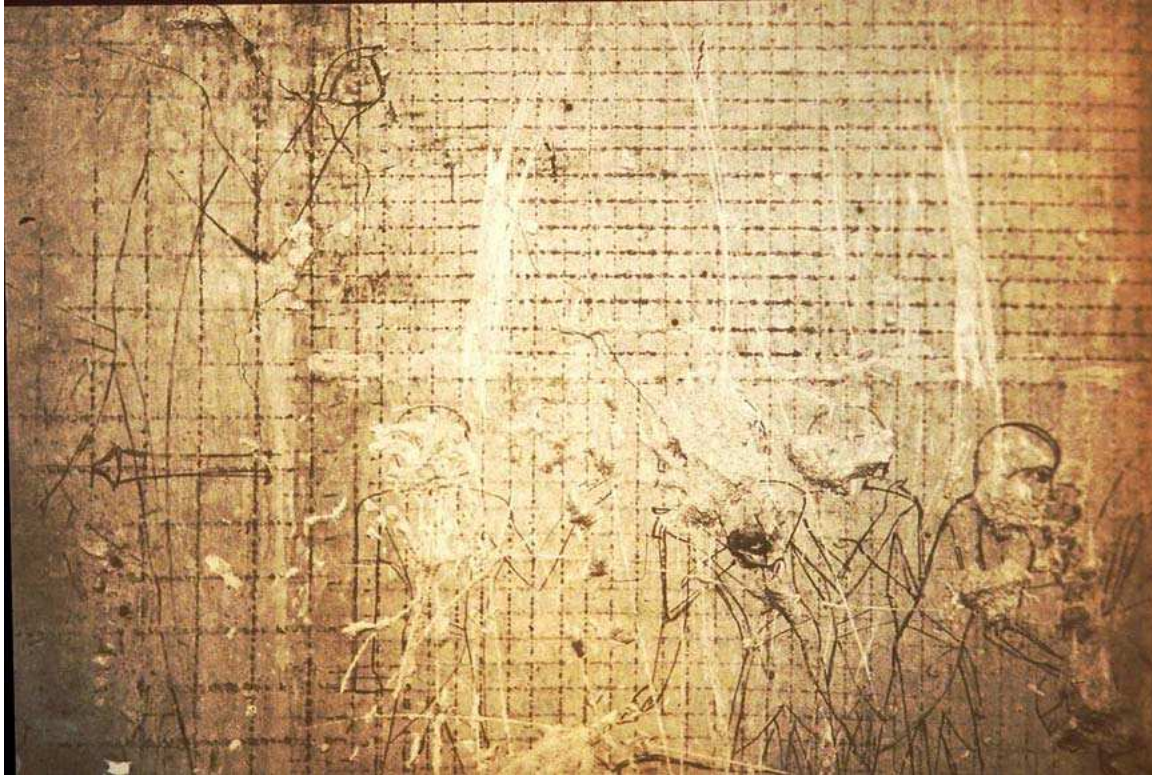


Fig. 1-57. Egyptian drawing for carving, unfinished 18th-Dynasty tomb TT92, from Robins, Pl. 1.1, Mond Photo 2122, by permission of the Griffin Institute.

Usually, Egyptian layout drawing is neat and skilled, but hardly more than a sketch. The outline of a figure, and his eye, might be there indicated, but the carver was expected to furnish all other details: pleats in the skirt, fingers, fingernails, expression, jewelry, individual feathers on a bird, etc. The layout artist often made a few corrections, usually minor adjustments of position and pose and sometimes gesture. These corrections he drew directly over the first attempt, as here ([Fig. 1-58](#)). Obviously the carver was expected to understand which of two overlapping outlines he was supposed to follow. Even then, the carver sometimes deviated significantly from the painted layout.³² Therefore there must have been close rapport between layout artist and carver. The Egyptian carver, though not usually as exalted as the scribe, was clearly a highly skilled and knowledgeable professional, held to extremely high standards.

Though for the most part, the artisans who made and decorated the tombs of Ancient Egypt were strictly anonymous³³, an occasional individual signed his work or was otherwise recorded

³² For example, Caroline Ransome Williams, writing about the process of tomb-construction and decoration (Williams 1932, p. 18f.), noted that the sculptor did not always strictly adhere to the draftsman's preliminary layout.

³³ "Egyptian works of art are almost always unsigned." Personal communication, James P. Allen, Egyptian Curator, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 15 March 2001. His colleague Dr. Cathleen A. Keller, Dept. of Near Eastern Studies, University of California,

or honored. Imhotep, the earliest artist whose name comes down to us, was architect of the trend-setting *Step Pyramid of Djoser (or Zoser)* in Saqqara, in the 27th century BC. A few Egyptian tomb-sculptors and painters did associate themselves with specific works, and shed a dim light on artistic attitudes and practices. For example, one Seni inscribed on the south wall of a chapel in the tomb of Ka-Hep in El-Akhmin: "(1) The draftsmen Seni, he says: (2) It was I who inscribed the tomb of Count Kheni. (3) It was I, moreover, who inscribed this tomb, I alone."³⁴ (Kheni's tomb is next door to Ka-Hep's.)³⁵

An Old Kingdom artist and administrator in the Eleventh Dynasty named Itrysen erected a stela describing himself as scribe and sculptor, and as an overseer of craftsmen.³⁶ What this slim bit of evidence suggests is that Itrysen and Seni were not exceptions; many, perhaps *most carvers* (or at least carving foremen or overseers) *were also scribes*, whether or not the reverse was true. This would be close rapport indeed! Thus ancient Egyptian as well as modern inscription-sculptors appear to have done their own layouts, and Roman lettercutters so closely partnered with their *ordinators* that the situation amounts to the same thing. Maya monument artists could have used any of these procedures, but, as I said, I tend to favor the British/American model (as perhaps did Egyptian and some Roman *sculptors*): each glyph-carver was also a skilled scribe, and painted his own layouts before carving them.

The few remaining Maya underdrawings we can examine suggest a situation similar to that of ancient Egypt: a simple sketch was enough to indicate figures (example: *Sarcophagus of Pakal*, see Robertson 1983 [Vol. 1], pll. 178ff.). A carved Classic Period ceramic vessel from Xcalmuk'in in Yucatán also preserves its initial layout, especially that for the 'monkey-head' headdress of the principal individual portrayed ([Figs. 1-58, 1-59](#)).

Berkeley, is the leading scholar in identifying and distinguishing Egyptian artists' work. See Keller 1978, and her article in V. Davies 2001.

³⁴ Kanawati 1980, Fig 8, & p. 19. Henry G. Fischer says this tomb is "now thought to be a little later than the Old Kingdom," and translated the three-column text I quote here.

³⁵ For most of this research, I am indebted to the generosity and the intimate knowledge of ancient Egypt of James P. Allen and especially of Henry George Fischer, respective present and emeritus Curators of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Department of Egyptian Art in New York.

³⁶ Most complete discussion to date can be found in Badawy 1961, pp. 269-276, And Barta 1970. This stela was first described in detail by Wilson 1948.



Fig. 1-58. *Xcalumk'in Monkey-Vessel*. Fort Worth, Kimbell Museum. Photo by Michael D. Coe.



Fig. 1-59. *Xcalumk'in Monkey-Vessel*, detail of monkey in headdress. Fort Worth, Kimbell Museum. Photo by Michael D. Coe.

Its artist doubtless executed both the initial sketch and the final carving —the "handwriting" is the same—, and saw fit to move the 'monkey' over by half a 'head' for the final rendering. This is comparable to the relationship of underdrawing to final painting in the codices; it is most visible in the *Grolier Codex*. (See Lee 1985.) Yet for the Palenque monuments we've been examining, the carvers must have been following a very detailed, very beautiful, calligraphic layout drawing.

1.5.3.

There is another bit of evidence that remains unexplained. The artists' signatures on ceramics and monuments almost invariably distinguish the medium of writing. That is, if the writing is painted, the signature says *U-ts'ib*, "his writing" or "his painting," followed by the name of the artist (See *Kerr Archives*). If it happens to be engraved or carved, the sentence begins with a collocation that perhaps reads, *yuxul*, and certainly means "his carving."³⁷ We never see a signature that says, "Written by so-and-so, carved by such-and-such," nor, "Written and carved by so-and-so."



Fig. 1-60. *El Peru Stela 34*, three of the eight *Yuxul(?)* signatures. Cleveland Museum. Relative scale roughly accurate; these signatures are really different sizes. Note that, as expected, comparing the *yu-Bat'-lu* glyphs shows that these are by three different Hands. The first of these is discreetly positioned on the Lady's Shield, perhaps indicating which area of the stela this artist was responsible for carving. Photographs by author.

That is, although the calligrapher was a highly esteemed member of court, apparently what mattered most in the making of a monumental text was *only* the carved, final rendering. Perhaps this means that the carver, too, was esteemed, perhaps as highly as the calligrapher—or higher—, or it may have nothing to do with the relative status of carvers and scribes, but rather emphasize the status of the final performance of rendering ritual in a permanent form. Alternately, one could claim that it suggests that a text-carver was, like a modern lettercutter, also expected to be a master calligrapher. In other words, to mention that the carver was also the scribe might have always been superfluous. Perhaps the glyph collocation that we take to mean

"his carving" could be more accurately translated, "his painting-and-carving."



Fig. 1-61. *El Peru Stela 34*, a *Yuxul(?)* signature inside the mouth of the Lady's *Xok*-belt-mask. Perhaps this artist is telling us he is responsible for carving this mask. This photograph also reveals one of the cuts (through the 'Bat head') made by the looters who sawed this stela's face into more than a dozen pieces to transport it out of the jungle and smuggle it to the United States. Cleveland Museum. Photographs by author.

Unlike their counterparts just to the east, Palenque artists apparently almost never signed their work (see [Fig. 1-36](#) for an exception), so we have to rely on handwriting analysis to distinguish individual talents.

The Artists of the *Platform* number fourteen. This is substantially more than the largest number of signatures on a single stela (eight, on *El Peru Stela 34* [[Figs. 1-60, 1-61](#)] and another eight on *Piedras Negras Stela 12*), and is the more remarkable for the relatively small size of the *Platform*. Although the two panels total about fourteen and a half feet long, they are only nineteen inches high; this is about half the surface area of the fronts of the two stelae mentioned above.

I patterned the next Figures after Zimmermann's *Tafel* distinguishing the eight Hands of the *Dresden Codex* (my [Fig. 1-01](#)). The somewhat more complex work-distribution situation in the *Temple XIX Platform/Throne* forced a somewhat more cluttered arrangement than his elegantly clear table. I selected the glyphs for their relative abundance of examples, and for the salience of their Hand-distinguishing characteristics (such as the shapes of the 'grapes' and the 'overhang' in 'stone signs').

³⁷ Search the *Kerr Archive*, clicking "Individually Carved" on the "Type" of vessel list.

Temple XIX Platform Scribe/Artists: Characteristic Glyphs

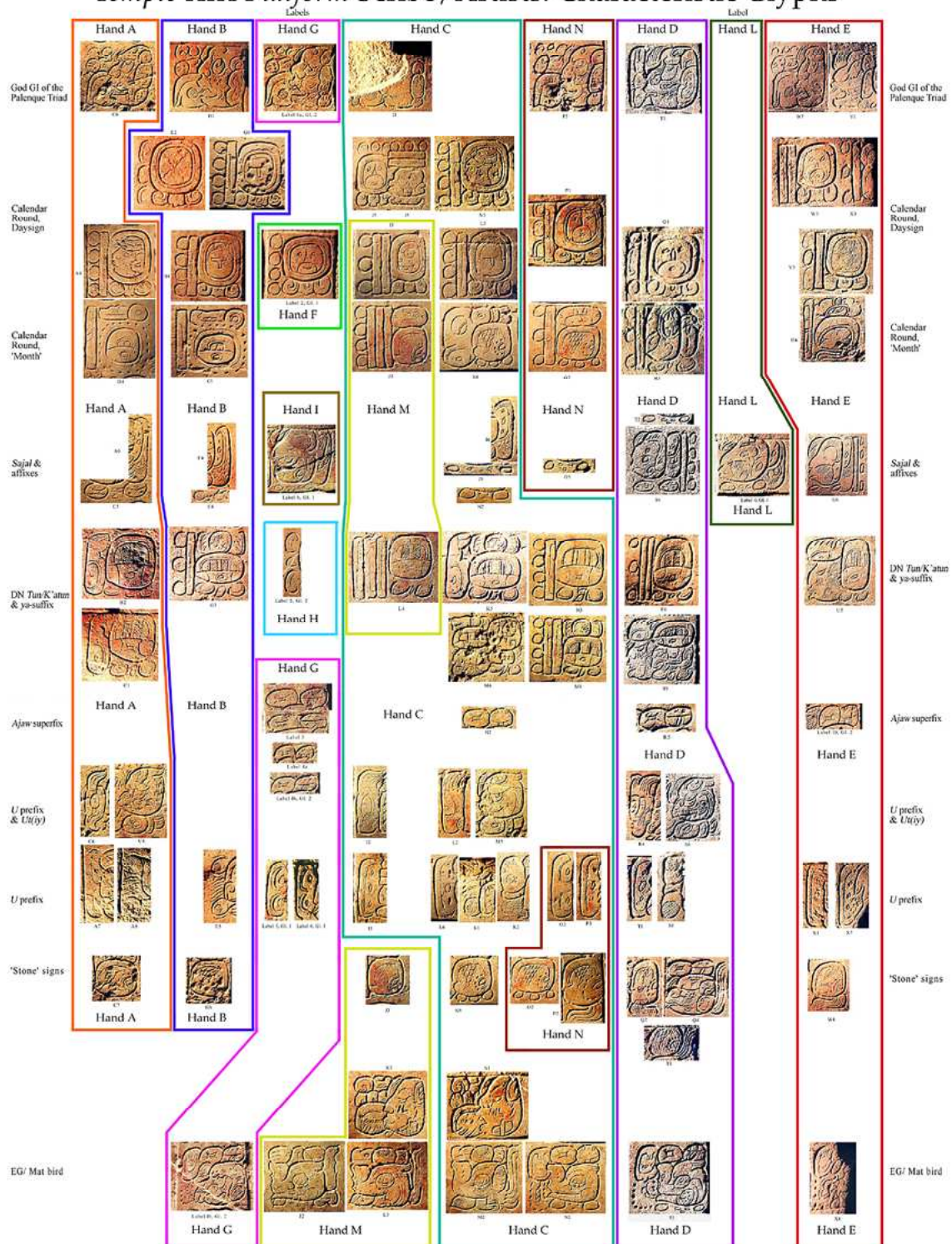


Fig. 1-62. *T. XIX Platform/Throne*. Table of idiosyncratic glyphs distinguishing fourteen Hands.
 The next four illustrations consist of enlargements of this same Table to show the essential details.

Temple XIX Platform Scribe / Artists

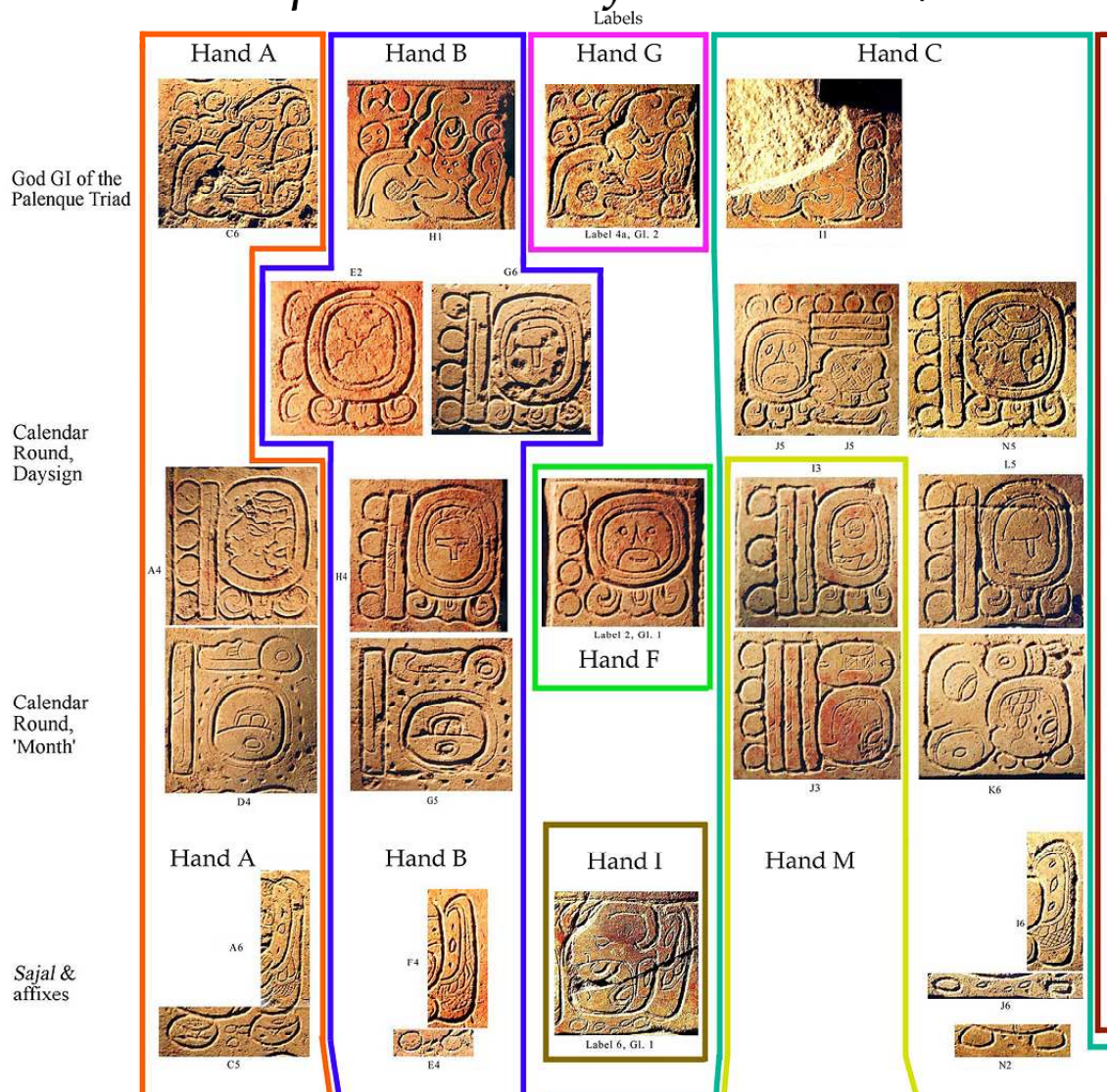


Fig. 1-63. *T. XIX Platform/Throne*: Table of idiosyncratic glyphs, upper left corner. Six Hands are represented here. These examples I selected for their distinctive diagnostic characteristics, such as the 'feet' of the daysign cartouche, or the details of the *ja*'s 'crescent moon,' or the form of the 'dots' in *mo* or in the 'stone signs.' The comparable glyphs (GI, CR, 'month' glyphs, and Sajal) continue in the next Figure. All photographs by the author.

ists: Characteristic Glyphs

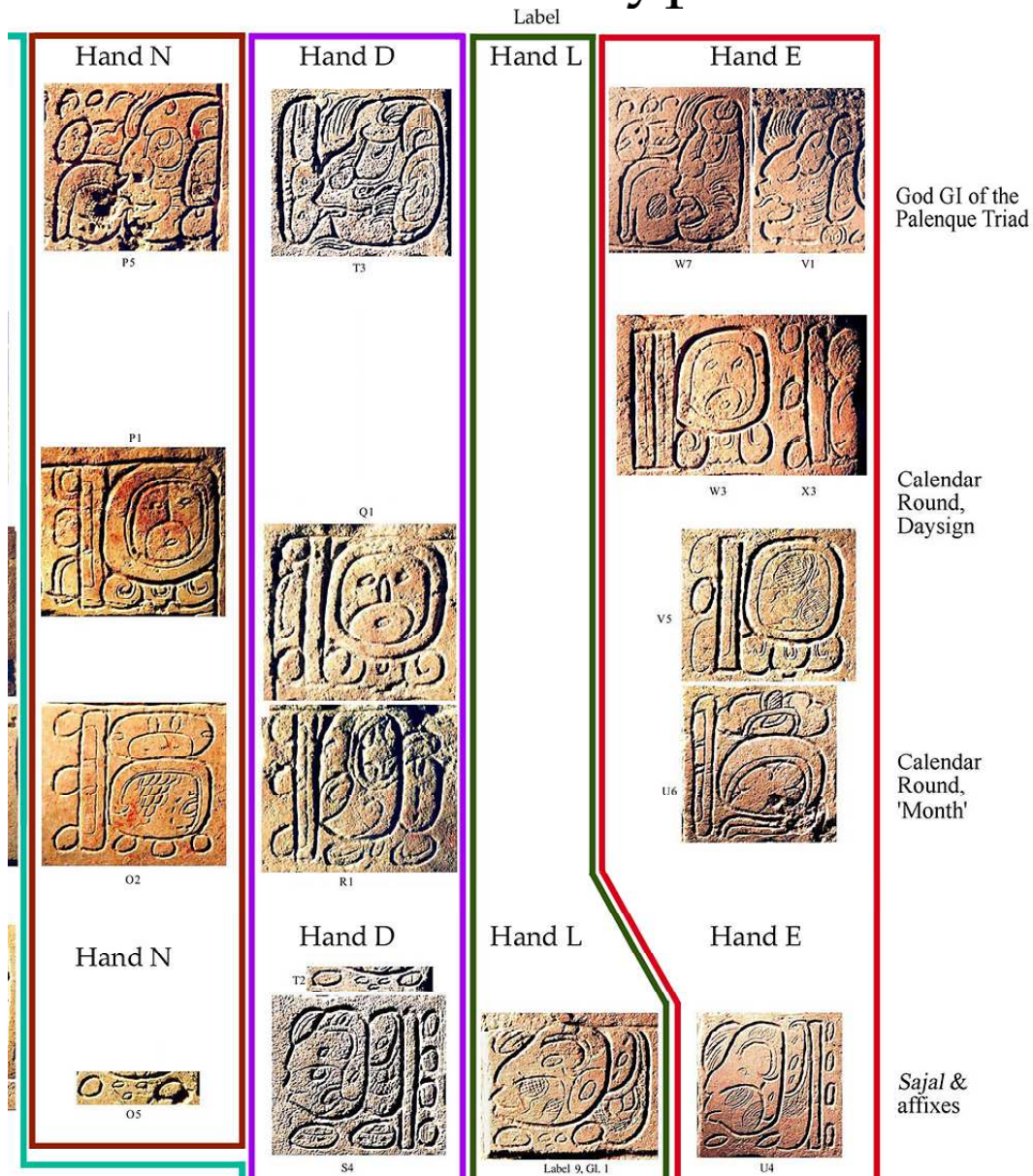


Fig. 1-64. T. XIX Platform/Throne. Table of idiosyncratic glyphs, upper right corner.

You can observe the similar carving qualities in each column; particularly the delicate “touch” of the “Fine Hatching Master” (Hand E) compared to his fellows. All photographs by the author.

(Next page):

Fig. 1-65. T. XIX Platform/Throne. Table of idiosyncratic glyphs, lower left corner.

As an example of how Artists working together influence each other (or are influenced by the Project Master), note that the ‘stone signs’ here all exhibit ‘hairy grapes,’ a rather unusual habit. The central element of the *ya*-suffix also covaries distinctively with each Hand. All photographs by the author.

DN Tun/K'atun
& ya-suffix



Hand H



Hand M

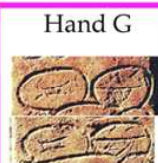


Ajaw suffix



Hand A

Hand B



Hand G

Hand C



U prefix
& Ut(iy)



U prefix

'Stone' signs



Hand A



Hand B



J3



K6



C

EG/ Mat bird



Hand G



J2



K3



L3



N1



M2

Hand M

Hand C

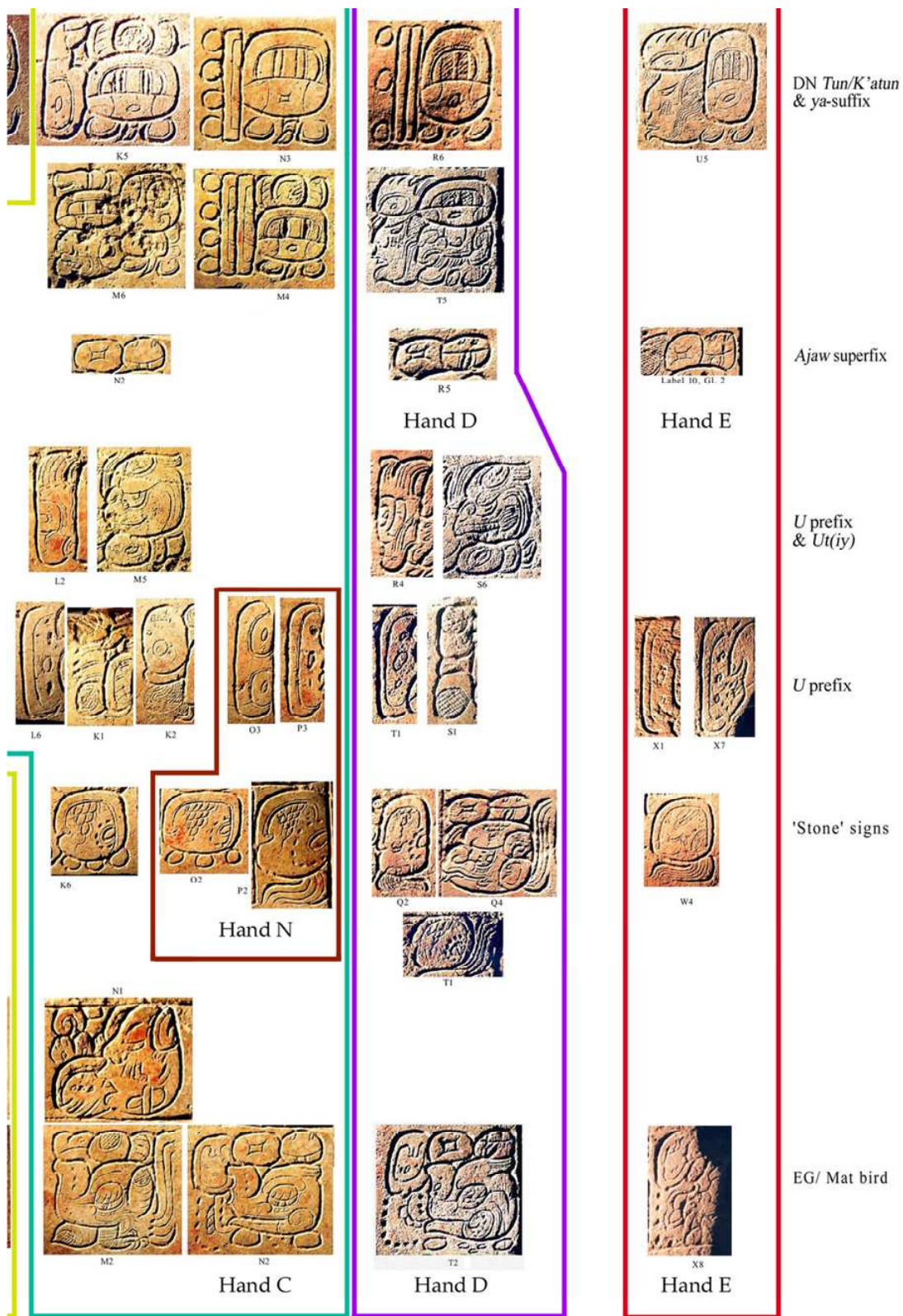


Fig. 1-66. *T. XIX Platform/Throne*. Table of idiosyncratic glyphs, lower right corner.



Fig. 1-67. *Temple XIX Limestone Panel.* Drawing of whole. Inset photo: portrait of Ahkal Mo' Naab.
 Drawing: Proyecto Grupo de las Cruces parts by author (courtesy Mesoweb.com), photo by author.

1.6. *Temple XIX* Limestone Panel

1.6.1.

The limestone panel which greeted those entering *Temple XIX* was even more ambitious than the *Platform* (or *Throne*). Over ten feet high and three wide, it had been deliberately torn off its supporting pier and its pieces scattered about the Temple just before the roof collapsed. The vandals dragged a large fragment carrying the face (detail shown here, [Fig. 1-67](#)) of the central image of Ahkal Mo' Naab over in front of the *Platform*, face up, and piled organic offerings upon it, apparently at the same time as they sacked the interior of the *Platform*.³⁸ Presumably they burned these offerings, but the fire luckily did not damage the carved surface.



Fig. 1-68. *Temple XIX Limestone Panel*. Details of face with 'eccentric obsidian' earflare of, and 'purse' of, Personage 3 (Yok-Nen-Tal-Yajaw-K'ak'). Note damage to eye, nose, and lip. Photographs by author.

As you see, the carving is brilliant and almost perfectly preserved. The sensitive modeling

of portraits and glyphs truly communicates the power and vitality of the characters, and the artists carried every square centimeter to utter completion. There are no unfinished or rushed areas of this panel, (for instance, as we have seen on [Fig. 1-39](#),



Fig. 1-69. Temple XIX Limestone Panel. Detail of headdress of Personage 3 (Yok-Nen-Tal-Yajaw-K'ak').
Photo by author.

the *Palenque Panel in Dumbarton Oaks*). However, vandals did carefully damage the eyes and noses (and sometimes the lips) of the figures on the *T. XIX Panel* and the *T. XIX Stucco* relief, perhaps in order to "blind" and "suffocate" and "mute" them; this was a typical "termination ritual". Breaking the *Panel* off also effectively "crippled" the three figures pictured on it; all that the archaeologists found still *in situ* when they first uncovered this pier was the three pairs of feet.

Surprisingly, the faces on the *Platform* remain undamaged, except for Ahkal himself, who received the one violent blow to the monument square in his face. Was he the only figure worth "terminating" on the *Platform*? Why was his lieutenant Yok Nen Tal Yajaw K'ak damaged here on the *Panel* ([Fig. 1-68](#)) and not on the *Platform*?

³⁸ This information communicated to me by Alfonso Morales, chief of the Proyecto Grupo de las Cruces, and his fellow archaeologists, 1999.

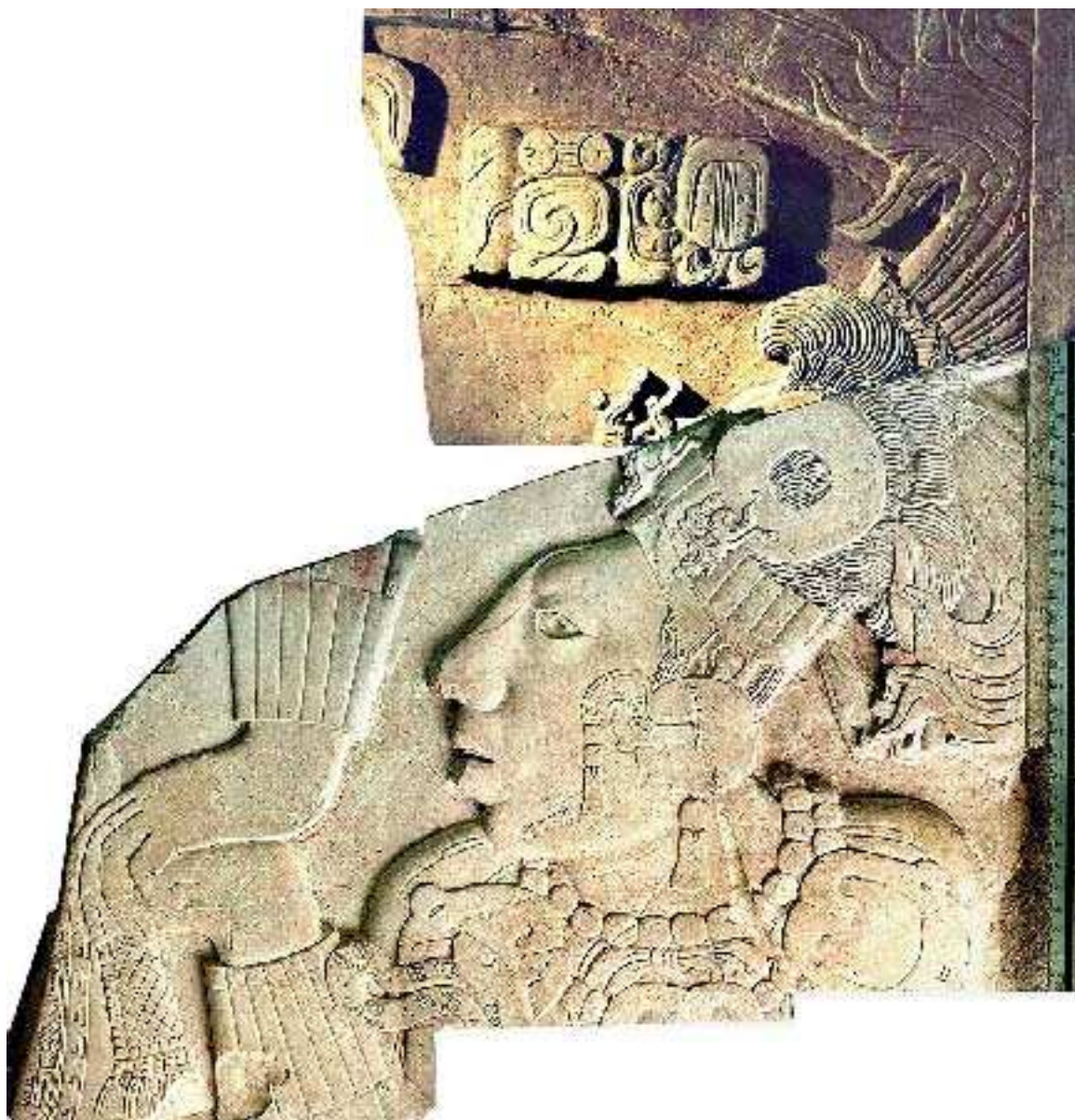


Fig. 1-70. Temple XIX Limestone Panel. Photo-montage of Yok-Nen-Tal-Yajaw-K'ak', with his name label, just after excavation. He is helping to support his Lord Ahkal Mo' Naab , who is wearing a tall, unwieldy 'Waterbird' costume (the same costume worn by his son in the *Stucco Panel* on the same pier [Fig. 1-10].) Photographs by author.

Unfortunately, although the *Proyecto* archaeologists found more than half of the fragments of this *Panel*, the greatest part of the text, (which arched over the king's 'Waterbird' backrack-costume), is still missing. The spelling of Ahkal Mo' Naab's name on the main text is striking: a turtleshell (*Ahk*), *la* suffix, a whole Parrot's head (*Mo'*) instead of the usual mere beak, draped with a lilypad (*Naab*). This spelling would be unique, except that it appears with precisely the same elements on the *Platform*.



Fig. 1-71. Ahkal Mo' Naab's unusually-spelled name from *Throne & Panel*. The second example also includes the Palenque Emblem Glyph. Photographs by author.

Comparing the two, notwithstanding the difference in carving technique, one sees that they appear to represent two different handwritings: look particularly at the form of the 'beak' and of the upper end of the 'water lily.' I do think that in this case we are looking at two artists' renderings of Ahkal's name as copied from some venerable model; perhaps the codex from which they derived the historical information recorded on these two monuments, or perhaps a favorite spelling of the Temple's architect.

1.6.2.

The *Temple XIX Panel's* surviving portions are beautifully finished and extremely



Fig. 1-72. *T. XIX Panel: ch'o-ko* title, from uppermost text and lower label. Photographs by author.

well-preserved.³⁹ The few glyphs that remain are buttery-smooth and reveal the marks of their makers' tools (Figs. 1-71 through 1-76).

Few glyphs appear twice; we are forced to more general comparisons than the oft-more-revealing specific glyphs. The *ch'o-ko* title does appear here twice (Fig. 1-72); its two examples are by different Hands, which should come as no surprise when we consider that they appear seven feet apart.



Fig. 1-73. T. XIX Panel: Initial series and part of a name and *Ajaw* title from lower label. Photographs by author.

Ironically, the extremely high standards of finish⁴⁰ to which this *Panel* was held make it difficult to recognize idiosyncratic minor habits that identify their makers. More problematic still is the presence of unique forms of many glyphs, such as the T-shaped *Ik'*: here it has a hooked

³⁹ When it was first displayed at the Mesa Redonda de Palenque conference in 2000, I overheard more than one epigrapher exclaim, "It looks like it was done *yesterday!*"

⁴⁰ It occurs to me that the remarkably fresh, consistently smooth finish that characterizes this entire monument may itself represent the work of a polisher, a "detail guy" —a single artist or team whose job it was to go over the entire monument, smoothing every surface. This is in contrast to the wide areas of unpolished "background" on the equally-well-preserved *Tablet of the Slaves*, with its distinctly different textures in the relief carvings and the untouched surfaces.

form, with the two 'arms' bent down at the ends ([fig. 1-74](#)). The glyph preceding it, with a *ji-ya* suffix, is also weird, anomalous. Had we other examples of this glyph on this stone to compare with it (or other examples of these peculiar glyphs elsewhere at the site), we might have been better able to distinguish Artists' boundaries.



Fig. 1-74. Temple XIX Panel: peculiar glyphs, from centered upper text. Photographs by author.

The three Emblem Glyphs, however, spring obviously from three individual Hands ([Fig. 1-75](#)). For example, the latter pair (seven feet apart) of 'rabbit-skull' EG's, superficially similar, differ on virtually every point of comparison, particularly the crisply-beveled finish on the last example compared to the more voluptuously rounded middle example (compare the 'incisors'). The 'Mat-bird' EG on the left offers fewer parallels, but its 'water group' *K'uh*-prefix, besides



Fig. 1-75. Temple XIX Panel, Emblem Glyphs. Three different Hands. Photos by author.

being differently-shaped, was formed by a distinctly different toolbox than the others.



Fig. 1-76. *Temple XIX Panel*, faces of the three figures; two different Hands. Photos by author.

The figures' faces appear to have been carved by two different Hands: Personage 1 by one Hand, the other two (Ahkal and his lieutenant Yok-Nen-Tal), by a second.



Fig. 1-77. *Temple XIX Panel*, comparison of glyphic 'faces.' Left: from upper central panel. Upper center: from Initial Series. Lower center: from lower left Label. Right: first two glyphs of Ahkal Mo' Naab's Label, lower right. Photos by author.

1.7. The Palace *North Gallery Tablets*

1.7.1. Overview: The *Palace Tablet* and its cohorts

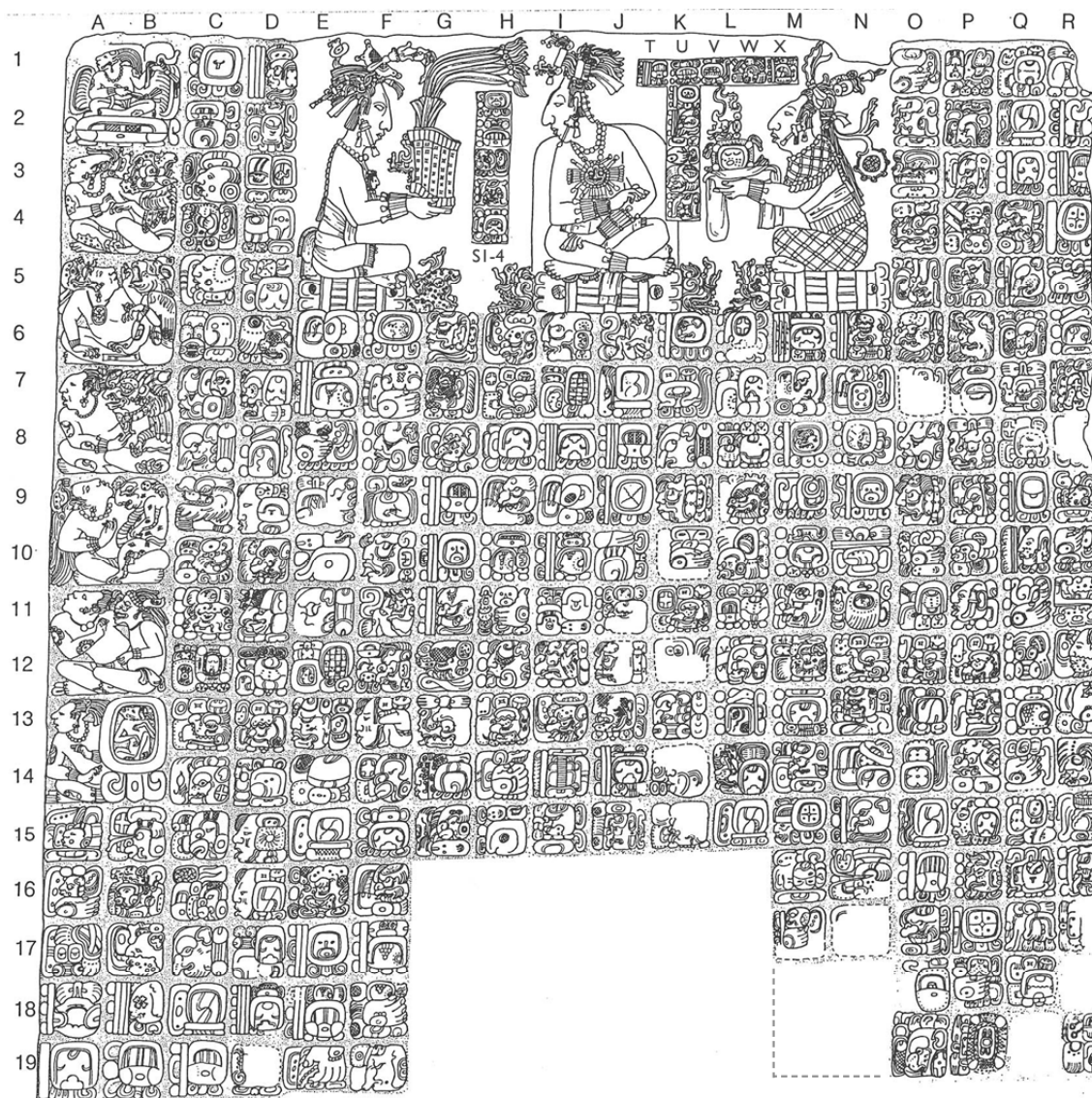


Fig. 1-78. *Palace Tablet*, Drawing by Merle Greene Robertson

Some fifteen years earlier than *Temple XIX*, a team of artists completed the huge, ambitious *Palace Tablet*. Like the *Temple XIX Panel*, it faced north, from a wall just inside the center of a main entrance of the Palace. In this case, it greeted the pilgrim as he or she arrived at the top of the North stairs. It too stands ten feet/three meters tall, but it is much larger; as wide as it is high. It consists of three slabs of stone; a large central one ten columns wide, and two smaller side panels four columns wide, carefully fitted together into a unified monument.



Fig. 1-79. *Palace Tablet*, Detail of upper portion showing parents (?) presenting the 'Drum-Major Headdress' and *Took'-Pakal* ("flint-shield," or royal accoutrements of war). The seam between slabs of stone appears just behind the leftmost individual. The female (right) is dressed as the Moon Goddess, the accessing Lord (center) wears a unique headdress (perhaps a *chapat*, or centipede, a symbol of death), the figure on the left a 'fish-and-waterlily' headdress of the god of the number 13, which also appears as a head-variant for the Early Classic calendric *Tun*. The three sit on the 'Thrones of Creation,' bundles with the heads of jaguar, shark, and snake respectively. The labels surrounding the group refer to no known Palenque individuals. Photograph by author.

It did not hang in isolation. A rectangular blank area at the bottom, about two feet high and three wide, indicates that the *Tablet* stood as an imposing backdrop, dwarfing a small platform—a throne or altar of some sort. (Nothing survives of this table, except perhaps items 41-43 in Schele and Mathews (1984) or other random fragments.) At least three other beautifully-carved glyphic panels kept it company in the North Gallery. One (*Bodega* #45) appears to have hung on the wall to the east of it (down to the viewer's left as s/he stood facing the *Palace Tablet*), others flanked the viewer from the insides of the piers opposite (*Bodega* #39, #40). Small fragments of others found nearby also tantalizingly survive (*Bodega* #41-43). What remains of these subsidiary texts rests today in the Palenque Bodega (Schele & Mathews 1984, items 39-44, my [Figs. 1-80](#) — [1-83](#)).

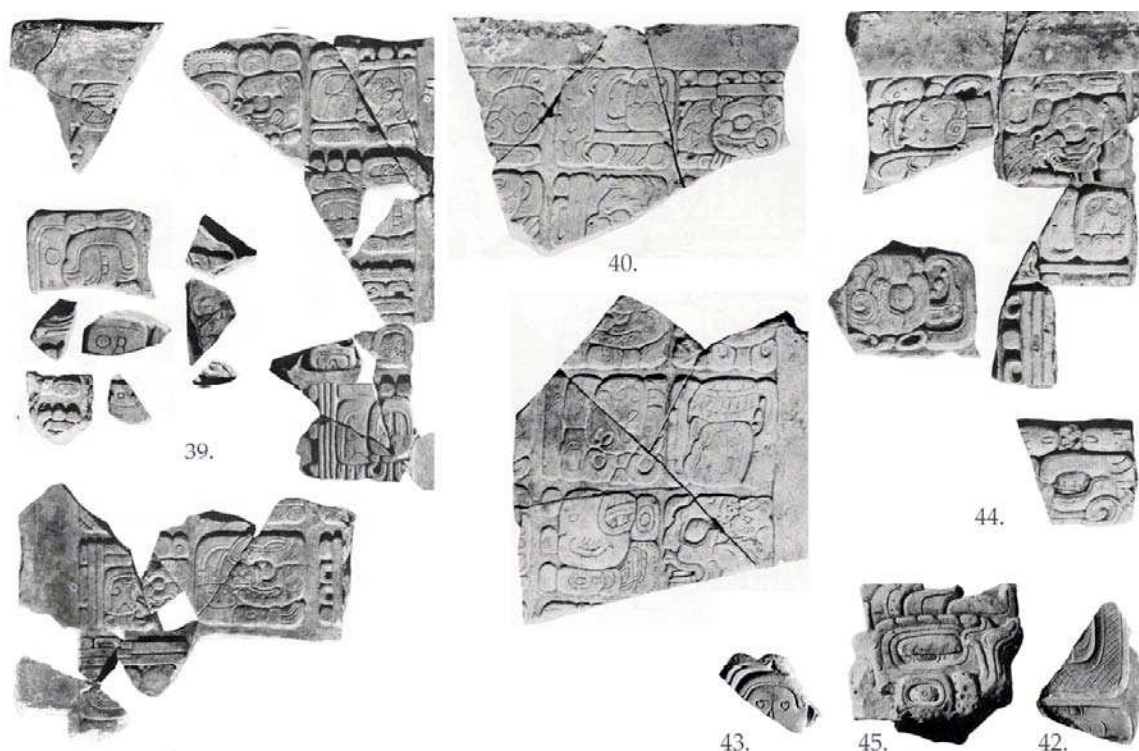


Fig. 1-80. *Palace North Gallery Tablets*, Photos by Schele and Mathews (1984, items #39-40, #41-45)

Even though *Palace Panels* #39 and #40 appear to have been a “matched” pair on the jambs of the piers opposite the *Palace Tablet*, they were carved by manifestly different Hands — perhaps *teams* of Hands— and although their respective glyphs are the same size, they were carved to different depths and “each is painted in a different scheme” (Schele & Mathews #40). The third panel (#44) and the fragments (#41-43, #45) show the work of yet other Hands, though one or more of them might have carved parts of the first two panels.

1.7.2. The Artists of the *North Gallery Panels*

Perhaps two or three Hands worked on *Panel* #39. In [Fig. 1-81](#), I assemble like glyphs — three distance numbers and three *i-u-ti* collocations— and find that the two glyphs in the right column seem to be of a slightly different character than the other three, and, comparing just the *ti* suffixes, they might represent different Hands *from each other*. A single *ti* glyph, however, is hardly a criterion to distinguish one Artist from another. Comparing the ‘fish’ *u*’s (lower row), we see differences in the ‘eyes:’ for instance, one has a ‘wide-open eye’ and the other has a beetling ‘brow.’ The fins and teeth of these two glyphs, however, are so similar that one cannot yet claim definitely that we have distinguished two Hands. Looking at the ‘fins,’ I think that if

they *were* carved by different Sculptors, then both worked from a layout by a single Hand.

Likewise, the *ya*-suffixes under the first two examples differ in thickness (though they are similar in other details), and may constitute distinguishing characteristics, but again there is not enough difference to support a definite claim. The *Winik* glyphs are strikingly similar, for example; similar enough that I assign them both to the same Hand. For me the confirming distinction is that the inlines of the first two glyphs (e.g., the inner arching lines on the ‘*Tun*’ glyphs) were carved with a blunter tool than engraved the same strokes on the third glyph (“3 K’atuns”). A new toolchest implies a new Artist.



Fig. 1-81. *Palace North Gallery Tablet #39*, DN & *i-u-ti* glyphs. Photos by (Schele and Mathews 1984, item #39)

[Fig. 1-82](#) sets similar glyphs from the three fragmentary panels next to each other, and confirms pretty clearly that each panel had its own Artist(s). There may have been two or more Artists carving on *Panel #40* or on *#44*, but there did not seem to be any crossover between these tablets. Scheduling could explain this. If these three were conceived as an ensemble, it is pretty likely that they would have been in production simultaneously, and each of the four to six artists would have been too busy with his own assignment to walk over to his colleagues’s workbench and carve out a few glyphs.

The three Artists (at minimum) represented here have distinctive flavors evident even in these few examples. The glyphs of *Panel #40*, for example, exhibit a distinctive slant, especially in the affixes. Though both *Panels #40* and *#44* utilize the poetic “*K’in-Ak’baI*” spelling of the *Tz’ak* glyph (first row), subtle details, particularly the slant, distinguish them. The ‘upended

iguana' glyphs in the second row (*hu* and *Sih*) follow this pattern, and also spotlight the differences in relief-depth. Panel #44's *ma-Mat* in the third row is there only to compare 'eyelids' and 'barbels' with its neighbors; the other two glyphs in this row, from Panels #39 and #40, each provide us with the 'deer' form of the word "*K'in*" peculiar to distance numbers. Though the 'deer head' itself is similar between the two, the 'bones' over their 'eyes' and especially the *wa* suffixes show these to have come from different Hands.

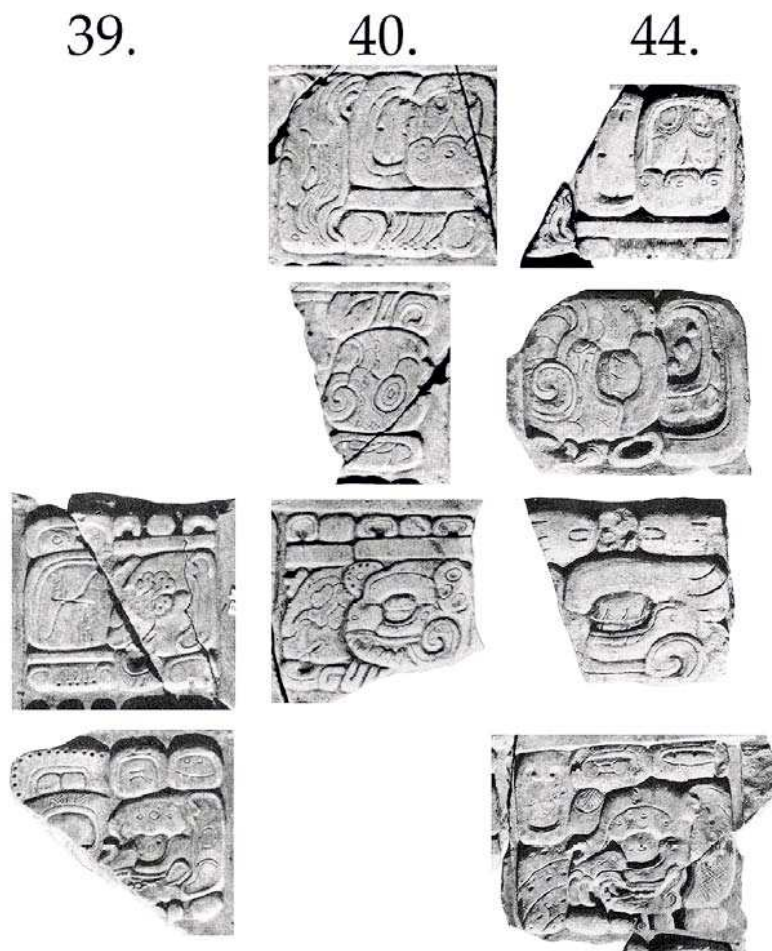


Fig. 1-82. Palace North Gallery Tablets #39, 40 & 44. Photos by Schele and Mathews (1984, items #39, #40, #44)

The 'deer-ear' in Panel #39 is virtually identical to the 'rabbit ear' on the following emblem glyph, confirming the stylistic continuity of this Artist. The *Panel #44* Emblem Glyph, on the other hand, is quite a bit more modeled, more sculpturally rounded than its neighbors, which (especially the *Sih-ya-ja*) exhibit a salient sharp beveled finish. I think that the EG represents a

new Hand, picking up where the “Beveling Artist” leaves off. The *Sih-ya-ja* glyph, in particular, shows the “Beveling Artist’s” tendency toward angularity.

1.7.3. Artists who got around

More importantly, two of the Hands who carved these subsidiary tablets also worked on the *Temple XIX Panel*. The most obvious comparison lies with the very crisp, beveled



Fig. 1-83. *Palace North Gallery Fragments* (grey), surrounded by details of upper *Temple XIX* (color). This Artist is notable for his sharply-cut, sometimes slightly-swelling forms and affection for sinuous tendrils with a finely-cut 'vein.' Color photos by author, black-and-white by (Schele and Mathews 1984, items #43, #45)

glyphs of *Panel #44* and fragments #43 and #45, including those I ascribed to the “Beveling Carver,” which recall the sharply-cut areas of the *TXIX Panel*, notably the figures and accoutrements of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab and Yok-Nen-Tal Yajaw K'ak', as well as the glyphs identifying them. [Fig. 1-83](#) focuses on a *Temple XIX Panel* Artist who carved the glorious macaw-head-headaddress and big-bird-and-fanned-woven-palmfrond?-backrack that Ahkal Mo'

Naab wears. The headdress occupies the right half of the illustration, with its powerfully-drawn beak and triple-ring of lively ‘feathers’ round the ‘eye.’ Atop this ‘eye-with-feathers’ sits an unusual side view of an *Ek’* “star” glyph whose shapes and details precisely match those of the ‘feathers’ atop *Bodega Fragment #45* to its left. Other comparable sinuous veined forms are the ‘eyelashes’ of the huge ‘eye’ of the ‘bird’ costume, upper left, and on the remarkable pierced ‘leaf’ shown just below it, and, at lower left, another leafy form from the upper portion of the backrack ensemble. Also note the Artist’s supreme command of form seen in the squarish spiral atop the bird’s ‘earflare’ (upper center of this picture): despite its geometric precision, the Sculptor has endowed it with a lively energy. Likewise with the modeling of the ‘eyelid,’ this very-symmetrical form could have easily descended into rubbery stiffness, yet it remains alive. Likewise, too, the rigid ‘square-nosed serpent’ that projects from behind the ‘macaw’s beak.’

Farther up this Tablet, atop the huge rearing bulbous beak of the ‘waterbird’ backrack, sits another openmouthed monster, this one a ‘Xok fish,’ familiarly seen as a belt-mask on the Moon Goddess’s jade-net skirt ([Fig. 1-85](#)). This one sits behind another ‘pierced leaf’ very similar to the one seen in [Fig. 1-83](#), and one might be forgiven for assuming it was carved by the same Hand as that ‘leaf.’ Probably the two leaves —and



Fig. 1-84. Temple XIX Tablet. Comparison of the ‘pierced leaves’ seen in Figs. 1-83 and 1-85. Photos by author.

probably the whole monument— were *drawn* by the same Hand, and the carvers who finished this Panel were faithful to that conception. But this Artist has a few distinguishing qualities. The first lies in his toolbox: he prefers to render inlines with a rounded tool rather than (like the

Artist of the lower ‘leaf’) a sharp one. The second is the obsessively-rounded edges to his forms, compared to the earlier Artist’s preferences for right-angle or sharply-beveled edges. One can see both these difference in the treatment of the piercings ([Fig. 1-84](#)). Now, the “Xok-Monster Master” sometimes bevels his edges,



Fig. 1-85. *Temple XIX Tablet.* At the top of the backrack that dominates this sculpture is another open-mouthed creature, a ‘Xok fish’ by an Artist closely related—or identical to—that which carved the details in Fig. 1-83 Composite photo by author.

and the “Beveling Master” sometimes rounds his edges, and the two share many, many habits—too many to say for certain that we have a new distinct Hand up here rather than the same Artist with a new tool and a new attitude. With that caveat, I shall treat them as distinct individuals, particularly because they each also appear on the fragmentary *Palace North Gallery Panels*

described in the previous section. And the two panels are definitely carved by different individuals—for the most part.

1.7.4. Further comparisons

The “Xok-Monster Artist” gives his ‘fish’s eye’ a peculiar treatment which shapes it rather like a kidney or a banana. This habit, combined with the sinuous foliage he and his colleague the “Beveling Master” both love, appears in the *North Gallery Panel #40*. [Fig. 1-86](#) compares its *u*-prefix (also a ‘Xok fish’) with the ‘eye’ of *Panel #40*. To my happy surprise, these features also combine in one of the four heads seen on the “Thrones of Creation” in the *Palace Tablet* ([Fig. 1-86](#)).



Fig. 1-86. *North Gallery Panel #40, Temple XIX Tablet, Palace Tablet.* These three ‘Xok fish’ share several carving habits, enough that I ascribe them all to the same Artist. Photos by author.

The habits of this Artist include the use of a rounded tool for secondary details, a banana-shaped ‘eye,’ an abundance of sinuous fin-like strands, carefully-rounded sculptural edges, and sharp, precisely-triangular ‘shark teeth.’ He shares with the “Beveling Master” a penchant for sharply-cut perforations such as the ‘pupil’ of the ‘eye’ of the central ‘Xok’ seen here in [Fig. 1-86](#).

In the next illustration ([Fig. 1-87](#)), we examine these and other habits in the *Palace Tablet*, *Temple XIX Panel*, and *North Gallery Panel #44*. Earlier I ascribed the three fragmentary North Gallery monuments to three distinct teams, but now I feel that possibly one of the Artists worked on both the low-relief *Panel #40* and the higher-relief *Panel #44*.



Temple XIX Panel, Label 3, Yok-Nen-Tal Yajaw K'ak'; 'Jester' in his Headdress

Fig. 1-87. North Gallery Panel #44, Temple XIX Tablet, Palace Tablet: Foliage and foliate-like *ja* glyphs from Temple XIX Tablet's "Xok Monster Master" or someone very like him. Note striking parallel between the squarish *ja* glyphs in the center of each row. The *ya* glyph in the center of the lower row, on the other hand, finds striking parallel with the Palace tablet glyph at the upper left. Color photos by author, black & white photo by Schele and Mathews (1978, #44).

The lower part of [Fig. 1-87](#) shows the name-label and 'Jester God' of Ahkal Mo' Naab's lieutenant Yok Nen Tal in the *Temple XIX Panel*. These glyphs feature the rounded-groove inline and foliage of the "Xok-Monster Master" we noted in [Fig. 1-85](#). We also note a squarish 'crescent moon' *ja* whose 'dark' area is fully excavated (rather than sloped or crosshatched). It and its prefixed *ya* find precise parallels in *Palace Tablet* glyph S3 (*Sih-ya-ja*) and the extraordinarily similar *Sih-ya-ja* glyph from *North Gallery Panel #44*. *Palace Tablet* glyph H6, which abuts the 'Throne of Creation Snake-Head' we saw in [Fig. 1-86](#), offers another parallel. I shall deal with assigning *Palace Tablet* glyphs to various Hands below

One of the 'flames' issuing from the bottom of Yok Nen Tal's title Yajaw K'ak' has a peculiar outlined indentation. This kind of crater appears often on the *Palace Tablet*, particularly in the work of the Artist who carved the 'Jaguar-Throne of Creation ([Fig. 1-88](#) left). We see parallels

not only with the ‘jaguar spots,’ but in the notched foliage of the ‘waterlily’ on the Jaguar’s head (see [Fig 1-83](#), lower left).



Fig. 1-88. *Palace Tablet*, The four heads of Jaguar, Xok, Xok and Snake projecting from the three ‘Thrones of Creation.’ (The middle ‘throne’ has two heads). The first two appear to be by one Artist, the second pair by another. Photos by author.



Fig. 1-89. *Palace Tablet*, The heads of Jaguar and Snake projecting from the first and third ‘Thrones of Creation.’ The ‘spots’ on the Snake are crosshatched rather than concave like those on the Jaguar. Photo composite by author.

In the close-up [Fig. 1-89](#), we observe that the ‘spots’ on the two ‘Throne-monsters’ are treated differently: the strikingly-rendered concave ‘jaguar spots’ with their crisp outlines contrast with the more lightly-incised crosshatched ‘spots’ on the Snake. The Snake’s scales and other facial details are even more-lightly incised. As we shall see in Chapter 2, different carvers finished the

adjacent patches of glyphs in the text as well.



Fig. 1-90. Temple XIX Panel and Palace Tablet. Glyphs by the “Xok-Monster Master” of *Temple XIX Panel* above; heads of Jaguar, *Xok* Fish and Snake projecting from the ‘Thrones of Creation’ in the middle row, and glyphs from just below the ‘Thrones’ at bottom. Photo composite by author.

[Fig. 1-90](#) shows some of these glyphs. G6 and H6 constitute a phonetic spelling of K’inich Janab Pakal, and sit directly underneath the Jaguar and left *Xok* heads, which I ascribed above to a single Hand; I think they are all by the same Master. The 3 K’ayab and the Snake head that sits upon it are by a different hand, as are the 8 Ok (not shown, see [Fig. 3-46](#)) and its corresponding *Xok* head (see [Fig. 1-88](#)).

1.7.5. Finally, the *Palace Tablet*

Like its subsidiary panels, and like the *Temple XIX Panel*, and the *Palace Tablet* is not incised, but in the more usual relief. Its 240-odd glyphs were carved by at score of individuals. (See Sections 2.5.2 – 2.6, Chapter 3.) Three or four worked just on the Full Figure Initial Series and the adjacent parts of Column CD, while on the same slab another fine artist carved the lower part—the "ordinary" glyphs— of these four columns. At least six more artists executed the text on the central slab, two more did the Thrones of the upper illustration, and probably the figures sitting thereon. One Artist seems to have carved the upper illustration's Label texts, and appears nowhere else. Yet another four or five Hands shared responsibility for the narrow slab comprising the last four columns of text. In Chapter 2, I analyze the *Palace Tablet* in depth (some would say *to death*), but here I shall briefly introduce the reader to the rich stable of artists who together carved this masterpiece, to demonstrate that even sculptural glyphs can submit to connoisseurship.

1.7.6. A clear initial example



Fig. 1-91. Palace Tablet, *Tz'ak* glyphs differentiating hands (expanded in section 2.5.2 below). Photo composite by author.

The phrase-glyph *u-Tz'ak-aj* appears repeatedly in Maya monumental discourse, and the *Palace Tablet*, with six examples, is no exception. *Tz'ak* alone (without the usual affixes), appears another three times here. Putting E15 with L15 side by side, even the untrained observer can see

immediately these two were by different Artists ([Fig. 1-91](#)). Laying C18 next to these two again argues that we have yet a third Hand. And so on (See Section 2.5.2).

1.7.7. Comparing Initial Series full-figure coefficients



Fig. 1-92. Palace Tablet, Initial Series glyphs by different Hands. Photographs by author.

[Fig. 1-92](#) juxtaposes the fourth and seventh glyphs of the full-figure Initial Series. The two have the same coefficient, a god (#11) marked with *Kaban* signs, both wearing precisely the same jewelry, hairstyle, and (presumably) loincloth. Yet the different scale of the two fellows' heads is striking, and the more details one compares, the more convinced one will be that these two were carved by different Individuals. Most striking is the difference in fineness of detail between the two. Looking just at the first (11 Tun), one would describe it as a masterpiece, hardly lacking anything. Yet the quality and fineness of the lower glyph (11 Ajaw) surpasses it amply. The lines of the hair are twice as dense, and appropriately smoother. The figures' flesh is modeled much more smoothly and convincingly, their hands and fingernails and bracelets measurably more crisp and realistic. This may have something to do with the fact that this glyph is right at eye-level on the wall, while the fourth glyph is some two feet higher.

Considering this, it surprises me to see such lackluster *Kaban*-marks on his arms and legs and clumsy oval decorating the lower flange of the 'daysign cartouche.' The *Kaban*-marks on the upper figure are much stronger and more confident. This implies that these final details were entrusted (unfortunately) to a much-lesser-skilled assistant.

1.7.8. Comparing *Ajaw* superfixes

There will turn out to be a number of irregular breaks in the work-distribution. The *Palace Tablet* is nearly unique in Palenque for its use of double Emblem Glyphs, an unusual practice (best-known at Yaxchilan) which may reflect an Ancient Mayan anticipation of titles such as “Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.” Examining the use of the *Ajaw* superfix which appears mostly on emblem glyphs, we find at least



Palenque Palace Tablet: Six *Ajaw* affixes by six artists

Fig. 1-93. *Palace Tablet*, six selected *Ajaw* superfixes. Photographs by author.

nine Hands at work. It appears that, with the exception of the double EG's, each of the eleven examples of this *Ajaw* affix was carved by a different hand. (These examples are distributed fairly evenly about the tablet, so this may be sheer coincidence, but one is tempted to speculate religious or secular reasons that each appearance of the *Ajaw* title, or a royal name, might have required a different carver. I shall resist that temptation; it is not productive in this paper's context.)

[Fig. 1-93](#) brings together six of these superfixes. I think it obvious that there is no way they could be accidental, or even deliberate, variations by a single Hand. It is surprising

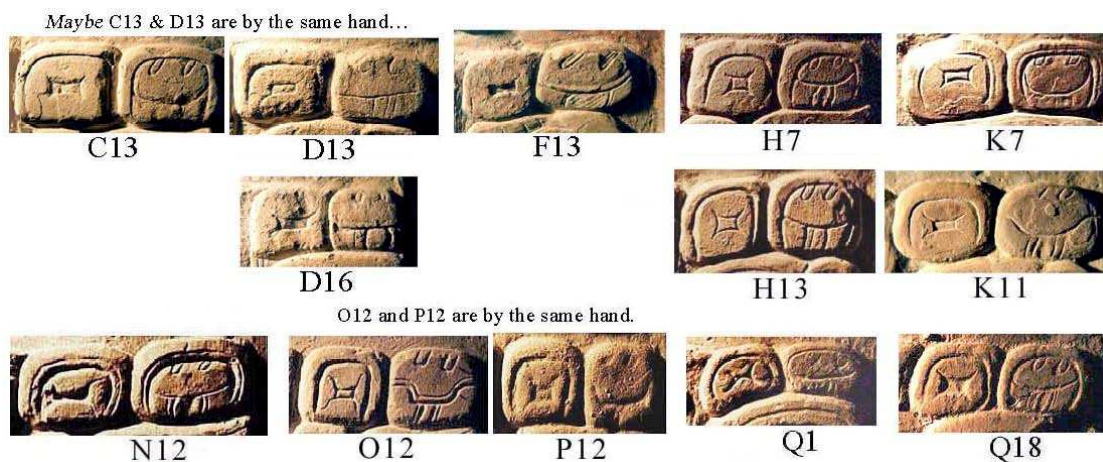


Fig. 1-94. *Palace Tablet*, all *Ajaw* superfixes. Photographs by author.

how many interpretations exist for this simple affix. [Fig. 1-94](#) arranges them by position, and links two pairs of them.

1.7.9. Comparing phonetic spellings of *Janab Pakal*



Fig. 1-95. *Palace Tablet* phonetic spelling of Janab Pakal's name. Photographs by author.

The middle panel is interesting. Only there do we find K'inich Janab Pakal's name spelled completely phonetically. Most everywhere else in Palenque (especially at this late date), including on the side panels of this *Tablet*, artists write it with the standard logograms. The two phonetic examples were carved by different carvers, both excellent artists. They are remarkably similar in their details, but the two have a different flavor. The most salient difference can be seen in the *na* of *Janab*; the first slants dramatically, the second sits stiffly upright. The details of the '*bi*-head' follow suit. The *pa-ka-la*'s are much harder to distinguish, but the differences are there: regard the 'noses' of the '*pa*-heads' and the *la* suffixes. I think we have here a likely example of two Sculptors carving from the painted layout of a single Calligrapher, who likely is identical with one of the two Sculptors.

1.7.10. Comparing 'dark spots' and ears

The style of *face* and *figure* we see carved on Palenque monuments is remarkably consistent ([Fig. 1-96](#)). I notice, for instance, that the artists of these monuments used in common a peculiar technique for rendering the all-important eyes and mouth. The faces all share a slightly bulging spherical eyeball inside a gently modeled concave eye-socket. The artists paid particular attention to the full, parted lips, with subtly-modeled cheek muscles. And they also rendered the soles of feet with striking care, often carefully sculpting a charmingly natural double wrinkle behind each toe. This consistency in fine details of eye and lips and ear is the nemesis of traditional connoisseurship, because these are precisely the kind of details that Western Old Master painters failed to standardize. But one cannot standardize everything (though Old Kingdom Egyptian art schools and various Chinese academies *tried*), and we just need to find the details that the Maya chose to allow the students to improvise. One opportunity lies in the various treatments of the details of the *Ajaw* superfix in [Fig. 1-94](#). Another example: 'dark spots' or 'dark areas,' such as the vertical bands in a calendric *Ben* or *Tuun* glyph. These rectangular bands (or other areas, such as 'spots' on a snake or jaguar) can be distinguished several different ways:

1. raised from the background, flat upper surface (usually engraved with inlines);
2. raised from the background, with concave upper surface;

3. raised from the background, with hatched upper surface (usually inlined);
4. concave (often outlined);
5. sunk into the background, with inline, hatched or other light engraving ;



Fig. 1-97. *Palace Tablet*, Various treatments of 'dark areas' such as bands or 'spots.' Photographs by author.

6. sunk into the background, with flat "bottom";
7. two-dimensional engraved (usually with doubled outlines);
8. two-dimensional engraved with inlines and hatching filling.

Now there is evidence that in any group of Palenque artisans, some followed one convention, and others, another convention for these 'dark areas,' even if they all made eyes and ears and lips precisely the same way.

Following Morelli (see next chapter), I initially ascribed this uniformity of eye and face and toe to the omnipresence of a single prolific master, who trained with the team

who carved the Cross Group under Kan-Balam, then worked as a master under his successors K'an Hoy Chitam and Ahkal Mo' Naab. Now, after seeing the incredible array of superb talent carving the glyphs, I am not so sure. I think this is a good example



Fig. 1-96. Faces of various figures carved in Palenque reliefs. Photographs by author.

of a 'House Style' created and taught by a single master, which proliferated among his students and colleagues. This kind of practice was common in Ancient Egypt and Rome. Under the

Caesars, for instance, the official procedure was to create a standard, idealized, politically correct portrait of the emperor, make several official standard copies, then send them to licensed sculpture studios throughout the empire, where it would be available for reference by anyone wishing to portray the Emperor for any work of art.

When one looks at the ears of the figures from Palenque during this period, they all share a simplified linear style, with certain specific lines incised in a certain way. This is true not only of the stone figures, but those sculpted in stucco as well. One is tempted to see a specialist in faces or figures, or even in ears, going about finishing the figures being carved in various temples. In the next two chapters, we shall scrutinize the *Palace Tablet* and other monuments to see if we can discern such specialization. In general, it seems safe to begin by assuming that a single glyph was all carved by one Artist. We shall have our hands full just trying to figure out where one Hand left off and another began

1.7.11. So why the big crowds?

The question remains: why did the monuments of Palenque (and Piedras Negras and San Jose de Motul) employ such a jostling crowd of artists? Were they just interested in cranking these stones out rapidly? With seven or ten artists at work, the *Temple XIX Platform* could have been conceived and completed in a week or two; perhaps there were so many celebrations to commemorate, the busy Maya craftsmen's guilds had to produce monuments on a tight schedule. We have no idea, for example, what other objects of display were painted, woven, carved in wood, or constructed of more perishable materials (such as the altars we see erected in modern village ceremonies). The astonishing corpus of carved lintels preserved at Yaxchilan is some indication of the vast wealth of wooden monuments lost to us, which the surviving lintels at Tikal confirm. There are hundreds of doorways just at Palenque, for example. Perhaps there were wooden stelae as well, and no doubt the buildings were hung with decorated textiles.

Allen Christenson and David Stuart suggested to me another reason. Large monuments were costly, and certain types were erected only once every five or ten years. It seems possible to have been the custom for each lineage head to endow a portion of such a monument, not only to enable large communal works to be erected, but to allow each of several lineages to share the honor of having produced them.

In the Primary Standard Sequence on ceramic vessels, one notes that a critical part of the text

states that the process of *painting* or of *carving* the vessel sanctifies it. Occasionally the painter or carver is honored(?) by the mention of his or her name. Now the action of patronage, of causing someone to do something, is often recorded on monuments: "*Sajal* So and So conquers the city of Whatzit, *U-Kab-hi* / "By order of" his *Ajaw* Such and Such." *Nowhere* do we find on a pot or monument that it was painted or carved *u-Kab-hi* Such and Such. What is recorded is the *actual act* of painting or carving, *u-ts'ib* So and So. It apparently would not do merely to provide the *money* to erect a monument, the real honor came from providing the *carving itself*.

My guess is that each carver-calligrapher working on the *Palace Tablet* and on the Temple XIX Platform might have been the actual scion of a participating lineage. Michael Coe (1997) has shown that Maya calligraphers and associated craftspeople were highly esteemed members of court, on par with Japanese and Chinese calligraphers. Some were possibly members of the royal family itself, and clearly the arts of calligraphy and carving were considered honourable callings for nobles. I have no doubt that any lineage of high rank was well-supplied with skilled scribes and artisans in its own members, which their *Ajaw* could assign to contribute to a given monument. This situation prevails today, according to Christenson, among the lineages of a *cofradía* which each contribute to decorating a specific portion of the building on feast days.

Although this practice of distributing work among several artists seems less widespread in the Early Classic (when population centers were smaller), there is some evidence that it goes back to the Middle Preclassic. Susan Gillespie (1994) analyzed unfinished Olmec monuments at Llano del Jacaro. Her analysis suggests that one group of artisans did the initial roughing out of the sculptures, another brought the figures nearly to their final state, then fine details were added by a third group. This *could* be an entirely practical kind of craft specialization, or it could have had a basis in religious or political considerations like those I am tentatively positing.

The large number of signatures on monuments from El Peru and Piedras Negras suggests similar divisions of sponsorship there. I am anxious to apply this connoisseurship analysis there, and to Early Tikal and other sites and eras, to determine whether this multiple-artist procedure was the rule. Whether it turns out to have been more or less universal (early indications suggest it was), or whether one finds spatial or temporal distinctions in Maya monument-creation practice, I believe it can shed a little more light on the political microeconomy of Ancient Maya cities.

Chapter 2. Criteria for Distinguishing Maya Artists' Hands

2.1. Scope of this Inquiry

As we shall demonstrate in great detail in this and the next chapter, the exquisite carving of the ambitious *Palace Tablet*, and that of the smaller *Temple XIX Platform*, were accomplished by a surprisingly large group of highly-skilled Palenque sculptors. Fourteen (perhaps more) worked on the *Platform* (with a sculpted area of about 2800 square inches, less than two square meters), and a score in the case of the *Palace Tablet* (ten feet square, or nine square meters). Questions arise immediately as we examine these apparent group projects: How sure are we that two parts of the same work are by different artists, or that one inscription was worked on by the same artist as another inscription?

Further, in carved inscriptions, was the *carver* of a glyph the same as the *scribe* who laid out that particular glyph on the stone? Was one of these roles more highly esteemed than the other? Were artists cross-trained like Michelangelo, expected to be both calligrapher and sculptor, or were the two fields separated? Were such distinctions universally held across the Maya realm, or did each city's artistic community have its own peculiar categories and ranks? Artists' signatures are not at all ubiquitous; how did that practice arise, and what does its heterogeneous distribution tell us about the individuality of Maya polities' attitudes toward scribes?

How unified were each city's artists? Were individuals attached to specific lineages, fiercely and jealously competitive, never to share technical secrets? Or were scribes, sculptors and other artisans trained in university-like centers of learning, and able to communicate freely among their own?

Although scribes were highly-ranked, highly-regarded individuals, recent scholarship suggests that they might have been considered a kind of chattel, a commodity that could be traded, or a prize to be captured in battle, either to enter service of new masters or be sacrificed⁴¹ along with a conquered polity's rulers and monuments.

This investigation cannot address but a small fraction of these issues. We can begin, however, by establishing definitive criteria by which we might judge whether a pair of objects

⁴¹ Johnston, Kevin J., "Broken fingers: Classic Maya scribe capture and polity consolidation," *Antiquity* 75, June 2001, pp. 71-81. Also reported and reviewed by Wilford, John Noble, "Live by the Pen, Die by the Sword," in *The New York Times*' *Science Times* section, 17 July 2001, pp. 1-2.

issued from the same hand or not; these criteria may begin to provide some insights. The foundations of this methodology were laid in a series of letters written 1866-1872 by art historian and connoisseur Giovanni Morelli to two of his colleagues⁴². Dealing with similar issues regarding Italian Renaissance painters, he determined the parts of a painting in which an artist revealed his individuality. This art of connoisseurship provided a major occupation for art historians for the next half century, and is a critical central task of dealer-experts who sell paintings, antiques, and *objets d'art* to this day.

2.2. Background of Connoisseurship

2.2.1. Morelli, Oriental Experts, Beazley

Morelli's problem resulted from the widespread practice during the Renaissance and later eras of well-known artists training numerous apprentices, who usually, with greater or lesser skill, imitated their masters' styles, subjects and individual masterpieces. The flourishing art market from that day to this also cultivated a thriving production of copies and outright fakes, the latter often painted by hungry but very skilled artists, who strove to emulate a master's style in every detail. Collectors willingly pay shocking sums for works by an acknowledged name, and Morelli's methodology provided some assurance that they were receiving the genuine article.

His observation is as simple as it is ingenious. A copyist or imitator can easily master the most familiar characteristics of a particular artist—the surprised expression of a Pontormo, the vivid musculature of a Michelangelo, the creamy skin texture of a Da Vinci, or the choppy brushstrokes of Van Gogh—and with work can ferret out a hundred other habits peculiar to that master. But he cannot ever learn them all. The “follower” invariably develops his or her own “handwriting,” a collection of habits and features that distinguish copyist from master. Morelli noted that humble, oft-repeated and little-noted features of these paintings—ears, fingernails, textiles, spurs, the kinds of details whose form and technique were never specifically articulated by teachers, but were expected to be mastered without tuition—, displayed style distinctive to the individual. One could refer to “Botticelli lips” or the “elongated toes of a Michelangelo” or the “assured, bold, left-handed hatching of a Leonardo drawing.”

⁴² Morelli, Giovanni (1816-1891), *Collecting connoisseurship and the art market in Risorgimento Italy: Giovanni Morelli's letters to Giovanni Melli and Pietro Zavaritt (1866-1872)*. Jaynie Anderson, editor. Venezia, Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere, ed ..., 1999

This same methodology is more or less applied by experts in every field of art scholarship. Tibetan calligraphy specialists, for instance, identify each artist's specific brushstroke qualities with imaginative allegorical phrases.⁴³ In this they follow Chinese painting connoisseurship practice.⁴⁴ In the middle of the last century John Davidson Beazley exploited this approach to identify Greek vase painters, publishing dozens of titles attributing a massive corpus of objects to individual artists.⁴⁵ Though usually much less compendious, similar efforts can be found sprinkled throughout the literature of every field of art history.

Beazley's work was aided considerably by the unusual (for ancient peoples) Greek practice of signing pots. Although a minority, a substantial number of Attic vases carry signatures of the potter and/or the painter. This evidence provides a check on an expert's attribution which is absent in many other fields.

However, most ancient and traditional peoples do not share our modern reverence for the individual artist. The paintings and sculpture of ancient Egypt, of Africa, of Polynesia, of the Andes, of the Alpine Celts, and a hundred other nations are, as a rule, anonymous. Likewise for the brilliant carvers of European cathedral sculpture, of Chinese inscriptions, of Assyrian reliefs, and so forth. The only method we have of determining whether, for example, two figures on the jambs of Rheims Cathedral issue from the same hand, is by a careful visual analysis whose essential practice follows Morelli.

2.2.2. Layout-Artists & Sculptors in an Egyptian Tomb

Egyptian scribes and the painters who decorated tombs, palaces, and temples earned high regard in their society. They had undergone an arduous education, roughly equivalent to

⁴³ The calligraphy of Thonmi Sambhota, founder of Tibetan Buddhism in the seventh century AD, was described as *sBal-nag na-la bgrad-'dra*, "like a frog crawling on a meadow." His successor Changar Richenbar's style was called *Sa-phag gShibs-'dra*, "like close bricks." Genyen Knochogbang's style is termed *Nas-sngon-po phyng dkar gyi steng-du-dkram-pa 'dra-wa*, "like blue barley corn scattered over felt." Eight-century Tsepong Jangchub's work earned the accolade *sBur-nag bdrad-pa 'dra-wa*, "like straddled ants." Droyatri, a reformer of the early 11th century, injected new life into Tibetan calligraphy with a revival of the styles of these earlier scribes, under the humble name *Bar-gSar*. "lately new." And so on.

Quoting T. Tsepel Taikhang, *The Vaidura G. Ya'sel of Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho*, 1683-1685 from *The History of Tibetan Scripts*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1971

⁴⁴ The most well-known Chinese work in the West is by Cao Zhao, translated by David, Percival Victor, Sir, bart., *Chinese connoisseurship: the Ko Ku Yao Lun, the essential criteria of antiquities (With a facsimile of the Chinese text of 1388)*. London 1971. Zhao, Qimei (1563-1624) set standards for expertising calligraphy that Chinese scholars follow to this day (e. g., the 8-volume *Zhao shi tie wang shan hu*, published by Shang wu (yin shu guan) Taipei, Taiwan, 1979). The Dept. of Asian Art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York published *Issues of authenticity in Chinese art*, edited by Judith G. Smith and Wen C. Fong, in 1999.

⁴⁵ For a single instance, Beazley, John Davidson, 1885-1970, *The Kleophrades Painter*. Rev. 1944 & 1948, Mainz 1974. An example of his more compendious volumes is *Attic red-figure vase-painters*. 2d ed. Oxford, 1963.

modern medical school, and generally enjoyed rewards roughly equivalent to those proffered our medical experts. From their ranks were chosen the powerful administrators and priests who ruled Egypt.

A number of semi-finished tomb reliefs provide us a glimpse of the division of labor between layout artists and finish sculptors.⁴⁶ (See [Fig. 1-57.](#)) The “outline-draftsmen” who laid out designs to be sculpted rarely indicated internal details such as fingers or feathers or clothes (though they usually drew in the eyes of figures); the sculptors who completed reliefs were expected to supply these details. Indeed, as is obvious from even a casual examination of these partly-finished reliefs, the sculptor who completed the work did not adhere too closely to the layout drawing,⁴⁷ this despite the strict canons of proportion and gridded layouts provided by the outline-draftsmen.⁴⁸ For this reason, it is obvious that the finish sculptors themselves had to undergo training almost as extensive as that of the layout scribes, though apparently they were not so highly esteemed —after all, they did not necessarily have to be totally literate. Doubtless, however, many of these finish artists did achieve literacy.

Professor Cathleen Keller at University of California at Berkeley works on distinguishing individual hands of painters working at the Egyptian New Kingdom artisans’ village of Deir el-Medina. Since much of the population of this village was literate, we are blessed with a somewhat more complete written record of the work, lives, and relationships between these artists than survives for other groups. In a few instances, some even signed their work, giving Keller and her colleagues, as Greek vase-painters gave Beazley, a check on conclusions derived from Morellian analysis.⁴⁹

One remarkable “outline-draftsman” at the end of the Old Kingdom signed his work (which fills the walls of two rooms) thus: “The draftsmen Seni, he says: It was I who inscribed the tomb of Count Kheni. It was I, moreover, who inscribed this tomb, I alone.”⁵⁰ As a rule, however,

⁴⁶ See, for instance, examples of layouts illustrated in Robins, Gay, *Proportion and Style in Ancient Egyptian Art*, University of Texas Press 1994.

⁴⁷ Williams, Caroline Ransome, *Decoration of the Tomb of Per-Neb*, p. 18f. points out that the sculptors did not always adhere very strictly to the preliminary work of the draftsman, as quoted by Henry G. Fischer (see n. 10 below). This also can be seen in illustrations in Robins, n. 6. above.

⁴⁸ See Robins, n. 6. above.

⁴⁹ Keller, Cathleen, “,” in *Newsletter of American Research Center in Egypt* (Vol. 125?, 1981), and “,” Davies, W. Vivian, ed., *Color and Painting in Ancient Egypt*. London, British Museum Press, 2001, the proceedings of a colloquium at the British Museum. Dr. Keller is carrying on the work initiated by Jaroslav Cherny on the draftsmen of the New Kingdom, and that of Benedict Davies, who wrote *Who's Who at Deir el-Medina: A Prosopographic Study of the Royal Workmen's Community*. *Egyptologische Uitgaven (EU)* XIII. Leiden, Nederlands, Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten te Leiden, 1999 ...

⁵⁰ Translated by Henry George Fischer, emeritus curator of Egyptian Antiquities at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The inscription in question, on the south wall of the *Chapel of Ka-Hep* (east of entrance), is cited in Fig. 8 & p. 19 of Kanawati,

Egyptian finish sculptors (probably including Seni's finishers) worked in rather large teams. One Leeuwenberg scrutinized a tomb chamber now in the Leiden Antiquities Museum, and claimed to have identified the hands of several different sculptors at work, though Henry Fischer doubts "that so many workers could worked on a single chamber of modest size."⁵¹

2.2.3. Hellenistic Inscriptions & European Medieval Manuscripts

Professor Stephen V. Tracy of Ohio State University has essentially used this method for his extraordinary study assigning some thousand surviving fragments of Hellenistic Attic inscriptions to 38 individual inscription-carvers.⁵² These artists never signed their work. His work is aided by large samples. The surviving corpus of inscriptions preserved in Greek collections is enormous, due in large part to the prolific output of ancient Attic letter-cutters. Also, individual Attic monuments were remarkably prolix, often consisting of dozens of sentences; it is not unusual to find over a thousand letters surviving on a single fragment.

This uniquely voluminous production compelled carvers to develop a uniquely efficient and quick carving method. Indeed, long-winded texts were only possible because they did so. The carvers worked small, with letters usually less than half a centimeter in height—comparable to the size of ordinary handwriting. They also usually cut most of their letter-strokes (which happen to be straight) with one or two direct blows into the stone, often employing a set of chisels of standard widths, to create short, medium, and long strokes. An *alpha* or *tau*—six and four blows respectively—might take ten seconds to cut. This technique compares with that of, say, contemporary Latin or Etruscan or Sanskrit lettercutters, who carefully tapped a V-shaped groove for each stroke of each letter, requiring two to ten *minutes* for comparable letterforms. Thus, a Greek working all day could carve easily *ten to forty times* as many words as his colleague in Italy or India. The speed with which these carvers worked approaches that of handwriting in pen and ink, and encourages sloppiness, exacerbating the individuality of Greek lettercutters, for precisely the same reason that modern handwriting is unique to each

Naguib, *The Rock Tombs of El-Hawawish: The Cemetery of Akhmim*, Vol. I. The Macquarie Ancient History Association, Sydney, 1980. Fischer states that the tomb is "now thought to be a little later than the Old Kingdom." (personal correspondence)

⁵¹ Leeuwenberg, "Un groupe de sculpteurs égyptiens à Leiden", published in *Bulletin van de Vereeniging tot Beoordeling der Kennis van de Antieke Beschaving te 's-Gravenhage* - *Alexandro Guilielmo Byvanck*, Jaargang XXXIX 1964. Comments by Dr. Fischer transmitted privately.

⁵² Tracy, Stephen V., *Attic Letter-Cutters of 229 – 86 B.C.*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990. Of approximately 1200 inscriptions dated from this era, he was able to assign approximately 1000 to these 38 individuals; the remaining 200 represent probable unique surviving examples of their makers' work. In this book, Tracy acknowledges the work of his forebears, such as A. Wilhelm and S. Dow, who in the early 20th century began making lists of attributions. For instance, Tracy attributes 72 works to his second cutter, and lists another eleven which seem to be by him, but differ somewhat from his main style. Wilhelm in 1906 identified six of these works; Dow in 1936 had expanded the list to 36.

individual. One cutter might tend to leave a gap at the top of his *alphas* and *lambdas*, (as we see here in [Fig. 2-01](#)) or give his *eta* a consistently sloping cross-stroke. Another prefers large-looped *rhos*, and so on. These characteristics are precisely the features Tracy lists to confirm his identifications.

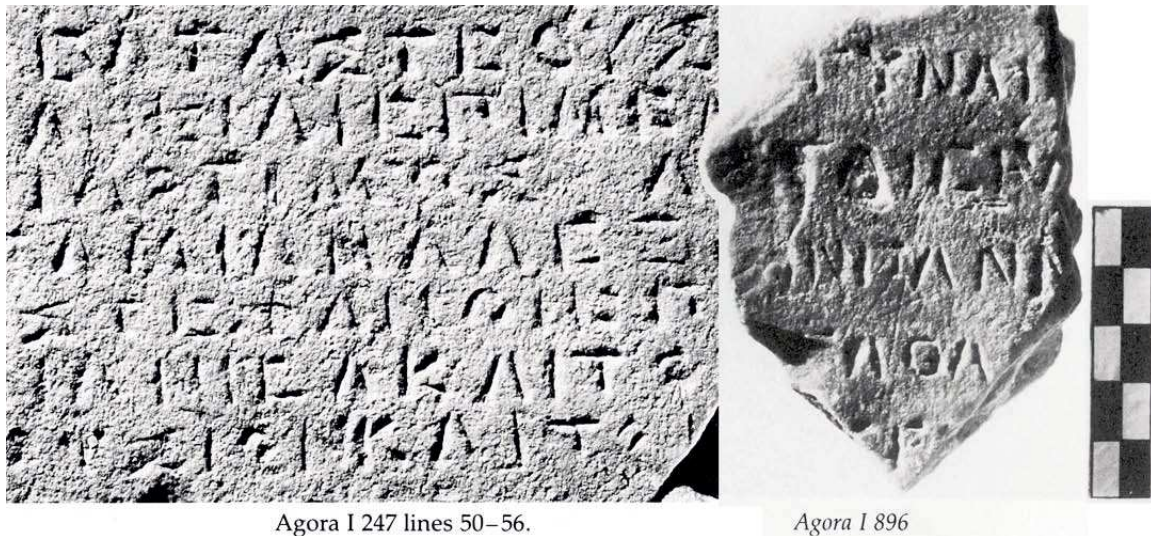


Fig. 2-01: Two Ancient Greek inscriptions by same carver, 194-147 BC. This inscription-maker carves with such speed and economy that his letterforms are barely legible. His sloppiness reveals the unique technique which allowed Greek lettercutters to produce lengthy inscriptions with such remarkable speed. Photos from (Tracy 1990 Fig. 12 & Pl. 15)

In the case of Attic inscriptions, we are able to make firm attributions due to a unique confluence of circumstances. A similar situation exists in the attribution of hands in Medieval European manuscripts. Some books are signed or attributed in colophons, but these are deeply in the minority; constituting no more than perhaps 3% of the total surviving.⁵³ However, in most scriptoria, individuality of handwriting was tolerated to the extent that a careful reader, even today, can easily distinguish where one scribe left off and another began.⁵⁴ Additionally,

⁵³ At the end of the 19th century, John W. Bradley (1830-1916) compiled an imperfect but still-unsurpassed list of named Medieval manuscript scribes and illuminators: *A Dictionary of Miniaturists, Illuminators, Calligraphers, and Copyists, ... with references to their works, and notices of their patrons, from the Establishment of Christianity to the Eighteenth Century...* n.d., ca. 1900, 3 volumes, reprinted by Burt Franklin/Lenox Hill, New York, 1958, 1973. The 6-volume work (so far) of the Benedictines du Bouveret, (at the Abbey of Saint-Benoit de Port-Valais: Bouveret, Switzerland), *Colophons de manuscrits occidentaux des origines au XVI^e siècle*. Fribourg, Suisse, Editions universitaires, 1965-1982), the beginning of an ambitious attempt to record all the surviving colophons of Medieval manuscripts, is an excellent place to browse for more rigorous data of this sort.

⁵⁴ This is the case in most European manuscript traditions, especially before the Gothic period (that is, before the 13th – 15th century). Certain teachers, however, devised script styles (and efficient methods of teaching them) that encouraged or demanded strict conformity. The stupendous output of “Paris” Book-of-Hours factories from the late 14th through the 15th centuries provides us, even today, with literally many hundreds of volumes, and probably employed thousands of scribes, but their beautiful and fluid script is as consistent as type. 12th century Beneventan minuscule script is equally homogeneous, but because that script’s designers did not establish equally consistent alphabets of *majuscules*, scholars found that they could distinguish Beneventan hands by their peculiar majuscule forms. The continuing uncertainty over the number of hands at work

the ambitious undertaking of copying a whole book was ordinarily divided between two to even a dozen or more scribes. Only among Early Christian books, usually the products of small monasteries which might have employed only two or three scribes total, do we find books which each were written out by a single scribe.

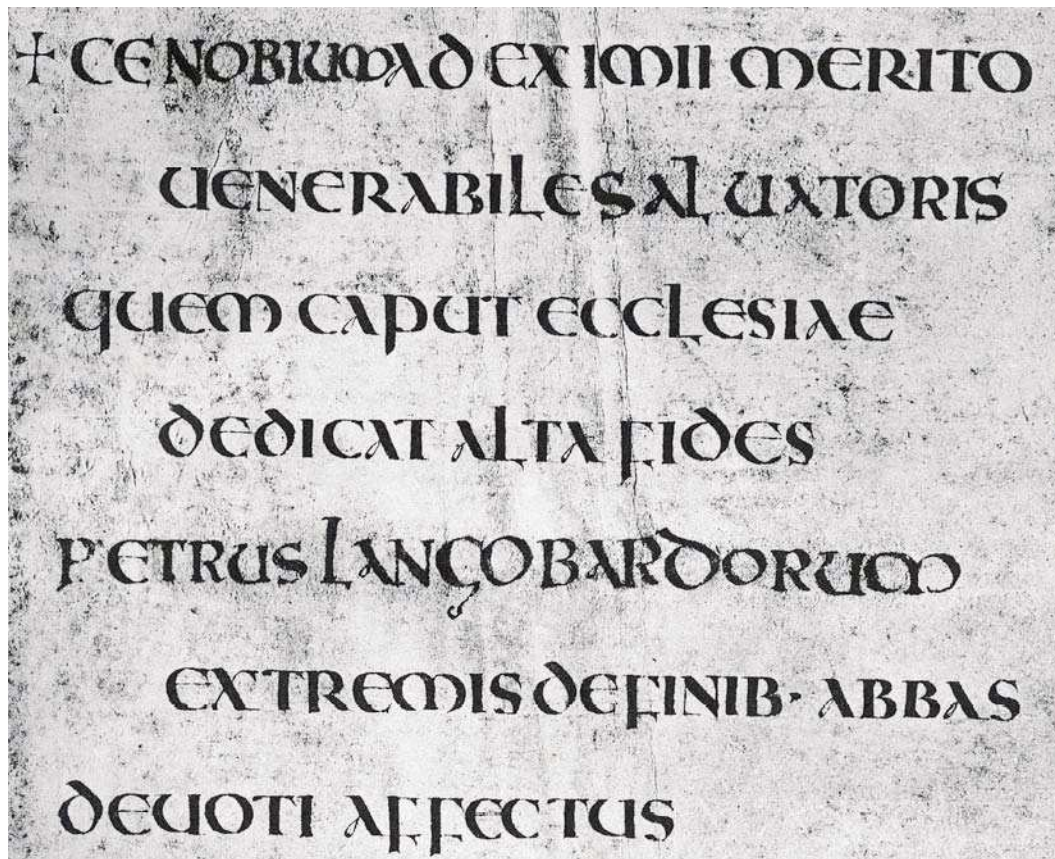


Fig. 2-02: Colophon page of Codex Amiatinus, top seven lines. This colophon page, written in AD 716 in Wearmouth-Jarrow in Northumbria, was altered later in that century by monks at Monte Amiatis, to whom it had been given. Note particularly Lines 1, 2, and 5. They exhibit few compunctions about trying to match their own clumsy uncial to the lyrical calligraphy of the original. From (Lowe 1960, pl. VIII)

2.3. Connoisseurship Applied to Maya Script

2.3.1. Zimmermann & the *Dresden Codex*

In each of these cases, scholars distinguish between, or attribute doubtful items to, individual artists on the basis of a constellation of habits peculiar to each. No one characteristic is enough to

in the 8th century Irish Gospel *Book of Kells* (there were at least two—one even used a different recipe for his ink—, but Françoise Henry saw three [see her 1974 volume *The Book of Kells*] and Bernard Meehan distinguishes four [his 1994 book is also called *The Book of Kells*]) points to a like consistency in the ancient teaching of Insular Majuscule script.

confirm an identification. The coincidence of two consistently-used habits is more convincing, while three such habits strengthen the argument even more. Each unusual characteristic we can add to the list multiplies the odds that we have a match. Tracy, for instance, begins each attribution list with a careful description of a half-dozen or more letterforms peculiar to this individual.

Variationen häufiger Hauptzeichen und Affixe (Die Schreiber der Dresdener Handschrift)								
Dresden Seite	2	3-23	24, 45-63 29-44	65-69	69-74	25-28	32-35a	42-45c
126 (Gott E)								
169 (Gott B)								
128								
1								
50								
79								

Fig. 2.03 (= Fig. 1.01). Upper part of Zimmermann, plate 5; characteristic glyphs of his designated scribes.

Günter Zimmermann in 1956 employed a similar strategy in distinguishing the eight scribes he identified in the *Dresden Codex*.⁵⁵ He chose a few dozen common glyphs and compared examples of these to each other until he felt he had established the boundaries of each scribe's responsibility. Selecting 18 glyphs, each of which were used by a minimum of four of his scribes, his Tafel 5 displays a typical example of each, the 105 glyphs neatly arranged onto a single page. The reader can judge for herself the sharpness of Dr. Zimmermann's eye for individuality.

⁵⁵ Zimmermann, Günter, *Die Hieroglyphen der Maya-Handschriften*. (Universität Hamburg, *Abhandlung aus dem Gebeit der Auslandskunde*, Band 62 — Reihe B [Völkerkunde, Kulturgeschichte und Sprachen] Band 34). Hamburg, Cram, de Gruyter, & Co., 1956

2.3.2. Styles and Materials Peculiar to Locales

In our attempt to distinguish between individuals working on a Maya monument, we are forced to make several adjustments to the standard technique, the better to tune our analysis to the character and habits of Maya artists. To begin with, although some individuality of carving and calligraphy was tolerated, each locale had a distinctive style—a collection of characteristics shared by every artist working there at a certain time. The differences between the local styles in Maya City-states reflect, among other things, adaptations to the local stones. Copan, for instance, like many Maya cities, focussed much of their public texts onto huge upright stelae, but Copan's were carved from fine-grained volcanic tuff, which uniquely allowed Copanec artists to sculpt ornately baroque high-relief and in-the-round figures.⁵⁶ Virtually the entire vast corpus of late-Classic Copan stone sculpture—architectural reliefs, altars, stelae, and all—is carved in high relief; the highest in the entire Maya realm. The stone itself—common near Copan, consistent, fine-grained, tough, and isotropic—encouraged it. It is not found elsewhere in the Maya region. Quirigua, but a few leagues away, exploited nearby beds of ruddy sandstone, whose depth and superior longitudinal tensile strength allowed the Quiriguanecs to erect the tallest stelae—Stela E stands 35 feet above the ground—of any Maya city. Again, this kind of sandstone was not available to other Maya polities. Kings elsewhere generally erected monuments carved of limestone, which abounds throughout the rest of the Maya lands, though it varies in quality. The tragically-eroded state of the hundred-plus stelae of Calakmul resulted entirely from the low-quality stone from which they were cut. Palenque's quarries, on the other hand, produced a strongly laminar, exceptionally fine-grained limestone—some experts claim it to be of lithographic quality⁵⁷—which was unsuitable for stelae (too flaky), but exceptionally well-suited to large thin panels (often approximately the size of a school blackboard) carved in low relief. The fine, buttery quality of this limestone invited artists to indulge in the finest detail, and its large panels encouraged lengthy texts. The limestone

⁵⁶ The tendency to high relief and flamboyantly sculpted ornament reached its height under the powerful Waxaklahun-Ubaah-K'awiil (according to Dr. Elizabeth Newsome, probably "18 Are His Images") around 9.15.0.0.0, the mid-eighth century AD. See Stelae A, B, C, D, F, 4, and Altars G1, G2, G3.

quarried at Yaxchilan and Bonampak had enough tensile strength to be used as doorway lintels—virtually every other sites' lintels were wood—, and rotted away centuries ago. The position of lintel texts—in a much more intimate and less public setting than stelae—impelled a different scale (and sometimes a different textual content) than one finds on stelae; this skews the bulk of Yaxchilan's inscriptional corpus—in terms of vocabulary as well as carving style—even further from that of its neighbors.

2.3.3. A Tentative Morellian Approach; Hints of a 'Style Manual'



Fig. 2-04. Ears from various Palenque monuments. (Photos by author. See also Fig. 1-96.)

⁵⁷ Linda Schele, a practicing artist, regularly made this claim in lectures.

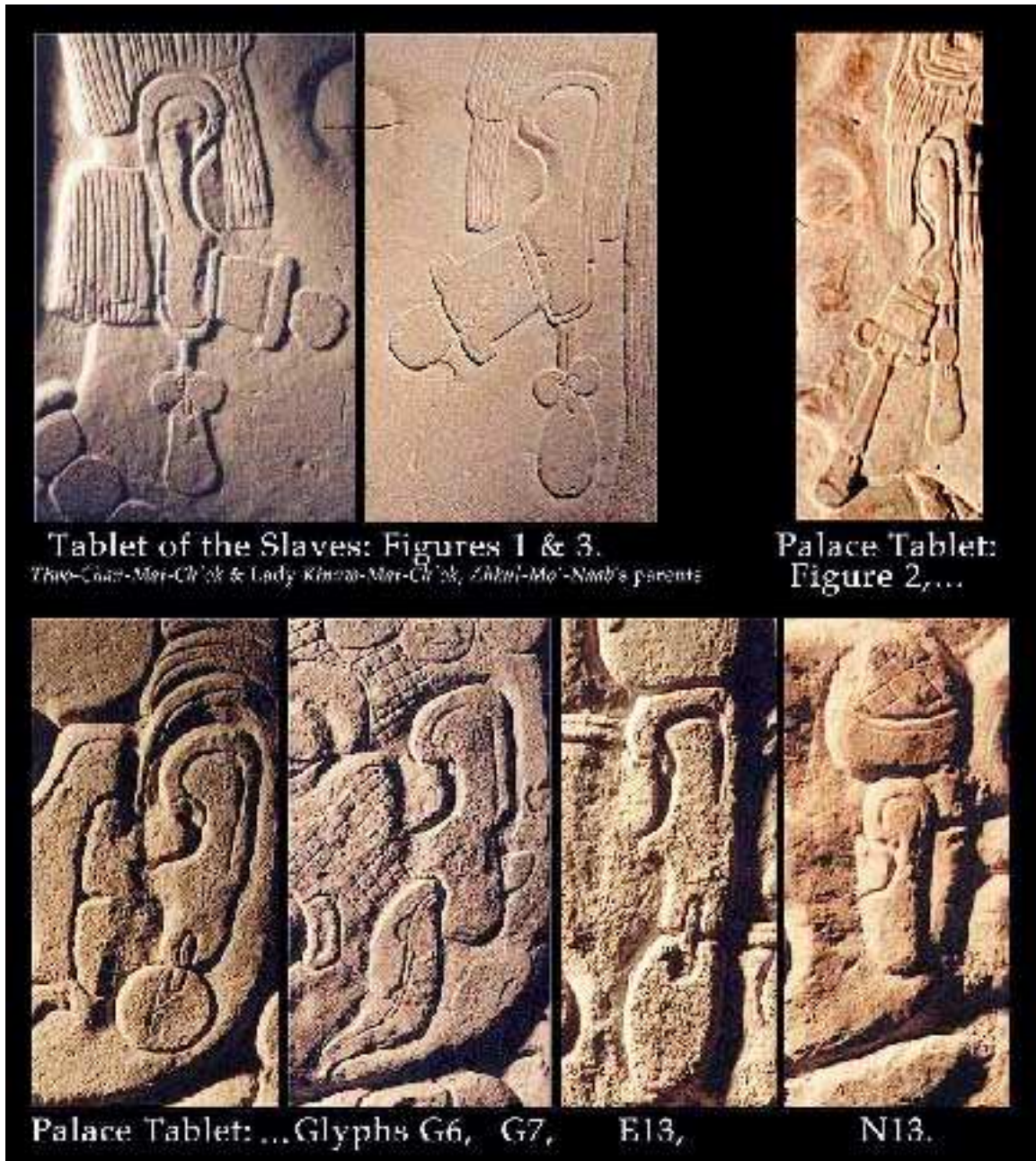


Fig. 2-05. Ears from two Palenque monuments, enlarged. Photos by author.

One of Morelli's favorite shibboleths for distinguishing Renaissance painters was the ear. Each of his artists treated ears in a quite distinctive way. The dangers of following Morelli's procedures too slavishly become obvious when one looks at the ears of Palenque figures. Apparently, some master teacher in their equivalent of a sculpture academy defined a very specific method for indicating ears, because most of the artists I examine here carved ears with the same precise conventions. They are virtually interchangeable. The sublime carvings of the

parents of Ahkal-Mo'-Naab on the *Tablet of the Slaves* provides us with a superlative example of the ideal (Figs. 2-04, first three, and 2-05, first two). The Palenque artists defined little of the complex interior geography of the ear. Its outline, and the upper part of the *helix* (the ridge along the outer edge of the *auricle* or *pinna*, the 'wing' of the ear), plus the *tragus* (the raised bit of cartilage that protects the auditory canal) were enough⁵⁸; the result is abstracted, just like a glyph. They lavished much more attention on the jewelry hanging *from* the ear, and the haircut around it; no doubt because these items carried much more potent significance—and could be changed to suit one's purpose— than the ear itself.

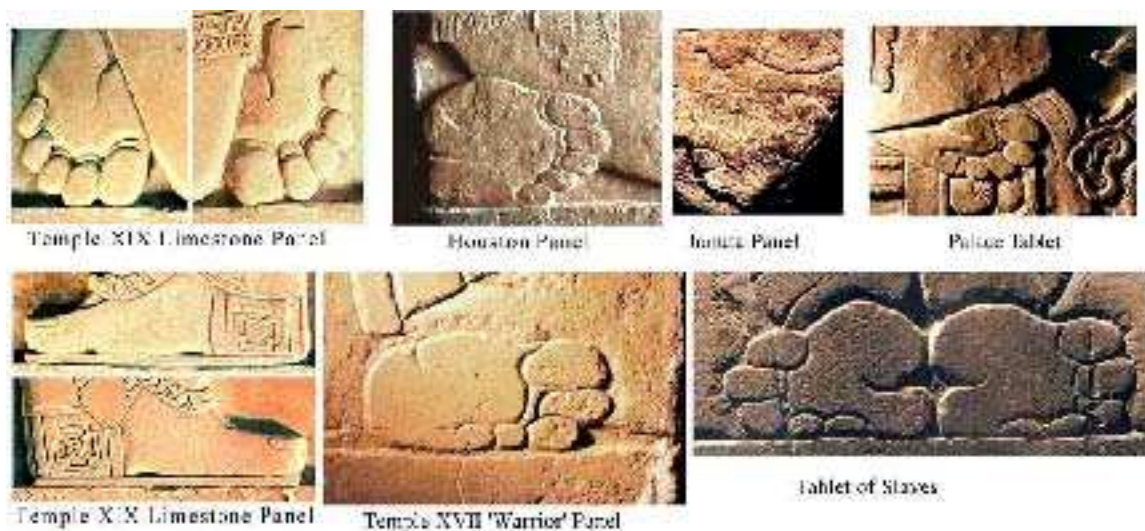


Fig. 2-06. Feet from various Palenque monuments. Photos by author.

The “Palenque Style Manual” must also have included an idealized foot, since the delightfully lively toes we see on Palenque’s royal denizens (and their guests) display specific conventions: for example, the double wrinkles between the ball of the foot and the carefully-shaped toe-pads. However, we find a greater range of forms among these nobles’ toes than among their ears.

⁵⁸ In a couple cases, such as on the *T. Slaves* Father's portrait here (x2-10a, first example), sculptors also made a rudimentary excavation to indicate the *fossa* of the *anti-helix*. These anatomical terms come from *Gray's Anatomy*, 1901 ed., reprinted by Crown, New York, 1977, pp. 849-851.

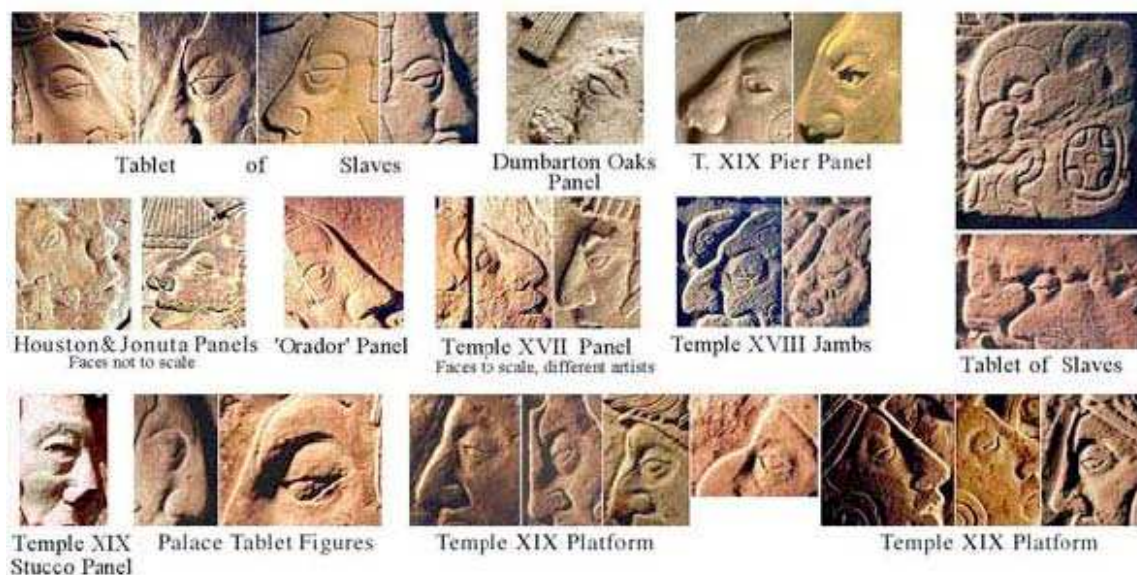


Fig. 2-07. Eyes from various Palenque monuments. (See also Fig. 1-96. Photos by author.)

Likewise for eyes. Palenque artists sculpted eyes bulging naturalistically within a distinctly concave eye-socket. Here the conventional standard allowed some individuality (perhaps responding to the needs of portrait accuracy), especially in the shape of the eyelids themselves, and form of the pupil.



Fig. 2-08. Profiles, and especially mouths, from three Palenque monuments. (See also Fig. 1-96.)

Although there must have been some specific conventions regarding mouths, artists here seemed to have allowed themselves personal techniques in their rendering. Perhaps again this results from the urge toward a veristic portrait, but the specific way some artists indicate, for instance, the edge of a lip varies distinctly. One artist will define a groove separating the facial skin from lip skin, another will blur the boundary, a third will define it sharply with a distinct “curb” or “shelf.” A particularly good example of this is the lips of Lady Kinuw-Mat-Ch'ok on the *Tablet of the Slaves* (enlarged in lower right corner).

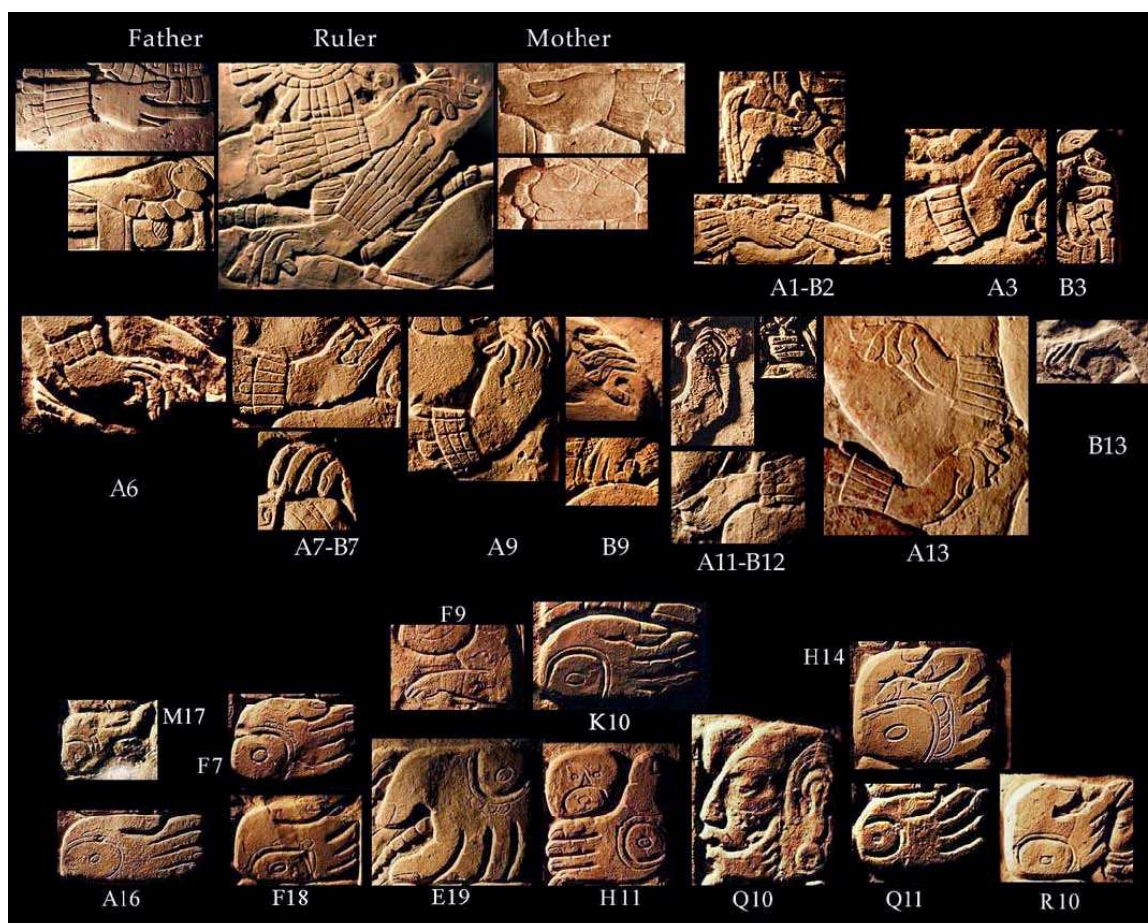


Fig. 2-09a. Palace Tablet, Hands carved on Figures (upper), and on glyphs (lower). (See also Fig. 1-50, west end, Temple XIX Platform.) Photos by author.



Fig. 2-09b. Hands carved on Temple XIX Platform and Tablet of the Slaves. (See also Fig. 1-50, west end, Temple XIX Platform.) Photos of Figures in upper half by Jorge Perez de Lara; photos of glyphs and of the Tablet of the Slaves by author. Enhancements by author.

Interestingly, sculpted hands sometimes display striking variety in form and quality. Hands' conventions must have been as carefully defined as those of feet; probably more so, since hand gestures apparently conveyed an important iconographic layer of meaning which is only lately becoming apparent to us.⁵⁹ In particular, the hands of the figures on the west end of the Temple XIX Platform are exceptionally clumsy. This may simply result from the same impediments faced by realistic artists everywhere —hands are difficult to draw well— but such a disparaging explanation ought to be used as a last resort.

⁵⁹ See Ancona-Ha, Patricia, Perez de Lara, Jorge, and Van Stone, Mark, "Some Observations on Hand Gestures in Maya Art," in Kerr, Justin and Barbara, eds., *The Maya Vase Book*, vol. 6, pp. 1072 – 1089, New York, 2000.



Fig. 2-10. God GI (Jun-ye-Nal Chaak[?]) from *Palenque Palace Tablet*. The first example consists of adjacent glyphs carved by the same Hand. The second example, whose two sequential glyphs are separated by several feet on the Tablet, were carved by a second and third Hand respectively. Note that although these two spellings render the god's name with precisely the same glyphs, their Artists have chosen different conventions for shaping every detail. Photographs by author.

Perhaps we see greater individuality in the treatment of hands precisely *because* they were more conventionalized (as conveyors of gestural meaning) than realistic. I say this because I have found the most productive area for distinguishing individual artists in Palenque is in — most conventionalized of all— their hieroglyphs. Hieroglyphic signs are often little pictures, subject to the same rules of composition and construction as human figures. Like their counterparts in China and ancient Egypt, Maya artists employed the same tools and line conventions in both writing and figure drawing. But a Maya calligrapher has a vocabulary list of only about 800 signs, many of which he or she may draw dozens, scores of times daily. Within the relatively strict conventions imposed by the demands of legibility, Maya scribes were free to develop and express peculiar habits; indeed, they seem to have been encouraged to do so. Evidence for this can be found, for instance, in the highly-varied renderings of names of Copan rulers, particularly Yax-Pasaj-Chan-Yo(p)aat (“New-Dawn-Sky-Penis”)

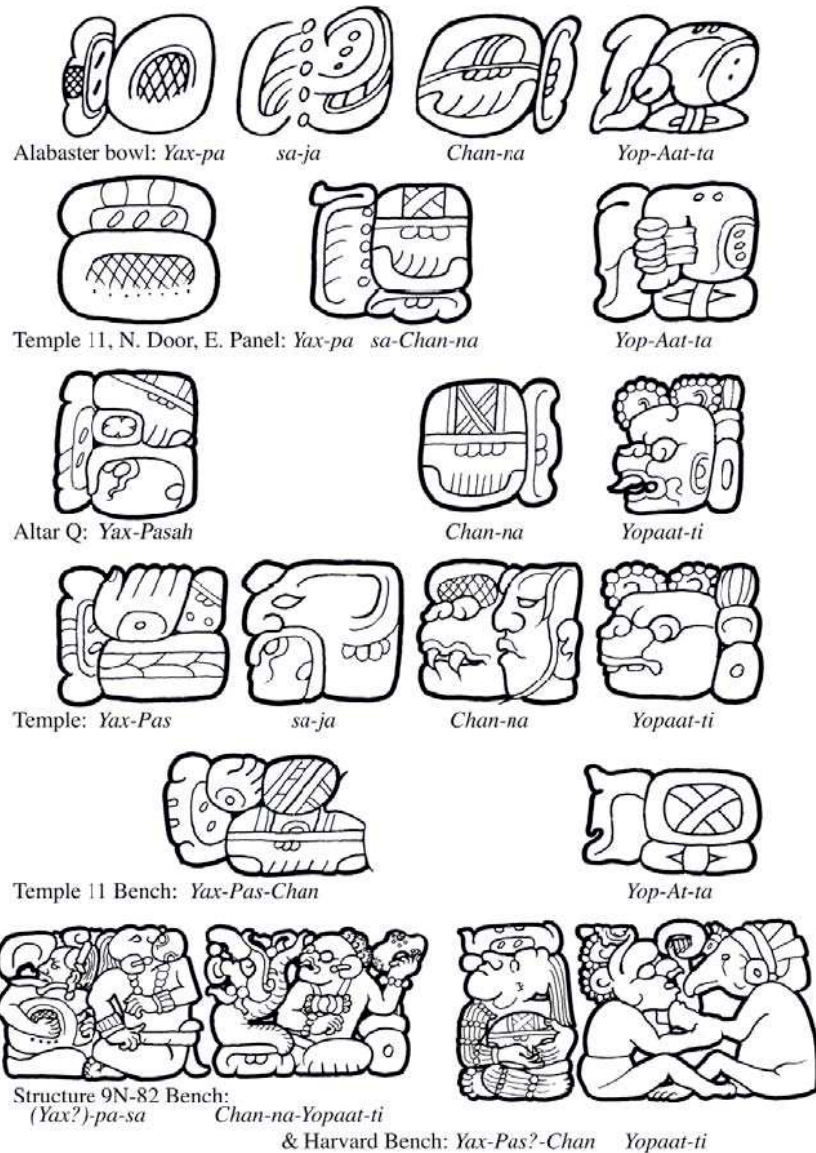


Fig. 2-11. Varied Spellings of name of Copan lord Yax-Pasah-Chan-Yopaat.

Maya scribes often substituted various allographs for each sound and word each time they wrote important phrases such as royal titles. These substitutions have been a valuable tool for epigraphers. (Coe & Van Stone 2001, p. 83). Drawings by author.

or in the deliberate alternation of different forms of common glyphs, as seen in [Fig. 1-09](#), on Palenque's *Temple XIX Platform*.

An average Oriental calligrapher was expected to be able to dash off at a moment's notice a passable imitation of the styles of any one of several past masters. Indeed, the highest accolade is still accorded to a calligrapher able to brush a recognizable copy of a particular masterpiece, closely faithful to the personal style of the master, while still imbuing it with a personal and

recognizable style all his/her own. Apparently a similar level of aesthetic sensitivity and esteem for individual style obtained among ancient Maya connoisseurs. In the finest expositions of Maya calligraphy, scribes toy with spelling and calligraphic forms, exaggerating superficial features, pushing conventions of legibility, showing off their cleverness, sometimes inventing new glyphs or expressions. The insanely complex full-figure glyphs of Quirigua come to mind, as do the poetic renderings of the *u-tz'ak-aj* collocations in the *Panel of 96 Glyphs* at Palenque.⁶⁰

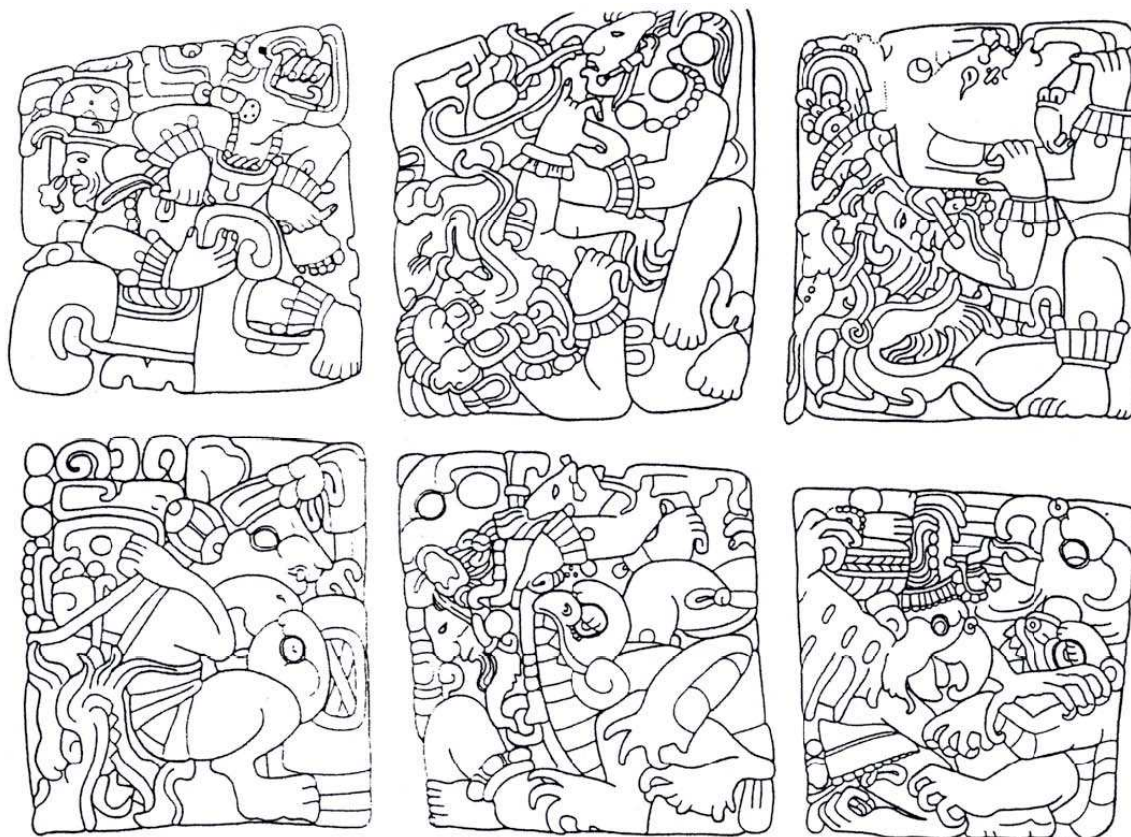


Fig. 2-12. Part of Full-Figure Inscription on Quirigua Monument 2 (Zoomorph P). Drawing by Matt Looper.

⁶⁰ On both the *Temple XIX Platform* (at T4) and the *Panel of the 96 Glyphs*, the verb *u-Tz'ak-aj*, "it changed," was spelled "poetically" thus: the *Tz'ak* root verb replaced by a variable pair of contrasted ideas: "night-day," "wind-water," "green-yellow," "star-moon." The North Gallery Panels of the Palace which accompanied the *Palace Tablet* also did so (See my Figs. 1-80, 1-82).



Fig. 2-13. *u-Tz'ak-aj* from *Panel of 96 Glyphs*. See also Fig. 1-82, top row, for examples of this practice in earlier Palenque monuments. Photographs by Author.

The origins of Maya writing are highly obscure and full of lacunae. Though the consistent use of “full-figure” glyphs came late, a few of the earliest Maya and proto-Maya inscriptions consist almost entirely of “head-variant” glyphs, for example the Protoclassic inscribed bone slip from Kichpanha, the Proto- or Early-Classic Kendal Earflare, and one or more Late Preclassic inscriptions at Takalik Abaj. But these are the exceptions. The earliest known Maya texts display much the same proportion of ‘abstract’ to ‘head’ glyphs as do later inscriptions. The protoclassic *Kaminaljuyu Stela 10*, for instance, has 40 glyph-blocks in the well-preserved part of its text. Of these, no more than nine or ten are “head” glyphs. Much of the catalogue of “head-variant” glyphs seem largely to have developed *later* than simpler, more abstract forms, presumably as a kind of creative one-upmanship game played between scribes.⁶¹

⁶¹ Nikolai Grube’s doctoral dissertation, *Die Entwicklung der Mayaschrift: Grundlagen zur Erforschung des Wandels der Mayaschrift von der Protoklassik bis zur spanischen Eroberung*. *Acta Mesoamericana*, 3, Universität Hamburg/Verlag von Flemming, Berlin, documents the earliest and latest appearance in the monumental record of every glyph in the sign-list. This important paleographical analysis shows that until about 9.4.0.0.0 (ca. AD 500), the Maya glyphic sign-list was quite limited and conventional —most signs had only one form; “synonymical” or substitute glyphs simply did not exist. After 9.4.0.0.0, scribes invented an increasing list of alternate forms, with the sign-list reaching its maximum size around 9.17.0.0.0 (end of the 8th century AD).

2.4. Maya Writing Technique and its Relevance to Form

2.4.1. European Writing Technique



Fig. 2-14. Three painted glyphs from ceramic vessels, which reveal the order and direction of brush-strokes. From, respectively, vessels of Codex Style (Nakbé), Naranjo, and the so-called *Ik'* Site. (Coe and Kerr 1997, Pls. 114, 105, and 28). Photos by Justin Kerr.

Michael Coe has masterfully analyzed the technique employed by Maya scribes when wielding their brush-pens.⁶² My own analysis of stroke-order and stroke-direction, evidence for which is left in calligraphic texts on ceramic vessels, in codices, on painted capstones, and on plastered walls, supports the first part of his analysis completely: “...(T)he basic stroke to produce the sign-form begins at the upper right, curved angle of the sign, or just left of this point, then continues left and down to the lower left angle; from there it either continues, or begins as a new stroke, in a rightwards direction to (the) curve on the lower right (corner),...” A number of Maya scribes,⁶³ but by no means all, completed this main outline as he describes it: “...then up to where it started; however, complete closure of the final with the initial stroke is sometimes not carried out, and a gap is left on the upper right of the sign-form.” I should modify his instructions to say that the final stroke on the right is more often executed from top to bottom, and it also often continued around the lower right angle towards the left to overlap the stroke on the bottom. Thus, the scribe drew his rounded-boxy “sign-forms” (which constitute the foundation of virtually every glyphic element) rather like we would draw an asymmetrical pair of parentheses. The left “parenthesis” is often wider, enclosing a shape more like a squarish letter C, while the right might precisely mirror this form, overlapping it on top and bottom,

⁶² Coe, Michael D., & Kerr, Justin, *The Art of the Maya Scribe*, London & New York, 1997, pp. 154ff.

though it was usually narrower, and occasionally fails to overlap at the top. Sometimes the calligrapher fails to overlap strokes at all, and leaves gaps at top *and* bottom.

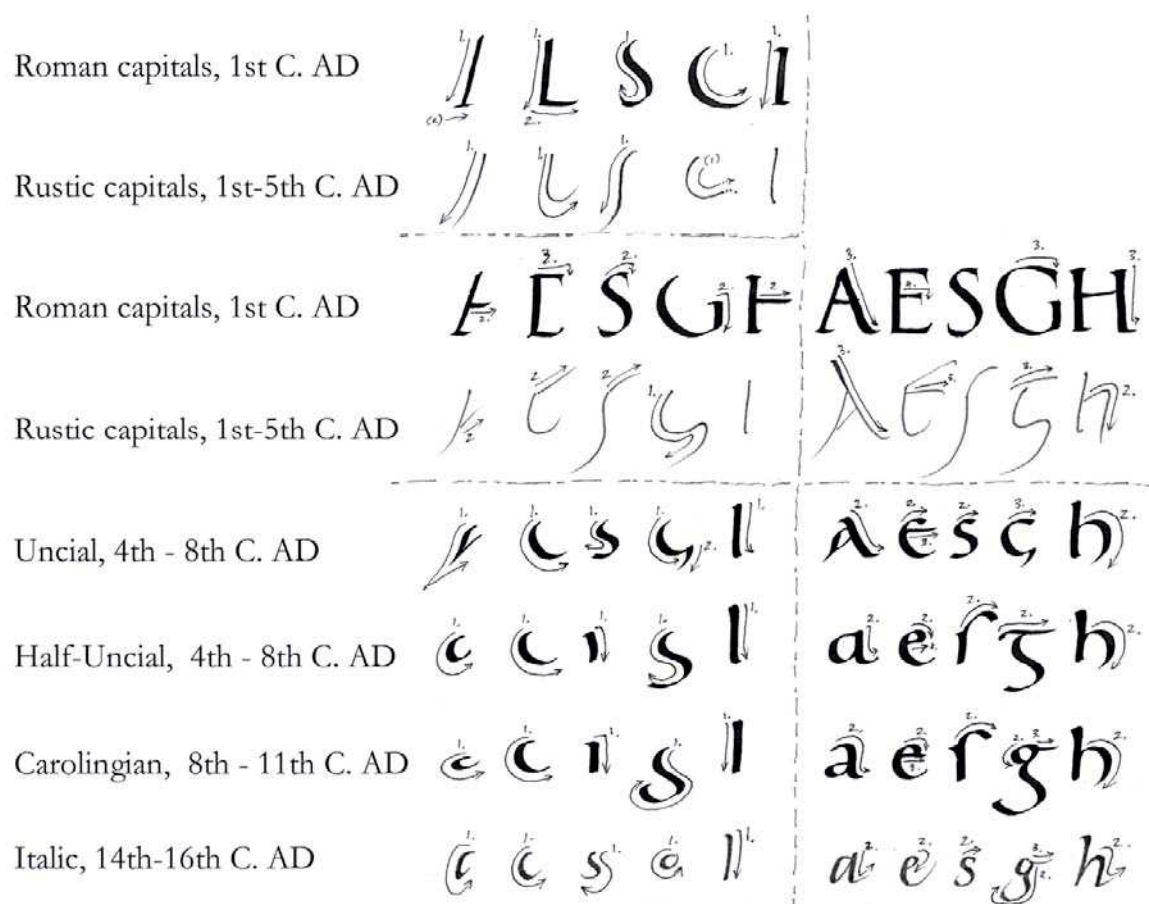


Fig.2-15. Stroke-direction for letter A, E, S, G, H through history. Each version of a letter's technique preserves the movements used to write the letter in previous incarnations. Calligraphy by author.

It is a principle of calligraphy in all nations that one of the virtual invariants of technique is stroke-order and direction. This “performance” component of a letter or character persists through changes of style, tool, medium, and language. Indeed, the form of a character, especially in the hands of an expert working at maximum efficiency, reaches an equilibrium which is completely responsive to technique, incorporating the physical tendencies of the tool and the muscles of the scribe, in harmony with the unquestioned habits which guide her or his hand.⁶⁴ Habits of stroke-order and direction are questioned about as rarely as one questions

⁶³ Maya who practiced Coe’s “one-long-stroke” outline technique seem often to have been scribes painting “Codex style” ceramics, who count some of the greatest virtuosos of Maya calligraphy among their number.

⁶⁴ In our own Latin alphabet, the lower-case letter **a**, for instance, was traditionally written loop first, then the arch from upper left, ending with the right vertical stroke and the little fillip of a tail at the lower right. This series of motions preserves within it the

whether day follows night. Students imitate their teachers' techniques; any challenges about efficiency, about alternative methods for accomplishing this or that, come up only at the very beginning, the initial point of transmission from teacher to student.⁶⁵

2.4.2 Scribal Self-Consciousness and its Expressions: Chinese, Muslim, and European Examples

A script and its practitioners undergo a sea-change when they reach a certain stage of self-consciousness. Though their primary motivations differed, secular Chinese calligraphers in the second century, religious Muslim scribes in the ninth century, and European scribes during the Renaissance all developed a habit of self-scrutiny and self-analysis which changed their focus and vastly expanded the creativity and variety of their work. A comparable and better-known self-consciousness overtook painters, sculptors, and other artists during the European Renaissance: a sense that artists were specially gifted, inspired, unique individuals.⁶⁶ The result of this attitude-shift on calligraphers' *œuvre* is dramatic and easily recognized: Unselfconscious Medieval and ancient scribes labored all their lives as a kind of typist, specializing in two or three hands at most. They may have been flamboyant and perhaps a bit self-aware, and brilliantly creative within the boundaries of their milieu, such as the virtuosity we see in the scribes of the *Book of Kells* (ca. 800 AD), but versatility was not their strong suit. The exceptionally broadly-educated scribes of Carolingian Tours were masters of five separate

order and direction of its Roman Capital ancestor: Down to the left (left side), across to right (cross stroke), and down to the right (right side). Virtually every incarnation of the letter **A** or **a**, written by every scribe in history (until recently) preserves this dance of the pen, down to left, across (and up) to right, the down to right. Every new style of script has been shaped by this technique; the lower-case **h** would look very different if the Capital **H** had been done any way other than its traditional left, middle, right; ditto for lower-case **a**, or **n**. Educational reformers like Palmer and Spencer, trying scientifically to improve the teaching of handwriting, ordered that teachers simplify or reverse the traditional stroke-technique of letters like **e** and **b**, breaking two thousand years of tradition.

⁶⁵ Sometimes changes in technique *do* happen. It must have been at such an early stage of transmission that some upstart Greeks decided that the right-to-left [retrograde] Phoenician writing order was less efficient than a left-to-right [orthograde] direction which Greek subsequently adopted. Precisely the same process reversed the direction of South Semitic script when it crossed the Red Sea and was adopted in Ethiopia. In both cases, the parent script continued to be written retrograde; its direction was too well-established to be overthrown. Orthograde writing has a distinct advantage over retrograde: right-handers outnumber left-handers ten to one in virtually every population, and in a retrograde script the comfortably-held writing hand covers each character almost as soon as it is written. This not only risks smearing the ink, but interrupts the eye-hand feedback necessary to control even texture. For this reason, right-handed retrograde scribes—those who write Phoenician, Arabic and Hebrew—had to develop awkward or contrived hand positions, much like those adopted by left-handers in our culture. (Please note that, though the reading and writing direction of Hebrew *letters* is right-to-left, a Hebrew scribe writes each *stroke* from left-to-right, precisely as would an orthograde scribe. This is also true of Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Arabic. This allows the stroke to be seen as it is being made, a virtual necessity for eye-hand coordination.) These hand techniques, designed to get the hand from blocking the view of the scribe, while definitely learnable, are less comfortable and initially less efficient than those which we intuitively, instinctively adopt while writing. Consider Chinese, whose retrograde columns, written in ink which often stays damp for the better part of a minute, forces its scribes to lift their hand completely off the paper for the entire time they write. Any Westerner who has taken Chinese calligraphy lessons will recall vividly the agony of adjusting one's aching muscles to that most 'unnatural' position.

⁶⁶ This popularized attitude has prevailed to the present day, exploited by curators, writers, gallery directors, and the artists themselves to the advantage of their bank accounts.

hands, which they used in a strict hierarchy, but they were an extraordinary and short-lived exception.⁶⁷ By contrast, Renaissance Humanist calligraphers might boast that they were experts at a dozen scripts, or a hundred.⁶⁸

The Medieval European scribe was also slave to his or her text: their product was always economically written on both sides of the page, and generally each volume would contain a single continuous work, or series of works, ordered by the abbot or other customer. By contrast, the self-conscious scribe of the 16th century and later chose his or her own text, often short pithy quotes whose only function was to showcase the scribe's bravura skill. Often among these quotations would be one or more of the abecedarian or "quick brown fox" sort, a common scribal exercise contrived to include every letter of the alphabet. A single short volume would often contain works in a variety of styles and layouts, and be written on one side of the page only.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ See Rand, Edward Kennard (1871-1945), *A Survey of the Manuscripts of Tours*. Cambridge, Mass., Mediaeval Academy of America, 1929. These scribes, as reformed under Alcuin, Charlemagne's minister of education, employed their five scripts in a strict hierarchy: 1. Roman Square Capital (revived from Roman imperial carved monumental lettering of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD) was used for the large initial letters beginning books and chapters. 2. Late Uncial (based on 6th-century Italian luxury manuscripts, usually Christian) usually stood as a transition between the large Capital initials and the small Minuscule of the main texts. Uncial, written with a larger pen than the minuscules, also emphasized minor initials throughout the text, beginning verses or sentences, much as we use Capital letters today. 3. Carolingian Minuscule (the direct ancestor of our modern lower-case letters), a stately-but-simple script modified from a local bookhand of nearby Corbie, formed the bulk of the text, precisely as we use lower-case type. 4. They employed "Tours Half Uncial," a more stately version of the local minuscule, with distinct forms for three letters, for prefatory texts. It was never easily distinguished from the Tours Carolingian Minuscule, and died out within a generation. 5. They wrote Roman Rustic Capital (revived from 4th - and 5th-century Late Antique manuscripts, usually pagan) with the same pen as their Minuscule bookhand, and used it for running titles across the tops of pages. Sometimes Rustic also appeared in rubric texts ("Here ends Chapter 2, and begins Chapter 3"), and later became the standard letterform for rapid initial letters. This hierarchy of scripts, which combined a "modern" bookhand with a venerable predecessor playing a ceremonial role in initials and titles, evolved into our modern "duplex" alphabet, which combines Imperial Roman Capitals and Carolingian Minuscules into a single script design. Even at Tours, scribes who practiced no more than two or three hands became the rule again in less than a century.

⁶⁸ At the beginning of the 16th century, German calligrapher Leonhard Wagner wrote *Proba Centum Scripturarum*, displaying his virtuosity in writing a hundred variants of Gothic and Renaissance scripts current in his day (published in facsimile: Wagner, Leonhard (1454-1522), *Proba centum scripturarum; ein Augsburger Schriftmusterbuch aus dem Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts*. Faksimile-Ausg. mit einem Begleittext von Carl Wehmer. Leipzig, Insel-Verlag, 1963.).

⁶⁹ Italian calligrapher Bennardino Cataneo, in 1545, wrote a series of poems and quotations in a showpiece manuscript now in the Houghton Library of Harvard University (see facsimile: Harvard 1981). In 1561-2 Georg Bockskay, Imperial Secretary for the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I Hapsburg, displayed his extraordinary calligraphic virtuosity in *Mira calligraphiae monumenta*, now in the Getty Museum (see their facsimile: Hendrix, Lee, and Vignau-Willberg, Thea, eds., *Mira calligraphiae monumenta, a Sixteenth-Century Manuscript Inscribed by Georg Bockskay and Illuminated by Joris Hofnaegel*, The Getty Museum, Malibu, 1992). In both the latter manuscripts, each scribe chose the whitest, finest vellum available, and wrote on one side of the page only, so as not to muddy the impact of each of his masterpieces with the ghost of a show-through from the other side. In both of these, the texts themselves were a collection of brief quotations, obviously selected merely as vehicles for brilliant calligraphic display. This is particularly apparent in the gilt running text along the bottom of the pages of the Cataneo: a contrived sentence, perhaps a mere list of words, each beginning with a successive letter of the alphabet, the better to exercise and display the calligrapher's mastery of each letter.



Fig. 2-16. *Cataneo Copy-Book*, folio 2v. Written by Bennardino Cataneo of Siena, 1545. Photo by Stephen Harvard (Harvard 1981, f. 2v), enhanced by author.

Precisely the same sort of calligraphic showpieces began to appear in China at the end of the Han Dynasty.⁷⁰ Likewise, in eighth-century Kufa and Medina, and especially in ‘Abbasid Baghdad during the next century, Muslim calligraphers established standardized methods of constructing “perfect” letterforms, designed the “Six Cursives,” and wrote copiously on the topic of the nobility of Calligraphy and its practitioners. This from a nomadic, oral culture who were largely illiterate before the *Qur’an* appeared. This shift in attitude can be attributed to the *Qur’an* itself which extols the virtues of writing *from its second sentence on*. Another hallmark of this sea-change of self-awareness is the identification of individual artists, the better to praise them. Calligraphers in these three cultures signed their work; their “unselfconscious” predecessors did not. As far as art-history is concerned, their self-awareness brought them to our attention. They thought, therefore they came to be.

⁷⁰ In the eyes of Chinese scholars, the traditional watershed event was the creation of the first “Stone Forest” copy of the entire corpus of Chinese Classic literature onto limestone stelae, in AD 177-184, masterminded by Ts’ai Yung, an official in the Imperial Court. He set up a massive training academy, in order to develop the calligraphic skills in a large pool of artisans to accomplish this ambitious undertaking. The nobility of this enterprise demanded a noble calligraphy, and a conscious effort to copy this noble standard with accuracy. In the centuries immediately following this event, calligraphers began exhibiting the self-consciousness symptoms described above: mastery of dozens of styles, the production of revered masterpieces whose textual content was relatively inconsequential, contrived, and so forth; instruction manuals extolling the virtues of various exotic types of brushes, made from mouse-hairs, wolf-tail, Mongolian marten shot in the spring, etc.; even the production of calligraphic masterpieces designed specifically to be cut into blocks of stone so students could make rubbings therefrom to take home as exemplars. See Chen Chih-Mai, *Chinese Calligraphers and their Art*, p. 40 f.

2.4.3 Maya Scribal Self-Consciousness and its Expressions

The Maya also express this dawning of self-awareness during that efflorescence which marks for us the beginning of their Late Classic period. At the height of the Early Classic, they slowly began displaying their virtuosity and creativity by inventing new spellings, new glyphs and variant forms of established glyphs around 9.4.0.0.0 (ca. AD 500). But it was not until around 9.10.0.0.0 or 9.11.0.0.0 (ca. 650) that they began signing their work, first on pottery (Tepeu / Ik phases in Waxaktun and Tik'al respectively⁷¹), later on monuments (e.g., [Figs. 1-60](#) and [1-61](#). *El Peru Stela 34*, dated 9.12.10.0.0 / 682). Soon after, they also established a hierarchy of scripts: full-figure, head-variants, and "ordinary" glyphs. As mentioned above, "head variant" calendrical glyphs appear from earliest times (e. g. the dates on the *Leiden Plaque* and *Tikal St. 29*), but "full figure" glyphs are extremely rare before Palenque's *Palace Tablet* (9.14.8.14.15 / AD 720). Maya painted vases (those illustrating Court life nearly all date from the Late Classic) regularly portray scribes as nobles, as successful courtiers, as masters of ceremonies, always present at (and perhaps organizing) royal events.

Classic Maya scribes apparently enjoyed some freedom to improvise with their religious stories. We know precious little of the Maya mythic literature which inspired their abundant vase-painting, a point driven home when Robicsek and Hales first collated their initial corpus of Codex-style vases.⁷² However, the most accomplished vase-painters and their patrons appear sometimes to exhibit a kind of sophisticated irreverence. The substitution of animals or unexpected characters into the main roles in popular scenes suggests the existence of satirical or comic literature.⁷³ This sophistication in our own day may be seen in stories like John Gardner's novel *Grendel*, which recasts the *Beowulf* epic sympathetic to the monster's point of view, or to Tom Stoppard's play, *Rosencratz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, played by two minor characters in *Hamlet*. Or it might be compared to the European fashion in 18th and 19th century portraiture, of casting the subject as a figure in Greek mythology —Lady So-and-so as Diana a-hunting, for

⁷¹ See Stuart, David, *The Maya Artist, an Epigraphic and Iconographic Study*, Submitted to the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts, Princeton, N. J., 1989 (Unpublished), p. 37.

⁷² As mentioned above, n. 20, Robicsek, Francis, & Hales, Donald, *The Maya Book of the Dead – The Ceramic Codex* (Charlottesville, 1981). Justin Kerr, the photographer whose pioneering work made the book possible, has added considerably to his corpus of photographs in the past decades. Many of these photographs can be viewed at his unparalleled Internet database: <http://famsi.saiph.com:9500/dataSpark/maya> or <http://www.famsi.org/mayavase/>.

⁷³ Linda Schele, private communication, 1997

instance. Whatever the precise meaning of these variations-on-a-theme, they suggest a rich aesthetic life at the Maya courts, one in which educated scribes played a leading part.

We unfortunately possess no teaching manuals, no literature whatever concerning attitudes toward courtiers or craftsmen, from this period, but enough hints survive in ancient images and in ethnographic survivals to give us an idea. Professor Coe, in *The Art of the Maya Scribe*, and Dorie Reents-Budet, Barbara MacLeod, et al., in *Painting the Maya Universe* collected the most salient of these, and my summary here is mostly thanks to their research.⁷⁴

2.5. Criteria for Distinguishing/Identifying Maya Hands

2.5.1. Identifying Distinctive Characteristics of a Maya Artist Despite Deliberate Variation: *Panel of the 96 Glyphs* group (See [Figs. 1-21](#) through [1-25](#).)

As an example of the kind of variation expected in the work of a single artist, we turn to the famed *Panel of the 96 Glyphs* and its relatives. The *Panel of the 96 Glyphs* is almost certainly the work of one very distinctive artist.⁷⁵ A few inscribed slabs found in its vicinity appear also to have sprung from the same hand. In fact, all the surviving work of this powerful personality (six pieces) may have come from a single ensemble, an inscribed throne, which stood on the north side of the Tower. The *96 Glyphs* constituted the seat, while its two legs (one in the Palenque *bodega*, one now in San Diego California's Museum of Man) carry mirror images of a baroque-drawn, engraved head of Chaak. The *Lapida de la Creación* is the throne's back-support, while two separated fragments (an inscribed edge of a slab, found on the steps of the Palace outside the Court of the Tower⁷⁶), may have been part of the ensemble, or may constitute bits of another monument. This throne is dated 783, and is the penultimate dated inscription found so far at Palenque.⁷⁷

When making a claim that a certain group of objects were made by the same artist, a scholar relies foremost on a gut feeling. This instinct is as difficult to articulate as the diagnostic

⁷⁴ Coe, Michael, *Op. cit.: The Art of the Maya Scribe* (New York and London, 1995), Reents-Budet, Dorie, et al., *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*, (Durham, NC, & London, 1994), *passim*.

⁷⁵ Linda Schele, who executed the definitive drawing of this demanding calligraphic inscription, frequently asserted (usually in class) that she believed it to have been both written out and carved by the same person. The source of this hunch appears to have been that the carving appeared to be unusually faithful to the assertive calligraphic qualities of the layout. In any case, some other scholars (personal communication) defer to her judgement, noting the very distinctive style of this artist, and accept that the whole panel was carved by the same artist.

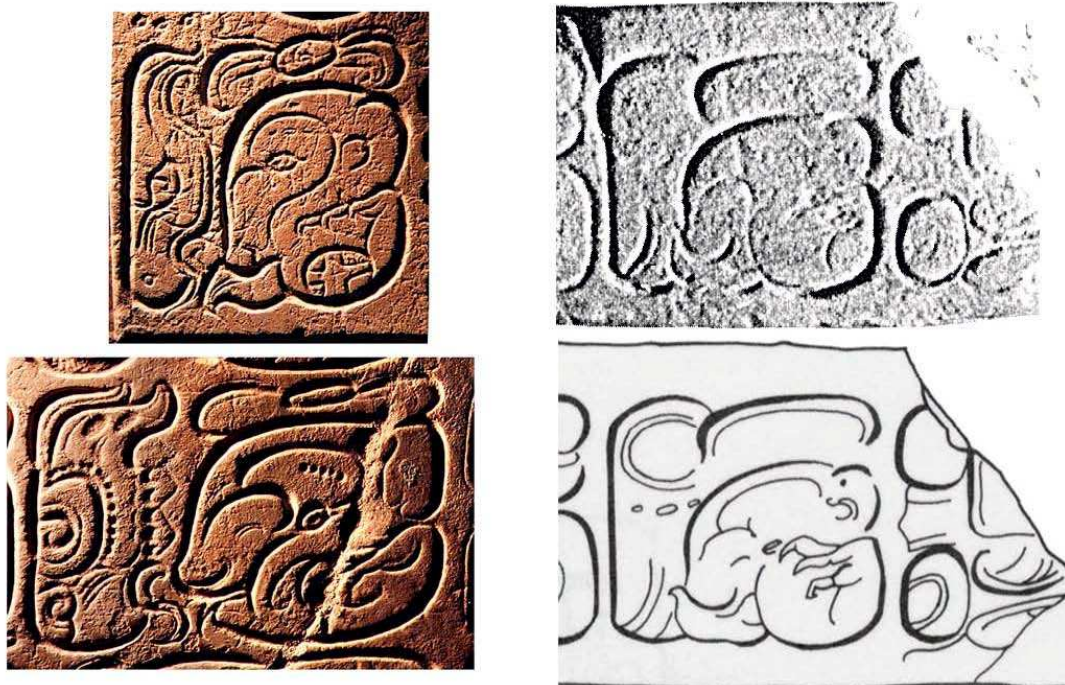
⁷⁶ One fragment resides in the Palenque Bodega. The other, which retains some of its original red coloring, is in the municipal museum of nearby Villahermosa.

⁷⁷ The final known inscription, a small ceramic vessel, is dated 799. Very soon thereafter the city was abandoned to the jungle.

characteristics by which one recognizes a friend or piece of music. And so it is with the *Panel of the 96 Glyphs* group. One is struck by the boldly modulated outlines of faces and profiles, which appear almost nowhere else with such dramatic swellings and abrupt turns ([Fig. 2-17](#)). Also the abundant, exuberant “whiplash” lines, which bespeak a joy in the artist’s brushstroke as it dances this way and that in a baroque exuberance (See [Fig. 1-25](#)). These two characteristics can be found everywhere on the ensemble, and in almost no other carved inscription. (The closest parallel [less dramatic but somewhat more detailed] appears half a century earlier on the *Temple XIX Platform*. Some high-quality painted ceramics, notably of ‘Codex Style’ and ‘Altar Vase Style,’ combine the same tendencies, affirming their calligraphic origin.) This artist also indulges in fine delicate details and energetic *ni* and *ya* suffixes, tightly-curved and wickedly talon-sharp (See [Figs. 1-21](#) & [1-24](#), especially the *ya* glyphs). This artist has a hundred distinctive habits, and also indulged in a lively variety of form and detail.



Fig. 2-17. *Ni* suffixes of the 96 Glyphs Master: *Tuun* Seat of Chaak on *Lapida de la Creación*, "Carved *K'an-Tuun-ni*" glyph L4, & *Tuun-ni* emblem in Chaak's forehead on *Throne Leg*. Photos by author.



Lapida de la Creación,
96 Glyphs
photos: M. Van Stone

PAL Bodega fragment
Reproduced from
Schele & Mathews, 1979

Fig. 2-18. Three 'ba' gophers' from three different objects carved by the Master of the 96 Glyphs.

Note, for instance, his or her charming *ba* 'gopher' ([Fig. 2-18](#)). In two of our three examples (from three different objects), this Master neglects what is elsewhere an essential detail: the '*K'an* Cross' which normally occupies the cheek of the 'rodent.' In all three, the artist uniquely delineates a raised paw, held tightly against the 'cheek' (reminiscent of the raised 'axe' of Chaak in the *Kalom-te'* title). This detail never appears anywhere else in the entire Maya corpus, to my knowledge. No-one doubts that this is a personal idiosyncrasy of this artist, yet the three renderings of the 'rodent head,' for all their similarities in "flavor," appear to differ markedly from one another, e. g., in their eye-position and rendering of their 'paws.' Of course, they differ in size: the postage-stamp glyphs of the Bodega fragment and *Lapida de la Creación* (about 3 cm x 3 cm, roughly an inch square) versus the 12 cm x 8 cm glyph-blocks on the *96-Glyphs*, (more the size of a postcard). They also differ in aspect ratio; the larger glyphs are remarkably wide compared to their height; the smaller, nearly square. Yet, one can see that this artist writes the ten or twelve major strokes that comprise this 'rodent head' —five for the outline, two or three for the face, a ninth to define the ear and two more to define the tongue— with practiced

consistency. There is a one-to-one correspondence between every one of these strokes, whether in a tight or expansive format. The greatest inconsistency we can find between these three examples is in the above-noted presence or absence of the ‘*K’an* cross,’ the position of the eye, and the size of the tongue.

The form of the ‘fish’ *u*-prefix (appearing on two of our examples) is another matter. Hardly a stroke corresponds between them. The larger example is much wider and more richly detailed of the two. The carver has even “decorated” the bold left outline of the larger *u*, (the ‘fish’s ‘back’), indicating its calligraphic layout had been broken into three separate strokes.⁷⁸ Their ‘nostrils’ differ, as do the ‘teeth,’ their ‘eyes,’ their ‘tails.’ Yet these two glyphs show a distinct family affinity: their S-shaped ‘fang’ and the smaller segment of ‘tailfin’ echo each other’s shape and have the same expressive verve and needle-sharp end. Every bold stroke in this syllable has the same expert modulation from thin to thick to thin again, the same assured serpentine slalom across the stone.



Fig. 2-19. *u-Kab-ji-ya* “agency” collocation on the *Tablet of the 96 Glyphs* and the *Creación Panel*, respectively.

The head-variant of *ji* appears rarely, but more often at Palenque than elsewhere. Usually, as here, it conflates with the distinctive ‘map’-like markings of *Kab* in the *u-Kab-ji-ya* “agency” collocation. We find two examples by this artist, on the *96 Glyphs* and the *Creación* (Fig. 2-19.). They differ markedly in some details (position of the ‘*Kab*-marks’ and again, ‘eye’-placement), but, as with the *Bah* ‘gopher,’ the main strokes exhibit a striking one-to-one correspondence of placement, form, and expert execution (and similarity of profile to the *Bah* ‘head’ itself). Their peculiar ‘rabbit ears,’ for instance (not seen on *Bahs* elsewhere), join to the ‘head’ in a recurve

⁷⁸ The breaks in this outline correspond, I suspect intentionally, with the ‘fish’s eye. The visual effect suggests indentations corresponding to the edges of the eye-socket.

like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. This characteristic joint appears frequently in this artist's work, particularly in 'skeletal jawbones' and the 'rabbit ears' attached to the Palenque Emblem Glyph (viz. next paragraph).



Fig. 2-20. *Tablet of the 96 Glyphs*: five 'skull'-type Emblem glyphs.

The five 'skull'-type Emblem glyphs⁷⁹ well express the artist's love of variation in little detail (Fig. 2-20). As a warning to Morellian analysts, scribes seem to have varied some of the simplest elements: the shape of the 'mandible' and its 'cracks,' the three dots on the 'forehead,' details of the *K'uh* antefix (different *spondylus* shells, and especially the dots of three different sizes: C7's are hollow circlets, F5's drilled, and H4's shallow flat-bottomed pits). One might expect these elements to be the usual Morellian hallmarks, the kind of detail an artist would dash off with habitual consistency. But our artist consciously altered them with every opportunity, and in the case of the final Emblem Glyph (I-7), drew quite a different 'skull' from the others (and *K'an* instead of a *spondylus* valve at the upper left). This 'skull' has a bulging forehead and simple orbital socket, echoing the form of three of its four preceding glyphs⁸⁰ (See Fig. 2-21). The second example of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab's name, which immediately preceded this Emblem Glyph,

⁷⁹ The Palenque Emblem Glyph consists of three elements:

- (1) Thompson's "water group" of dots plus a 'precious' element, in this case a bivalve shell (in four cases) (T36 - T40, all reading *K'uh*, "sacred," "god") and a '*K'an* cross':
- (2) Lounsbury's '*Ah-po'* superfix (Thompson's '*Ben-Ich* superfix,' T168 - T170, reading *Ajaw*, "lord");
- (3) Palenque's *Baak* (or *Baak-la*) Emblem, which in this case is always portrayed as an animal skull with a floppy 'rabbit ear' (T1045). In other inscriptions, the 'rabbit skull' has two rodent incisors; but our artist portrays them as a single hooked fang, indistinguishable from that of a serpent.



Palenque Panel of the 96 Glyphs - F4-E5, 16-16: K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab

Fig. 2-21. Tablet of the 96 Glyphs. K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab's name. The second example is immediately adjacent to the anomalous Emblem Glyph I7 in Fig. 2-20 above. Photos by author.

contains two of these beetle-browed glyphs. I suspect this glyph's divergence from the others is just a kind of formal convergence (where two vaguely similar forms evolve towards each other over time, here exacerbated by repetition of the neighboring glyphs), and its appearance here is a strong warning against the pitfalls of ordinary connoisseurship in this context. These Maya artists were self-conscious, and like today's self-conscious Western artists (and those in ancient China), they valued variety and strove to incorporate it into their work. A careful scrutiny of the formal elements of even this divergent glyph reveals the same characteristically bold and expert 'whiplash' lines, hooked fang, spotted 'ear,' etc., that appear so frequently elsewhere on this

⁸⁰ I suspected for a while that our artist allowed an apprentice write a few glyphs in this passage, including the EG (the spelling of Ahkal's name at I-6 just above is anomalous: *a-ku-la-la*, with an extra *la* indicated). The carving style is quite consistent, however, and upon close inspection, so seem to be many other details.

collection of monuments. It is also remotely possible that these slightly anomalous few glyphs are the work of a *very* apt pupil of the 96 Glyphs Master.



Fig. 2-22. *Tablet of the 96 Glyphs. Sak nu-ku Nah* "house event" collocation. Photos by author.

We have four examples of the name of the temple (*Sak Nuk Nah*) where ceremonies commemorated on this tablet were performed. The consistency between them is remarkable and comforting, compared to that of the five emblem glyphs ([Fig. 2-22](#)). The same four elements arrange themselves in precisely the same positions, with the *nu* superfixes identical in almost every detail, and the others nearly so. The differences between the *Sak* glyphs are trivial, but the simple decorative marks on the *na/Nah* postfix are strikingly varied. The diagonal double-bars vary only in width and thickness, but the two or three little crescents/ ovals/ dots correspond to each other only by dint of their graduated size. This variety seems almost indecisive, as if the artist were experimenting with a new idea, trying out this combination and that one, to see how each played. Indeed, the internal details of other examples of this common glyph, when present at all, never seem to take this form of dots (or whatever) of graduating size.

The variations present in the internal details of the *ku* glyph are harder to explain. The 'bunch of grapes' element depending from the 'arch' differ in size and shape; two of these sprout

wild 'hairs,' two do not, and so forth. It could be that this artist's mood changed (more than a scientific analyst should like) from hour to hour, day to day. I believe that these differences can be accounted for in the artist's simple variations from one instance to the next, but I say this with less conviction than usual. One thing these 'stone' signs have in common is their "sign-form" or outline: each one here, and in the multitude of other examples of 'stone' signs throughout this ensemble (whether reading **ku**, *Tuun-ni*, doubled in **pi**, or as part of many calendric glyphs, see [Fig. 1-04](#)), is distinctly indented about half way up the left side, where the overhanging 'arch' curls in to terminate to the left of the 'grapes.' The thickness and curvature of this arch is remarkably consistent.

One notes this consistent form of the 'stone' sign in [Fig. 2-17](#), of three other examples of *Tuun-ni* (including two iconic rather than glyphic), but our artist's unique personality shines more clearly in her/his unusual form of the **ni** suffix. Terminating in four or five big, drilled dots, the long sinuous strokes of this 'ponytail' consists usually of a very bold pair of outlines, bracketing some five or seven alternating thick and delicate parallel inlines. In most other inscriptions, the **ni** suffix is quite asymmetrical and made up of lines of equal weight, like the first of our examples, a glyphic-illustration/icon (i. e., not necessarily strictly a text) from the *Lapida de la Creación*.

The flavor, the artistic character I have been trying so hard to describe and define — from omnipresent themes such as the boldly modulated and dramatically-bent calligraphic 'whiplash' strokes and the 'ear-joints,' to specific characteristic glyphs like the **ba** 'gopher,' 'stone' signs, *Na(h)* and **ni** suffixes— is consistent throughout the six inscribed objects I have selected here. Even the way this artist consciously strives for variety in minor details —in wavy 'bone lines' of differing frequencies, in graduated rows of dots, crescents, etc. — fall into distinctive, recognizable patterns and categories. Ultimately, this artist has such a distinctive personality, has so many rare or unique habits, such extraordinary skill and graphic power, that his or her works are relatively easy to identify. The fact that s/he chose to honor the calligraphic layout by carving it precisely makes this identification all the easier; the direct strokes of the hand and brush are much more individualistic and inimitable —literally a signature— than the multiple movements inherent in scraping a three-dimensional relief in stone. It is partly because I believe that Maya carvers followed their own written layouts that I am able to undertake the main part of this project at all.

2.5.2. Tz'ak / DNIG Glyphs on the Palace Tablet by Different Artists: Six Elements or Aspects of Comparison

2.5.2.1. Introductory, "sign form"

In this dissertation we'll examine several monuments of the eighth century, and the conclusion will be that the *96 Glyphs* ensemble is, by dint of its single artist, the exception to a rule.⁸¹ All the other monuments I have examined were carved by a committee: at least four artists on the *Tablet of the Slaves*, and fourteen or more on the *Temple XIX Platform* and the *Palace Tablet*. I'll use examples from these latter two to establish criteria for assigning work to one or another artist, then test these criteria on other monuments.



Fig. 2-23 (=Fig. 1-91). Eight Tz'ak collocations, and a similar but different glyph, from the Palace Tablet.

We shall begin with the example cited above, in section 1.7.5. The relatively common *Distance Number Introductory Glyph (DNIG)* collocation is usually pretty consistent from example to example, consisting of one of a variety of *u*-prefixes, a **Tz'ak** "main sign," and a T12 – *Aj* suffix.⁸² (Fig. 2-23). This consistency, plus the relatively geometric form of its elements,

⁸¹ This may have something to do with the fact that the Palenque polity was on the verge of collapse. The *96 Glyphs*, carved in 783, is the last stone inscription we have from Palenque. About a *k'atun* later, the city was abandoned to the jungle. I suggest that the reason only one artist executed the whole *96 Glyphs* Throne was because the city's resources were by then so strained that it could support only one great artist. Even forty or fifty years earlier, in the time of *Ahkal-Mo'-Naab*, we find evidence of economic contraction: When Temple XIX collapsed, it was not rebuilt. Ahkal's massive renovation of Temple XX was left half-completed. (Morales, Alfonso, *Proyecto Grupo de las Cruces* updates)

⁸² This suffix appears to function here as nothing more than a rebus for the usual completive *-ja* suffix for the verb *U-Tz'akaj*, which is almost always in other cases spelled with the 'crescent moon' *ja*. Perhaps this is nothing more than an archaistic spelling,

conspire to make this glyph a good candidate for visual comparison. As noted in section 1.7.5 above, even a neophyte can compare almost any two of these glyphs at random, and s/he will observe substantial differences between each of the three elements. Looking just at Coe's "sign-forms," (the rounded boxy outlines of most glyphs), we see that the first example E15 in particular exhibits a pronounced slant to the right when compared to the others. This distinctive slant is visible in both outline and interior details of E15, and is quite noticeable in [Fig. 2-24](#).

In order to discover how large an area this scribe carved, one might begin by assuming that the artist who carved E15 is likely to have also carved the text immediately preceding and following it, and seek these slanted sign-forms in the glyphs neighboring E15. This one criterion is usually insufficient to confirm that two glyphs were carved by the same hand, so we shall have to look for others.

2.5.2.2. 'Band width'



Fig. 2-24. Three Tz'ak collocations, highlighted to emphasize the "sign form," from the Palace Tablet.

A second salient characteristic is the 'band width' distance between outline and the arched line which echoes it in two elements of this collocation ([Fig. 2-24](#)). Immediately one sees that the E15 carver favors a broader band than the other two. Again, one could seek that kind of wide border in glyphs in E15's neighborhood, particularly in the direction of C18 (which appears carved by a different Hand), in order to establish the boundary between territories of the E15 carver and his colleague. One might hope these two distinctions to define identical boundaries. If so, the probability that one has identified a specific individual's peculiarities —and his 'territory' on the monument— increases dramatically.

whose currency resisted reform (as have hundreds of modern English words with silent letters), a kind of visual "strong verb."

2.5.2.3. Favorite allographs

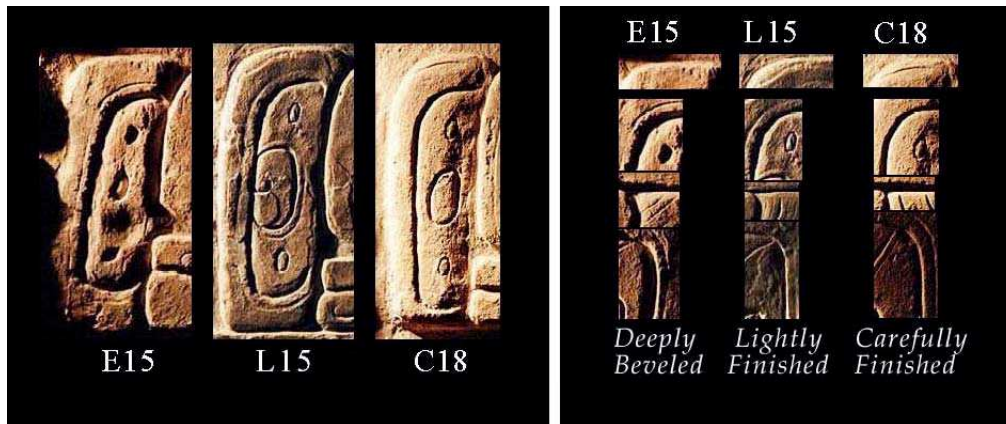


Fig. 2-25 (left). Palace Tablet. Three "identical" *u*-prefixes from the above collocations.

Fig. 2-26 (right). The same collocations scrutinized for details of carving finishes. Photos by author.

Third, note E15's peculiar form of the *u*-prefix: containing three deeply-carved, similar-sized small ovals, with the center oval positioned a bit above the waistline, parallel to a slanting but quite straight inner arch (Fig. 2-25). C18's lightly-carved ovals with distinctively-larger center oval flank a straight and more vertical arch-line, while L15's *u* has a much rounder arch-shape and unique, dominant and detailed center oval, containing its own doubled outline and inner spiral.⁸³

2.5.2.4. Modeling

Fourth, E15's deep and sharp beveling where the *Tz'ak* overlaps the *u* contrasts powerfully with the flatness of L15's *u* and the gently-rounded surface of C18's *u* as it approaches the *Tz'ak* (Fig. 2-26). The last seems to slip gently under its neighbor, while L15's *u* lays beside its *Tz'ak* in the same plane; as an equal, as it were.

2.5.2.5. 'Swastikas'

Fifth, the swastika-like inner details of the *Tz'ak* glyph differ dramatically from example to example (see Fig. 2-23). The middle diagonal can be straight or wavy, symmetrical or not. The

Or, perhaps there is some logographic connotation which has yet to be discerned by epigraphers.

⁸³ This spiral resembles the 'eye' of the 'flattened fish' variety of *u*. Perhaps this is a clue that the Maya perceived the highly abstract 'bracket' form of *u* (T1) as a simplified version

doubled-line vertical elements can be curved or straightish, and may connect to the single horizontal cross-line in a gentle curve or, as in L15, as a sharp break. L15's vertical bits contain unique (for this monument) feather- or leaf-like inner details, as well as a very stiff shape.

2.5.2.6. More favorite allographs

Sixth, the details of the *-aj* suffix vary widely: E15's artist carves his big raised dots with sharp bevels, as expected, and fills the 'spacer' between the dots with cross-hatching. The other two *aj*'s 'spacers' are neatly hatched with gently-curving, rhythmic parallel lines—one bold, three fine—but they slant in opposite directions (See [Fig. 2-23](#)). Casting about in the neighborhood of L15, I find at I14 an *aj* prefix whose decorated large dots could arguably match those of L15 (included in [Fig. 2-23](#)). The 'spacer,' however, does not match very well at all, with its neatly-drilled row of dots punctuating each hairline. One usually seeks other examples of the *u*-prefix elsewhere in the *Tablet* to see which style they matched, and these identifications would help to confirm (or erode) one's initial hypothetical work-boundaries. There are no close matches, unfortunately. However, we saw above (See [Fig. 2-13](#)) that these details on *aj* sometimes seem to change with the whim of the carver; s/he might prefer crosshatching one moment and dotted hairlines the next, for instance. This is especially true when the glyph is rotated 90°, as this example is.

2.5.2.7. Caveats

This incomplete corpus of evidence is one of the continual drawbacks in connoisseurship. In ambitious production work like this, an artist's attention to detail can vary widely, depending on his mood or an approaching deadline, or simple weariness at the end of the day. He might on one occasion lovingly 'cushion' a simple form's surface (rounding its edges so it resembles a cushion laying on the stone's surface), or another time go so far as subtly to sculpt the swell and hollow of lips, cheek or eye-socket on a glyph. Yet again he might feel so rushed that he simply bevel its edges rather than taking the trouble to round them. In other words, the amount of finish work on a glyph is not necessarily a useful indicator identifying of a particular artist, although an exceptionally brilliant finish on one Artist's glyphs may distinguish him from his mediocre contenders.

There are scores of other forms and elements whose characteristics one might seize to compare. Some, like a human face, are so complex in themselves that they might not provide

consistent enough points of comparison, at least not at the beginning of a project like this. Something very simple, such as the most abstract forms of *-ma* or *-la* suffix (comprised of three and five plain circles respectively) or like the ears mentioned above, might provide too few distinguishing characteristics to be productive. Still, common affixes like *-ya*, *-wa*, and the many faces of *-u*, can provide a promising start. Better yet, common collocations which tend to be spelled consistently (e.g., *'u-ti-ya*, *u-Tz'ak-'aj*, and Distance Numbers) provide a cluster of simultaneous comparisons, the examination of which might most efficiently establish identities and distinctions between our artisans. This is the reason I began this section comparing *'u-Tz'ak-'aj* collocations, and I shall continue by examining them some more.

2.5.3. Two *u-Tz'ak-aj* Glyphs by the Same Artist... maybe



Fig. 2-27 (detail of 2-23). Two pairs of collocations that satisfy criteria for attribution to the same Hand. (O13, though comparable, is not an *u-tz'akaj*.) Photos by author.

Let us examine a pair of glyphs the identity of whose lone artist seems clear-cut. J7 and Q2 ([Fig. 2-27](#), left pair) are two of our examples of the *u-Tz'ak-aj* collocation. Although these two are located far apart on the stone, they are strongly similar in each of the six points of comparison listed above. Though the first is damaged, enough remains of it to show that the two match significantly in the fifth item of comparison: the interior 'swastika' whose diagnostic scythe-like 'blades' are each drawn of two strong lines paralleled by two delicate outlines. These two share with O13 and O15 the 'fish' form of the *u*-prefix, but in most details, J7 and Q2's *u*'s resemble one another much better than they do O13 and O15 ([Fig. 2-27](#)).

O13 and O15's 'fishes'—deeply-cut, angular, frowning-- also match one another far better than they do any other 'fish' in the inscription. The shape of these 'fish's eyes and teeth are

distinctly similar. Though one might see a difference between their fin and tail treatment, even in these details they resemble one another much more than they do J7 and Q2.

The relatively exclusive use of a specific form of *u*-prefix, by these two carvers, by the way, implies that **carvers chose the spelling of the glyphs they carved**, which means that they were no slaves to the master layout artist. It also means that each carver probably painted his final layout onto the stone just prior to carving. In other words, these carvers seem to have changed the spelling from the master layout according to their own preferences while painting their glyphs on the stone preparatory to carving.⁸⁴

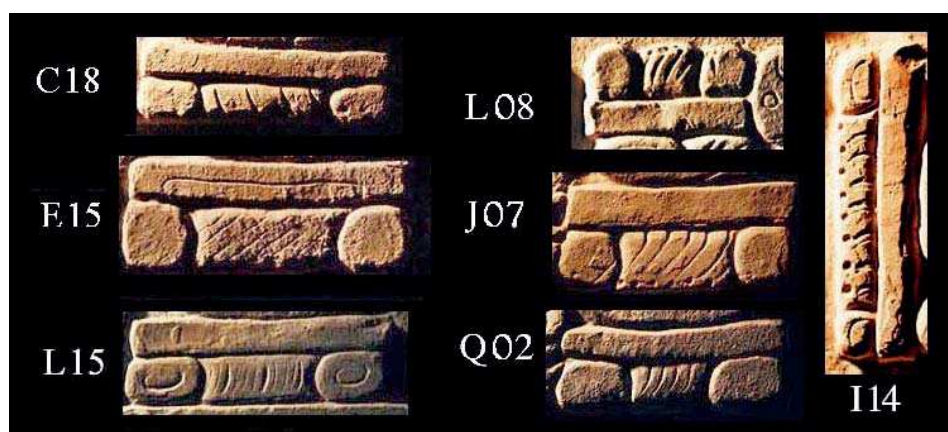


Fig. 2-28. Palace Tablet: *Aj*'s, see also Fig. 2-23. The first column represents three different Hands, while the glyphs in the second column all appear to be by the same (fourth) Hand. The vertical *Aj* at I4 is yet a fifth Hand. Photos by author.

The main distinction one perceives between J7 and Q2 is the relative size of the *-aj*s and *Tz'aks*: J7 has a much larger *-aj*, almost 40% of the height of the glyph, while at Q2 it is much smaller, less than 30%. Secondly, the relative size of the 'bar' and 'dots' of the *-aj* differ significantly here: J7 has a larger (and squarer) bar, almost as thick as its dots; Q2's dots are larger, and her bar smaller and more curved, than J7's. Still, despite these differences, these two *-aj*s are much closer to each other than to any other *-aj* in the whole monument, with one exception: L8, which I believe to have been carved by the same artist. (It bears the added advantage of proximity to J7.) Despite differences, these three *aj*'s share nicely-curved 'eyelash-shaped' hatching—each stroke tapered from a thick, curved base to a straightish, delicate point,

⁸⁴ This does not necessarily imply that there were *no* master layout artists at all. I cannot imagine how else a large, ambitious text like this could be accomplished. But the individual artists, after being assigned, by the master, a definite section of text- and monument-real estate, were apparently free to rewrite the specific glyphs according to their own taste. There exists the distinct possibility that some carvers relied on their colleagues to brush their layouts for them, or that there existed a whole category of

with a single, tiny, drilled dot dripping off its tip. The ‘hairs’ within other *a*’s are quite unlike this (with the possible exception of I14, whose drilled holes are bigger).

It is also true that the profile, the ‘sign-form’ of J7 leans slightly to the right, and is a touch more rounded, when compared to Q2 (see [Fig. 2-23](#)). These differences raise the fundamental question: When shall we say that two glyphs exhibit enough difference to be said to have come from different hands? What tolerances did their artists work within? What were their standards for variations on a theme? Some artists are always more creative than others; some scribes will obviously enjoy more freedom than others. Some seem to have positively reveled in deliberate variety. How sure can we be of our conclusions? I shall begin by setting an arbitrary standard: **When we can discern an identity between more than half of a group of comparison criteria (say, three or more out of six), we shall define the two glyphs as by the same Hand. Likewise, if more than half a number of characteristics distinctly differ between two glyphs, we shall define them as by different Hands.**⁸⁵ In practice, as we have already seen, there are few grey comparisons; two examples of a glyph collocation usually look very much alike or quite different.

2.5.4. Assumptions About Scribal Methods

I shall begin to establish a set of rules by stating my assumptions.

1. **Maya scribal artists were competent craftsmen and craftswomen.** (On the gender of scribes and artists, see #13 below.) They worked expertly, efficiently, directly, rapidly. Any skilled artisan can make substantial progress in his/her medium at a rate far faster than the ordinary person. Calligraphers in every culture build their characters from a relatively small vocabulary of well-practiced, direct strokes. I estimate that characters such as we see on the *Palace Tablet* each took on the order of thirty seconds to a minute or two to write, and half an hour to an hour (each) to carve. (Layout time —sketches, roughs, revisions, text-distribution, etc.— could multiply this number considerably.) Though there exists no living Maya glyph calligrapher using the proper tools against whose rate of production I can calibrate my guesses, I am comparing this rate with that of expert Chinese calligraphers, writing signs of approximately equal complexity.

“outline draftsmen” who stood between the Master Layout and the flock of carvers, which would considerably complicate matters.

2. Either through unconscious habit, or conscious choice, there always exist *some* combination of relatively invariant features peculiar to any given artist. Despite their sophistication and conscious striving for creative variety, the work of individual Maya artists, like all other artists worldwide, can be recognized by these peculiar habits and characteristics. In other words, **one can apply a connoisseurship methodology to this work**.

3. Maya scribal artists and their customers valued visual consistency. Any text must have a **consistent “typographic color”** (evenness of texture, such that, seen from afar, there be no “hot spots” of too-light or too-dark texture) to be comfortably legible. Despite extreme variety of outline and complexity from glyph to glyph, Maya texts exhibit a pleasing textural uniformity. This aesthetic demands some consistency between personal styles of any group compelled to work together on a particular text. In such a case, team members were expected to adjust their work to harmonize with that of their colleagues, or the Master selected them from a large pool for their harmonious styles, much as actors for a Broadway play are selected by a casting director.

4. At the same time the same audience (including fellow scribes) appreciated the “life” given to a text by a **lively variety in the repeated forms**. Even in works which seem clearly to have issued from a single hand, one never finds a glyph written precisely the same way twice (*viz.* the examples given above in the *96 Glyphs Panel*). The standard of consistency from one character to another that we find in, say, Chinese *li shu* ([Fig 1-56](#), the central character in the bottom row and the right end of the second row), or better, Classic Roman *Litterae Quadratae* ([Fig. 1-55](#), compare the A’s), is *much* more severe than that manifested in, say, Palenque’s *Panel of the 96 Glyphs* ([Figs. 2-18](#) through [2-22](#)). Yet if any carving in Palenque can be said to be the work of one hand, this is it; its distinctly flamboyant calligraphic style is quite distinct from anything else (see section 2.5.1 above).⁸⁶ In other words, we should expect and tolerate some deliberate variation in details, choice of allographs, even in

⁸⁵ I base this on the physical-science criterion for resolving two overlapping light sources: When the amplitude of light in the space between two amplitude maxima is less than half that of the maxima, the two light sources are defined as *resolved*.

⁸⁶ Linda Schele, whose unequalled drawing of this inscription most accurately captures its calligraphic exuberance, was fond of saying that she felt this artist both wrote and carved this inscription, since his engraving was so faithful to the calligraphic layout. (personal communication 1986, 1994)

habitual, simple forms such as outlines, hatching, etc.

5. **Text-carvers tend to work sequentially.** If two or more artists are working on a monument at the same time, they tend to stay in a certain territory. Thus, in any given monument, proximal or adjacent glyphs are more likely to have been made by the same hand than glyphs far apart. If I find two examples of a glyph which, though far apart, exhibit a similar set of characteristics, then I conclude they might be by the same artist. But a pair with the same degree of similarity located *near* each other on the stone have an extra argument for the identity of their maker.
6. Large, ambitious, and intricately-carved monuments such as the wall-panels of Palenque and the stelae of Copan and Quirigua may have been roughed out in the quarry or in off-site workshops, but **final carving was almost always done *in situ***. Transporting a multi-ton stone is hard enough without having to worry about chipping a hundred corners.
7. **I assume some continuity of religious attitude and mental preparation from Classic times to at least the Conquest.** Landa reports that Maya sculptors of wooden “idols” were quarantined during their work. They lived apart in specially-blessed workshops, fasted, prayed abundantly, abstained from sex and apparently from bathing during the several days it took to hew out a new statue.⁸⁷ Few doubt that practices and attitudes like these also prevailed centuries earlier.
8. The precise reading of scribal signatures is not yet fully known, but I believe that their meanings are more or less accepted.⁸⁸ (See the first glyph in [Figs 1-29](#) and [1-30](#), and glyph L4a in the *Tablet of the 96 Glyphs* in [Fig. 2-17](#).) For the purposes of this inquiry, **I shall assume that the T65:756a:568 collocation found on stelae and other sculpted stones, when followed by a name, probably reads *yu-xu-lu* = *yuxul* = “his carving” and identifies that name as the carver of the text.** There exist a few painted ceramic texts (as on K635, K2784? And K6020)⁸⁹, in which an apparent equivalent collocation T1:563:585a likewise precedes a

⁸⁷ Landa, pp. 76 f.

⁸⁸ As established by David Stuart, (Stuart 1989), and expanded by John Montgomery in his Master’s thesis (1994).

⁸⁹ In the PSS, this same collocation appears frequently but has a different, verbal reading, something like “written/painted (upon).” It almost never is used as an identifying phrase in this context. There exist a few ceramic non-PSS texts, however, where this

name, and reads *u-tz'i-bi* = *utz'ib* = "his writing/drawing," and identifies the following name as the calligrapher or painter of the text and probably the illustration as well. The more common T12:563:585a, *Aj-Tz'ib* = "He of Writing/Drawing," or "Scribe/Artist" is a title apparently worn by scribes. However, no carved text is known which unequivocally identifies both its scribe and its carver individually. Indeed, no carved inscription is known to carry the *u-tz'ib*. This situation is different from the signers of, say Greek vases: often a signed pot bears two signatures, one of the painter and one of the potter. If, like the Chinese, the Maya regarded the scribe (*Aj-tz'ib*) more highly than the carver (*Aj-Nab* or *Aj-Uxul* or whatever), one would expect to find an *u-tz'ib* or two on monuments.

Occam's razor suggests the following hypothesis: **Scribe and carver were one.** Like modern lettercutters in the West, Maya inscription-carvers were also competent calligraphers, and overwhelmingly preferred to execute their own artistic layout as well as its final sculpting.

9. If a monument consists of more than one piece of stone, it would be possible to separate the slabs, comfortably allowing two or more artists to work simultaneously. In Palenque, the *Palace Tablet* was constructed of three (perhaps four⁹⁰) slabs, as was the *Tablet of the Slaves*. The *Temple XIX Platform* is made of four slabs, two carved and two uncarved. In the last of these, the **work assignments apparently break along the boundaries of the stones**, as we shall see. However, on the *Tablet of the Slaves*, the stone-divisions each cut right through a column of glyphs, rendering it highly likely that one carver bridged the gap. (This is also the case on the earlier panels of the *Temple of Inscriptions*, which fall outside our discussion.) However, we shall examine evidence that different *Tablet of the Slaves* carvers executed the right and left parts of split glyphs. Thus,
10. **If an artist carved *part* of a glyph-block, it is highly likely that he or she carved the whole thing.** I do not doubt that sometimes one artist may have applied some finishing touches to a glyph which someone else started, but unless otherwise compelled, I shall assume that a glyph displaying traits by a particular artist was wholly carved by that artist.

collocation precedes a name, and presumably identifies a scribe or painter in precisely the same way as the *yu-(xu?)-I* collocation identifies a carver.

⁹⁰ The middle slab is broken horizontally. The break follows the line between rows 9 and 10 for about two-thirds the width of the stone, then slants down diagonally, splitting four glyphs. I note that there is a break in the "territory" of different Carvers which

11. **If two glyphs in an inscription appear strongly to be by the same hand, intervening glyphs are rather likely to have been by the same hand.** If two such glyphs are adjacent but one (that is, if they flank or surround a single glyph), then the intervening glyph is *very* likely to have been carved by the same hand.
12. **I presume, unless otherwise compelled, that for every important hieroglyphic panel, there was a single Master scribe who dictated the text and layout of the whole project.** He was probably also responsible for the schedule and the work-distribution, making sure that none of the several calligraphers/sculptors on the project made any spelling, transcription, or computational errors. He may have been a calligrapher, carver, priest, architect, court minister; some or all or none of these. In all likelihood, he played more than one of these roles. This is the usual practice in every comparable cultural activity, from ancient Egypt to T'ang China to the Vietnam War Memorial. Considering the consistent high quality across the large teams of artisans who executed these inscriptions, these Masters certainly were excellent judges of talent.
13. Nearly all artists' signatures seem to have been men. Though one calligrapher refers to his mother as a scribe, and women appear in scribal garb in ceramic illustrations of Court life (see Coe & Kerr 1992, *passim*) evidence of power-hierarchies in Maya life suggest that only a few women attained scribal rank. Accordingly, **I shall refer to scribes with male pronouns.** I acknowledge that this is the wrong gender in an unknown (small) percentage of cases, and I beg the reader's indulgence for my smoothing out the prose by eliminating all those awkward "her or his"s and "he/she"s.
14. Many glyphs have two or more allographs which substitute freely with each other in many contexts. There exist about a dozen distinct glyphs which read as syllabic 'u, for example. Although there may be as-yet-undetected subtle connotations to the use of this or that allograph, ('u- can indicate third person singular or possessive pronouns, for instance; certain Maya scribes may have preferred to correlate one or another allograph with each meaning), I shall assume unless compelled otherwise that when an artist elects to use two different

happens to follow this break for four columns, and maybe six. This could be a coincidence, or the stone might have suffered an

allographs of the same glyph on neighboring glyph-blocks, that he does so mainly for aesthetic, visual variety.

2.5.5. The Glyphs Carved by One Artist: E15 and Its Neighbors

2.5.5.1. Method

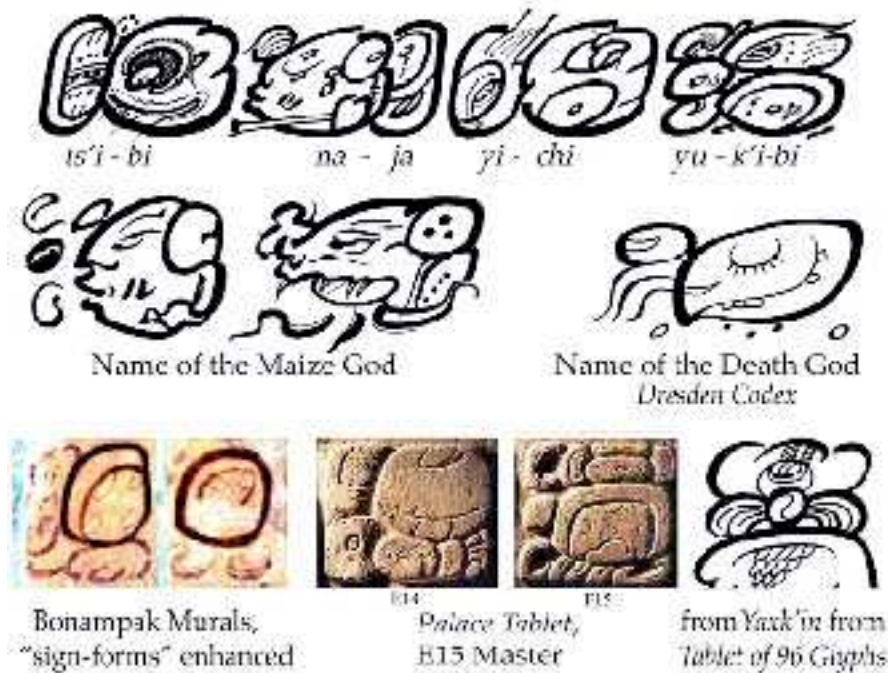


Fig. 2-29. Cursive slanted sign-forms in painted glyphs, echoed in E15 Master. Top row & first two glyphs of second row: Codex-style pottery texts. Others labeled. Photos and drawings by author.

Let us try to establish the area on the *Palace Tablet* carved by the sculptor of E15. I shall first seek examples displaying its glyphs' most salient characteristic: a pronounced slant, or lean, in its "sign-forms" or major outlines. These leaning outlines (and parallel inlines) betray influence from cursive writing. As we see in codices and painted inscriptions, many scribes' handwriting slopes to the right, for the same reasons that our own handwriting does: in right-handed writing, the natural pivoting motion of the wrist makes a diagonal pen-stroke from lower left to upper right. As this is the easiest stroke to make, it tends to dominate most handwriting. (Lefties constitute fewer than 10% of any population.) For this reason, most glyphic "sign-forms" tend to lean, often only slightly, becoming parallelograms. The extreme example of this parallelogram

accident between the grooving of its glyph-blocks and their actual carving.

distortion is seen in the *Dresden Codex*, whose "main signs" all tend to exhibit a pronounced proboscis

Furthermore, this artist's "sign-forms" are asymmetrical: the bottom tends to bulge downwards, the right side tends to greater curvature than the left, and the lower left corner is often distinctly sharper than the others. Again, these tendencies are persistent cursivisms, found to lesser or greater degrees in most Maya calligraphy, but the artist of E15 gives in to it more than his colleagues.

Assuming that an artist concentrated his work in an area at least roughly defined by the space he needs to work comfortably, I expect that the most productive place to look for more glyphs by a given artist is within his reach — directly adjacent to the area we have defined already as his 'territory.' My methodology here shall be to try first to establish a connection between my core area of glyphs and one of its neighbors, using as an arbitrary first criterion their "sign-forms." (My criteria can change according to the character of the artist in question; I have chosen "sign-forms" here simply because it seems to be a most salient characteristic of the E15 artist.) If this next adjacent glyph meets the first criterion of comparison, I shall assume tentatively that, coupled with its proximity, this glyph is by our artist. I shall also check to see if it matches any of the other qualities we discern in this artist's work —wide 'band-width,' sharp beveling, and other details. If they match, this further corroborates the hypothesis that the glyph in question is by the same artist. If this adjacent glyph fails to meet the first criterion, but matches several other criteria, I shall still conclude that the glyph in question is by the same artist. Just as one matching characteristic is not enough to establish the identity of the artist of two glyphs, one mismatch cannot rule out that a pair issue from the same hand, if other characteristics do correlate. Without pretending to set a rigid or rigorous set of criteria for declaring this or that glyph to have been carved or written by one or another artist identified on an inscription, I shall assign glyphs firmly only when their matches strongly outweigh their mismatches. Those with a weaker claim I shall assign tentatively, conditionally, or not at all.

2.5.5.2. F15, E16, ... to the End of the Double Column



Fig. 2-30. *Palace Tablet*, E15 Master: His distinctive slant and cursive "sign-forms." Also his distinctive form of the *wa*-syllable. Photos by author.

As I first mentioned above, E15 exhibits a pronounced slant to the right in its "sign-forms." This same slant characterizes the following glyph F15 (1 k'in, 0 winal)'s outline, inline, prefix, and interior details. E16, directly below E15 (1 tun), is a head-variant damaged across the 'ear,' and it is difficult to judge the slant of its irregular outline, but its suffix *ya* leans dramatically, just like the partial *ya*-suffix on F15. The crack which injures E16 cuts through the lower part of the antefix of F16 (*i-u-ti*), but enough remains to assure us that it has the same slant as E15's. Thus, solely on the basis of "sign-form-slant," the four glyphs E15-F16 seem carved by the same hand.

The slanted outline and inlines of E17, (12 Ajaw) match those of E15 and the others. The same with F17 (8 Keh). However, the damaged E18 (11 K'atun) does not slant. Neither does F18 (*u-K'al-wa-Tuun-ni*), though the interior division between its left and right sides does; the left edge of the *K'al*'hand' indeed strikingly resembles that of the *Tz'ak* element in E15. The upright aspect of these two glyph-outlines may yet prove to be a fluke. A look at E19 (*u-Chok-wa*) confirms this suspicion: though the glyph block itself does not slant, the vertical interior division does, and the prefixed *u* precisely matches that of E15, except for its slope. E19 strongly resembles its immediate predecessor F18 in another way: their *wa* suffixes match in virtually every detail. F19, unfortunately, is too damaged to make much of a judgement about.

2.5.5.3. F14, E14, ... Upwards to the Next Artist's Territory

Thus ends columns EF. The text continues at the top of the next columns, G-H6, some eight feet away and almost certainly is the territory of another Carver, evidence for which I shall present below. We proceed to look above and to either side of E15. Both E14 and F14's outlines are quite vertical on the left, though F14's right profile does lean. However, the leaning 'main sign' of each, and the strongly-sloped inlines in the antefix of each are quite in keeping with the standard we arbitrarily chose in E15. Both of these are more smoothly modeled and finished than the beveled planes of E15, but they are quite in keeping with the careful modeling of F15. Perhaps the sculptor finished E15 in a little more of a hurry than the other three. Though smaller and simply drilled rather than sculpted, the group of three dots of the *si*-subfix on E14 has the flavor of the similar three dots in the *u* of E15 just below. Both E14 and F14 must be by the Hand of E15.



Fig. 2-31. *Palace Tablet, E15 Master*: Glyphs E13-F15. Photos by author.



Fig. 2-32. *Palace Tablet, E15 Master and other(s):* Glyphs E12, F12, F10. Photos by author.

The next rows up, however, are harder to reconcile as work of the same carver. E10 to F13 names six Palenque Patron Gods, starting with the Palenque Triad, and most of these are head-glyphs, whose complex profiles mask a clear view of their underlying “sign-forms.” The few simple “sign-forms,” such as the ‘cartouched head’ and checkered ‘shield’ of GIII at E12, are quite vertical, though the matching earflares of GI and GIV, at F10 and F12 respectively, do lean a bit. However, referring to our second criterion —the width of the band between outline and inline— we see that at E12, GIII’s ‘shield’ has a



Fig. 2-33. *Palace Tablet, E15 Master and other(s):* Comparing the width of the arched forms in Glyph E15 (wide, slanted) with those in E12, O13, and O15 (narrow, vertical). Photos by author.

very narrow band, like the frames seen on O13 and O15, and quite unlike the wide band of E15. Although the ‘cartouche’ on the same glyph is quite wide, its rounded “sign-form” and sculptural quality are quite unlike those seen at E15 and its brothers. I think that these three distinctions together (“sign-form,” band-width, and modeling-quality) are enough to establish that E12 and E15 were carved by different individuals. We shall encounter other evidence to confirm this distinction.

On the other hand, to my surprise, F13, *Ixik-??-Ajaw*, also known as GVI,⁹¹ *does* seem to be by the hand that carved E15 (Fig. 2-31). The two-part *Ajaw* superfix leans just the right way, especially the right half, whose lower left corner outline precisely matches that of E15's *Tz'ak*. I note that the crosshatched area of this element of the *Ajaw* superfix also matches the shape and flavor of the similar crosshatched details on the next two glyphs (top left of E14, and on the crown of F14's 'God C'). It emphatically does *not* resemble any equivalent element where it might be expected on E14, or any glyph in columns EF to the top of the text; the artist(s) who carved these upper glyphs consistently scooped such 'dark' spots out in a shallow concavity.

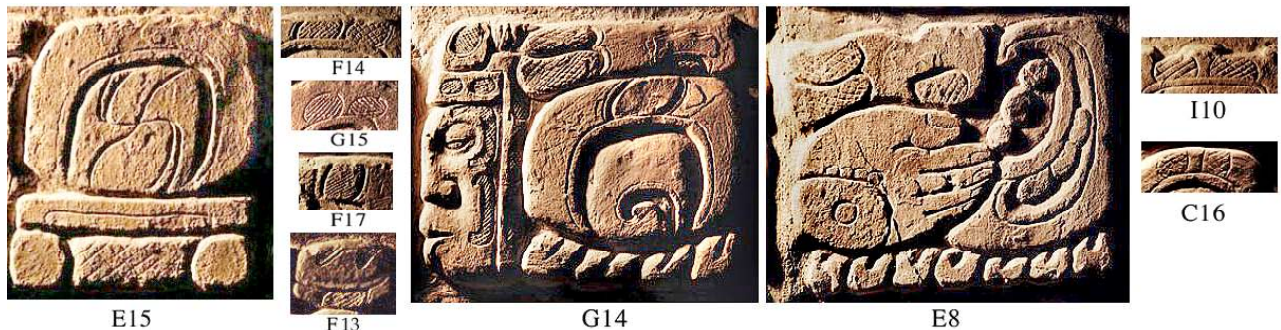


Fig. 2-34. *Palace Tablet*, E15 Master and other(s): Crosshatched 'dark' areas on glyphs in E15's neighborhood. Photos by author.

Admittedly, the abstractly-shaped crosshatched areas on the 'deerhoof' of E8 (unexpectedly matching E15), and the flat-bottomed excavations in the 'tun' glyph at E18 (*mismatching* E15), are exceptions that test this rule. But the 'tun's outline at E18 does match that of E15, as does the outline of the 'hand' of F18; while the abstractly oval outline of the 'hand' in E8 clearly does not. To return to our original line of argument, analysis of the "sign-forms" does indeed suggest that the upper part of this double column (E6 down to E13) was carved by one (or more) Artist, and another worked on the lower part (F13 down to F19). This second Hand, who carved E15, tended toward more strongly slanted or 'cursive' outlines in his glyphs, and also preferred to indicate 'dark spots' with fine crosshatching, rather than 'scooped' concavities. Like the "Fine Hatching Master" on the Temple XIX Platform, he crosshatches areas like the *-Aj* at E15 and the *Ajaw* superfix of F13, which never normally have it.

If carvers were expected to work on continuous passages of text, we would find some continuity of style from EF19 to the top of the next column at GH6. As this is a distance of eight

⁹¹ The undeciphered glyph is a flexed human figure, with a large penis resting on his knees, where his head ought to be. (The flexed pose: knees up, feet and butt flat on the ground, arms clasping the upraised knees. This pose is identical to that of mummy-bundles and Aztec Ancestor-figures portrayed in their manuscripts.)

feet, I mentioned earlier that I thought such a practice impractical, and a few examples are all that is necessary to confirm this suspicion.

2.5.5.4. Different Artist Continues Text at Top of Next Column; Same Artist Carves Lower Part of This Next Column

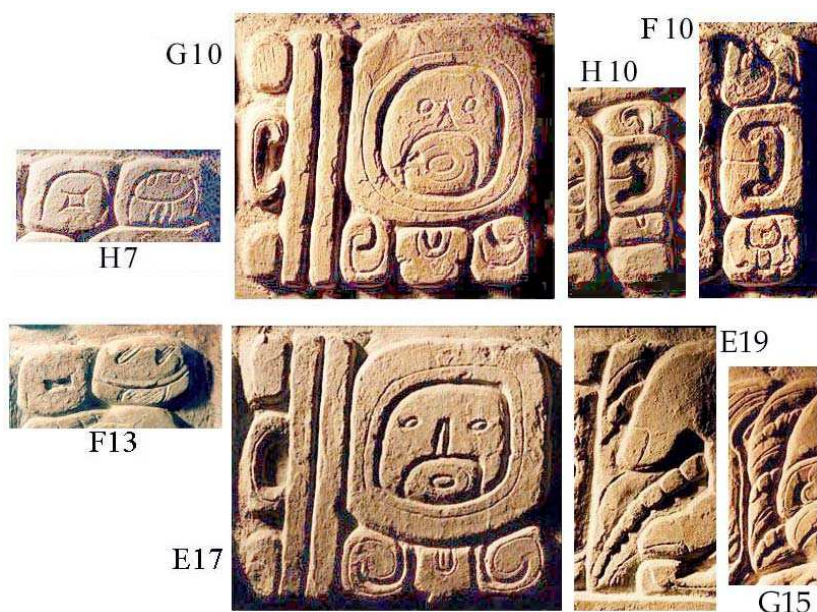


Fig. 2-35. Palace Tablet. Comparing *Ajaw* superfixes F13 & H7, E17 and G10 12-*Ajaw* dates; F10 & H10 earflares, E19 *Ch'ok* 'scattering' & G15 *K'uh*. Photos by author.

The *Ajaw* superfixes on F13 and H7 are distinctly *not* in the same style. None of the details match, with the possible exception of the rounded sculptural modeling of their edges. Likewise with the 12 *Ajaw* dates at E17 and G10: neither the shape of their noses, eyes, mouths, cartouches, 'feet,' nor 'spacers' between the two dots of the numeral, match. This should establish the nonidentity of the hands of lower EF and upper GH. On the other hand, details such as the 'earflares' on F10 and H10, and the peculiar spray of 'droplets' issuing from the left side of the 'scattering hand' at E19 and the 'God C' head at G15 *do* match quite closely. These and a score of other details support the conjecture that one sculptor conveniently carved the lower part of columns E, F, G, and H, while another worked on the upper parts of the same columns. We should expect to find the boundary between their work at about row 13, and indeed this is the case.



Fig. 2-36. Palace Tablet. G15 *u-K'uhul-li* cf E19 'scattering' & F14 *K'uhul*

We shall begin with row 15 (the last row of all columns GHIJKL⁹²), adjacent but one to our anchor E15. The lively *u-K'UH-li* at G15 bears several striking resemblances to its neighbors to the left. Its "sign-forms" slope somewhat, as we expect. But the assertively peculiar form of the dotted prefix of the 'God C' glyph (Thompson's "water group,") appears in only one other place in the entire text: as the dots 'scattered' by the hand in E19. G15's 'God C head' closely matches the same 'head' at F14 in every detail except two: the shape of the eye and the width of the 'hair' or 'helmet.' G15's lenticular 'eye' does match the lenticular dots in E19's *u*-prefix; and its broad band of 'hair' is actually more in keeping with the proportion preferences we see in E15 than F14's is.

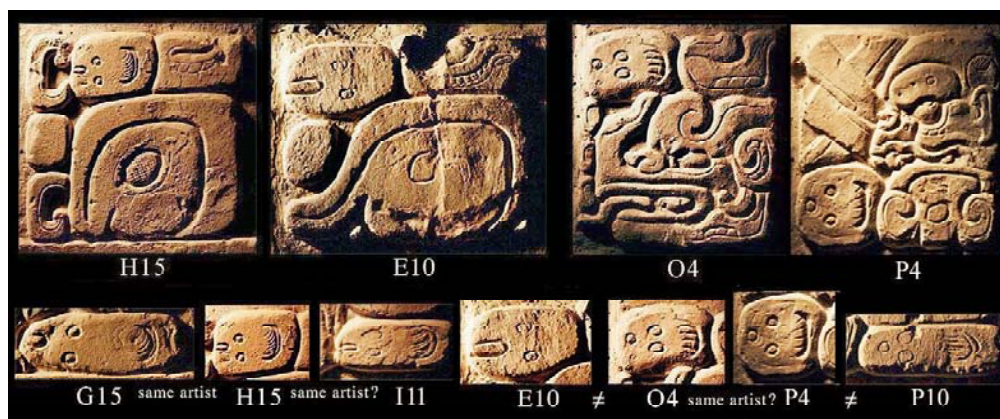


Fig. 2-37. Palace Tablet. H15 & E10 *Hun-ye-Nal*, and *li*s. Photos by author.

⁹² Presumably an altar, throne, or other impediment stood in front of this (85 cm wide, 54 cm high) indentation in the text. The *Palace Tablet* originally faced north, mounted on the wall in the outside gallery of House AD, aligned perpendicularly with the front wall and *Hieroglyphic Stairway* of House C (which, being inside the courtyard behind the medial wall of House AD, was presumably invisible from that gallery). When a visitor ascended the right side of the grand staircase from the Ballcourt plaza and entered the gallery, the *Tablet* faced the visitor. The fact that it was not centered at the top of the stairs implies that its alignment with the corner of House C was important, or perhaps simply that its erection predated the final construction of the grand stairway. As the medial wall was unpierced, visitors who climbed up the North grand stairway would tend to enter the gallery at its center, to the left of the *Tablet*, turn left and proceed into House A, wherefrom they would enter the East Court through House A's grand archway. The erection of the *Tablet* might also have predated the final enclosure of the East Court between Houses A, B, and C, though no archeological evidence of this purported sequence survives. Merle Greene Robertson shows that House AD joined the already-built Houses A, C, and D, and implies that it was built by or in honor of Kan-Xul / Kan Joy Chitam. (Robertson 1975, vol. III, p. 50)

The *Hun-ye-Nal* glyph at H15 also has a lot in common with E15. The profile of the ‘main sign’ *ye* is fairly square, but the non-parallel inline ‘sign-form’ closely matches the shape of E15’s. Also, despite differences in proportion, the ‘*li*’ element in G15 and H15 appear to have come from the same hand, especially when one compares their similar ‘comb’ elements and sculptural finish. Compare this detail with an example at O4 by another artist. The *Hun-ye-Nal* title for GI appears also at E10. The two examples at H15 and E10 each exhibit distinct, strong, individual personalities in many details, compelling even a casual observer to observe that different artists carved them. (See also [Fig. 2-10](#).)

Although it does not lean as dramatically, the G14 ‘main sign’s outline does resemble that of E15 (see [Fig. 2-34](#)), particularly in one detail: the pronounced lower left ‘corner’ of this outline is sharper than the others, an echo of cursive ‘sign-forms’ commonly seen on ceramics and in codices. Our example in [Fig. 2-29](#), from the *Dresden Codex*, shows how pronounced this ‘hooked’ corner can be; it pervades nearly every ‘sign-form’ in the book. Evidently The E15 Calligrapher was accustomed to writing in a more cursive style and allowed some of its lively characteristics to invade his more formal writing. A particularly common habit (not peculiar to this artist by any means) is his way of rendering the crosshatched ovals or bars across the ‘hair’ of ‘God C’ or the top of glyphs like *Yax*, *Chak* or *yi*, many of which I isolated above in [Fig. 2-34](#). Our artist usually decorates them with crosshatching, though for some reason here he does not—if there ever was crosshatching, it has been scraped off. However, every other ‘dark’ detail on this glyph is crosshatched. But more importantly, the shape of this detail is assertively, cursively elliptical, leaning strongly and gracefully to the right, made by a sure hand. As we see in [Figs. 2-37](#) and [2-38](#), the artist of the upper part of Columns EF (who normally ‘dishes out’⁹³ these details rather than crosshatching them) consistently draws them more upright, more quiet, and less beautifully. In [Fig. 2-34](#), I have also included two examples from two other artists of the *Tablet*, who also crosshatch these details, but who nevertheless draw them more symmetrically, upright, more barrel-shaped than ovals.

In the same plate, I have included for comparison the other example of the rare ‘deerhoof’ glyph, from E8. The main difference we can see in these two examples of the ‘hoof’ itself is the sculptural modeling of the edges. G14 is entirely much more rounded and modeled, giving the

appearance of higher relief than E8, which is almost planar, raised above the background but lacking virtually any modeling. The abstracted, strongly ovoid *K'al* 'hand' of E8 also contrasts sharply with that of our artist at F18 (see [Fig. 2.30](#) above): F18's 'hand' exhibits, for instance, the cursive lower-left 'corner' which pervades this artist's 'sign-forms.'

2.5.6. Another Artist Whose Work Abuts the E15 Hand

2.5.6.1. The Hand at H14 and Up



Fig. 2-38. Palace Tablet: H14 & F9 *Yichnal*, other *Nals* and *Naabs*, and comparable glyphs. Photos by author.

⁹³ The term 'dish out' is a technical one, employed by inscription carvers to refer to the process of scraping a shallow concavity into a flat surface, usually for the purpose of correcting a spelling error. (inscription carver John E. 'Fud' Benson, Newport Rhode Island, personal communication)

H14 looks to me like a new hand at work. The ‘sign-forms’ of the elements, though not stiff, are much more upright than those I have attributed to our E15 carver. The sharpened lower left corner is visible in both the *Nal* superfix and *chi* ‘hand,’ but blunted, enervated. (Although I argued strongly above that our E15 carver is responsible for G14, it appears this new carver may have at least touched up G14, most saliently in the concave-rather-than-hatched detail on its *yi*, which matches the same detail on H14. Also, the broad outline band on H14’s *yi* does seem to relate it to E15.) However, I think other features of G14 do not quite jibe with equivalent forms in H14; I remain uncertain whether G14 is the work of one artist or the other, or both. Certainly H14’s *Nal* superfix, with its deeply-cut, square ‘kernels of corn’ does not match the style of any other *Nal* on the *Tablet*, including the one at H15 directly below, whose cursive ‘kernels’ are lightly incised.⁹⁴

A semantically equivalent collocation which may also read as *Yichnal* appears one other place on this *Tablet*, at F9. This collocation is peculiar to Palenque and Tonina and shares a *Nal* superfix and *-la* subfix with the more conventional title/spelling (*yi-chi-Nal*/*yi-chi-Nal-la*). Its ‘main sign’ is a one-armed human torso with a hand curled downward and held closely against the chest.⁹⁵ Although F9 shares with H14 a virtually identical *-la* subfix, the ‘foliage’ of its *Nal* superfix does not seem to match any of the other six examples’.⁹⁶ This merely confirms that there is a change of hands between F9 and H14.

H13, the ‘buck-toothed, rabbit-eared’ Palenque Emblem Glyph, seems to be by this new hand as well. Though a crack mars its ‘face’ and antefix, its *Ajaw* superfix matches that on H7, at least

⁹⁴ Only the ‘maize foliage’ part of these two glyphs brooks comparison. The three examples on this *Tablet* of the *Nal* superfix whose left element is overlaid with a *Ti* glyph (which form often covaries with the *Hun-ye-Nal* title of GI) may or may not have a meaning distinct from that of the more common *Nal* whose ‘head’ consists of a ‘maize spiral.’

⁹⁵ This unusual glyph seems to fall into the same category of ‘clever inventions’ as the *yuk’ib* head-variant discussed above. Patricia, Ancona-Ha, Jorge Perez de Lara, and I examined this and other ‘gestural’ glyphs in our initial investigation into the meaning of Maya hand gestures (see our article “Some Observations on Hand Gestures in Maya Art,” in Kerr, Justin and Barbara, eds., *The Maya Vase Book*, vol. 6, pp. 1072 – 1089, New York, 2000.) The *chi* ‘hand’ may have originated, for instance, from a sign for ‘just a pinch’ of something, which is pronounced *chih* in Tzeltal (Marc Zender, personal communication), or from hunters’ sign-language for “deer” (also *chih*, in most Mayan tongues), wherein their curled fingers imitate the antlers of a deer. Several Classic vase PSS inscriptions, particularly those from Waxaktun, replace the *chi* ‘hand’ with a deer’s head (see Coe, Michael, and Van Stone, Mark, *Reading the Maya Glyphs*, London & New York, 2001, p. 101, last line).

However, the hand in the ‘full figure’ *Yich(Nal)?* glyph is curled down, and is not the position of the *chi* ‘hand.’ The meaning of *yichnal* is not completely understood, but it seems to imply ‘companion’ or ‘someone close to one,’ as it pertains to assistance at certain ceremonies. This glyph’s ‘hand’ and ‘arm’ may portray the traditional Maya gesture for “come here” or “come close.” Among Mesoamerican Indians, this gesture is sometimes performed close to the body, and as among east Asians, with wrist high and fingers down and moving repeatedly toward the chest as if miming a scooping action. (Personal communication from Antonio Cuxil, a Maya speaker and educator associated with the Maya Meetings held annually at the University of Texas).

⁹⁶ The closest we come is to the immediately following glyph, E10. Although the interior ‘corn kernels’ differ markedly in size and shape, the outline of the ‘leaf’ is drawn and carved much the same in both of these. Perhaps we have a collaboration of sorts on these nearly-adjacent glyphs; two carvers working from a single artist’s layout drawing. Or perhaps this difference in details reflects an artist’s caprice. A closer analysis will have to wait until we finish our determination of the extent of the E15 artist’s ‘territory.’

much more closely than any other example of the same superfix on the *Tablet*. (See [Fig. 3-11b](#): *Ajaw* Superfixes) The subfixed *la*'s also match, for what it is worth. Despite this evidence, H13's 'skeletal jaw' is essentially indistinguishable from that on E16, so I hold final judgment in abeyance.



Fig. 2-39. *Palace Tablet* EG's at H13, H7 & K11. Also comparable glyphs. I have nicknamed the Hand of H7, also responsible for G13 and H14, the "Blunt Corner Master." Photos by author.

More to the point here is the sculptural modeling of H7, which strikingly matches that of H14 (less so that of H13). This is particularly true of their too-symmetrical, blunted left corners; these two exhibit very similar clumsy, stiff treatment. Comparing the lower-left corners made by our first carver (E15) with the corners of H14 and those from yet a third artist, the reader may be forgiven for asking, "So, what's the difference?" Indeed (with respect to the third dimension), on this entire *Tablet*, every carver seems to have held the same ideal edge-relief in mind: a smooth

quarter-cylinder "molding" of strikingly consistent radius. Now, many glyphs exhibit evidence that their artists were a bit rushed, and did not carry their sculptural modeling to completion. The sculptor of H14 and H7, for example, stopped just short of totally smoothing his edges, leaving the glyphs' edge-molding with a skillful (and attractive) polygonal cross-section (For example, H7 in [Fig. 2-39](#) and [2-40](#), H13 and H14 in [Fig. 2-39](#)). E15 itself falls even further short of this ideal: its contours are barely smoothed; they retain a rough-hewn, chiseled, precipitous right angle. Its interior details, rather than smooth and rounded, retain a distinct bevel. Pleasing as these sculptorly details might be, they seem generally to be the exception on this stone (but viz. the full-figure Initial Series); the immediate neighbors of E15 (E14, F14, F15, E16, and F16) *all* have more finished edges, all hew to my posited ideal much more closely.

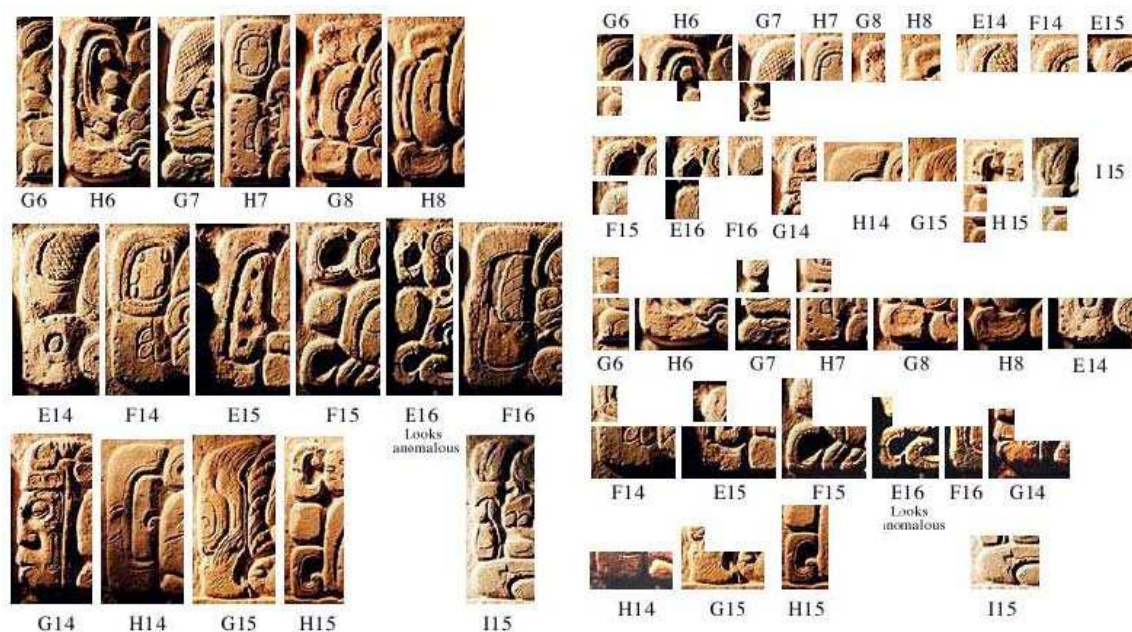


Fig. 2-40. *Palae Tablet*. Edge-molding details of H14 & H7 & E15 & neighbors. Photos by author.

But to return to comparing the (two-dimensional) "sign-forms" or outlines of these glyphs: Michael Coe has pointed out⁹⁷ (as have many others) that formal Maya calligraphy is at its most pleasing when its sign-forms are not totally symmetrical. Grace notes and emotional shading, most noticeable in their sharper lower-left corners and their slightly slanted trapezoids or parallelograms, syncopate the rhythm of otherwise dully repetitious rectangles, and enliven even the most stiff and rectilinear inscriptions. The artist of H14 and H7 is bold and sure of his

⁹⁷ Coe & Kerr 1997, 154ff.

work, deeply cutting every detail. He does indeed incorporate a few slanted formlines, such as the three elements at the top of the EG (H7) and the 'head' of the *Nal* and the inner spiral and the 'bar' across the left outer border of *yi*. But the lower left corner of these glyphs is perfectly geometrical, a quarter-circle rounding a strict right angle, unlike the corners of E16, F15, and the like. On both elements of the *K'uh* 'water group' prefix of the EG, on the *yi*, even on the obtuse angle of the 'hand' and acute angle of the *Nal*, this overly-symmetrical corner reminds me of a fully-inflated air-mattress. The temper of this artist's carving might be described as "stolid" or "competent" rather than "graceful" or "lyrical." Compare his corners with those of other artists in this illustration ([Fig. 2-40](#)). All of the others exhibit some (usually pleasing) asymmetry, an echo of the cursive motions of less formal calligraphy.

This Stolid artist's territory is, however, gerrymandered. We have attributed to his Hand H14, H13, and H7; the first two of these are in an island of six glyphs surrounded by two other Artists' more extensive territories. (These are the L14 Master [see below] and the abovementioned E15 Master [see [Figs. 4-01](#) and [4-04](#) respectively]). Interestingly, H7 and H13 abut the two identical phonetic spellings of Pakal's name (at G6-H6-G7 and J12-I13-J13, see [Fig. 1-95](#), [Fig. 3-104](#)). H7 is even his EG title. The L14 Master carved the *K'inich* title at J12, but he certainly did not carve the rest of the name. And a brilliant Artist—perhaps the Master of the whole project⁹⁸—carved the "Jaguar Throne of Creation" and its facing "Snake Throne" head, resting directly on G6 and H6. However, the style of G6 and H6 does not much resemble his delicately-detailed glyphs at A15-B19 and C14-D19. I think that this Master did indeed carve the three glyphs of Pakal's name at G6-G7. And I have always been suspicious of the almost-identical big-nosed *pa*'s in both these renderings. The affixes and crosshatching do not match (and the *Janabs* are certainly distinct Hands), but the two *pa*'s are otherwise almost identical, too close to discern with assurance, using my criteria. Perhaps the "Stolid Master" who carved Pakal's archaistic name and titles up at G6-H7 also did part of the Pakal down at J13—or at least laid the glyph out. It is just possible that he shaped both big-nosed heads, but left the detailing and the affixes (of at least one of them) to someone else.

In a section 2.6 below I examine the evidence of the range of Artists who carved the Full-Figure Initial Series. For scrutiny of the other Hands (such as the L14 "Itz'i-Winik" Master) who rubbed elbows (literally) with the E15 Master, see Chapter 3. Close, detailed examinations there

⁹⁸ I attribute to him not only this Jaguar and the left Snake head of the middle Throne, but the last and finest of the Full-Figure Glyphs and the block of twenty glyphs below it. See below.

clarify my criteria for distinguishing individual characteristics of the several Artists who collaborated to create this masterpiece. When it began to dawn on me just how many there were, I couldn't believe it. The workshops were as busy, and as crowded, as a movie set.

2.5.7. General observations on Palenque carving practice



Fig. 2-41. T12 'a or 'A' glyphs from *Tablet of the 96 Glyphs*, *Palace Tablet*, *Tablet of the Slaves*, and the *Temple XIX Platform*. Photographs by author.

A few observations on the consistency of carving standards are in order here. The many carvers of the *Palace Tablet* were all expert sculptors; they all meet a very high standard of craftsmanship. Whether or not they were free to choose how to *spell* certain collocations, whether or not they painted their layouts, they enjoyed extraordinary freedom when choosing how to *render* in three dimensions any given glyph. A single example, the common affix T12 (syllabic 'a or logographic 'A'), is typical. In [Fig. 2-41](#) I have collected examples of this glyph from three important eight-century Palenque monuments. Even the Artist of the *Tablet of the 96 Glyphs* (it was almost certainly executed by a single Hand) varies the type of hatching (cross-hatching or diagonal strokes), large 'spots' (plain or hatched), and small 'dots' (drilled or outlined, plain or hatched). Two generations earlier, Ahkal Mo' Naab commanded a much larger stable of carvers for his *Temple XIX Platform*. These small glyphs (*circa* an inch square) at first appear to exhibit great consistency — four of the seven have precisely the same kind of hatching, 'spots' and 'dots' — yet E6 has cross-hatching, Label 9, Gl. 1 has drilled 'dots,' and we

see a different variation in the 'bars': straight (e.g., A8, T4, X5) vs. wavy (F5, E6, and Label 10, G. 4), square vs. rounded (Label 9, Gl. 1), closed (e.g., A8) vs. open (e.g., E6). For these glyphs in context, see [Fig. 2-23](#).

Earlier still, in the *Palace Tablet*, in eight glyphs, five or more carvers feel free to choose between *five* different kinds of hatching, decorated or undecorated 'bars' and 'spots,' the presence or absence of 'dots'... One is forced to conclude that standards of form imposed on these carvers were neither very specific nor very strict. The Master certainly demanded excellent skill, but he clearly did not specify whether a *ko*-syllable's longitudinal bands should be straight or curved, thick or thin, outlined, raised, sunken, or crosshatched ([Fig. 2-41](#)). This tolerant attitude stands in stark contrast to that which obtains, for example, in Egyptian or Hittite hieroglyph carving, whose sculptors were extraordinarily faithful to meticulously explicit ideal forms.⁹⁹

Due mainly to their usually-imperfect state of preservation and legibility, most Maya inscriptions are published and studied in the form of a drawing. Photographs are readily available, but tend to play a supporting role at best. For our purposes, the monuments I have chosen are in excellent condition for the most part. But these modern epigraphers' drawings (for example, the widely-published drawings of the *Palace Tablet* by Linda Schele or Merle Greene Robertson, [Fig. 1-78](#)) minimize or eliminate distinctions between, say, a sunken, or scooped, or sloped, or merely outlined area, or between lightly-carved and deeply-carved lines. In so doing, drawings happen to reconstruct, to some degree, the original calligraphic Master Layouts which guided the carvers, and they reveal that these layouts possess far more consistency than the resulting carving (see [Fig. 3-07a](#)). It follows that — and it seems reasonable— whatever standards of consistency ancient Maya scribes and carvers followed, the standard forms of *written* glyphs were much more specific than for their *sculpted* forms. After all, for every glyph ever carved in stone, there were literally thousands written in ink on paper and other media. Greater currency of any practice impels greater consistency and conservatism.¹⁰⁰

The only hard evidence I feel comfortable citing to support the hypothesis that the sculptors had any say in their layouts lies in patterns of spelling. That is, if a peculiar spelling habit

⁹⁹ See Section 1.5. Many Egyptian reliefs remain unfinished, and reveal very simplified underdrawing. The sculptors were obviously expected to fill in details, and did so with remarkable consistency. In Ancient Rome and China, the carvers were utterly subservient to the calligrapher's brushstrokes, and they remain totally anonymous. The very fact that Maya sculptors expressed so much individuality, even signing their work in many sites, underlines how highly respected they were.

¹⁰⁰ The presence of so many "silent letters" and other archaic spellings in English testifies to the odds against convincing all its hundreds of millions of literate speakers to replace the spelling of, say, "straight" with the more reasonable and logical "strate."

covaries with a specific carver's work (consistent choice of, say, T232 versus its allographs T1 or T13 for 'u), I believe one is then justified in claiming that that artist was given a Master layout on paper, but painted his own layouts —changing spellings or other minor details here and there— onto the stone before carving. I originally included the unusual spellings of *Janab Pakal* at H6-G7 and at I13-J13 ([Fig. 1-95](#)) or the rare *la-ta* suffixes at M6, N6, J14 and M13 ([Fig. 2-42](#)), to support a hypothesis that one a Hand might lay out a text that his buddy ended up carving. But we cannot rule out the possibility of a yet-undistinguished connotation to the use of an "archaic" spelling of *Janab Pakal* or to the *-la-ta* suffix, so I am forced to withdraw them from evidence. If some future epigrapher demonstrates that these unusual spellings are indeed random, that they have no hidden connotation and fully substitute with other spellings, then we may cite their distribution as evidence to define more specifically the carvers' design-and-execution procedures.



Fig. 2-42. Palace Tablet: Four rare *la-ta* suffixes on Distance Numbers (counting toward death dates), and a comparable calendric. Three different Artists. Photographs by author.

2.6. The Full-Figure Initial Series Hand(s)

2.6.0. Introduction

In this section we'll come to the surprising conclusion that at least three Hands worked on three successive full-figure glyphs (the 'Bak'tun,' 'K'atun,' and 'Tun'). Further, one of these crowded Artists carved *parts* of two adjacent glyphs ([Figs. 2-47](#) through [2-50](#), [3-78](#)). Now, these

intricate glyphs are less than a square foot in size; it is hard to imagine all this happening at once; the masters and apprentices must have taken turns or worked different shifts, and perhaps one or more of the most-highly-skilled masters kept busy, flitting about like a hummingbird, correcting here, encouraging there, filling in a face or a hand or other more sophisticated detail for this or that colleague. The workshop must have been an intense scene, filled with activity and very close collaboration among a large, highly-skilled, and motivated team.

2.6.1 From the Top (See also section 3-07, for comparisons in greater detail.)

The ‘Initial Series’ of the *Palace Tablet* is the only known full-figure glyph text at Palenque.¹⁰¹ Its use here, combined with its location and size, underscores the extreme importance invested in this Tablet as an expression of Palenque royal power. This most impressive part of this most impressive inscription is arguably the part that would be assigned to a most respected artist, a senior, ranking artist, perhaps the director of the entire project. And certainly its execution, its style, its flavor, is powerful and consistent (at least through the 12thth row, on which more later). In particular, these full-figure glyphs are simpler and more legible than those carved (a bit later) at Copan and especially at Quirigua; our artist has arranged the interlocked figures simply seated quietly side by side, rather than (as at Quirigua) locked in a violent, contorted struggle which renders the protagonists almost indistinguishably tangled. ([Fig. 2-12](#))

¹⁰¹ Full-figure glyphs are a rarity in the Maya corpus. We find their most consistent employment at Copan and Quirigua, (e.g., Stela D at both sites). One lesser-known example closer to Palenque is a throne inscription at Yaxchilan (Mathews, Peter, private communication), and occasionally a full-figure will drift into an otherwise normal text. A hybrid of this sort is the IS of Yaxchilan Lintel 48, whose ‘head-variant’ IS has a full-figure ‘*k’in* monkey,’ holding ‘head-variant’ forms of the numerals 10 and 6 which form its coefficient 16. The standard format for a full-figure glyph collocation is rather limited. Each block usually consists of a pair of figures representing two glyphs. Phonetic affixes, which commonly complement the ‘bak’tun,’ ‘k’atun,’ and ‘winal’ glyphs in their abstract form, are universally absent in full-figure variants, and almost so with head-variants. Since most full-figure texts are Initial Series Long Counts, the glyphs are nearly all calendric, of the formula ISIG, X ‘bak’tun,’ Y ‘k’atun,’ Z ‘tun,’ A ‘winal,’ B ‘k’in,’ C (daysign); where numerical coefficients are represented by the X, Y, ... C letters. The numerals are usually humanoid figures, often marked with ‘god-signs’ on legs and arms, with diagnostic heads more or less identical with the commoner ‘head-variant’ glyphs for the numerals. For example, the number 9 is the Hero Twin Xbalanque, a young man wearing patches of jaguar skin on his upper arms, legs, and around his mouth. The ‘head-variant’ for 9 is the head of the same fellow, with the diagnostic patch of fur on his mouth. Another example: The ‘Tun Bird’ is a chimerical combination of raptor, human skull, and jaguar; its usual head-form is a beaked, feathered head with a jaguar’s eye and a human jawbone replacing the lower beak. The ‘full-figure’ form of this creature has the usual head, but on a humanoid body with feathered wings, and bird-clawed hands and feet. The Palace Tablet’s ‘Tun Bird’ also wears a fancy earring, pectoral and collar, the latter of woven-fiber supporting ‘death-eyes’ and a cropped fringe.

In the case of collocations where more than two glyphs combine, such as the ISIG or, on Copan Stela D, in the ‘Supplementary Series,’ usually the third and fourth elements appear in their simple or abstract form, for example the ‘combs’ flanking the ‘patron,’ or the *Haab* ‘drum’ on the ISIG.



Fig. 2-43. Palace Tablet. The 'Initial Series Introductory Glyph' A1-B2. Photograph by author.

Observing closely the 'Initial Series Introductory Glyph,' we can begin to list the characteristics of this Hand. Immediately we see that the carver prefers a minimum of relief modeling, and carved the left '*ka-comb*' with a distinct bevel where it is overlapped by the seated '*patron of the month Mak*'¹⁰² figure. He models the '*patron*'s eyes, nose, lips and belly, but virtually the entire rest of the glyph is carved flat, with engraved details. He engraves some of the lines deeply and widely (e.g., the inner arch of the '*ka-comb*' and the outline of the *Haab*

¹⁰² The so-called 'Patron of the Month' for Mak is either a simple tau-shaped *Ik* glyph, or its 'head variant,' a young man wearing the glyph as an earflare (also the 'head variant' of the number 3). In this case the young man displays three 'god-marks' on his arms and legs consisting of the *Ik* sign in an *Ik*-shaped outline. He is shaking maracas, whose 'voice' is carried by the air; an emblem befitting the god of wind, of song, and of odor (the Aztecs considered aroma to be the 'song' of a flower). See Thompson, 1950, Figs. 22-23

'drum'), so widely as to create the *illusion* of modeling. This Hand distinguishes the glyphic elements of the collocation with bold outlines or with planar foreground-background distinctions. A good example of the latter is the recessed background area round the head and torso of the 'patron.' The damaged tripartite *tzi* that surmounts the ISIG is essentially flat, but carved sloping toward the background, so that its lower area essentially *becomes* background behind the 'patron.' Likewise the right 'ka-comb' sinks downward toward the left, becoming the background plane behind the 'patron's arm and torso. Where the 'patron's left 'hand' (our right) and 'instrument' overlaps the 'ka-comb,' the artist has subtly sunk the surface of the 'comb' in order to place it visually on a more recessed plane, to bring the 'hand' and 'wand'/'rattle' forward.

In other words, this carver perceives the glyph as a collection of overlapping graphic planar shapes, rather than as overlapping sculptural objects.

His right 'ka-comb' alternates deeply- with lightly-engraved 'teeth,' curved in the usual way. Its matching 'comb' to the left seems unfinished,¹⁰³ both in its abruptly-beveled planes and in its tentative secondary 'teeth.' The 'combs' both exhibit a powerfully calligraphic form, especially the left 'comb's unmistakable lean to the right. This same lean or slant can be seen, more subtly, in the asymmetric ends of the otherwise sausage-shaped *Haab* 'drum.' This Hand expunges extraneous details and decorative touches from his glyphs, which is a key element in their clarity and legibility. However, *someone* (maybe a colleague) added a surprisingly delicate touch, carving tiny knuckle-wrinkles just behind the god's left big toenail. (Other "fine" details, such as the crosshatching just below, seem Gargantuan by comparison.) Details like toenails and fingernails, where present, are skillful and accurate, though his right hand, across his chest, is noticeably awkward, particularly around the thumb. We see the same sort of awkwardly-drawn hands on many figures at Palenque, such as the Father and Mother on the *Tablet of the Slaves* (see [Fig. 2-60](#)), and the figures on the West side of the *Temple XIX Platform* (see [Figs. 1-28, 1-49ff](#)). His left hand seems more natural, despite the unnatural grip with the little finger lifted daintily. This effete-ly-lifted pinky is actually a meaningful gesture, common in portrayals of Maya handling sacred objects.¹⁰⁴ His *Ik*-shaped 'god-marks' are simply delineated, unlike the peculiar *Ik*' daysign directly adjacent at C1. (The *Haab* 'drum' on which he sits does more or less

¹⁰³ This 'unfinished' state comes as a surprise, particularly of the very first glyph. It suggests that this glyph was carved near the end of the project, as deadlines loomed large. This supports my hypothesis that the *last* 'full-figure' glyph (A13-B14) was carved first.

¹⁰⁴ Its precise meaning, however, eludes us. It is gesture #15 in Ancona-Ha, Perez de Lara, and Van Stone (2000), and appears again on the numerical coefficient figure of the 'Winal' at A9-10.

match a smaller example in the upper part of adjacent C2: its vertical 'bars,' too small for crosshatching, the artist merely scooped concave; but he did crosshatch its supporting 'split-yi')

The god leans far to our left, and parts his sensitively-carved lips in an expression of awe as he tilts his head back to regard, with heavy-lidded eyes, whatever awe-inspiring vision confronts him. He has exaggerated cranial deformation and his hair is divided subtly into four 'locks' which, unadorned, arch backwards and hang precisely like corn-tassels. The engraved lines which define the strands of his hair seem rushed, a bit shaky (like the secondary lines engraved on the left 'comb'). He wears a single strand of large jade beads round his neck and a flori-form earflare with a long 'pistil' counterweighted by a heavy jade bead (or perhaps more, this area is damaged) hanging down behind the earlobe. His loincloth is simple and neatly carved, as are his cloth-tasseled maracas. The 'patron's figure is well-proportioned, agile, and very skillfully delineated, and surrounded by simple, careful, calligraphic abstract glyphic elements. The ISIG Artist is indeed a masterful draftsman and, probably, a masterfully subtle if impatient—or rushed—carver.

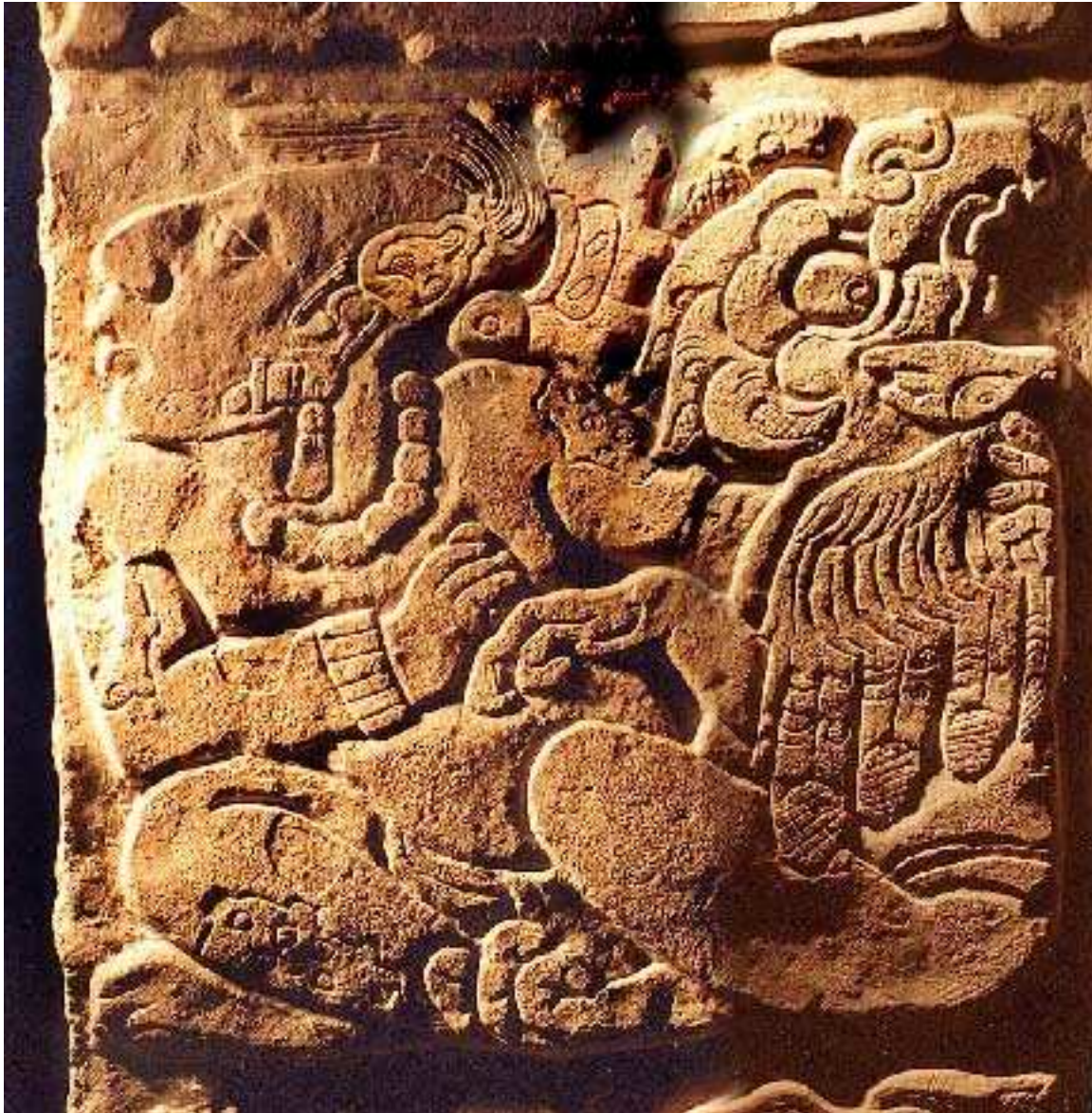


Fig. 2-44. The Second Initial Series Glyph, "9 'Bak'tun' (9 *Pih*)" A3-B4. Photograph by author.

In the next glyph, the Hero-twin figure of Xbalanque sits in almost exactly the same pose as the 'patron of Mak' above. His left arm and leg disappear behind the human-bodied 'Bak'tun Bird,' his deftly-sculpted and delicately-spread fingers appear from behind the 'Bird's shoulder, gently clutching his collocative like an old friend. The 'Bird's head is somewhat modeled, though much of this effect is due to the artist's widely- and deeply-cut outlines, as noted above. The human hand that forms its lower jaw expresses a common Maya gesture of indeterminate

meaning.¹⁰⁵ The 'Bird' has a human body but crabbed bird-claws for hands and feet, and its wing is distinctly defined by three differing rows of feathers.

The shape of legs and eyes and jewelry, the spare, crisp, deeply-outlined and planar carving of these two figures, the modeling of the respective faces, is totally in keeping with the style exhibited in the ISIG. However, the cross-hatching and the definition of Xbalanque's hair is somewhat finer; the Twin's jaguar-skin patches and jaguar ear have particularly finely crosshatched spots. His ear-jewelry is more clear here: a squarish flori-form earflare, its 'pistil' a single egg-shaped bead, counterweighted by a common assemblage not unlike an inverted exclamation point. He wears a 'jaguar ear' like a mask, tucked above his human ear, and the traditional lobed, beaded, asymmetrical Yax sign rests behind his shoulder. Interestingly, the expected patch of jaguar skin on his cheek is barely sketched in, a mere circle of tiny dots, not at all in keeping with the lobed patches of pelt on his limbs. I note that his lower lip is 'Hapsburgian,' very like that on the figure of Ahkal-Mo'-Naab on the *Tablet of the Slaves*, discussed below (Section 2.7.1). The 'patron of Mac,' however, does not sport such a lip, though I believe both these first two IS glyphs to have sprung from the brush and chisel of the same Hand.

¹⁰⁵ Gesture #12 in Ancona-Ha, Perez de Lara, and Van Stone (2000).

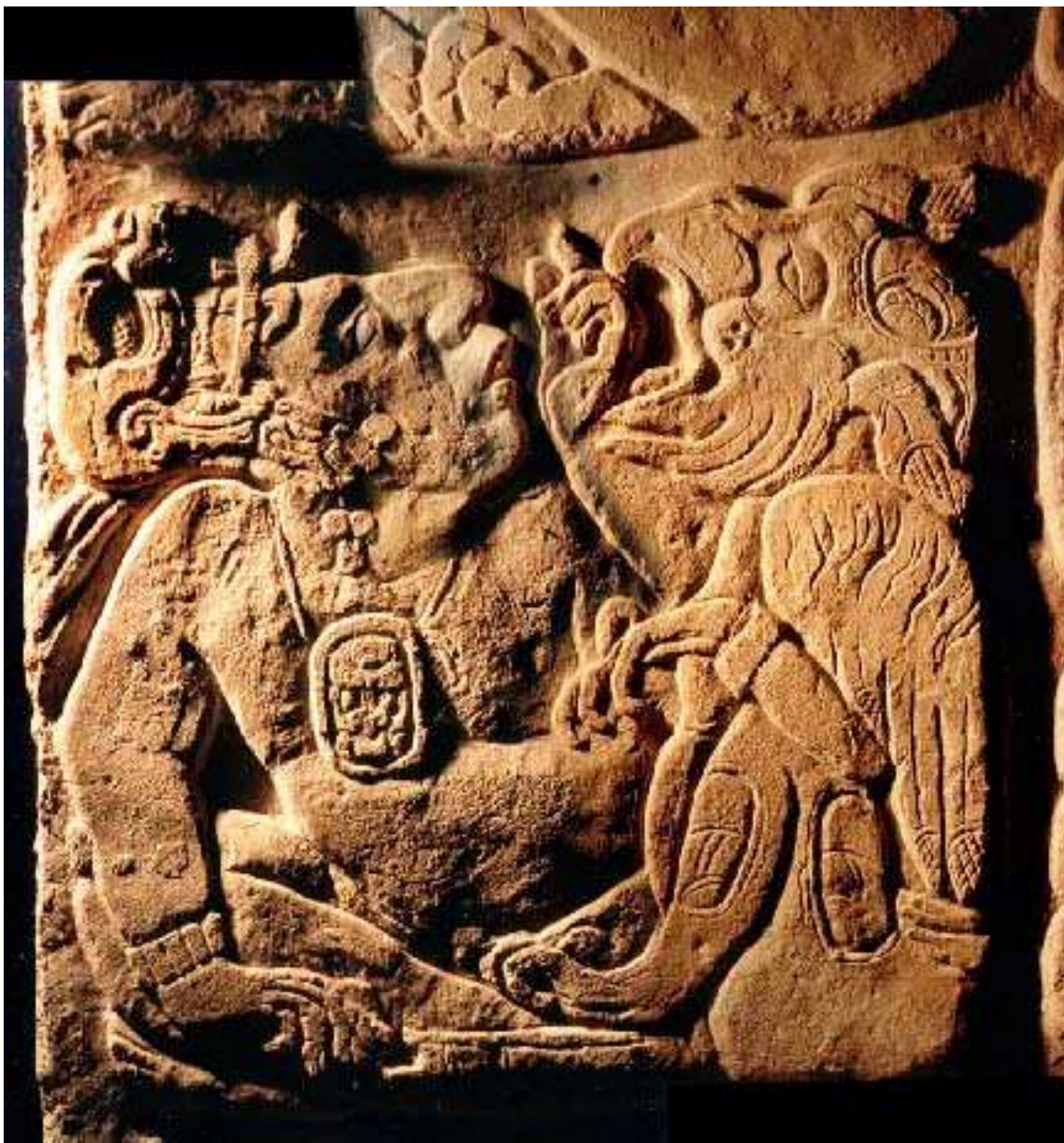


Fig. 2-45. The Third Initial Series Glyph, "11 'K'atuns,'" A5-B6. Photography by author.

The "10 K'atuns" glyph, however, occupying A5-B6, exhibits the same general qualities of simplicity and clarity in carving, the same bold outlines and usual restriction of modeling to the faces. However, it is not entirely by this same Hand. I note some stylistic minor differences, and one major one: *someone* detailed the feathers and claws of the 'K'atun Bird' totally differently from those on the 'Bak'tun Bird' just above. The shoulders of the 'K'atun's wing he adorns with wispy pennants (totally unlike the bold scimitar-like curves of its upstairs neighbor). The primary flight feathers he renders narrow and tapering, with double-outlined dark spots at the

tips. His crosshatching, in contrast to that of the 'Bak'tun Bird,' is drawn at a steep angle, acute at the upper and lower corners of each tiny rhomboid. The 'Bak'tun Bird's crosshatched rhomboids (as well as the ISIG's) are acute on the *side* corners, his primary feathers wide and sausage-shaped, the dark ends bounded by single engraved crescents which resemble fingernails, quite unlike those of the 'K'atun Bird's primaries. Likewise, the head-feathers of the two birds are treated dissimilarly, in form, detail, and firmness of stroke. ([Fig. 2-46.](#))

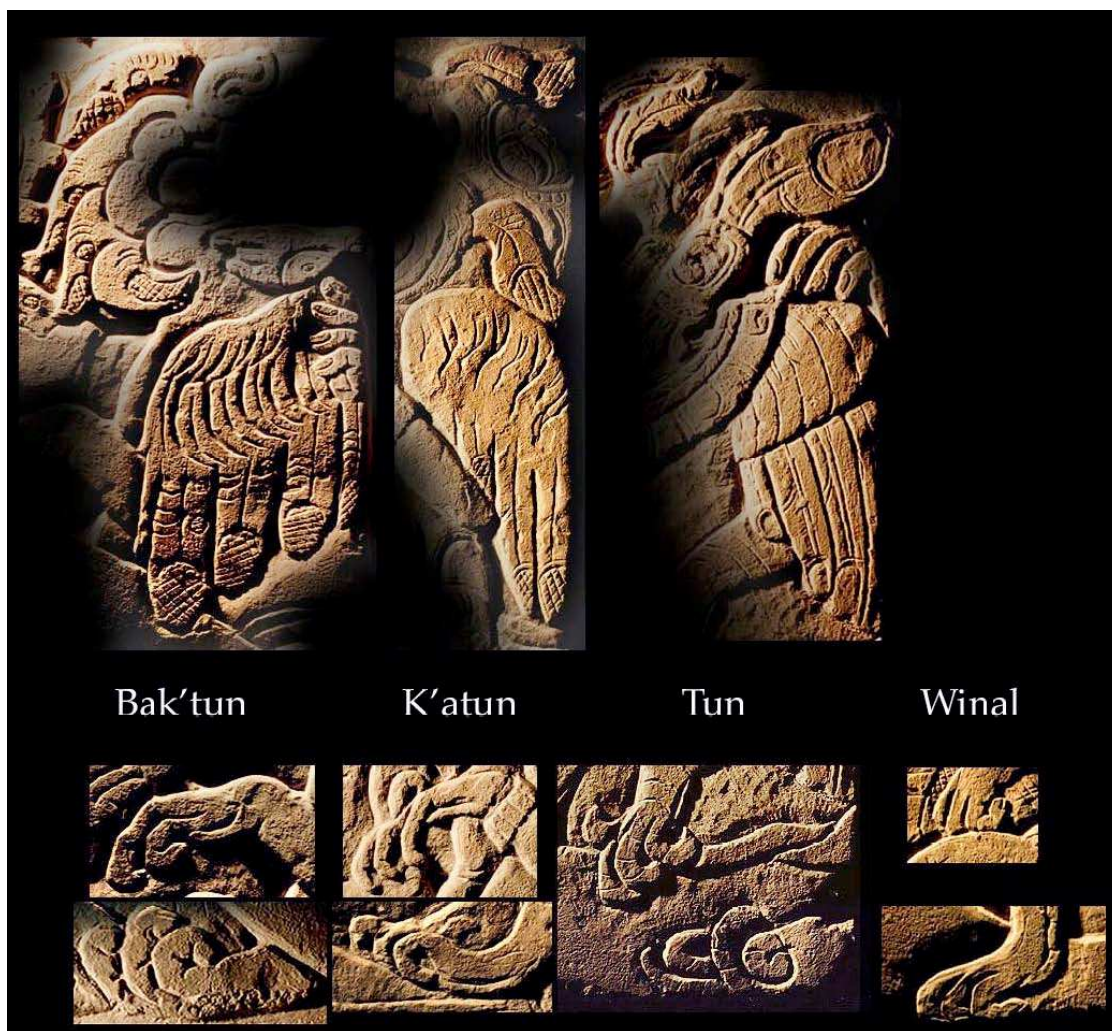


Fig. 2-46. Palace Tablet Initial Series 'Birds' and 'claws.' Three different artists; the 'claws' of the 'Winal frog' are by the Hand who carved the Bak'tun figures. See also section 3.07. Photography by author.

The 'K'atun Bird's claws are also more gnarled, the claws crossing each other while the 'Bak'tun's claws behave more like curled fingers. The human's upraised fingers also cross in an unusual way, perhaps forming another meaningful gesture (it rather resembles the gesture of blessing of a Greek Orthodox priest). 'K'atun's head is completely different, more naturally

avian than the 'Bak'tun's, though its eye is rendered as if it were a human eye. The lackluster sculpting of the 'K'atun's wing and cheek feathers presents a surprising contrast, however, to the masterful assurance of the rest of its head, its clawed feet and 'hands,' especially the 'mirror' on its cranium ([Fig. 2-47](#)). I am tempted to suggest that the artist who carved the wings and body of this 'Bird' might have been a lowly apprentice to the master who sculpted its face, its claws, and the human figure.



Fig. 2-47. *Palace Tablet* Initial Series 'Bird heads.' Three different artists. Photography by author.

Yet the 'K'atun's human coefficient (he is *not* 'god-marked'), the full-figure numeral 10, also might be a different Hand than that of the first two glyphs. His nose and pectoral muscles are more carefully modeled. His jade-bar bracelet is different; especially it is too tight for his corpulent wrist (though the rest of his body seems trim). His earring assemblage seems more carefully detailed, quite a different portrayal than the apparently similar earflare and 'pistil' on the 'Bak'tun' just above. The head-variant of the numeral 10 usually takes the form of a skull, of the Death God A, but here it appears as a human wearing a skull headdress. Our Hand has carved that skull quite lovingly and in comparatively high relief; its deep-set, bulging eye has a large crosshatched pupil, its cranium is well-rounded, its jaws bold and ferocious. The man also wears a narrow striped headband holding a flame-like diadem against his forehead; this too is in unprecedentedly high relief.

All in all, parts of this glyph exhibit a slightly more volumetric, expert sculptural quality than the glyphs above, while other parts (the wings) seem tentative and less skilled. The man's face has a somewhat different eye-shape (as well as earflare-shape) and more assertive expression, though this could be due to an artist's wish to express a different intention. The artist did portray this man earnestly conversing with the 'K'atun Bird,' in contrast to the 'Bak'tun Bird' and its coefficient, who steadfastly focus their attention in opposite directions. The fingers and claws

seem more lively as well, and I feel compelled to assign this glyph —at least important parts of it— to two new Hands. These Hands hewed closely to well-defined sculptural and drawing standards set by the master of the project. The coefficient-man, for instance, rests his right hand just above the mat (at A6) with fingers fanned in precisely the same (probably meaningful) shape as Xbalanque's left hand, the one amiably grasping the 'Bak'tun's shoulder.

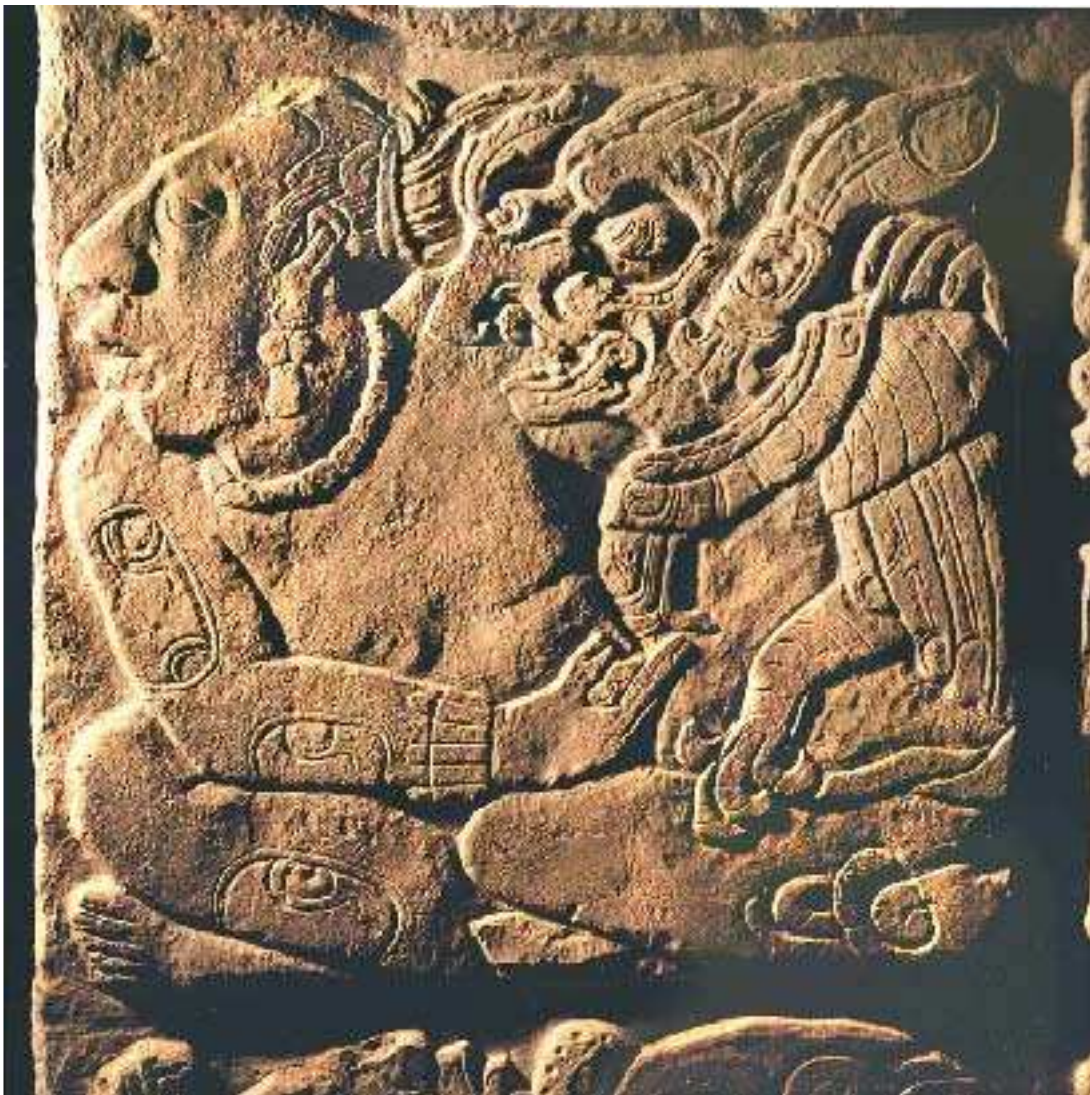


Fig. 2-48. *Palace Tablet*, Fourth Initial Series glyph, 'Tun' (*Haab*) glyph & coefficient 11, A7-B8. Photography by author.

The fourth IS glyph, "11 Tuns," introduces yet more innovations. The coefficient is a deity facing leftwards in a natural pose (though his eyes are directed upwards), 'god-marked' with neatly-carved double-outlined 'Kaban' signs, his arm around the shoulder of the 'Tun Bird' much

as Xbalanque holds *his* 'Bird' above. His other arm rests across his lap, the hand pointing up at the 'Bird,' a curled middle finger prominently positioned between thumb and forefinger. His bracelet is more complex and carefully drawn than the five that appear in the previous three glyphs, though it is essentially the same rectangular-plaques form, adding only a 'fringe' of round beads. He, too, leans toward the left, and like the first two figures, wears a simple strand of fat jade beads. His earring consists of the triple-bead counterweight only; virtually identical to that of the #10 coefficient just above, but here there is no flare to counterbalance. His hair is bound, like Xbalanque's, in a simple strip of loosely-knotted cloth, though here the knot is somewhat more prominent. His facial expresses the usual almost-deadpan awe. He parts his lips as above, as if he is about to speak (or perhaps he simply forgot to close them). This artist added to the coefficient's eyes a tiny engraved-outline pupil, just as the 'K'atun Bird's eye above.

The 'Tun Bird' wears a 'death-eye collar' and '%-sign' pectoral of the Death God / God A, in addition to the brow, empty 'nose,' and jawbone of a human skull. Like the two preceding 'Birds,' it has a winged humanoid body with bird-claw 'hands' and 'feet.' It wears an unusual ear ornament consisting of a trefoil celestial symbol often seen in the 'Quadripartite Badge,' from which sprouts vertically a prominent feather. This chimera's eye is the usual heavy-lidded 'jaguar eye,' deeply and convincingly carved, marked iconographically with three drilled dots.

It is in details of the 'Bird' features that this monster displays such different style that I (reluctantly) assign its carving to yet a third Hand. Its wings, for instance, consist of two well-defined rows of feathers, feathers whose details differ strongly from those of the other 'Birds.' This Carver defined a feather's rib with a double line (except for those atop its 'head'); the others did so with a single groove. The 'black spots' terminating the feathers here on wing and head all are 'scooped out' with a shallow excavation rather than with the usual crosshatching. Likewise, the 'dark spots' on the 'Kaban god-marks' are mostly excavated rather than crosshatched. Another difference that argues for a new Hand is the treatment of the 'Tun Bird's claws. Though portraying these claws as snagged like those of the 'K'atun Bird' above, this Hand sees fit to engrave scaly lines round the wrists and 'fingers,' rendering the claws a bit more avian in appearance. On the other hand, the claws' *outlines* are more abstract, composed of powerful conventional curved strokes that communicate better at a distance the essence of claw-ness; more like a long-practiced glyph than a drawing from life. ([Fig. 2-46](#). 3 birds' claw details)

Although it appears that these three calendric 'Birds' (or at least their wings and claws) were carved by three different individuals, we find much more consistency between the sensitively-

sculpted humanoids, and even between parts of these 'Birds.' Despite the many reasons to believe that this 'Tun Bird's wings and claws were carved by a third personality, most of its head, with clear faceted defining lines, looks powerfully like it sprang from the clear, disciplined, laconic Hand which carved the 'ISIG' and 'Bak'tun' glyphs. Perhaps this similarity is due to several Hands having apprenticed with the same Master, a regional 'accent' as it were.) Further, the 'Tun-bird's 'jaw' at B7 has a deep, curved cleft; it is unlike any other 'jawbone' on the entire Tablet, except for one: that on the 'skull-headdress' of the K'atun's coefficient just above (at A5. See [Figs. 2-49](#) & [3-76a](#)). So this 'bird-chimera' seems to share features with all three humanoids in preceding glyphs, as well as its own coefficient.



Fig. 2-49. Palace Tablet Initial Series 'mandibles' on K'atun coefficient and on 'Tun Bird' (*Haab*) glyphs A5, B7. Similar mandibles and brows; probably the same Hand. Photography by author.

Perhaps this similarity is due to several Hands having apprenticed with the same Master, a regional 'accent' as it were. It is not hard to imagine variable details like feathers were entrusted to apprentices. The softly-modeled 'god of #11' coefficient contrasts with the sharp and boldly-delineated features of the 'Tun Bird's head; could the humanoid coefficients be by one Master and the 'Birds' by others? I think it unlikely that all these 'Birds' spring from the same Master, experimenting with different treatments, consciously varying the details for variety. This might explain the varying 'Birds' heads, but not likely the different claws or feathers.

I think at this point that the most satisfying explanation would reflect a busy Renaissance painting-production shop: One Master closely superintends the production of numerous works by trained assistants, reserving for his own hand the most important and satisfying tasks, for

example portrait faces. In our case, the Master's work would more likely be found in the Initial Series and the master layout of the whole Tablet than anywhere else. Under this scenario, the parameters for sculpting human figures seem to be much more closely standardized than that for birds and chimeras. And, as we shall see, at least some of the artists were free to employ their own preferred spelling for some glyphs, which indicates that the master layout was more of a sketch than a rigidly-followed fully-detailed drawing.

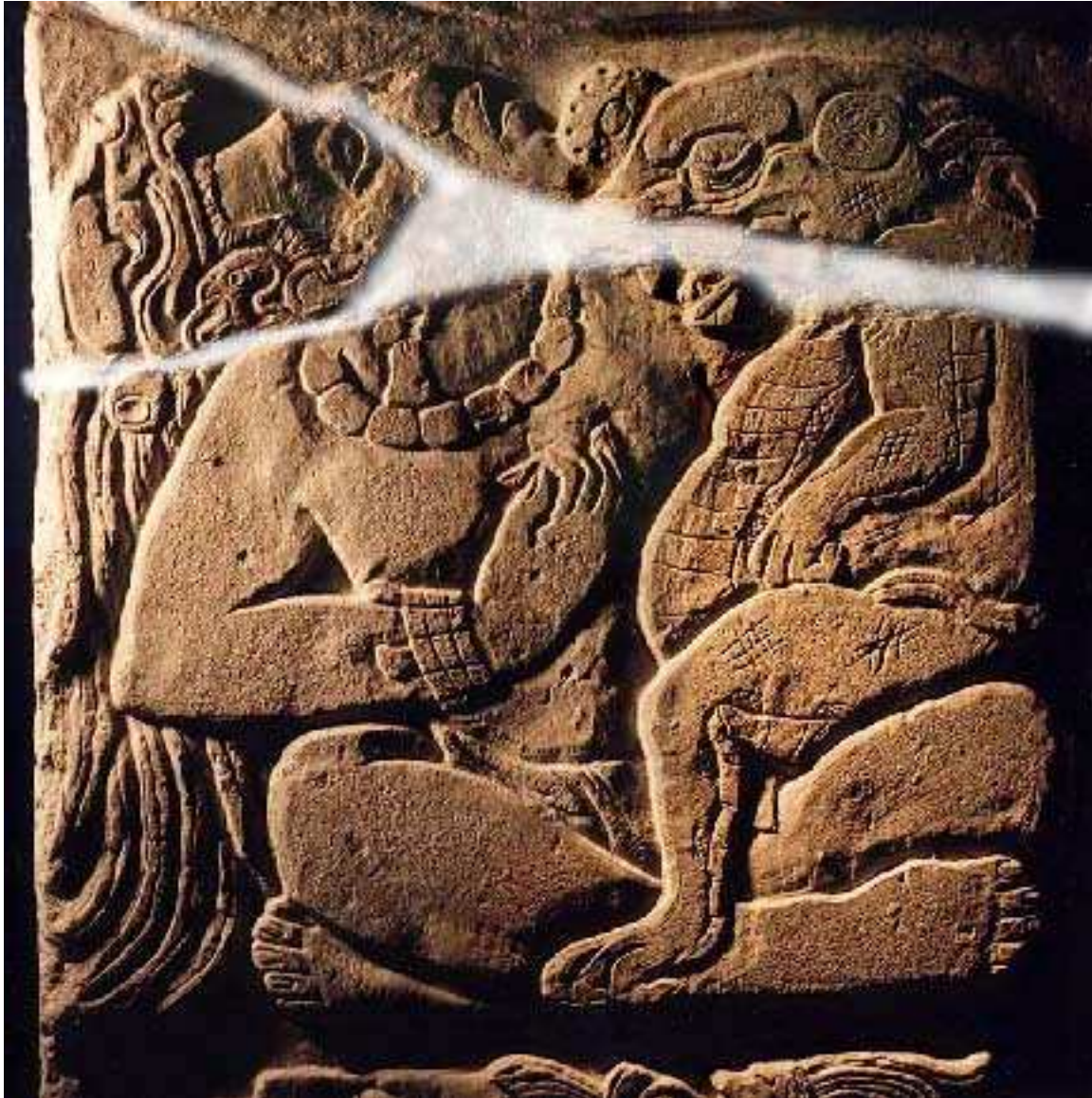


Fig. 2-50. *Palace Tablet*, The fifth IS glyph, A9-B10, '17 Winal.' Photography by author.

On the fifth IS glyph, one discerns at first glance many similarities between the 'Winal Frog' (B9-B10) and the 'Tun Bird' (B7-B8): their heavy eyelids and flat brow ridges, the 'Frog's belly

scales with the 'Bird's claws. It appears that the same artist carved both these glyphs. The 'Frog's feet, however, better match those of the 'Bak'tun bird' than the 'Tun Bird.' Comparing the two coefficients, one notes the man (again, he is not 'god-marked') wearing a slightly new type of bracelet made of three rows of squarish jade plates and bell-shaped beads, but this is the kind of gratuitous variation we often find at Palenque and elsewhere. Likewise, this fellow's hand- and head-pose are new, but probably also simply the result of conscious variation; such variation seems to be rule in full-figure texts.¹⁰⁶ This man's toenails are narrow and carved identically to those on the 'number 11 god' above (with the exception of the big toe of the first figure, none of the others above have toenails even defined). Although the 'frog' (this anthropomorphic chimera combines iguana and *bufo marinus* toad characteristics, and wears a loincloth) wears crosshatched spots, it also sports a trio of 'scooped' spots (like we see on the feathers of the 'Tun' glyph) on its 'ear.' The coefficient fellow wears a jaguar ear and skull-headdress whose 'dark spots' are also 'scooped' instead of crosshatched. However, note that here the concavities are more careful and three-dimensionally conical, rather than the flat-bottomed concavities we see in the 'Tun Bird.' They more closely resemble the careful 'jaguar spots' on A6 and A17 and the 'Jaguar Throne of Creation' than those of the 'Tun' (See [Figs. 1-89, 1-90](#)).

¹⁰⁶ Linda Schele has demonstrated (1998 [*Code of Kings*], p. 123-125) a clearly conscious example of variation for its own sake in the portrayals of the ten portraits carved on the sides of the *Sarcophagus of Pakal* in 683. Here the artists distributed seven different attributes (including gesture and four different articles of jewelry) according to rigid patterns of position rather than to communicate anything about the individuals' specific character or rank. I am convinced that the poses found in 'Full Figure Glyphs' were varied with the same intent. Note, for instance, the directions that the participants in this Initial Series face: Starting with the ISIG, the humanoids face (primary direction first) up-left, left-up, right-up, left, up-right, up-left, and left. Their partners face (starting with the Bak'tun) right-up, up-left, left, left-down, left, and up-left. Combining these pairs, we get UL-0 (no partner on ISIG), LU-RU, RU-UL, L-L, UR-LD, UL-L, and L-UL. I suspect the gestures here might also vary without much regard to their specific meaning, though I must leave to another day investigating this possibility. As evidence to support this suspicion, compare the position of 'hands' which replace the 'mandibles' on various head-variant and full-figure 'Bak'tun' glyphs. They assume a variety of gestures, some of which, taken out of context, would read as specific glyphs. However, in the context of a 'Bak'tun' glyph, they almost certainly cannot have different *meanings* in different inscriptions.



Fig. 2-51. *Palace Tablet*, Comparison of 'skull' headdresses on numerical coefficient figures. Photography by author.

The number 17 coefficient here wears a skull headdress, which probably was to be considered identical to that worn by the number 10 coefficient just two glyphs above. However, this portrayal is carved so differently that resemblance is faint. The earlier skull (A5) is rounded, almost human; while this one is long-snouted. Its large, flat, vaguely T-shaped supraorbital plate predominates, with three oval dots and a process protectively jutting down over the excavated pupil of the eye ([Fig. 2-51](#), also [Fig. 3-80](#)). Hanging from this skull is a 'death-eye' and a luxuriant cascade of hair (or feathers?); the comparable skull above wears only a short ponytail, almost an afterthought. Compared to the crisp, confident detailing of the rest of this glyph, however, this hair is crudely executed, its lines unsure, erratic. The few short locks on the "10" above also appear half-hearted, and furthermore lack any sort of fine line detailing at all. One gets the distinct impression that the Masters here entrusted the finishing touches on hair to less-skilled apprentices. On the other hand, the hair on all the other humanoids in the Long Count are competently rendered. The Calendar Round coefficient, as we shall see, is a different matter.



Fig. 2-52. *Palace Tablet Sixth IS glyph, "Zero K'in," A11-B12.* Photography by author.

In a pose very close to that of the 'Bak'tun' coefficient, the 'Zero God' (marked with two "zero" glyphs), sits with his arm around a 'Monkey Man' variant of the *K'in* glyph. His right hand assumes a royal gesture of acknowledgement, close to the chest, wrist bent up, fingers curled but carefully fanned.¹⁰⁷ Head thrown back, upswept hair tied in the usual way, he wears a simple necklace: two large jade beads on a string or thong, and a simple uncounterweighted earflare. The 'Monkey-Man's snarling lip and half-closed eye present a fierce aspect, while his jeweled headband, pectoral amulet, beaded bracelet, loincloth, and the usual swept-back hair indicate his human ancestry. On his cheek are three prominently-drilled dots (chimerical Bufo or Jaguar-indicators?), his hand-gesture is unfortunately eroded, and over his (human) ear he wears the usual *Ak'bal*-marked 'scribal inkpot'¹⁰⁸ or 'deer-ear.'

The Initial Series glyphs down to here, though they display some variety in carving style, all still adhere to a fairly rigid standard: simplicity in modeling, lack of excess decoration, especially

¹⁰⁷ Gesture #2 in Ancona-Ha, Perez de Lara, and Van Stone (2000).

minimal delineation of details such as fingers, faces, arms and feet. This simplicity, in carving as in pose, gives these earliest full-figure glyphs greater clarity and legibility than we observe in later full-figure passages at Copán, Quiriguá, and Yaxchilán.



Fig. 2-53. *Palace Tablet: Seventh IS glyph, 11 Ajaw, A13-B14.* Photo by author.

The next glyph, “11 Ajaw,” adheres only partly to the above standard of simplicity. Its “11-God” (marked with two ‘Kaban’ signs, just as the “11” above) wears the same jewelry and hair-tie as his fellows. However, the resemblance stops with its layout-drawing; unlike its predecessors, this glyph’s carver finished it to an extraordinary degree, completely modeling and polishing the figures and lovingly crafting the tiniest details as if he had all the time in the world. Where before the figures were more graphic than sculptural, with only nominally rounded edges and modeling restricted mostly to faces, this glyph is completely sculptural, with

¹⁰⁸ For more on this identification, see pp. 106-107 (“The Monkey-Man Gods”) of Coe and Kerr, and Justin Kerr’s article, “Where Do You Keep Your Paint-Pot?,” privately circulated, n.d., and available (April 2004) on his website <http://famsi.saiph.com:9500/dataSpark/maya>.

not a square millimeter left uncarved. The other humanoids above wear clunky squarish bead necklaces, while this “11-God’s” beads are round and polished. Eight¹⁰⁹ figures in this Initial Series wear the same ‘corn-tassel’ hairstyle, and display the same ‘widow’s peak’ hairline, but the other guys’ hair seems unkempt next to his perfectly-combed and trimmed locks. The standard Palenque method for rendering long hair seen here is to indicate individual strands with long, lightly-engraved, parallel lines down its entire length, with every third or fourth or fifth strand engraved more deeply to indicate natural separation into locks of hair. As neatly-carved as the hair is on the first (IS), fourth (Tun) and sixth (K’in) glyphs, these seem rough and clumsy when compared to the much-finer and more naturally-layered locks of the ‘11-God.’

If any glyph on this Tablet were a sculptor’s model or exemplar to which any carver on the project might refer, this could be it.¹¹⁰ This glyph also happened to sit at eye level on the Tablet, and would naturally present the most effective place to showcase one’s carving expertise, if one were pressed for time and unable to devote such loving attention to every square inch of the (100-square-foot/10 m²) Tablet. I can think of three reasons for this glyph’s being so much more beautifully carved than the others: (1) Perhaps the team were pressed for time and found themselves unable to devote such loving attention to every square inch of the (100-square-foot/10 m²) Tablet. (2) Perhaps it is nothing more earth-shaking than personal style; other Hands having been responsible for the upper glyphs — carvers who simply habitually chose a more graphic than a sculptural definition. (3) Or perhaps the designer(s) recognized that such fastidious attention to detail on those glyphs above eye-level would be wasted. No-one would be able to see subtle details up that high; indeed, the higher glyphs *needed* to be more graphic and simple to be read from below.

Yet, in surprising contrast, some details on this beautiful relief remain unfinished, or finished clumsily. The engraved oval in the center ‘foot’ of the ‘daysign cartouche,’ with its cursive tick at the top, is uncomfortably asymmetrical, flat on the right side. The lightly-engraved line framing the ‘Monkey-Ajaw’ daysign is likewise uncertain. Most out-of-place are the tentative ‘Kaban’ ‘god-marks’ on “11’s” arm and leg, drawn lightly by a manifestly different hand than that responsible for the similar ‘god-marks’ on the “11 Tuns” at A7-B8. Could the Hand that crafted that perfect coif, those excellent ears, those delicate miniature fingers on the ‘Monkey-Ajaw, have

¹⁰⁹ That is, eight out of ten; the second ‘Monkey-Man’ and the ‘Frog’ are bald...

¹¹⁰ Many such sculptor’s exemplars survive from Egyptian workshops, the most famous being the Berlin *Head of Nefertiti*.

also scraped these tyros' exercises?' The answer is simple: it was *not* the same Hand, it *was* some beginner.

I think it quite likely that this glyph *does* represent a master sculptor's standard, a model for the rest of the carvers on the project, should they have any questions as to depth of cut, radius of edge-molding, how to render hair, faces, or fingers, etc. At the same time it represents the teamwork and apprenticeship training congruent with a project of this magnitude: Whether pressed for time (looming dedication date?) or some other reason, many fine artists, and a few with less-developed skill, worked together closely on this inscription, even to the point of finishing each others' glyphs. In the case of the Initial Series, the Project Master painted the layout on the slab for the entire Initial Series and then probably carved the last glyph, the 11 K'in, as an example. Perhaps he also painted a sketch of the layout text on the whole slab. (But probably only in outline, like Egyptian layouts; I believe most carvers repainted their own layouts before carving.) Then the carving team got to work. If the Project Master carved any of the other full-figure glyphs, he must have felt rushed (and, with the glyphs reaching far overhead, able to get away with less-finished characters), or perhaps he was so busy overseeing the project that he was only able to finish a hand or face here and there for his colleagues.

2.6.2. The Full-Figure Initial Series Hand(s)' Other Glyphs: Columns C & D

The *Palace Tablet*, you will recall, was constructed from three limestone slabs ten feet tall: two 4-column-wide side panels flanking a central panel 10 columns wide. On the left slab, the Initial Series occupies only the upper 60% of the left two columns (down to AB-14). It seems likely that the artists working on the IS also cut the neighboring glyphs in Columns C and D, and indeed this seems to have been the case. The separate slab carrying Columns E-F through M-N, and that with O-P-Q-R, were probably concurrently being carved at nearby tables — under the same thatched roof, but some distance away. Although it is likely that some of the artists from Columns C-D also lent a hand on the other two slabs, we have no good reason to suppose that their other passages should have ended up adjacent to their work on C-D.

2.6.3. Summary of Initial Series Attributions (*See also* Section 3.07)

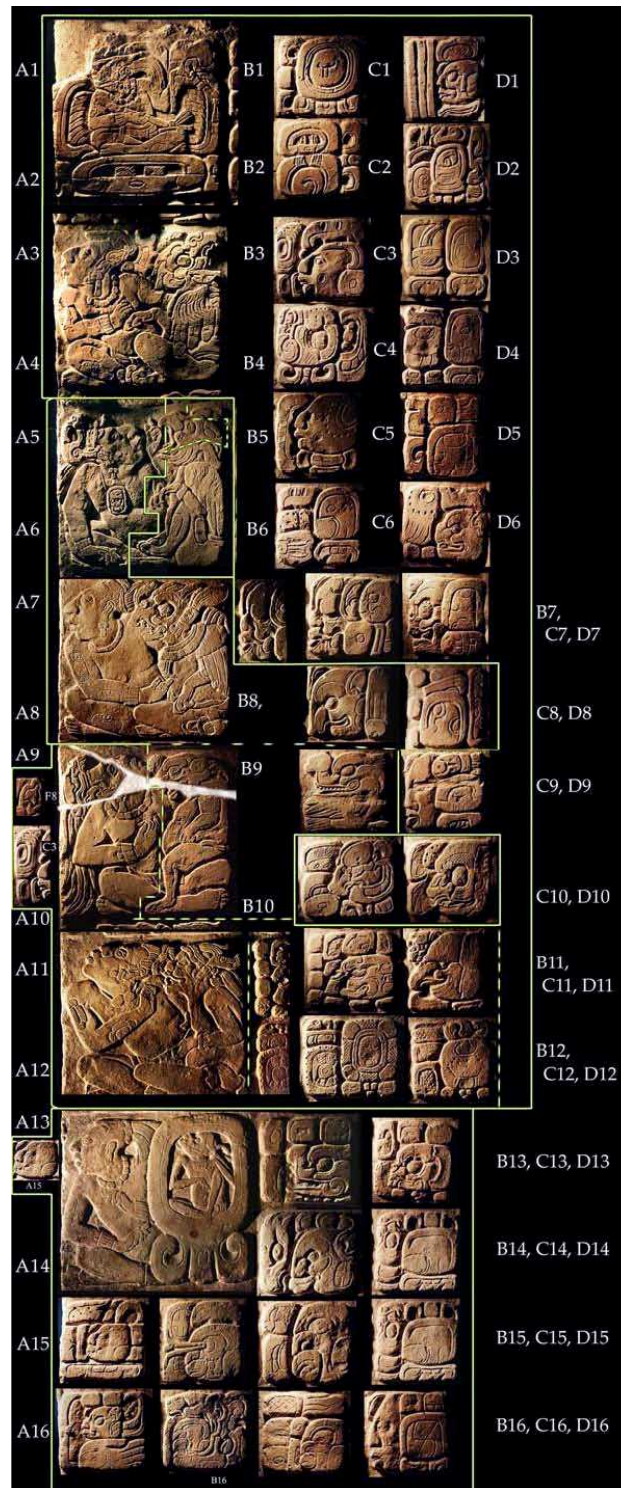


Fig. 2-54. *Palace Tablet*: Initial Series and adjacent columns with attributed territories. Photography by author.

So, the reader now has many, too many, connections and distinctions to juggle, just in the Initial Series. To summarize:

(1) The first two glyphs, the ISIG (A1-B2) and the 'Bak'tun' (A3-B4), are by the same Hand, apparently the C1-D1 Master (**Sections 3.6.5, 3.7**). Another Hand may have inserted details around the 'toenail' of the ISIG 'Patron of *Mak*.'

(2) The 'K'atun Bird' is mostly by a second Hand, except for its 'cranial mirror' and perhaps its 'eye' and 'beak.' A third Hand carved its coefficient "10" as well as the 'jawbone' on the 'Tun bird' in the next glyph. He manifestly did *not* carve the unique 'jawbone' at D7, which was probably carved by the C1-D1 Master.

(3) This third Hand (*not* the C1-D1 Master) also carved the entire "17 Tuns" glyph (A7-B8). Its flat concavities don't match C1-D1's, but rather those of the neighboring Hand who carved C8.

(4) The 'Winal' coefficient (A9-A10) is not by the Hand who carved the K'atun (A5-A6) and Tun (A7-A8) coefficients just above. He may represent a fourth Hand, but he more likely is identical with the C1-D1 Master(s). Certainly his 'skull headdress' and the 'feathers' dangling from it have much in common with C3, and his 'jaguar ear' matches that at F8, which I assign tentatively to the same Hand. His 'toes' match those of the A7-A8 'Tun' coefficient, but little else does. Likewise the 'Winal toad-iguana' (B9-B10) has some features in common with the 'Tun bird' above (B7-B8, the 'eye,' for example), but it finds a closer comparison at A16 (whose 'ophidian eye' also matches, raising the possibility that an "eye expert" carved all three). The 'Winal' creature also shares some qualities with the 'Bak'tun' glyph and with F9, both of which I assigned to the C1-D1 Master. Thus A9-B10 appears to represent a return of the C1-D1 Master, but with insertions ('toenails,' 'belly-scales,' 'eye?') by other artists.

(5) The 'K'in' glyph has much in common with its predecessors, though it is even more simplified and graphic than before (the 'hair,' for example). In this, it resembles C10. Its artist, however, has taken the trouble to model the figures' bodies a bit more than above, perhaps because this glyph is close to eye-level. It seems to have been carved by the same Hand as the 'Winal coefficient' glyph preceding it; I base this primarily on the 'lips' and 'eyes.'

(6) The 'Tzolk'in' date at A13-B14 has an entirely different character from the others. Certainly its amateurish 'Kaban god marks' are not by the Hand of A7-A8, because its otherwise superlative modeling sets a standard high above not only that Hand but by any of the other IS glyphs. Another Hand with comparably superior modeling is the L14 *Itz'i-Winik* Master, but his

detailing never matches this. The closest match is just below, at A15 and B16, and I think that this Hand finished columns AB to the bottom. He may also have executed the human faces at D15, D16, and F13, and probably other details.

If this were the Master of the whole project, he surely had his hands full administering the score of other carvers. We might expect his touch to appear anywhere on the Tablet, but infrequently. Whenever I find an anomalously-beautifully-carved detail shining out from an otherwise mediocre passage (for example, the 'hair' on C3 [Section 3.6.5, [Fig. 3-59](#)]), I suspect this to be the case.

2.7. The Artists of the *Tablet of the Slaves*

2.7.1 Description and Statistics

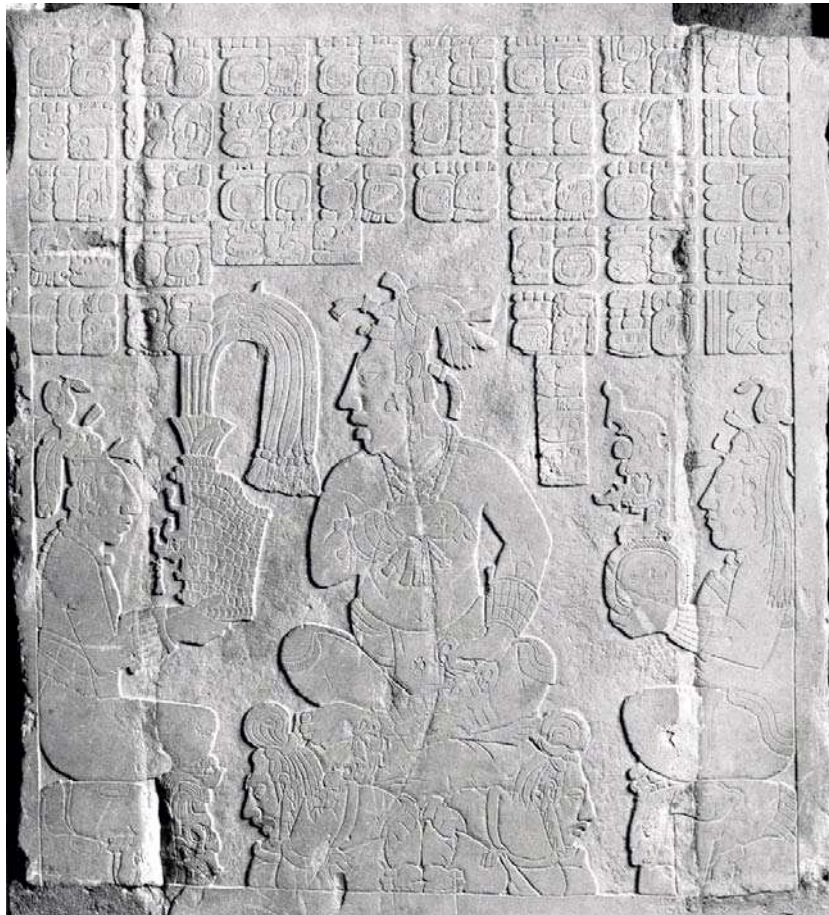


Fig. 2-55. *Tablet of the Slaves*. Photo by Merle Greene Robertson (Robertson 1991, pl. 282)

The *Tablet of the Slaves* (160cm x 140cm) was discovered in 1950 in Group IV as a result of work on the road to the present entrance of the Archaeological Park (Robertson 1991, 66). Group IV is 300 meters WNW of the main Plaza (that bounded by Temple XI, the Palace, and Temple of the Inscriptions), and comprises a small plaza bounded by a U-shaped group of buildings, which contained several burials (Robertson 1991, 7). The content of the Tablet and its location suggest that Group IV may have been an elite but non-royal residence, perhaps that of Lord Chak-Sutz', who is mentioned five times on the Tablet¹¹¹, (though the personage portrayed thereon is his younger half-brother and liege Ahkal Mo' Naab, crowned by his father and their mother (R. Wald, personal communication, 1999). The Tablet is superbly carved in very low relief (no more than 3mm between highest and lowest planes). It carries a tri-figure image of an accession ceremony, common at Palenque¹¹², framed by a main inscription of 34 glyphs and two 3-glyph identification labels arranged in an inverted-U around the head of the central figure.

It derives its nickname from the fact that Ahkal is seated, frontally but with his head facing to the left¹¹³, on a unique "throne": a cushion resting on two bound, kneeling, bent-over captives. His mother and father are likewise seated (in profile) on humbled figures, though these are unbound (presumably volunteers) and clearly supernatural: A toothy, long-lipped, 'mirror'-marked figure (a wind diety?) supports its namesake, Ahkal's father (labeled here "*Ti-wo-Chan-na ma-Mat ch'o-ko*"); while a deer-headed and -hoofed humanoid supports the mother (labeled here "*Lady Ki-nu-wi ma-ta ch'o-ko*"). The deer and the long-lipped character wear identical segmented belts. Aside from the disturbing furniture, the arrangement is quite conventional in

¹¹¹The text begins with the accession of their father K'inich Janab Pakal on 5 Lamat 1 Mol (9.9.2.4.8 / AD 615), mentions his "*tuun-seatings*" and those of the succeeding *K'uhul Ajaws* ("sacred lords") Kan-Balam and K'an-Joy-Chitam, then the birth of Chak-Sutz' (called *he-Sutz* in his youth) on 7 Kaban 15 K'ayab (9.11.18.9.17 / AD 671) at A4-B4. This is followed by the royal accession ("headdress-tying") of Ahkal Mo' Naab III on 9 Ik' 5 K'ayab and, soon after, the accession ("flaming-headdress-tying") of Chak Sutz' as *Bah-Ajaw* ("first lord" under Ahkal) on 8 Ix 7 Yaxk'in (9.14.10.4.2 and 9.14.11.12.14 / AD 722 and 723) at C1-D2. This is followed two years later by an 'axe' war event (*Ch'ak-K'in-a* / "sun-chopping") by Chak-Sutz' (7 Ik' 5 Sek, 9.14.13.11.12 / AD 725), now described as a *Yajaw-K'ak* ("his lord of fire"). He captured one *Ta-Aj-chih Aj-la-Ajaw Aj-Ch'een* on 9 Kimi 19 Sek (9.14.11.17.6 / AD 723), and performs another 'axe' war event (*Ch'ak-ko-la* / "ko'ol-chopping") on 2 Kawak 2 Xul (9.14.17.12.19 / AD 729).

These bellicose acts he follows with an undeciphered event on 7 Imix 4 Keh (9.14.18.1.1 / AD 729), and carries these titles: a "stone-ballplayer," a 4-Ajaw, 6-Ajaw, *ya-ja-mo-lo-na* (?), and a *Sajal* ("subordinate lord"). The text wraps up by anchoring its chronology to the period-ending 9.15.0.0.0 4 Ajaw 13 Yax ("8 *te*-1 tun in the future" / AD 731), dedicates the tablet (or its house) on 5 Lamat 6 Wo (9.14.18.9.8 / AD 730), and links that event to his 60th birthday, nine days later on 1 Kaban 15 Wo (9.14.18.9.17 / AD 730).

Thus the *Tablet of the Slaves* was carved in 730, eight years into the reign of Ahkal Mo' Naab, and marks the significant rites and war-events of his older half-brother. This monument provides evidence that rulership descended matrilineally; though Chak-Sutz' is apparently a son of Pakal the Great, and older than his half-brother, it is Ahkal who acceded to the *K'uhul-Ajawship*.

¹¹² See Schele 1979.

¹¹³ In about 90% of Maya images of court scenes, the ruler or main figure faces to our left, presumably echoing the customary direction of glyphic faces. The Maya distinction between "writing" and "picture" was blurred (the word *tz'ib* is used for both), just as it was in Sumerian, Egyptian, and Hittite, whose asymmetrical glyphs also consistently "face" the reader, presenting their "front" to the eye first, as we read along the line.

Palenque: the parents present their son with the accoutrements of accession: a shell-mosaic 'drum-major' headdress (whose feather panache carefully brushes Ahkal's name in the text) carrying the royal 'Jester god' diadem, and a personified *Took'-Paka'* or "Flint-Shield," symbol of war-chieftainship.

The three each wear a fringed wraparound skirt, jade necklace, and jade cuffs. The father's skirt (typically) covers his navel and extends to mid-calf, the mother's outfit covers her breasts and apparently reaches her ankles, but Ahkal's loincloth hangs low: it reaches his knees and (atypically) exposes his navel. He also wears a complex jade pectoral carved with the frontal open-mouthed face of a snarling beast (usually jaguar or snake), partially hidden behind his gesturing right hand.¹¹⁴ The three each wear their hair bound atop their heads with a knotted cloth strip, their cascading locks contrived to imitate the tassel of an ear of corn. In addition, the parents each wear a fillet made from a fresh waterlily tied round the forehead, and perched atop each of their heads sits a small, strange creature nicknamed "shell-winged dragon," a two-legged ophidian chimera whose "wings" are the valves of a clam or oyster. Ahkal wears neither dragon nor lily, but a fillet of disks (presumably shell) adorns his forehead, and two locks of his hair are pulled through bell-shaped jade beads, one in front and one behind.

All three wear flower-shaped earpools, counterweighted by a triple-beaded drop hanging out the back of their respective earlobes.¹¹⁵ Ahkal's loincloth, the only one facing us, reveals a textile ornament: centered in the front is a pierced "portal" glyph, containing within it a woven "royal mat" knot, seen frequently in the royal clothing of the Maya West. Ahkal, finally, holds in his left hand the spotted-pelt strap of an 'incense purse' decorated with the figure of an owl and a long shell(?)-adorned tassel. An identical 'purse' is carried by a few subsidiary characters in the reliefs of Temple XIX (q.v.).

¹¹⁴ His gesture is a common royal gesture, appearing on a dozen or so court scenes portrayed on ceramics. It is never returned by a subordinate. It is a variant of "Gesture No. 2" in the categorization found in Ancona-Ha, Patricia, Perez de Lara, Jorge, and Van Stone, Mark, "Some Observations on Hand Gestures in Maya Art," pp. 1072-1089 in Kerr, Justin and Barbara, *The Maya Vase Book*, Vol. 6, New York, 2000.

¹¹⁵ This triple-bead counterweight was rather fashionable at this time in Palenque. It hangs from the earlobes of several (but not all) of the heads in all the monuments discussed in this paper, but is quite rare elsewhere.

2.7.2. Carving process

This *Tablet* was composed from three separate slabs of fine-grained limestone, a middle slab ca. 100 cm wide x 159 cm high, flanked by two narrow slabs approximately 27cm wide each¹¹⁶. In general the larger the monument—in any culture—the more likely it was carved *in situ*. Once finished, the flamboyant Late Classic stelae of Copan, for example, would be impossible to transport any distance without damaging hundreds of details, even with today's technology. This panel, however, presents evidence that its glyphs and figures were more or less completely carved *before* being assembled on the wall. There are large gaps (often a centimeter or more) between the carved surfaces of the panels as they survive today. No doubt the artists filled the gaps with stucco while installing the panels, which was then sculpted *in situ* to bridge the gaps once the panels were set in place. (This patchwork practice was actually rather common at Palenque, the large texts in the *Temple of Inscriptions* providing the most complex examples.)

What makes this monument different from the *Palace Tablet* (and like the middle panel of the *Temple of Inscriptions*) is the way that the separation between slabs cuts right through columns B and G of the main text. Ten glyphs (out of forty) are thus affected, and an analysis of their handwriting shows that *different artists apparently carved the right and left parts of these 'split' glyphs*. This is not so obvious on Column B, but it is fairly clear in Column G. One might imagine that the project director laid out the whole text on the three slabs, and that the three stones were then distributed to three adjacent work tables (or easels) to be cut simultaneously (by four artists, it turns out; two different hands worked on the central slab). The side-panel Artists, however, crossed over to the central slab to complete their figure carvings. Presumably, the sculptors of the (now-lost) stuccoed gaps also touched up the connecting carving on the adjacent slabs. These artists did *not* work on the text sequentially.

¹¹⁶ Dimensions (from Robertson 1985a):

Whole Tablet: 159 cm wide, 180 cm high, or an aspect ratio of about 1 to 1.13.

Carved area: 141 cm wide, 157-159 cm high (the panel is not perfectly square), aspect ratio about 1 to 1.12.

Left and right slabs: ca. 27 cm wide, carved areas 20.5 cm wide; aspect ratio about 1 to 6.6667 (whole) or 1 to 7.71 (carved area)

Central slab: 99-100 cm wide (a.r. 1 to 1.6 or 1.8); cracks between slabs ca. 0.5 cm. The carved area of the central slab is approximately a golden rectangle (1 to 1.62)

Glyphs' aspect ratio is about 16.5cm x 11cm, or 1.5 to 1.

2.7.3. Hand 1

(Carved the left panel; probably also the entire left figure and his supporting supernatural "slave.")

Using my criteria for distinguishing artists delineated above, I determined first that the five glyphs of Column A were all executed by a very expert sculptor with a tendency towards abstraction. His work is carefully crisp and assured, and displays a number of cursive habits developed, no doubt, in a long career as a scribe. One of his particular habits is a tendency to overlap two glyphs with an abrupt bevel. Note how the 'moon' disappears under its neighbor to the right in A2 and A3, and the *antefix* on A5 likewise, to name but the most obvious examples. (See [Fig. 2-56](#) for diagnostic details of Hand 1's work: sharp bevels, abstract 'moons,' graphic rather than sculptural details.) We do not find this beveling habit in columns B, C, D, or any other column until H (but see below).

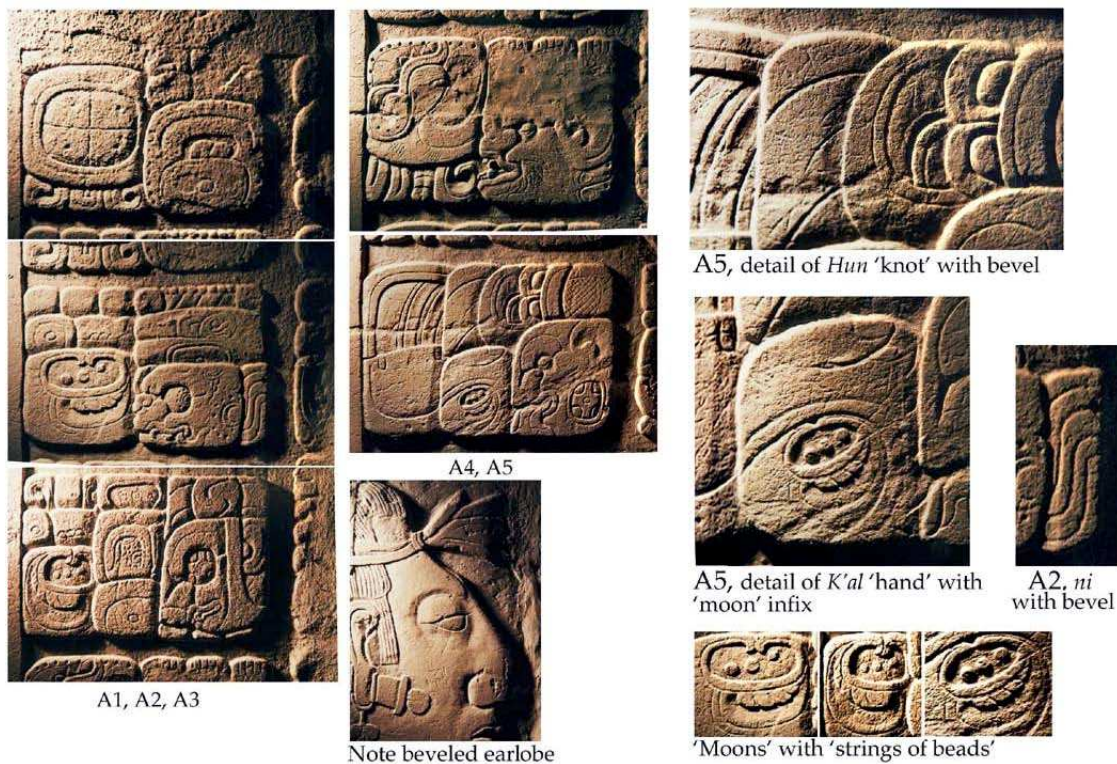


Fig. 2-56. *Tablet of the Slaves*, first column of glyphs and head of left Personage, all carved by Hand 1. The three details at upper right display his tendency to bevel overlaps, and his very abstract *K'al* 'hand.' The three 'moons' at lower right show his peculiar method of terminating crescents, his distinctively 'sliced' 'strings of beads,' and how these 'beads' lie in a distinctive beveled or sloped concavity. Photographs by author.

Cursive tendencies appear in his distinctive 'moon' signs (A2, A3, and A5), whose asymmetrical 'string-of-beads' he draws as a curved wedge, barely divided by a row of four graduated counterclockwise arcs. Most other artists (for example the other Artists of this *Tablet*) draw these 'pearls' separately, and —when they curve at all— usually arcing down to the left (clockwise) rather than to the right. Other features of his 'moons' include consistently raised circular disks in the sunken field surrounded by the 'horns' of the crescent, and the 'horns' themselves, which tend to squash against each other. (The other 'moons' on this inscription all carry the usual incised elliptical dots in the sunken field, and more conventional 'beads/pearls.' See [Fig. 2-57.](#))

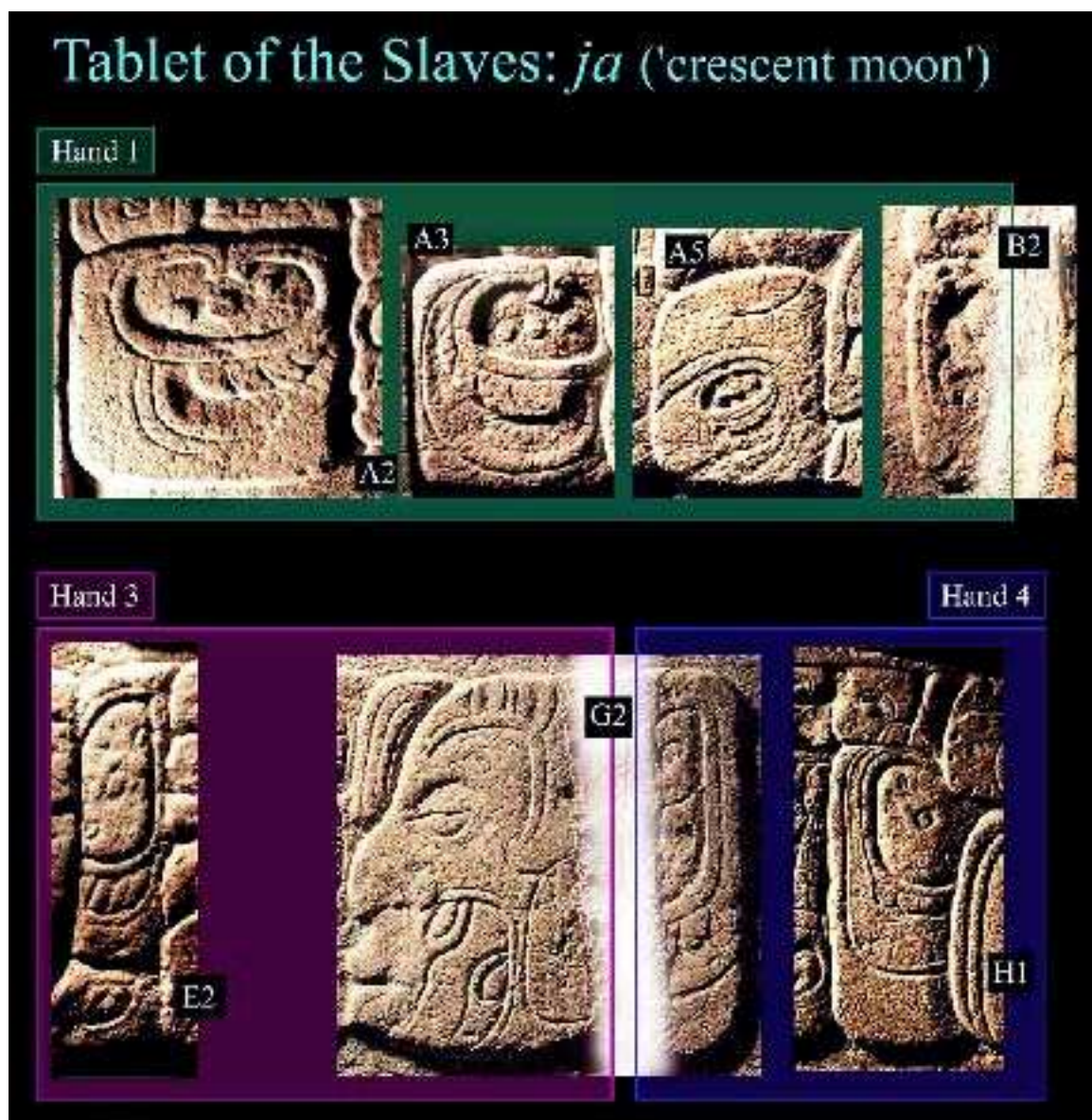


Fig. 2-57. *Tablet of the Slaves*. 'Moons.' Photography by author.

The Column A artist also carefully sculpts conical spirals in his *ya*-suffix (A4) and the 'numeral spacers' (A3) and 'feet' of the daysign-cartouche (A1) ([Fig. 2-58](#)). But his tendency toward abstraction is most evident in his treatment of the *K'al-ja-Huun* at A5: the *K'al* 'hand' is legible only because of the thumb; the lines separating its fingers are almost invisible as they slip behind the *ba*-'gopher.' The jauntily-slanted, elliptical *ja* 'moon' infixed in the 'hand' is also barely recognizable, as is the *Huun* 'cloth knot' above it. Another example of this 'knot' appears, somewhat more recognizably, at A3 tied above K'an-Joy-Chitam, but one can see the same abstracting tendencies: the squared cloth strap-ends are not very cloth-like ([Fig. 2-56](#), upper right). This artist tends to force the heads of animals into a perfect square (especially sharpening the upper right and lower left corners, seen in [Fig. 2-56](#)), and is a master at lightly-engraved (rather than sculpted) details such as reptilian scales (A4), 'eyebrows' (A3, A4, A5), and the 'veins' on the 'tongue' of the *ba*-'gopher' at A5. He delineates rodents' beady eyes with gracefully-drawn half-closed lids (A4 & A5). He is as meticulous about finishing every detail of a glyph as he is when drawing his characteristically clean, precise lines.

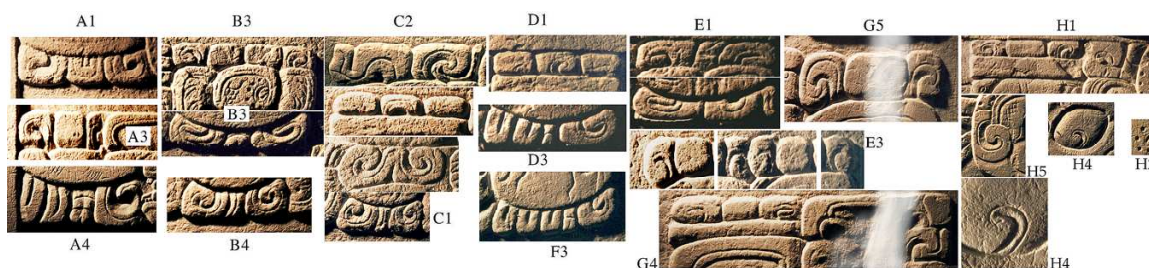


Fig. 2-58. Tablet of the Slaves. Spirals, *ya* and 'spacers.' The three examples in column A are by our first Hand, those in columns B through the left half of G are by Hands 2 and 3; those in the right half of column G and column H are by our fourth hand. Photography by author.

The Column A artist, whom I like to call the Abstract Master, also is responsible for the figure of Ahkal's father, directly below Column A ([Fig. 2-59](#)). His rendering of the 'dragon's scales and its wings, the beveled treatment of father's ears and earflares, and the overall precise drawing of both the father's and the 'slave's figures are of a piece with the glyphs above. I believe that this artist also might have moved over to the central panel and carved the father's hands and the 'Drum-Major' headdress he holds ([Fig 2-60](#)); he may also have worked on Ahkal's precisely-finished name-glyph at B5, since it connects to the Headdress feathers which he presumably carved. However, this glyph lacks the bevel we find in every glyph in Column A;

perhaps the Abstract Master only carved the details, or his compatriot reworked the glyphs to harmonize them, or both.



Fig. 2-59. *Tablet of the Slaves*. Hand 1's carving of Ahkal Mo'Naab's Father & the 'Slave' supporting him. Hand 1 *possibly* also moved over to the other slab and carved the Father's hand and 'Drum-Major Headdress," and the glyph-block which its feather panache touches — the name of Ahkal Mo' Naab. The face of the 'Slave' probably by Hand 2. Color photography by author, black-and-white photo by Merle Greene Robertson.



Fig. 2-60. *Tablet of the Slaves*. Details of the 'Drum-Major headdress' and associated glyphs Hand 1 possibly also carved these parts of Ahkal Mo' Naab's Father. (Below, in sections 2.7.7.3 and 2.7.7.4, we conclude that these details are actually by the even-more-precise Hand 4.) Photography by author.

The crisp work of these masters reminds us of the Hands who carved the *Temple XIX Panel* a generation earlier. Particularly noticeable are the short serpentine feathers atop the 'Drum-Major Headdress,' which I compare with similar feathers in the *Temple XIX Panel* in [Fig. 2-61](#). It is not impossible that the Artist of the *Tablet of the Slaves* 'Drum-Major Headdress' (middle and right) worked on the earlier Panel (left), but the later feathers are less sculptural. In any case, these simple forms just do not present enough data in to say for sure. One *can* say for sure that the earlier Artist's style (though not this precise monument, which was long buried by 750-760, when the *Tablet of the Slaves* was made) did inspire the later Carver.



Fig. 2-61. Temple XIX Panel & Tablet of the Slaves. Comparing serpentine feathers. Maybe the Artist of the *Tablet of the Slaves* 'Drum-Major Headdress' (middle and right) worked on the earlier Panel (left). Photography by author.



H1



H4. Bevel between H4a & H4b



Note beveled spiral 'pupil' & bevel around 'eye'



H2



H5
Bevel between H5a & H5b



Beveled spiral



H3

Bevel between H3a & H3b; also a beveled 'frame' inside *Lamat*.



Stiff outer shape, but lyrical cursive *mu*;



This 'rodent' more rounded-modeled than its neighbors.

Fig. 2-62. Tablet of the Slaves. Glyphs by Hand 4. This Artist is compulsively neat, even more so than his colleague (and former apprentice?) Hand 1. Photography by author.



Fig. 2-63. Tablet of the Slaves. Ahkal's Mother by Hand 4. 'Whiplash lines' and precise flat-relief are hallmarks of his style; he carved her whole image, on both sides of the seam, but not the glyphs of her name (upper left). Photography by author.

2.7.4. Hand 4

(Carved right panel; also entire right figure and her supporting supernatural "slave.")

Even more precise (and a bit more realistic) than the Abstract Master is the Artist who carved the right slab, whom we name Hand 4. His work is very close to that of Hand 1. His work is so

exacting, economical, and compulsively neat as to border on sterility; it has rectangular numerals and symmetrical, crisply-defined outlines and inlines ([Fig. 2-62](#)). Like the Abstract Master, he bevels his overlaps (though with a softer transition), and also like the Abstract Master, he prefers to *draw* details on the frontal plane, rather than *sculpt* them: H2, H3 and H4 are sterling examples of "flat-relief" glyphs, containing only the subtlest hints of three-dimensional surface modeling. (However, occasional glyphs, such as H1, and some details such as the 'eyeball' and 'lips' of H4, were lovingly rounded.)

A testament to the superlative skill of this artist is that even the barest deference to the third dimension, such as we see in H2 and H3, are sufficient to suggest a sculpted surface. Further, this artist tends to restrict himself to fairly bold incisions, but occasionally balances his severe sculpture with delicate, beautifully-drawn calligraphic hairline details such as the 'hairy grapes' and infixed *mu* in H3, and the graceful whiskers on H4 ([Fig. 2.71](#), upper right). The wavy 'bone marks,' and hairy 'stone-sign grapes' on the personified Flint, and the 'whiplash' lines which comprise the 'eyebrows' and 'eyes' on the Shield proffered by Lady Kinuw-Mat-Ch'ok can hardly have been made by anyone else ([Fig. 2-63](#), upper center). The precision and clarity of every stroke defining the Lady herself (on both sides of the gap) is also testament to this Compulsive Master's consummate skill. Compare her ear, her earflare, her lips, to those of any other figure on the Tablet ([Figs. 2-64](#) and [2-65](#)) —or anywhere in the Maya world, for that matter—, and you shall see how this artist's precision and skill is head and shoulders above that of even his excellent colleagues. To be convinced that this is not just the Abstract Master on a good day, compare the *K'al-Huun* at H4 with that at A5, and the 'moons' at H1 and A2 ([Fig. 2-67](#)).

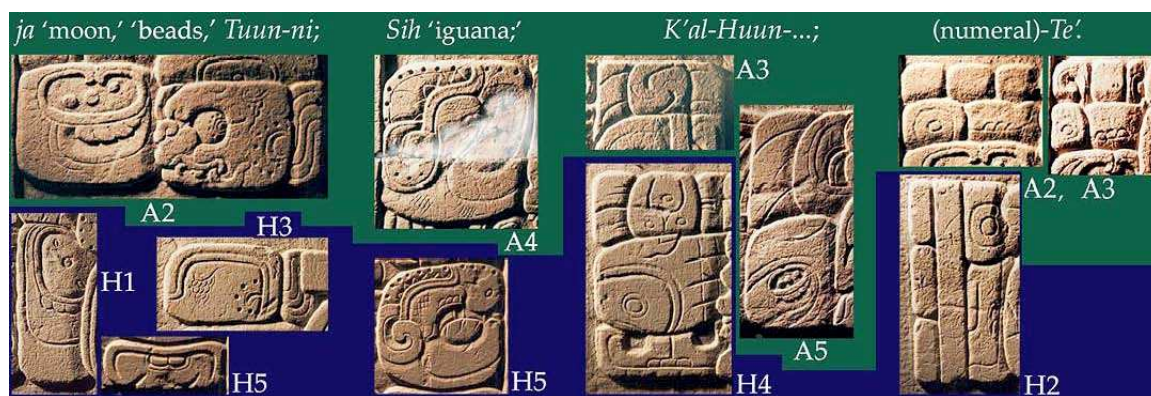


Fig. 2-67. Tablet of the Slaves: Comparison glyphs, Hands 1 and 4. Photography by author.

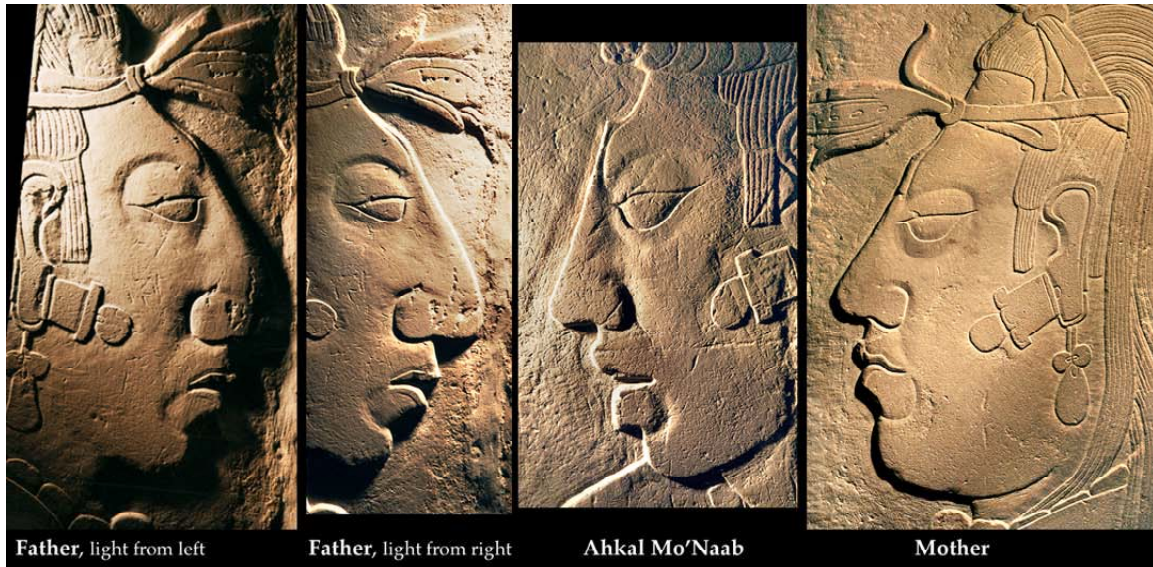


Fig. 2-64. *Tablet of the Slaves*. Faces of the three main Figures. The Father is shown lit from two directions; his nose, and both his and the Mother's waterlily diadems were carved on a distinct slope, probably because the edges of the slabs had been damaged before carving. Hand 3 moved the head of Ahkal about half a centimeter to the right; the *pentimenti* of his profile and earflare show clearly here. Photography by author.



Fig. 2-65. *Tablet of the Slaves*. Faces of three 'slaves.' The toothy long-lipped deity (left) who supports Ahkal's Father is probably the character (*Ti-wo?*) which constitutes part of his name in other monuments (See Figs. 1-07, 2-66). Photography by author.



Fig. 2-66. *Tablet of the Slaves: Name of Ahkal's Father.* The usual spelling of his name begins with a long-lipped head (Wind God?) seen in the *Temple 18 Stuccos* (Fig. 1-07) and *Temple 18 Doorjambs*, followed by *Chan-Mat*. Here he is named *Ti-wo-Chan-Mat-Ch'ok*. Photography by author.

2.7.5. Hands 2 and 3

(Carved the central panel text, central figure, and central "slaves")

Two less-assertive personalities carved the bulk of the central panel. The adjacent glyphs G1 and H1 carry a pair of little-understood titles: 4 *Ajaw* and 6 *Ajaw*, and their juxtaposition is an excellent test of this claim ([Fig. 2-68](#). *Ajaw* G1, & H1). They use very similar head-variant spellings of the *Ajaw* glyph. G1's is the 'vulture' form (T747a), carrying a half-obsured 'ahau face' attached to the bird's forehead with a wide cloth headband, while H1's is a rodent (T758 or T759), wearing an identical headband with 'ahau face' diadem. Although these are distinct glyphs, they are so similar in shape and



Fig. 2-68. *Tablet of the Slaves: 4 Ajaw & 6 Ajaw, adjacent titles by Hands 3 and 4.* It is obvious here that the two halves of the first *Ajaw* glyph, on either side of the crack, were carved not only by different Hands but with different tools. Photography by author.

internal details that they could have been carved from identical layout drawings. But they were clearly carved by different hands. G1, half of which survives on the central panel, differs distinctly from its brother H1 on the right panel, though one can match one-to-one details of headbands and creases around the nose. G1's details are carved more deeply and abruptly; H1 (and the 'headband-knot' on G1) have much more delicate details and beveled divisions (such as the crease around the mouth, that continues upward to separate the nose and cheek). They constitute an easily-comprehended comparison of two distinct carving styles.

Like Hands 1 and 4, both 2 and 3 skillfully make the best of the shallow relief, but do so more sculpturally than graphically; they carve a more rounded, modeled relief than Hands 1 and 4. The edges of their glyphs tend to be rounded rather than sharp and/or beveled, and recognizable 'objects' (such as 'hands,' 'animal heads,' and '*teponaztli* drums') are modeled more realistically ([Fig. 2-69](#)).



Fig. 2-69. *Tablet of the Slaves*: 'Hand' glyphs (*K'al* and *Tzutz*) by Hands 1, 2, & 3. The first two collocations, almost identical, highlight the differences between Hand 1 and the very-similar-to-each-other Hands 2 and 3 (A5 and C2). The third collocation (G5) contains a *Tzutz* almost indistinguishable from the *K'al* at C2. But its subtle differences show it to be another Artist. Photography by author.

Hands 2 and 3 are difficult to distinguish; they have a lot more in common with each other than they do with our first two artists. But one discerns differences in the 'hand' signs in [Fig. 2-69](#) above: Hand 3 (G5) carved fingers a little more plump, less jointed than his colleague (C2). One can see differences also in their treatment of Chak-Sutz's name (and other rodents) ([Fig. 2-70](#)), and in their *Kab* / 'earth' glyphs ([Fig. 2.71](#)).



Fig. 2-70. *Tablet of the Slaves*. Chak-Zutz's name by Hands 2 & 3. With comparable 'small-mammal' heads and indented bars. Label 1 underlies Columns C and D1, while Label 2 extends Column F. Photography by author.

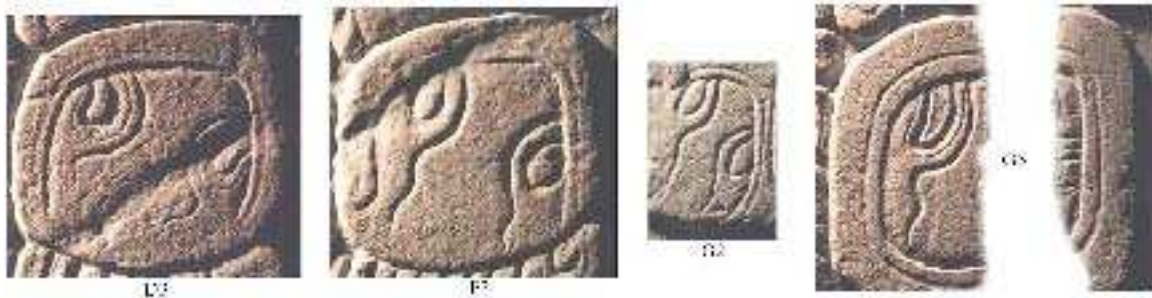


Fig. 2-71. *Tablet of the Slaves*. Kab glyphs, Hands 2 & 3 (& yet another Hand?). D3 is by Hand 2, F3 and G2 by Hand 3. G5—or at least its interior details—is anomalous, not resembling the work of any of the four expert Hands I've identified heretofore. It is closest to Hand 3 in its doubled outlines and assertive 'whiplash,' but the clumsy loop in upper left matches none of the work elsewhere on the stone. Photography by author.

Examples of the *Chak* superfix, the first element in Chak-Sutz's name, show striking differences of treatment ([Fig. 2-72](#)). F4 and F5 are adjacently positioned and stylistically close to one another, both in their *Chaks* and in the 'hairs' on their 'rodents' cheeks (see also [Fig. 2-70](#)).

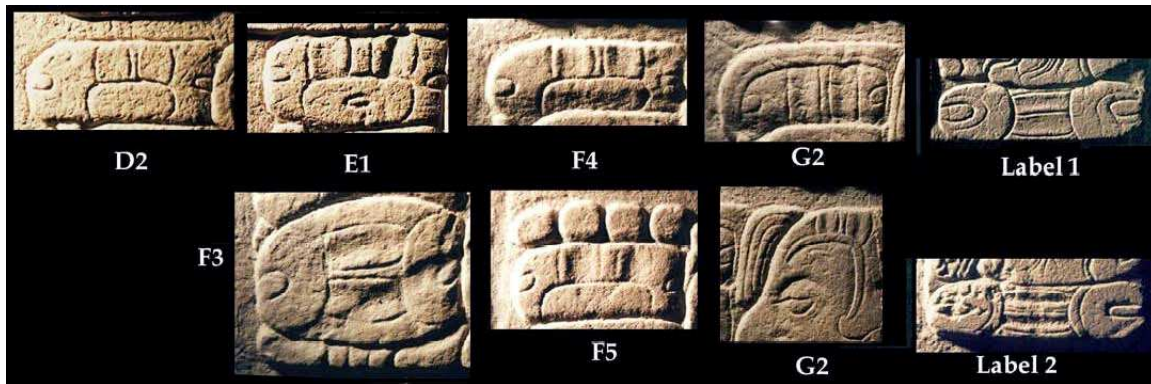


Fig. 2-72. *Tablet of the Slaves. Chak and ko glyphs and related 'bars' in sa.* Photography by author.

Although G2's *Chak* is differently drawn ('framed,' lacking the usual lower inner oval, and less deeply modeled than F4 and F5), I still believe it to be by the same Hand. The F4-F5 artist defines the vertical elements of the *Chak* with convex barrel-shaped engraved outlines framing a gently-scooped concave 'valley.' The barrel-shapes are hardly present in G2, and the 'valley' is only faintly excavated, but the similar vertical elements in the 'hair' of the adjoining *sa* glyph (G2) match more closely. Also, the 'Kaban/*Kab*' in the mouth of the *sa* have precisely the same flair and movement as in *Kab* at F3 (see [Fig. 2-71](#)). Thus F3, F4, F5, and at least part of G2 are by the same hand.

2.7.6. Attribution of Central Panel Glyphs to Hands 2 and 3, and the figures below to 1, 2, 3, and 4

Before presenting more exhaustive —and exhausting— evidence to support them, I shall summarize my conclusions: I attribute the left half of the central panel text to Hand 2 (Columns B and C, plus D1, D3, and probably E1); the right to Hand 3 (columns F and G, plus E2, E3, and maybe D2). The heads of the two 'slaves' on whom Ahkal sits ('Slave' 2 and 'Slave' 3) were carved by different individuals: I attribute the left head and arm and hand ('Slave' 2) to Hand 2 and the right ('Slave' 3) to Hand 3, but their hurried and unfinished state renders these attributions more tentative than they otherwise might be. Their abutted backs and legs are by the same Hand (probably 3): the feet are identical.

Comparing the treatment of face and fingers (noting particularly the lip and fingernail treatments), I attribute the main figure, Ahkal Mo' Naab, to Hand 2, the same artist responsible for the left 'slave's torso. However, the delicately-incised 'incense purse' Ahkal holds ([Fig. 2-74](#)) appears to have been carved by Hand 3.



Fig. 2-73. *Tablet of the Slaves, Ahkal Mo' Naab, Slave 2, and Slave 3:* their faces, hands, feet. The heads and hands of Ahkal and 'Slave 2' appear to have sprung from Hand 2. The head and hand of 'Slave 3' and both the 'slaves' feet were by Hand 3. Photography by author.



Fig. 2-74. *Tablet of the Slaves, Temple XIX Panel: 'incense purses,'* and Bodega Fragment #45, which has some parallel structures. These two, apparently meant to portray the same kind of bag, are, except for their 'owl' motif, otherwise quite similar to the Teotihuacan-motif 'purses' held by the figures on the *Temple XIX Platform*. Note that the 'owl' on the *Slaves* tablet has 'janab markings' around its eye. Color photography by author, black and white by Schele and Mathews (1979, item #45).

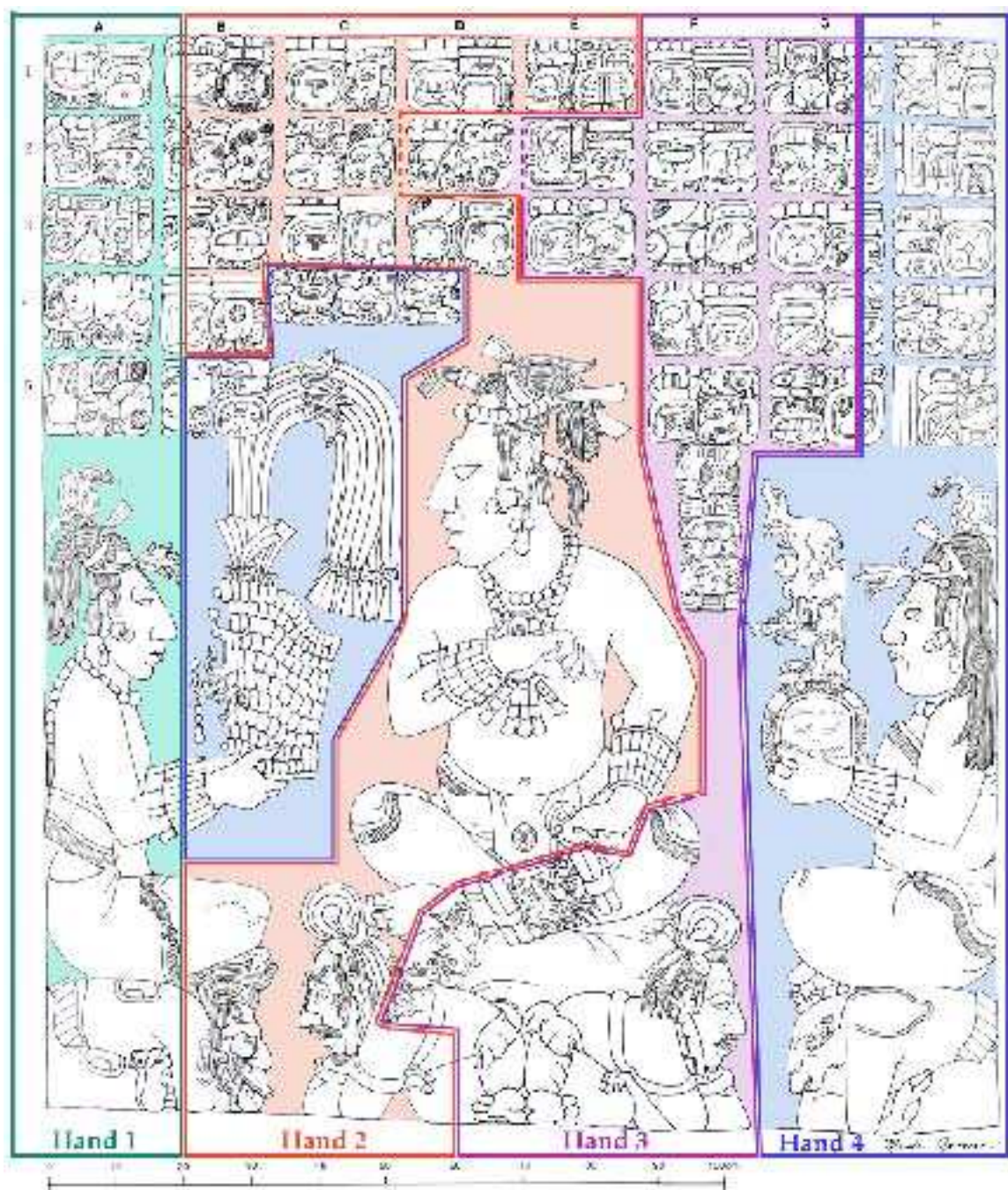


Fig. 2-75. Drawing of *Tablet of Slaves* with attributions. Drawing by Merle Greene Robertson; colored additions by author.

2.7.7. Details of Attributions

2.7.7.1. D2

D2 is an anomaly. It shares several qualities with Hand 2 (e. g., 'nose' and 'ear' shape [like E1, unlike F4]), yet its severe *ba* 'gopher' is strikingly different from its neighbor C2, and its virtually unmodelled (unfinished?) *Chak* and gracefully-drawn *Ajaw* superfix are strikingly different from those on E1, which look rather awkward. Its flat *Chak* is peculiar to itself, as is its stern *ba* 'gopher,' with its long-tongue and sharp-cornered 'K'an cross.' Comparable to Hand 3, rather than 2, are its 'cheek hairs' (like E3 and L3, but unlike E1 and K), yet the 'cheek hairs' on Hand 3's F4 and F5 are finer and more precise. I have attributed D1 and D3 to Hand 2, so if I group D2 with Hand 3, I thereby surround it on three sides with the work of a colleague. This suggestion strains Occam's razor, yet D2 has too many distinctive personality traits to explain away. I group it with Hand 3 with many reservations. To attribute it to the intrusion of a *fifth* Hand is even less likely.

2.7.7.2. *ya* and other 'curls'

When I attempted to attribute areas of the middle panel only on the basis of the *-ya* affixes (and glyphs of similar form), I came at first to disquietingly different conclusions. These affixes include the syllable *ya* (A4, B3, B4, C1, D3, E1, F3) the curling 'flames' of *K'ak'* (C2, E1, F2, G4), the 'spacers' on numerals (A3, B2?, B3, D1, C3, E3, G4, G5, H1), the syllable *wo* (I), the curls on *Sak* (F1) and *hu* (H5) and *MAT* (J), and the spiral 'feet' of the 'daysign cartouche' (A1) ([Fig. 2-58](#)). The *ya*'s support my attribution of the edge panels to Hands 1 and 4, but divide up the central panel somewhat differently, and demand an explanation.

The deep conical excavation in the spiral on A4 *ya* is the most assertive example of Hand A's style with this form. The cavity within, rimmed closely by a precise, fine engraved line, contrasts boldly with the squarish planar exterior of the same curl, both here and on the 'feet' of A1's 'cartouche.' An exactly similar treatment of the 'spacers' flanking the numeral 1 dot at A3 are somewhat disguised by their beveled edges as they crowd their neighboring glyphs. (This treatment, stretched broader, is also accorded the asymmetrical excavation in surface markings of the 'crescent moon,' just below in A3. See [Figs. 2-62](#) and [2-58](#)).

2.7.7.3. Hand 4 at work on the 'drum major' headdress and glyphs associated with it.

Hand 4's treatment of similar 'curls' at H1 ('spacer'), H2 (*to*), and H5 ('breath-curl' issuing from the 'mouth' of the 'upended frog') are even more precise and gracefully carved than Hand 1's (See [Figs. 2-56](#) and [2-62](#)). A similar treatment of the *wo*-curls at I1 (the first glyph of the first 'label') conspires with other details ('whiskers' on K1 and H4, for example, or the identical cursive *na*'s of H5 and I1) urging me to attribute the Father's name (I, J, K) also to this Hand. On the other hand, one could argue that the artist who carved the *figure* of the Father (Hand 1) might have been more likely also to have cut Father's *name* than Hand 4. Adding to this doubt are the 'curl' and 'oval dot' details in the lower part of the *Naab* of Ahkal-Mo'-Naab's name at B5. B5's precise, flat carving seems out of place here, and these details would be more at home with the comparable elements at H2 (and the eye of the 'Jester' on the 'Drum-Major Headdress'). I am led inescapably back to my first hunch, that the artist responsible for the Headdress (or at least the feather panache overlapped by B5), B5 itself, and the nearby glyphs I, J, K (the Father's Label), seems to be Hand 4.

2.7.7.4. Hand 1's image of the Father, Hand 4's Mother.

Confirming this identification is the identical treatment of the Father's and Mother's fingers ([Figs. 2-60](#) and [2-63](#)); I have already attributed the *Took'-Pakal* (and presumably the Lady's hands), to Hand 4 in 2.7.3 above. However, I still feel that the Father's *figure* was carved by Hand 1, after the five glyphs on the same slab. The finishing of his face and garment is very distinct from that of the Mother, particularly when one compares the lips and sculptural modeling: The compulsive crystalline perfection of the modeling of Mother's face and ears is quite in keeping with the similarly precision exhibited the glyphs in Column H.



Fig. 2-76. *Tablet of the Slaves*. The 'Shell-Wing Dragons' atop the head of Ahkal's Parents. Note that Hand 2 (left) carved the hair into some chips on the stone's surface. Photographs by author.



Fig. 2-77. *Tablet of the Slaves*. Carving details on the 'Drum Major Headdress' (Originally presumed by Hand 1) and the 'Shell-Wing Dragon' atop the head of Lady Kinuw (presumed by Hand 4). Photographs by author.

Likewise, comparing the 'shell-wing dragons' perched on the parents' heads, one is immediately struck by the difference between the 'shell-wings': their overall shape, their modeling (or lack), and the shape of the dots within. The 'dragons' heads at first appear virtually indistinguishable, but differ in several subtle ways. Note that, in contrast to his high-polish finish of the rest of this Lady and her *Took-Pakal* offering, the concavity of the 'shell-wing' retains the gouge-marks of its making, and these toolmarks compare closely to the those on the overlapping shell-platelet 'scales' of the 'Drum-Major Headdress' ([Figs. 2-76](#) and [2-77](#)). This detail supports my attribution of the headdress, and attached glyph B5, to Hand 4.

2.7.7.5 Details of Attributions: Hand C's image of Ahkal, 'Slave' 2, etc.

I believe Hand C carved Ahkal's head and hands. He has a "Hapsburg lip:" his lower lip turns outward, showing its inner membrane. This lip, and his precise eye-shape, are repeated on the face of 'Slave' 2, the leftward of the two unfortunates supporting Ahkal. His Mother shares the "Hapsburg" pout, but Hand B carves her lip in a distinctively different and more precise way, defining the upper lip as well, and enhancing her expression with a kind of sneer. Five 'face' glyphs also display this type of lip, as well. H4, J and K show a rather soft version of it; not unlike the lip of Lady Kinuw-Mat; I attribute all of these to Hand 4. I attribute the Lady's Name Label (Column L) to Hand 3, even though the 'lips' we see on L1 and L2 closely compare to those on Ahkal. The 'eyes' do not; they are half-closed like those of Hand 3's G2, and of Hand 4's Lady Kinuw. (See [Figs. 2-64](#) and [2-65](#).)

2.7.8. Some Problems With my Attributions

The left 'spacer' curl at G5 (and its awkward 'Kaban curls'), seem a bit anomalous (its engraved line is far from the edge of the conical cavity—elsewhere it is closely parallel), but it precisely matches the curled ornaments on Ahkal's 'incense purse' ([Figs. 2-58](#) and [2-74](#)). Although I am still convinced that Ahkal was carved by Hand 2, I think his 'purse' (as well as the 'slave' directly below it) was the work of Hand 3. Scrutinizing details like this, I sometimes see a small cluster of anomalous details which seem to form a pattern consistent enough to tempt me to introduce a *fifth* artist, here a Hand E, carver of the purse and of G5. This introduction of a new artist would be supported by G5's clumsy *Kaban* daysign, which is unparalleled anywhere on this Tablet. Though I am at a loss to posit a credible explanation for this distinct treatment of

'curls,' I feel evidence is still insufficient—as it was with D2—to force a fifth artist upon us. I therefore must attribute this new habit—admittedly a very minor change—to a caprice, a change of mind, of mood.

Another distinction that begs for an explanation is Hand 4's *ya*-suffix on the month sign 'Kayab.' 'Kayab' is spelled very consistently throughout the corpus *K'an-ʼa-si-ya*, which is the modern Cholan name for the month (Thompson 1971, p. 106).¹¹⁷ Hand 2's two examples of this month-name (B4, C1) are virtually identical; they provide a good example of the consistency we can find in two glyphs by the same hand. (They also differ in the presence of a central dot in the 'K'an cross eye', to remind us what details were clearly optional.) The 'beak' of this 'bird' (or 'turtle') also appears in exactly the same form at D3, facing downward as a subfix syllabic *ʼa* (Fig. 2-78). Also strikingly consistent are his two examples of the *Ik'* daysign [C1 & C3], with its rare and lovely subtle indentation outlining the tau-shaped central element. The 'spacer' at C3 is inverted-U-shaped, different from all the others, for the simple reason that it is the only 'spacer' in the whole inscription which sits in the middle, rather than the end, of a numeral.

¹¹⁷ *K'ayab* is the Yucatec name for the month. Now that much of the Maya corpus is readable, it is clear that during the Classic period, the month in question was consistently spelled in Cholan (*K'anasiy*) rather than in Yucatec. However, scholars have consistently called this month *K'ayab* since Landa, and few epigraphers are willing to "correct" the name against such a weighty tradition.

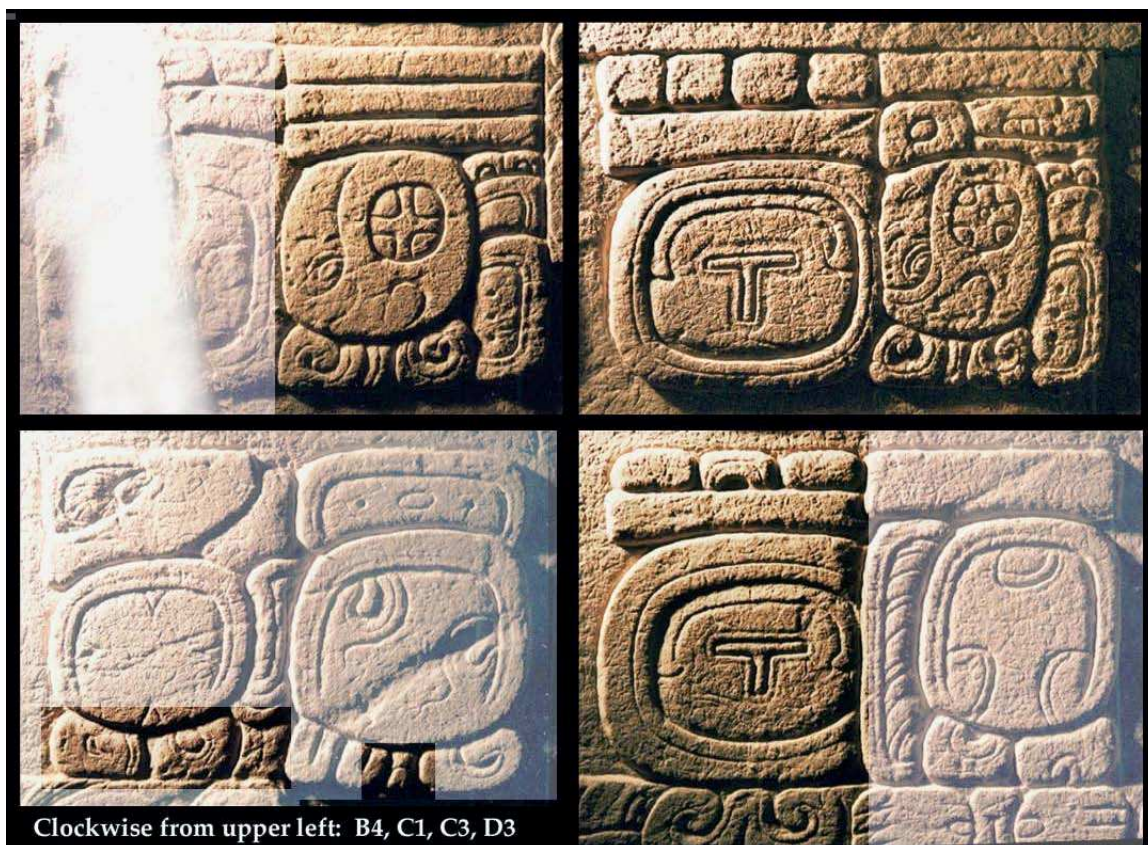


Fig. 2-78. *Tablet of the Slaves*. Comparable glyphs by Hand 2: *K'ayab, Ik', 'a, ya*. Photographs by author.

The problem is that the form *ya* takes everywhere else in the inscription is composed of a pair of rather squashed spirals flanking a fairly realistic 'penis'.¹¹⁸ The 'penis' has an indentation in the end and a transverse curve indicating the 'glans' (e.g., at A4, B3, D3, F3; [Fig. 2-58](#)). Yet in this collocation —and in this collocation only— the 'penis' is abstracted, lacking indication of a 'glans,' with a central groove to match those on its neighboring 'curls.' This conflicts with the other *ya*-syllables drawn by Hand C (B3, D3), which are of the more realistic type. Do we see yet another personality at work here? Or just a wild hair? Or some peculiar (ancient?) allograph traditionally associated with the *K'ayab* collocation (see note 79)?

Comparing D3 with provides an excellent example of the Maya scribal practice of 'overlapping' collocated glyphic elements, a habit so common that examples of the 'overlapped' or 'partial' forms of many glyphs far outnumber the 'full forms.' (Examples include *K'ak', hi, ja,*

¹¹⁸ The source of this glyph was apparently acrophonic: the central element a clear image of a penis (*yaf* in Mayan). In most Late Classic inscriptions, the graphic (too-graphic?) central element was replaced by three dots, probably derived from cursive rendering of the original form. (Linda Schele, personal communication, 1995)

K'uh, *Ajaw*, and many others.) This 'full form' of the 'a'-beak' is in fact quite rare outside the *K'an-'a-si-ya* / 'Kayab' collocation.¹¹⁹

2.8. Technical Matters

2.8.1. The Style Manual for the Tablet of the Slaves

Despite personality differences which I have tried to define above, the four artists who carved this Tablet hewed closely to a consistent style which is distinct from other monuments carved at Palenque. This I attribute to the Project Director, who laid out the text and probably set the standards of fidelity to it. Qualities shared by these four artists which are not universal at Palenque include the following:

1. Extremely low relief. Palenque's laminar limestone encouraged low-relief designs (particularly on the huge and early text panels in the *Temple of Inscriptions*, which doubtless set a standard for future inscriptions), but the 3-mm depth of this panel is extremely shallow even by these standards. Only engraved texts such as the *Temple XIX Platform* and the *Panel of the 96 Glyphs* are lower (q.v. [Figs. 1-21](#) through [1-27](#); [1-45](#) through [1-54](#)).
2. Wide aspect ratio. Most glyphs at Palenque are more or less square, their heights equaling their widths for the most part. On certain monuments such as the Cross Group Tablets and *Temple XIX Stucco Panel*, we see glyphs whose widths are consistently wider than their heights, with an aspect ratio (height:width) from approximately 9:10 up to about 5:6 or at most 4:5. The glyph-blocks here are very wide, at least 2:3. This is so wide that the Maya reader could be forgiven for thinking that a single glyph-block contained both glyphs of a double column (as we see in the Initial Series of the *Cross Group*), since indeed most glyph-blocks do divide more or less in half (for example, all the glyphs in Columns C, D, E, and F).

¹¹⁹ I consider that the 'Kayab' collocation, like many common glyptic 'words' both calendric and non-calendric (e. g., *Tuun-ni*, the month 'Xul,' the so-called '*Iu*-Bat' or *yu*-Bat'-*Iu* "carving" glyph, the 'fish-*wa*' spelling of *kakaw*, etc.), early acquired a "canonical" form which took on a logographic life of its own. This process is quite common in writing system evolution. The most common examples in our writing system are abbreviations: we commonly spell the titles **Dr.**, **Mr.**, and **Mrs.** in abbreviated form; so commonly that one almost never sees the word "missus" spelled out. A more closely analogous example in European languages is the *ampersand* (&), which originated in a cursive rendering of the Latin word *et* (Fig. 2.7-33: origin & development of &). In common cursive handwriting this ligatured form of the letters **e** and **t** was so deeply rooted that it became what one might call a *post-phonetic logogram*; it transferred with the alphabet from Latin into every European language, most of whose words for "and" are not spelled anything like **et**. This is to say that perhaps the 'Kayab' collocation developed its own cursive form, developed along its own evolutionary path, slightly divergent from the paths of its **consituent** syllabic signs, just as & evolved away from **e** and **t**. 'Kayab' thus retained the convention of writing out the "full form" of the 'a syllable, which disappears almost everywhere else, and perhaps (at least in the scribal school where Hand C learned his trade), acquired a peculiar abstracted, convergent version of *ya* suffix.

3. The use of 'daysign cartouches' which lack 'feet.' While the very first glyph in the inscription (5 Lamat) sits on the customary three 'feet' at the bottom of daysigns, none of the other ten dates do. Now, while such minimal cartouches do crop up in many circumstances (especially Postclassic codices), they are during the Classic a distinct minority. To find three artists all using them consistently smacks of outside compulsion. This compulsion could easily take the form of a single layout cartoon—more detailed than usual—designed by one high-ranking (and opinionated) art director.

4. An extremely common group of visually-related Maya glyphs are the 'stone' signs (including *Tuun*, ***ku***, ***pi***, *Witz*, several calendrical glyphs, and glyphs for "altar" and others). The diagnostic elements these signs hold in common are a dot-outlined loop projecting from the lower right side, and a 'bunch of grapes' in the upper left (See [Fig. 1-04](#)). This 'bunch of grapes' usually 'hangs' from the 'ceiling' of the glyph, that is, projects downward directly from its inner border (just as the dotted loop attaches to the 'wall' of this inner border). Some artists, however, saw fit to 'hang' the 'grapes' from a flourished 'whiplash line' which gives the impression of a frowning eyebrow. While this conceit is uncommon elsewhere, it is the unvarying rule for all four of our calligrapher-carvers ([Fig. 3-51](#). 'stone sign' 'bunches of grapes' & 'dotted curls'). This kind of consistency can be adequately explained by presuming an externally-imposed standard. The most likely explanation for this peculiar consistency seems to be, again, that the four were following a single master-artist's layout.

2.8.2. The *Tablet of the Slaves'* production process

I imagine the process to have proceeded roughly thus: The patron orders a panel to be carved to adorn the Group IV compound. This monument is a sacred one, and can be put up only with the proper authority from Lord Ahkal Mo' Naab, and from the priests, at an astrologically auspicious time. The artists, like those described by Landa (See Chapter 4), prepared themselves with fasting and prayer, and likely abstained from sex and other profane activities for the duration of the work. The *Tablet* was possibly too large to fit on a single slab of the best stone, or perhaps there was a geomantic reason to divide the *Tablet* across three slabs of stone. (The aspect ratio of the carved area of the middle panel is 1:1.6, approximately a Golden Section. See Chapter 2, note 116.) I note that the original planed surface of the stone weathered slightly before carving ([Fig. 1-03](#)), so it must have lain outside for some months or years after quarrying, before it was selected for this monument.

The edges of the slabs were substantially damaged along the seams from the start: the Father's nose, for instance, was carved 'down' the slope of one of these chipped edges ([Fig. 2-64](#)). (This suggests that the slabs were shifted about quite a bit while awaiting customers.) Along the seams a rather large gap existed. They must have chosen not to plane down the rough edges of this gap for some reason—it would have been easy enough for such expert sculptors to fit them more closely— or, even more puzzling, they chose deliberately to *insert* this large gap, perhaps again for some geomantic reason. The slabs were assembled by the Project Master, and the image and text painted carefully thereon. The Master, an expert calligrapher, drew a careful layout of every glyph and figure on the Tablet in relatively permanent paint. He preferred 'daysign cartouches' that lack feet, and a distinctive type of 'stone sign' whose 'grapes' depend from a calligraphic flourish, and other distinctive characteristics which he sternly warned his carving team—four expert carvers, one of whom was presumably the Master himself—to follow *precisely*. I presume he so carefully defined every detail of the *Tablet* so that the glyphs cut by the seams would match up. On other monuments, individual cutters sometimes had some editorial choice over the glyphs they carved, but here they seem to have had unusually short leashes.

Then the Master separated the three slabs onto adjacent tables or easels, and the teams set to work. Only on the central slab was there any likelihood of the artists' getting in one another's way. Four experts cutting simultaneously made short work of the *Tablet*, perhaps as little as a single week.

After the slabs were carved, the artists (or perhaps only the Art Director) assembled the Tablet, set it into a wall, smoothed the gaps with stucco, and one or two artists sculpted the stucco, connecting the glyph fragments carved on Columns B and G. Very likely, the artists responsible for this stucco clean-up work also touched up some of the glyphs' stone carving as they connected them up. This might explain some of the puzzling style details of such glyphs as B2 and G5. Then the whole Tablet was painted, perhaps red glyphs on blue background, or vice versa. Not a trace of this paint remains, but evidence from other monuments at Palenque (such as the Stucco glyphs from Temples XVIII and XIX) and elsewhere make it virtually certain that the *Tablet of the Slaves* once had rich polychromy.

Chapter 3. Commentaries on Tables and Figures comparing similar glyphs

3.1. Commentaries on Tables and Figures comparing similar glyphs, assembled for the purpose of identifying individual Hands in the Palace Tablet

3.1.1. Lunar Series

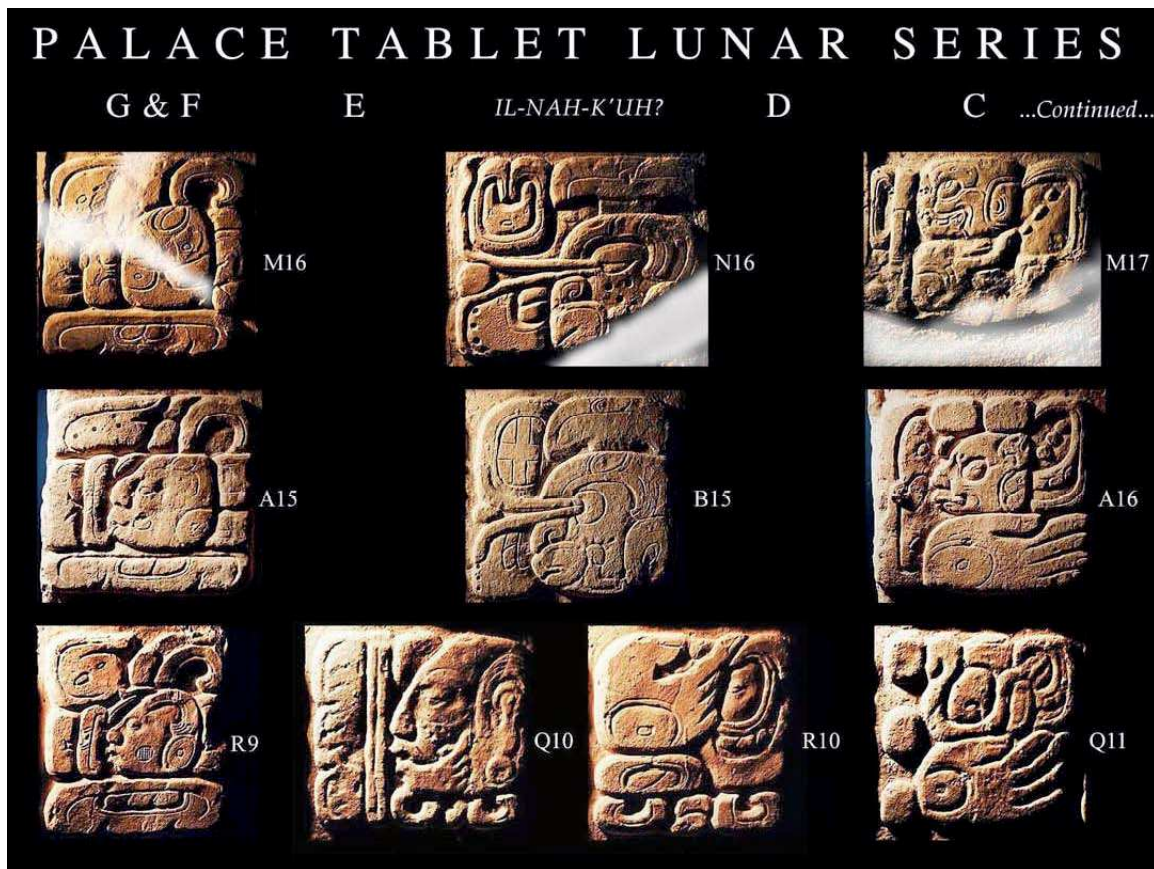


Fig. 3-01a. Comparison: Three Lunar Series. (M16-N17, A15-B17, & R9-R12.) First part: Glyphs G, F, E, (Y?), D, & C. Photos by author.

This Figure ([3-01a](#) and [3-01b](#)) parallels the three Lunar Series in the *Palace Tablet*. Compare the second glyph in the first and second rows: two series (N16 & B15). This rare collocation probably reads *Nah-K'uh-Tl* / "It was the last (first?) holy seeing," according to Robert Wald (Schele & Wald 1999, 75), referring to the last visibility of the moon in its cycle. Although we can see a perfect correspondence between these two collocations in virtually every delineated

element, the respective personalities of these carvings are fundamentally distinct. While the B15 artist is meticulous in his modeling, incising minute, delicate details, his compatriot at N16 carved every stroke boldly. This single salient distinction continues in the 'C glyphs' (M17 & A16), and although we cannot compare the lost next glyphs of the MN text, the B15 artist's mastery of delicate detail is at its sublime best in the 'X glyph' at B16: A *K'uh* in the mouth of a squinting Jaguar, the whole emerging from a larger crocodilian's mouth. You can see all this carver's characteristics here: soft, careful modeling, rounded compact forms (note the arching *Nah* on B15, and the treatment of the Jaguar's eye); sensitive, minute, and immensely complex details (the Jaguar's spots). This rare glyph X reappears in engraved form some 15 years later on the *Temple XIX Platform* (at B6); I include it for comparison in [Fig. 3-02](#). The *Temple XIX Platform's* intaglio inscription much more closely reflects its original painted layout than the *Palace Tablets*, and one might find it difficult to compare the two. However, a dozen details, most obviously the different renderings of the Jaguar's profile, make it unlikely that these are the same Hand.

(For a discussion of M16, the 'G&F glyph,' see below, **Section 3.1.3.**)



Fig. 3-01b. Comparison: Three Lunar Series. (M16-N17, A15-B17, & R9-R12.) Second part: Glyphs X, B, and A. Photos by author.

The rest of the A15-B17 Lunar Series is by this same sensitive, meticulous artist. I compare details from these six glyphs in [Fig. 3-03](#), focusing on specific groups in [Figs. 3-06, 3-07, 3-08](#), and [3-09](#). Seen as a whole, the texture, details and relief of these six glyphs are completely consistent. This artist has polished each glyph fully and equally, leaving no rough edges. Though large areas of each glyph are level with the front plane of the stone —actually perfectly flat—, his mastery of relief modeling gives each element the appearance that it is rounded, bulging with energy and life.



Fig. 3-02. Comparison: Glyph X of the Lunar Series. A *K'uh* within a 'jaguar' mouth, both within the mouth of an 'ophidian monster.' Photos by author.



Fig. 3-03. Comparison: The *Palace Tablet* Lunar Series A15 – B17, characteristic details. Photos by author.

In the lower area of [Fig. 3-03](#), I have gathered four sets of like details for comparison. The first contains 'bubbles' (like soap bubbles on a surface, these appear in groups of two or three, abutting each other and attached to lines such as the inline of *-na* and 'Moon' glyphs [e.g., *-ja* and "20," seen here]). The Ancient Maya drew these 'bubbles' two ways: as two (or three) separate arched lines (e.g., at M16), or as a single wide arch, 'sliced' in two or three parts, as our artist does fairly consistently ([Fig. 3-06](#), left group).



Fig. 3-04. *Palace Tablet: The second Lunar Series.* (M16-N17) Glyph G-F (M16) was carved by a different Hand than the rest of the Series. Photos by author.



Fig. 3-05. *Palace Tablet: na* glyphs. Photos by author.

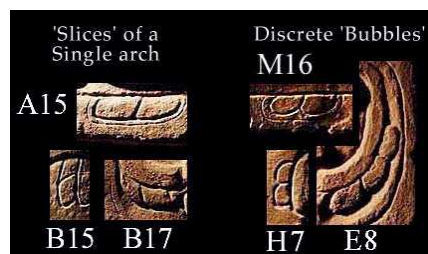


Fig. 3-06. *Palace Tablet: 'Bubble' element of some glyphs.* Photos by author.

The second group highlights this carver's treatment of 'Jaguar spots' and the human facial profile. This master of subtle detail carves pelt-spots in a distinctive way, seen at its best in the 'Jaguar-Headed Throne of Creation' in the upper scene (this Jaguar rests atop glyph G6, overlapping the G5 position). I shall not commit just yet whether the throne was carved by this artist. Many details might confirm such a supposition, but the 'Throne' is extraordinary —carved with even more attention to detail than these glyphs. In any case, these three examples ([Fig. 3-07](#)) render this sacred animal's spotted pelt in a unique way: concave oval craters carefully

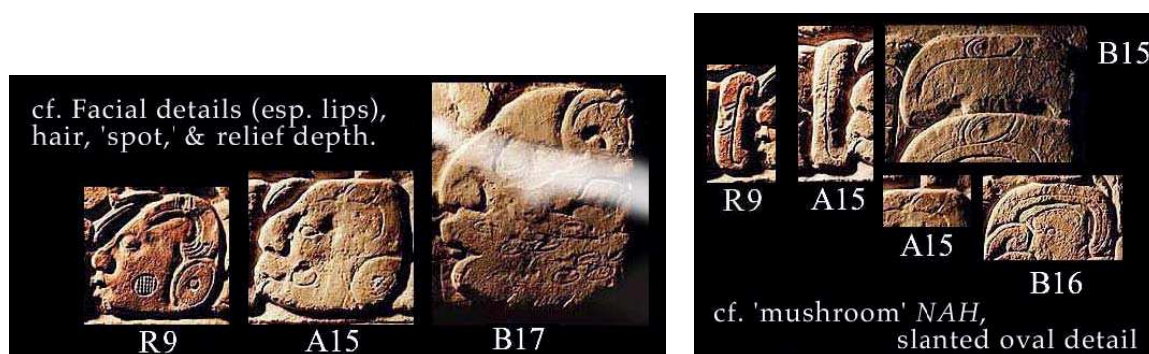
outlined with an engraved line so that each 'spot's 'rim' lies level with the front plane. This laborious process is visually very effective, and demands great care and skill.



Fig. 3-07. *Palace Tablet*: 'Jaguar spots' elements of some glyphs. Photos by author.

One other glyph has 'spots' carved like B17 et al.: the full-figure glyph 10 *Winal*, at A9-B10. Other parts of this glyph are carved more deeply, more dramatically than the Lunar Series which starts at A15 (in fact, the boldly-carved '#10-skull' headdress at A9-A10 seems much more characteristic of the M16-N17 Hand), but perhaps this is a function of its greater prominence. I leave till another section the problem of linking this Initial Series glyph with A15-B17.

The artist of our third Lunar Series appears to treat his 'jaguar spots' in a similar way (R12, in [Fig. 3-07](#)), but his spots are circular, and his engraved line lies down inside the 'crater' rather on the surface plane. The other 'Jaguar spots' on the *Palace Tablet* occur in the chimerical name-glyphs of K'inich Kan-Bahlam, at L9 and M12. The respective artists of these two examples (also pictured on [Fig. 3-07](#), right) both treat 'spots' in the traditional way: with crosshatching rather than excavating.



Figs. 3-08 and 3-09. *Palace Tablet*: 'Jaguar spots' elements; *Nah* affix and comparable elements of some glyphs. Photos by author.

The second group also juxtaposes facial profiles. The two faces happen to be those of Hunahpu/Hun-Ajaw and his twin Xbalanque/Yax-Balam, so we ought to find a close resemblance, especially in the 'Hapsburg' lips and large round noses of A15 and B17. The other face of Hun-Ajaw at R9 ([Fig. 3-08](#)), has more petite lips and nose, and his every detail is carved more boldly (note particularly his hair and earflare).

([Fig. 3-09](#)) The third group compares the T48 *Nah* "house" glyph, and the diagonal band or oval that decorates it (see also [Fig. 3-68](#)). The soft 'mushroom' shape we see in B15 is echoed, rotated 90°, at a smaller scale in A15. The usual form of *Nah* is at R9, a stiffer, straighter 'mushroom,' cap separated from its stem, adorned with a (double-outlined) straight diagonal band bonding the outer edge to the 'inline.' The artist of B15 prefers to crown his 'mushroom' with a doubled-outlined slanted oval. He repeats this peculiar oval in the 'hair' of the '*K'uh* head' just below it. It appears again in the identical 'hair' treatment of the '*K'uh* at B16 and the 'Hun Ajaw' at A15. I refer to R9's *Nah* as 'the usual form' because the 'decoration' one usually finds on this part of the *Nah* glyph (when present at all) is almost always a stripe, made of straight parallel elements like the band at R9 (often with a crosshatched or excavated middle as here), rather than curved ones like the artist of A15-B17 prefers. Likewise, the 'band' which crosses the 'hair' of R9's 'Hun-Ajaw' (see [Fig. 3-08](#)) is treated precisely analogously to the 'band' on R9's *Nah*.

The fourth group compares this artist's treatment of 'hair' and 'earflares.' At least some Palenque artists apparently considered the hair of '*K'uh*' and *Ajaw* to be interchangeably analogous, as seen here and in [Figs. 3-08](#) and [3-11](#). These earflares vary considerably in shape (A15's is rounder, B15's more rectilinear, B16's more a rounded parallelogram), but the central ovals in each (and the depth of relief) are quite similar. In short, the earflare's utter simplicity seems to make it less useful a predictor of identity than the other more complex shapes.

3.1.2 Lunar Series Conclusions

To conclude my analysis of the A15-B17 artist's Lunar Series, I should describe his most salient characteristics. The farther down the list, the more specifically I need to describe them:

1. Lightly-engraved details, such as individual 'hairs.'
2. A preference for low-relief modeling, particularly in defining the hairline, coupled with meticulous modeling/rounding of edges (e.g. the 'mushroom' *Nah*, the 'goggles' of the *Ch'ok* at A17). These lightly-carved details contrast sharply with the deeply-cut, carefully-rounded edges

of the major morphemic and visual elements within each glyph-block. This habit happens to maximize legibility.

3. Occasional indulgence in intricate, delicate detail (e.g., the 'X-glyph' at A16).

4. 'Bubbles' of the 'sliced' variety (see first group, [Fig. 3-06](#)).

5. In minor details, slanted ovals preferred to circles. Slanted ovals also preferred to straight diagonal bands (see third group, [Fig. 3-09](#)); this rare preference is highly peculiar to this artist.

6. An attractive, peculiar treatment of 'jaguar spots' — carefully concave ovals bounded by a very neat outline ([Fig. 3-07](#)). This treatment extends to the double 'spots' on the 'ears' of A16 and B17, and links these glyphs to the full-figure "10 Winal" glyph A9-B10 (perhaps) and the 'Jaguar Throne' in the top of the Tablet. His treatment of the 'stripes' in *ko* (A17, [Fig. 3-12](#)) echoes this habit: though he carved away the background, the two bands have gently concave centers.

7. Consciously-varied form of his '*u*'-prefix (and presumably other glyphs) when they occur adjacent to one another (as A16 and A17), presumably for the sake of avoiding repetition. However, this variation is hardly dramatic; A16's T11 'bracket' and A17's T1 'bracket' are closely-related forms.

8. The difference between his 'moons' at A16 and B17 (besides the diagnostic single-dot ["20"] vs. the three dots [*-ja*]) may result from the desire for variety. In A16, the field surrounding the 'bubbles' is sunken, carved down to a lower level, while that in B17 is a bevel, sloping attractively. Elsewhere, carvers might simply darken this area with cross-hatching (though uncommon in Palenque's relief glyphs, as on *Temple XIV Panel B3* [[Fig. 3-10](#)]; such a treatment is *de rigueur* on engraved texts like the *96 Glyphs* and *Temple XIX Platform*), but not here —every example of 'moon' glyphs on the *Palace Tablet* is one of these two varieties. (See [Figs. 3-03, 3-06, 3-15, 3-62, 3-101, 3-105](#).)



Fig. 3-10. *Temple XIV Tablet*, glyph B3: *-ja* suffix with crosshatching. Photo by author.

9. His *K'al* 'Hand' at A16 has the same softness as his *Nah* at B15. Here it is a detriment — the 'hand' looks lifeless, fingers tubular, like an inflated rubber glove; he does not indicate joints. The characteristic 'wrist oval' he draws large, a careful, lightly-engraved doubled ellipse (with a nearly-horizontal axis, at quite an angle to the axis of the small oval just off-center), with even more-lightly-engraved 'bubbles.'

10. This artist draws 'eyes' differently every time — or at least five different ways out of five times (the sixth, B17, is unfortunately eroded, but I expect it resembled A15's). His 'ordinary human eye' on A15 is a little larger, its upper lid a little rounder, than the comparable 'eyes' on R9, Q10, R12. The 'eye' he draws in his *K'uh* at B16 is beady— tiny and almost circular— while those he puts into the *Ch'ok* 'goggles' are heavy-lidded. His 'God eye' at A16 is emphatic, boldly sculpted (as is the rule elsewhere).

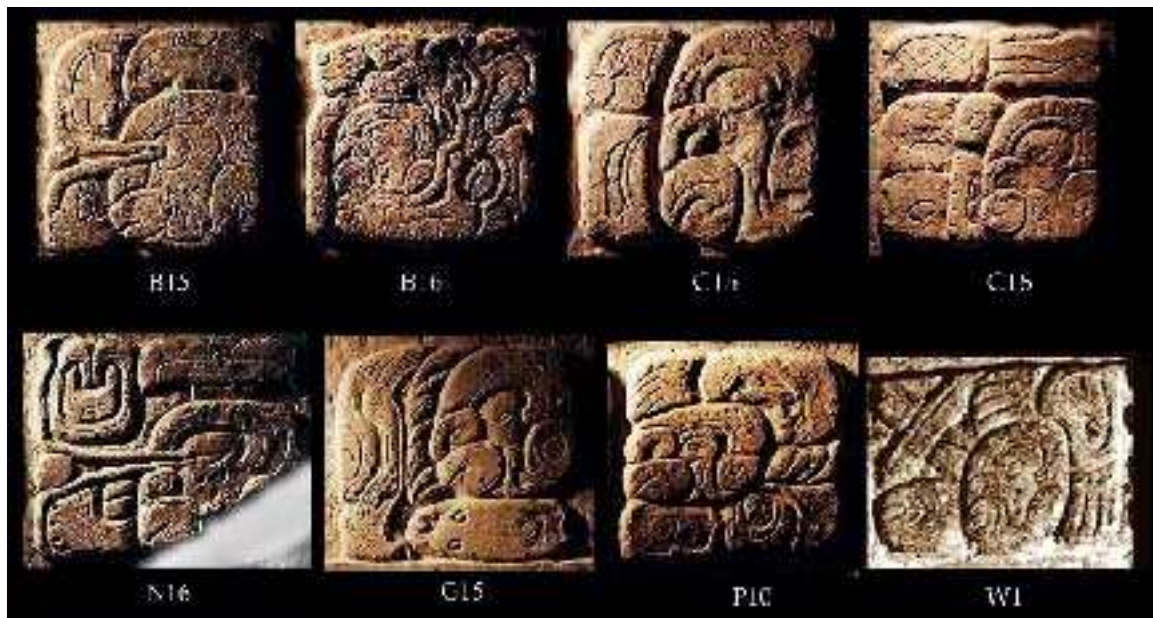


Fig. 3-11. Palace Tablet 'K'uh heads.' Photos by author, except W1, by Merle Greene Robertson.

11. His drilled dots (A15, B15, B16) are of middle size —smaller than those of the N16 artist, larger than the almost-invisible specks on C15 and C16 ([Fig. 3-11](#)). However, his dots at A17 are a bit smaller, so we cannot count on these to be absolutely consistent.

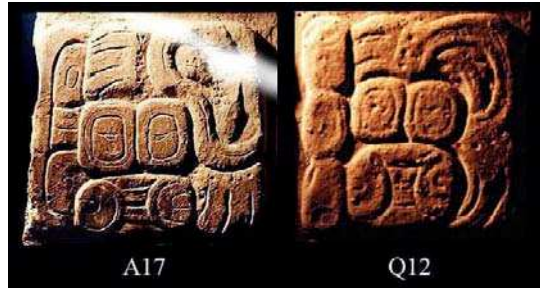


Fig. 3-12. *Palace Tablet*: (*u-Ch'ok-ko*-) *K'aba* 'elbows.' Photos by author.

12. His *K'aba* at A17 ([Fig. 3-12](#), A17 & Q12, also see [Fig. 3-11](#), P10 and W1) is carved with deep separations between the parts —the 'cross-bands' is completely framed within an L-shaped 'window,' which he carved as if it overlays the 'wings.' This is the more common variety at Palenque, but the Q12 artist connects his 'wings' organically to the 'frame,' and further, carves the whole 'elbow' (including part of the 'frame') as if overlaid by the *Ch'ok-ko*.



Fig. 3-13. *Palace Tablet*: Royal names, *Mat*-bird, 'Skull,' and comparable Emblem Glyphs. Enlargements on following pages. Photos by author.



Fig. 3-14. Palace Tablet: 'K'an Crosses' in context. Photos by author.

13. The inner corners of the 'cross' in his '*K'an* cross' are unusually sharp. The standard form has consciously rounded corners (in [Fig. 3-13](#), eight out of eleven are rounded, and two [C14 and P2] go further: they 'checker' these corner spaces, C14 by crosshatching, P2 by excavating, opposite 'corners'). Usually, the Ancient Maya artists drew each 'corner space' as a right angle with rounded corner (L11 might exhibit the ideal form), though the more cursive forms of these became little circle-segments (P9) or slanted ovals (H7, F14). See [Fig. 3-14](#) for some of these '*K'an*-crosses' in context.

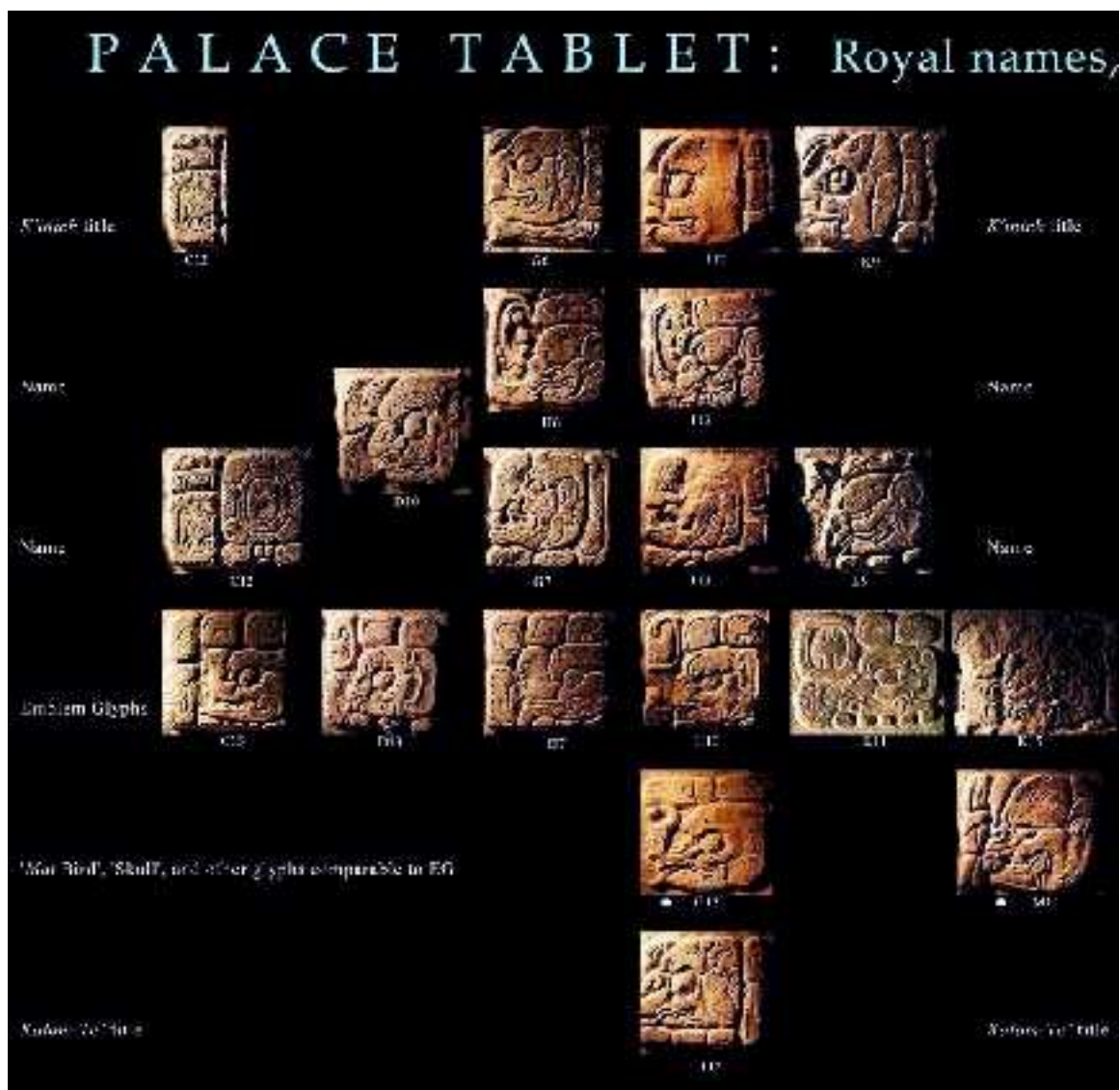


Fig. 3-15a. *Palace Tablet*: Royal names, *Mat'* bird, 'Skull,' and comparable Emblem Glyphs. The left half of Fig. 3-13 above. Photos by author.

14. Finally, Palenque artists developed quite a variety of (T36 - T40) 'water group' *K'uh* prefixes that appear virtually nowhere else. I mentioned one rare variant used by the E15 artist (at G15), and the A15-B17 artist gives us a small version of that, engraved its details (at B16) rather than carving them in relief (see [Fig. 3-11](#), which illustrates all these).

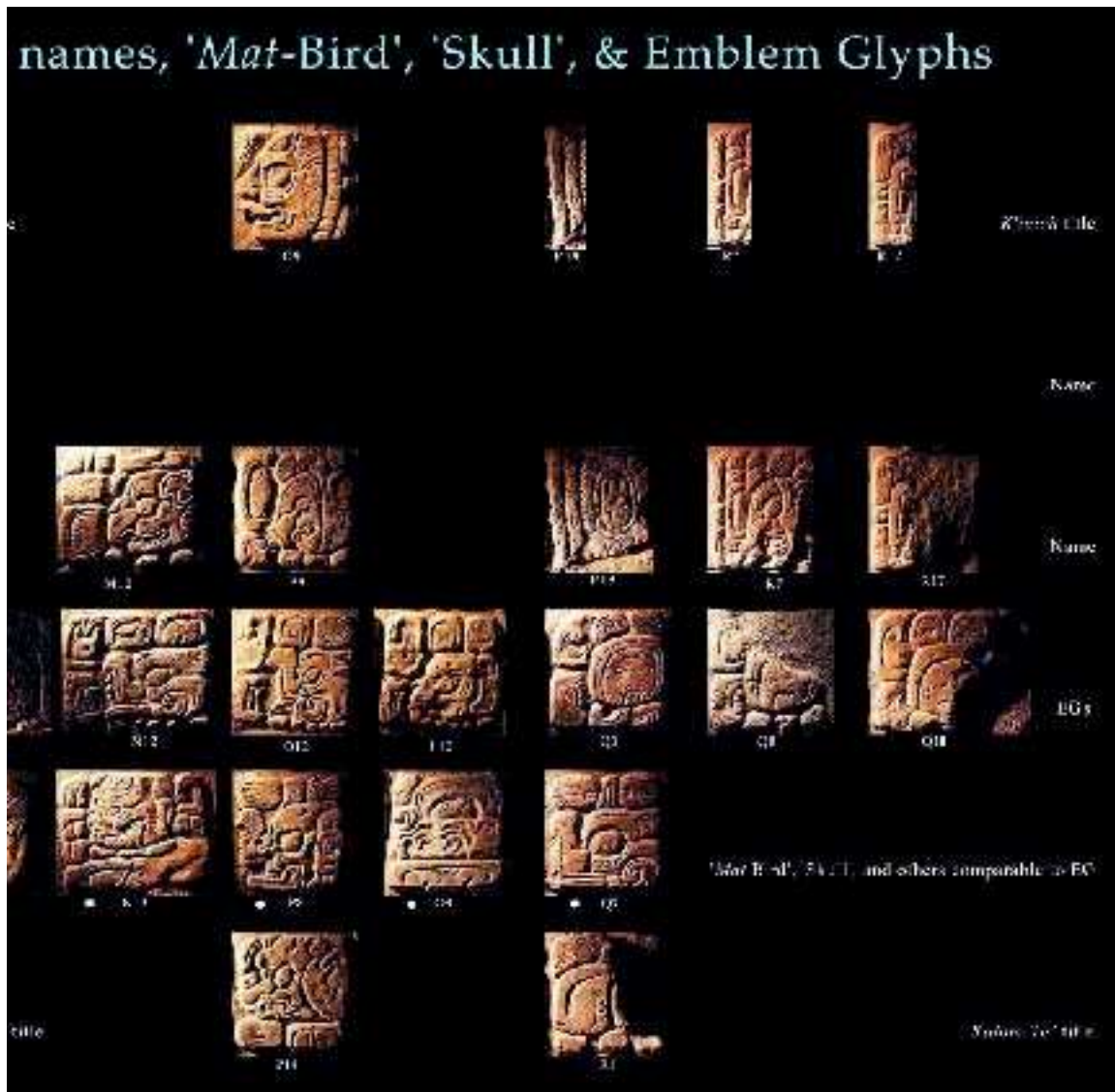


Fig. 3-15b. *Palace Tablet*: Royal names, *Mat*-'bird,' 'Skull,' and comparable Emblem Glyphs. The right half of Fig. 3-13 above. Photos by author.

3.1.3 Characteristics of the artist of the N16-M17 Lunar Series fragment:

1. He carved with less care (his edges and curves are weaker), but more deeply and dramatically. N16's drilled holes gape ([Fig. 3-01a](#)), the 'bubbles' in the 'water group' *K'uh* prefix and the interior details of the *K'uh* 'head' are defined as deeply as the *K'uh* 'head' itself. He sharply bevels many of these deeply-cut inner lines (especially in the 'shell' and 'bubbles' of the *K'uh* prefix).

2. His 'sign forms' are highly rectangular —the 'skull', the 'hand' itself, the 'moon' and its enclosed space, the 'spacers' in the numeral, and all the elements of N16.

3. His squarish *Nah* superfix defines its horizontal element as separate from its vertical 'stem.' (cf. N16 & B15 in [Fig. 3-01a](#).) This is the more traditional form of this glyph; harking back to the totally rectangular form prevalent during the early Classic.

4. Though he deeply drilled many dots, he crisply carved some —e.g., three in the N16 'shell' ([Fig. 3-01a](#)), three 'osteopores' in the M17 'skull' ([Fig. 3-15](#)), three raised dots in the M17 'moon' *-ja*— as distinctly flattened relief ovals.



Fig. 3-15. *Palace Tablet*. Supplementary Series Glyphs, all with 'hands.' Photos by author.

5. He carved the 'pupil' in the 'skull's' 'eye' in a characteristic way: a strongly-sloped narrow oval (related to his dots) with a fine outline, hanging from the upper edge of the 'eye socket' ([Fig. 3-15](#)).

6. His *K'al* hand here (M17) has nails sculpted in relief (unlike the lightly engraved lines on A16), and its index finger bends assertively up to touch the 'skull' ([Fig. 3-15](#)).

3.1.4 Surprising Result

None of these characteristics are visible in M16, the 'G & F glyph' of this Lunar Series (with the possible exception of the little oval dots) ([Fig. 3-14](#)). We are forced to conclude that Palenque sculptors could divide their work up whenever it suited them, even to the point of one artist carving the first glyph(s) of a clause, another carving the rest. This artist is also distinct from the other two Lunar Series artists ([Fig. 3-01](#)). Comparing the three 'G & F glyphs' (2nd, 3rd, and 4th glyphs of [Fig. 3-05](#)) readily makes that point. The 'bubbles' in the M16 *na* are separate; its 'cloth knot' is amorphaously natural, and its T128 *Ti'* superfix is different in character from the other two—which are also different from each other. This artist is even more of a perfectionist than

the A15 Hand: his detail lines, even the lightest ones, are precise, firm, unerring. (To understand what I mean by *unerring*, compare on [Fig. 3-05](#) the inlines of the *na*'s in M16 and A15. The former's curved ends —especially connections between them and the straight middle— are smoother, more assured, possess more energy than the corresponding parts of A15.)



Fig. 3-16. *Palace Tablet*: careful, fine lines skillfully paralleling bolder lines. Photos by author.

And when one seeks upward from M16, one finds that M14 substantially matches it along many dimensions (first glyph of [Fig. 3-05](#)). The *na*'s match perfectly. The relation between the heavy detail line and its fine parallel commands my attention ([Fig. 3-16](#)). This sculptor handles them with extraordinary consistency and skill; every stroke is strong and even and beautiful. It is such attention to detail that separates great carving from merely good. He created the extraordinary *itz'i-Winik* at L14; we shall discuss his work below (Section 3-05).

3.1.5 Characteristics of the artist of the R9-R12 Lunar Series Fragment:

The third Lunar Series in [Fig. 3-01](#) (R9 - R12) is by a fourth Hand. I have already mentioned some of the characteristics of this artist in comparison to the other Lunar Series ([Figs. 3-01a](#), [3-07](#), [3-12](#), [3-15](#)), but to recapitulate:

1. Careful, highly finished modeling on human faces (as R9, Q10, R12, and the 'eye' in R10), but mostly flat treatment of abstract glyphs like *na* and *Ti'* (R9), and the 'hands' (Q10, R10, Q11; see [Fig. 3-15](#)). Most edges of elements rounded; while crescents as in *ya* and *Ti'* (R9, Q10, R10) he carefully bevels on the inner curve.

2. Three 'bubbles' rather than two in *na* (R9) and 'moons' (R10, Q11) —or none? (R12 seems to have suffered some flaking....) 'Bubbles' mostly separate from each other, divided by strongly-diagonal cuts (esp. R9).

3. Sunken field around 'bubbles' on 'moons' and *na*.

4. He excavates the spiral 'feet' of the T628 'Casper glyph' at R11, carving them into spiral valleys with raised edges. This treatment he also accords, more gently, to the central 'frame' of *K'aba* and the ends of *ko* (Q12).

5. *Ya* suffix's center is a relatively naturalistic 'penis.' Its curled side elements are quite thick (Q10, R10), squeezed into a squarish shape on R10.

6. Distinctive (unique?) treatment of 'jaguar spots' on R12 ([Fig. 3-07](#)): circular craters with a tiny circle engraved down inside.

7. The *K'aba* 'elbow' (Q12, [Fig. 3-12](#)), as mentioned above, organically connects its 'wings' to its central 'frame.'

8. His *ko* syllable at Q12 ([Fig. 3-12](#)), is unusually 'fat,' almost as wide as it is long.

9. Crosshatching (R9) and excavating (*u*-syllable of Q12) both appear.

10. 'Hands' ([Fig. 3-15](#)): *K'al* (Q11) is fairly lively (at least livelier than the rubber-glove *K'al* at A16); its joint-creases indicated, its nails and 'wrist-circle' sculpted rather than merely engraved, its high-relief 'fingers' reaching up gently to touch the 'jaguar-eye'-*ja*. The *Hul* 'hand' at R10 has a large flat expanse, including a disproportionately fat 'thumb.' Though the 'index finger' points upward, the rest of the 'fingers' turn in (as they do on the 'jaw-hand' at Q10) so the 'middle finger' can touch the 'thumb' in a gesture whose meaning was probably clear and important, though it is still unclear to us.¹²⁰

11. Except for his carefully modeled faces and triple-'bubbles,' this artist tends to carve economically —few extra strokes beyond what is necessary. The 'jaguar eye' in Q11 has a minimum of adornment, his *Ti'* and 'cloth knot' *Hun* (R9) are highly abstract and simple. The 'cleft' in the 'skull' of the 'Square-nosed Beast' at R11 is unadorned by the parallel line so common elsewhere. When the situation demands it he carves delicate details (such as the 'hair' and crosshatched 'cheek-spot' of his '*Ajaw*' (R9) and Xbalanque's '*Yax*-diadem' (R12) with careful, firm, neatly parallel cuts. Usually, however, careful facial modeling is more this artist's *forte* than very fine decoration (*pace* the '*Ajaw*' at R9).

¹²⁰ Whatever the meaning of this specific 'pointing' gesture in Maya ceremony, in the context of a head-variant "zero" or *Bak'tun* it substitutes/interchanges freely with an open hand.

3.2. Assign the 30 glyphs with *-la* or other 'Ajaw faces' ([Fig. 3-17](#))

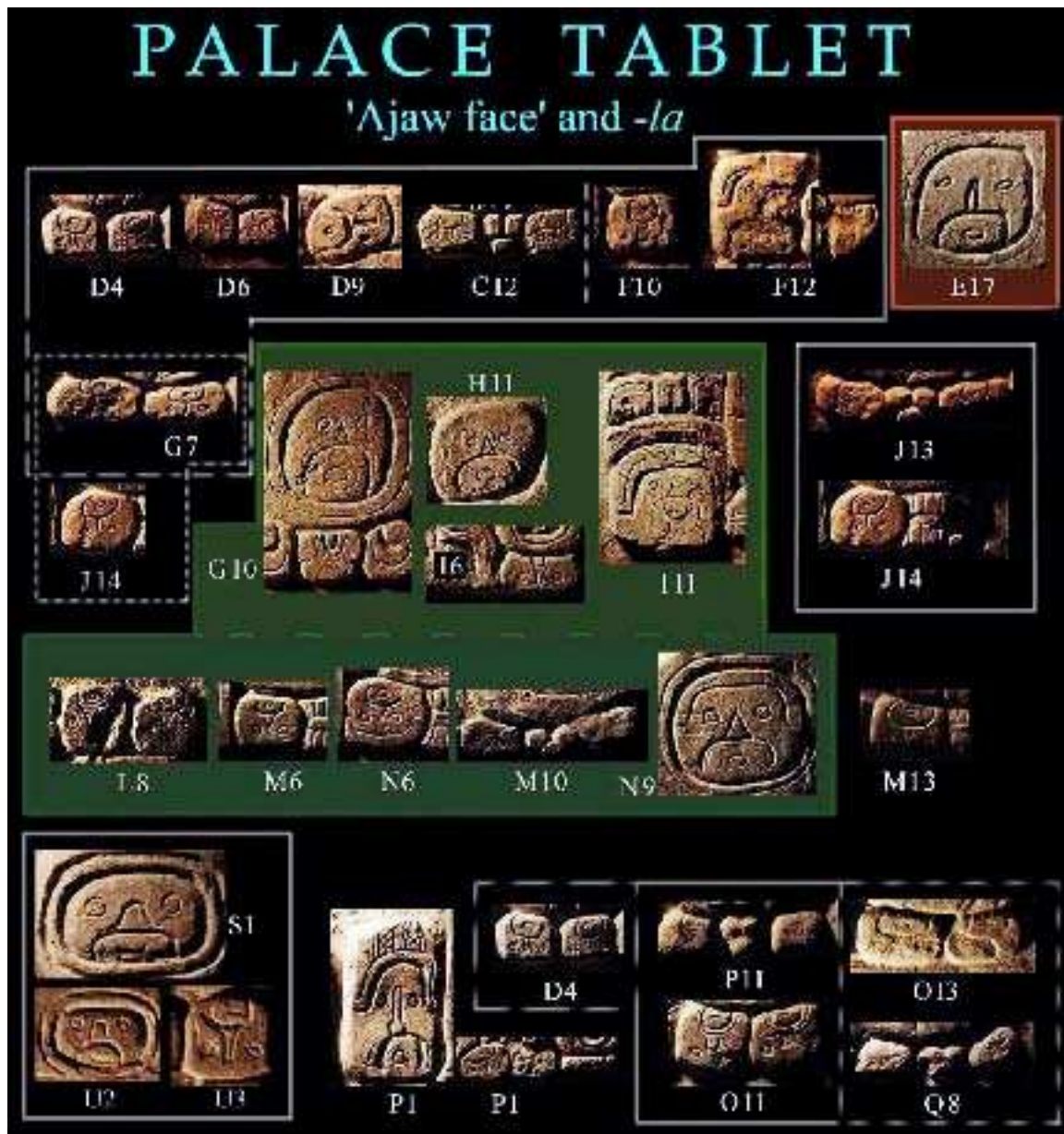


Fig. 3-17. *Palace Tablet* 'Ajaw-faces': daysign *Ajaw*, syllabic *la*, and "son of father," assigned to various Hands. Photos by author.

3.2.1. Four *-la-ta* suffixes

3.2.1.1. *-la-ta* suffixes, Hand M6-N6

Distance Number (DN) suffixes follow a fairly strict formula: *-wa* under a "day" glyph (if present), *-ji-ya* under "winal," and *-ya* under "tun," "k'atun," etc. However, for some reason the *Palace Tablet* scribes used a (very nearly unique) different suffix, *-la-ta* (*lat*, "later"), thrice under the "winal," once under "tun." These anomalous spellings are grouped on the middle slab of the inscription; three in Columns MN, one in Column J ([Fig. 3-18](#)). Their proximity might suggest that they spring from the hand of a single scribe. However, as we shall see, they were *carved* by three different Hands. There are three likely explanations: (1) These three carvers were all working from a single scribe's painted layout (a plausible scenario), or (2) The Master Layout featured these odd spellings in several places, perhaps throughout the text, and the other carvers felt free to change their (eight or nine) DN's back to the 'normal' spelling, leaving only these three adhering to the layout's peculiar suffixes (less plausible), and (3) the use of the word *lat* is specifically associated with death, as all four uses of this suffix are in DN's leading to a death event. They were indeed part of the original Master Layout, but only here, and the carvers were *not* free to change them, because doing so would have changed the meaning or connotation, if only slightly. (This explanation appeals most to me¹²¹. For more on Distance Numbers, see below, [Section 3.5](#), and [Fig. 3-76](#).)

¹²¹ There is another "death" event in Columns I-J, at J10-I11, but this example is not structured precisely the same. Here the DN is isolated from the verb by a CR



Fig. 3-18. *Palace Tablet*: Four *la-ta* suffixes, and a comparable calendric, by three Hands. Photos by author.

Comparing the first two of these collocations (M6 & N6), note that they are sequential glyphs, therefore likely to have been carved by the same Hand. Indeed, they are strikingly similar: both *-la* suffixes have 'caps,' large, perfectly round 'eyes' and 'mouth,' and larger 'eyes' than 'mouth.' In the center of each 'face' is a large, concave-triangular 'nose.' ([Fig. 3-19](#)) The 'faces' (and the *Winik* glyph, [Fig. 3-18](#)) are squarish, pretty strictly bilaterally symmetrical, and the artist has finished their modeling similarly.



Fig. 3-19. *Palace Tablet*: 'Ajaw-face' glyphs with wide, round 'eyes,' concave triangular 'nose,' characteristic of the Hand of M6. Perhaps the smaller-'eyed' glyphs in columns G, H, and I represent a different, but closely-related hand. Photos by author.

These seven correspondences convince me that they are by the same Hand. Note, however, that the numeral 15 on M6 is decorated, while the thinner bars of N6's numeral 18 are not ([Figs. 3-18, 3-19](#)). Also note that the N6 *ta*'s central 'spinal column' is wider and slightly concave, while that of M6 is not ([Figs. 3-19, 3-23](#)); also their 'ribs' differ slightly. These differences inform us of the kind of variation (at minimum) we should expect from the same Hand as he moves from glyph to glyph. His treatment of the *ta* glyphs is otherwise remarkably consistent. From identical D-shaped 'tail caps' sprout identical bifurcated 'antennae' ([Fig. 3-23](#)); these 'antennae' are likewise bilaterally symmetrical (as are the decorative bands on the numeral bars, [Fig. 3-21](#), and the upper 'bubbles' in the *Winik*, [Fig. 3-22](#)).

3.2.1.2. *-la-ta* suffixes, The J14 and M13 Hands

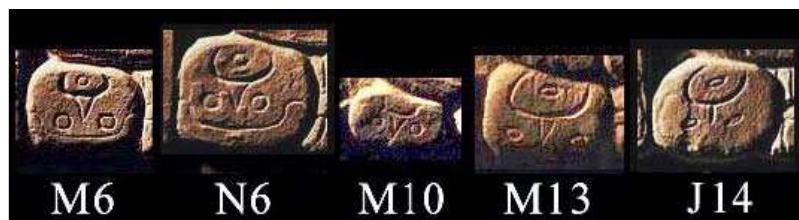


Fig. 3-20. *Palace Tablet*: 'inverted-Ajaw-face' *-la* glyphs. The first three are by the Hand of M6, the others by two different Hands. Photos by author.

This group of traits described just above is not shared with any other glyph in [Figure 3-18](#).¹²² For 'face' details see [Fig. 3-20](#): J14's tiny 'eyes' and 'mouth' all are narrowly elliptical, axes aslant, and crowded into the center area of the 'face' round the 'nose'; the 'nose' is not triangular, but condensed into a single short stroke. J14's 'face' and the line encircling the 'mouth' are also elliptical, tilted to the same angle. M13's *-la* has narrow elliptical 'eyes' and 'mouth' as well, but these all lie on horizontal axes, wide-eyed, far apart, around a lifeless, rigidly-triangular 'nose.' The loop around its 'mouth' is decidedly asymmetrical-cursive. For further comparison I have included a *Kumk'u* glyph from M10 in [Fig. 3-18](#); its *-la* suffix (though 'mouthless') matches those on M6 and N6 ([Fig. 3-20](#)). I think M6, N6 and M10 all spring from the same Hand.

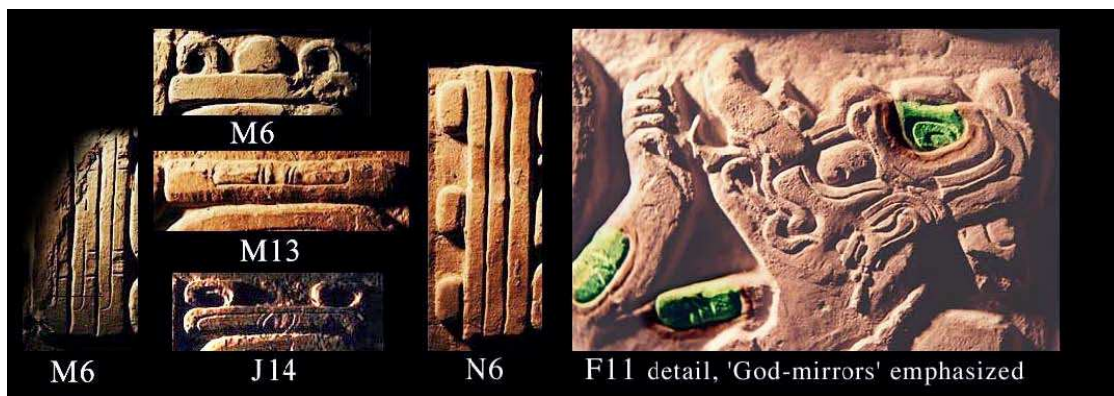


Fig. 3-21. *Palace Tablet*: some numerals and 'god-marks.' Photos by author.



Figs. 3-22 and 3-23. *Palace Tablet*: Details of *Winik* and *ta* glyphs. Photos by author.

The 'antennae' of M13's *ta* slope upwards ([Fig. 3-23](#)). The 'bubbles' in the top of both J14 and M13's *Winik*'s ([Fig. 3-22](#)) and the decorative band on their numeral coefficients all slant decidedly ([Fig. 3-21](#)). As a warning against getting too fussy about these little details, the corresponding 'bubbles' in M10 *Kumk'u* are also asymmetrical, though not quite as slanted ([Fig. 3-22](#)). The 'curls' on the sides of *Winik* also differ from scribe to scribe; M6's curl smoothly, beginning in a downward direction ('southeast' in [Fig. 3-22](#)), they end up pointing 'north.' M13's

¹²² For 'Ajaw-face' glyphs comparable to M6-N6, see Fig. 2A-2b.

begin horizontally ('east'), and curl down, then back up, ending up pointing back the way they came, like a fishhook. J14's are different yet, spiraling inward like a snail-shell, almost a full 360 .

[Figure 3-21](#) compares three decorated¹²³ and two undecorated numerals from these DN *Winik* collocations. The three decorations, superficially similar, consists of a slightly-concave stripe outlined on both sides, but there the resemblance ends. M6 and M13 both divide their '5-bar' down the middle with a nearly-rectilinear 'inset.' Both 'insets' 'face' outward, away from the glyph. (In this way, they resemble the structure of 'God-mirrors' like those on *K'awiil* at F11 shown here [\[Fig. 3-21\]](#).) But M6's carver places his pair of (orthogonal) 'bands' on the 'inside' of each bar, while M13's carver puts his (slanted) 'bands' on the 'outside.' J14's artist finds a third variety: His rounded dividing line 'faces' inward, and his 'band' is a slanted oval, not unlike those we investigated at A15, B15, B16 ([Fig. 3-29](#)). His numeral bar itself is modeled more roundly than M13's, which in turn has more volume than M6's. These distinctions —flat or rounded, 'decorated' or not, divided to the 'outside' or the 'inside,' with band single or double, straight or curved, on the 'inside' or 'outside'— are likely to be arbitrary, and vary according to the artist's whim. Even with six dimensions, by themselves numerals are too simple and too capricious to distinguish one Hand from another. Yet the three are so much unlike each other that it is hard to imagine one artist making them all. Indeed, their differences confirm the distinctions we have already drawn between the *la* suffixes. Though N6 is undecorated, its numeral is carved square and flat, just as M6's, and unlike the others, further confirming the identity of the M6-N6 Hand. Even numeral form can contribute to assigning glyphs to this or that Hand.

3.2.2. Different elements identify different Hands: Return to the *96 Glyphs*

From case to case, it is hardly possible to predict which of these pettifogging details will covary with individual artists. A detail that commonly takes a certain form indistinguishable among many artists may still have a unique variety in the hands of a specific individual. It appears, for instance, that these *Winik* 'side curls' might do so, but the 'bubbles' at the top ([Fig. 3-22](#)) and the stepped element at the bottom ([Fig. 3-18](#)) do not appear so productive—at least in

¹²³ I use the word 'decorated' because, so far as we can determine, their presence or absence carries no known meaning. It is entirely possible that the pattern of this and other subtle variations in glyph formation may serve rhetorically to emphasize a passage, to connote an extra message. For example, Linda Schele proposed that the two (rare and perhaps archaic) phonetic spellings of the name of K'inich Janab Pakal on the *Palace Tablet* were placed there specifically to connect it to earlier

this inscription. The likelihood of identification of a glyphic form with an individual artist increases in proportion to the number of dimensions along which it may vary, but above ten or twelve dimensions, things get murky, especially with the ancient Maya artist's evolving self-consciousness.

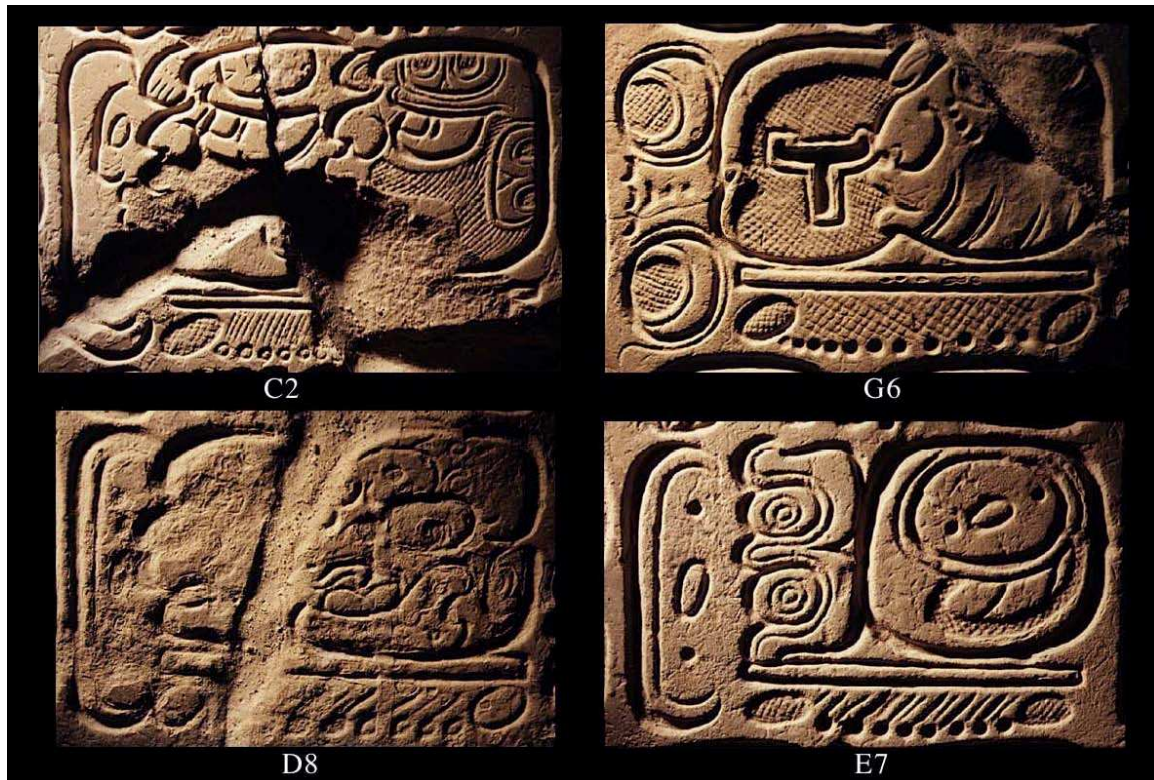


Fig. 3-24. *Panel of the 96 Glyphs*. Four "poetic" *U-Tz'akaj* glyphs. Photos by author.

Connoisseurship becomes increasingly difficult when the artists in question deliberately vary their forms. It is frustrating to compare, say, T12 'Aj glyphs on the *96 Glyphs Panel* (Section 2.5.1), whose Master deliberately alternated between hatching (D8, E7) and crosshatching (G6) and fine crosshatching (C2); between small (C2) and large (D8) 'hollow' dots and drilled dots (E7, G6) ([Fig. 3-25](#)); between crosshatched ovals (C2, E7, G6) and those merely outlined (D8). Yet the assertive, voluptuous line quality of this Master's work is unmistakable, especially when one looks at whole glyphs ([Fig. 3-24](#)).

monuments known as the *Tableritos*, which spelled his name in precisely the same way (*A Palenque Triad*, 2nd rev. ed., 1999, p. 180). See Fig. 2A-13j & 2A-13k, and n. 17 below.

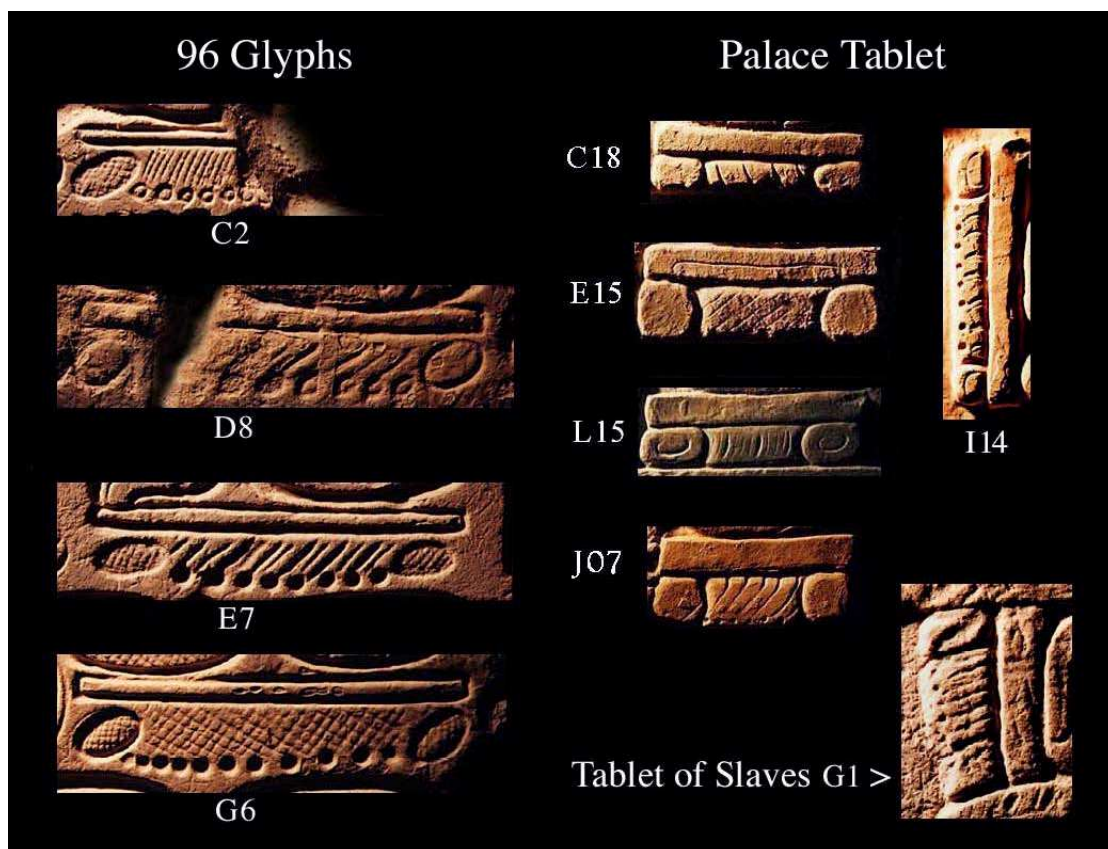


Fig. 3-25. *Panel of the 96 Glyphs, Palace Tablet, and Tablet of the Slaves. Ajglyphs.* Photos by author.

The T-shaped or 'bone'-shaped 'jewels' which dangle ubiquitously from headdresses, garments, and noses (an *Ankh*-like sign of breath/life?) in portrayals of Maya ritual take on an eccentric trifurcate shape—and a rich variety—in this Artist's hands. Three of his most elaborate such 'jewels' from the *Lapida de la Creación* comprise the bottom row of [Fig 3-26](#). These three bear 'faces' like the common 'Ajaw face' I scrutinized in Section 3.2.1.

Analyzing the earlier *Palace Tablet*, a connoisseur can count on the shapes of the 'eye,' of the 'nose,' and of the 'mouth' as characteristics peculiar to various specific artists. However, here, sixty-years later, our Artist has reached such a level of sophistication that he uses all three 'nose' types, two different shapes (and three sizes) of 'eye,' and two types of 'mouth.' The first 'face' in the bottom row, with closed 'eyes,' is more like the 'Xipe Totec' or 'sacrifice victim' mask seen on 'shields,' an identification emphasized by the protruding 'tongue.' Though these are strikingly consistent in form (especially when compared to other artists' 'beads') the last of these 'jewels' has an odd extra bend on one of its head-protuberances. However, these three do have matching

'teeth.' Two also sprout a glorious pair of S-shaped flourishes —also identical to one another— from their cleft crowns.

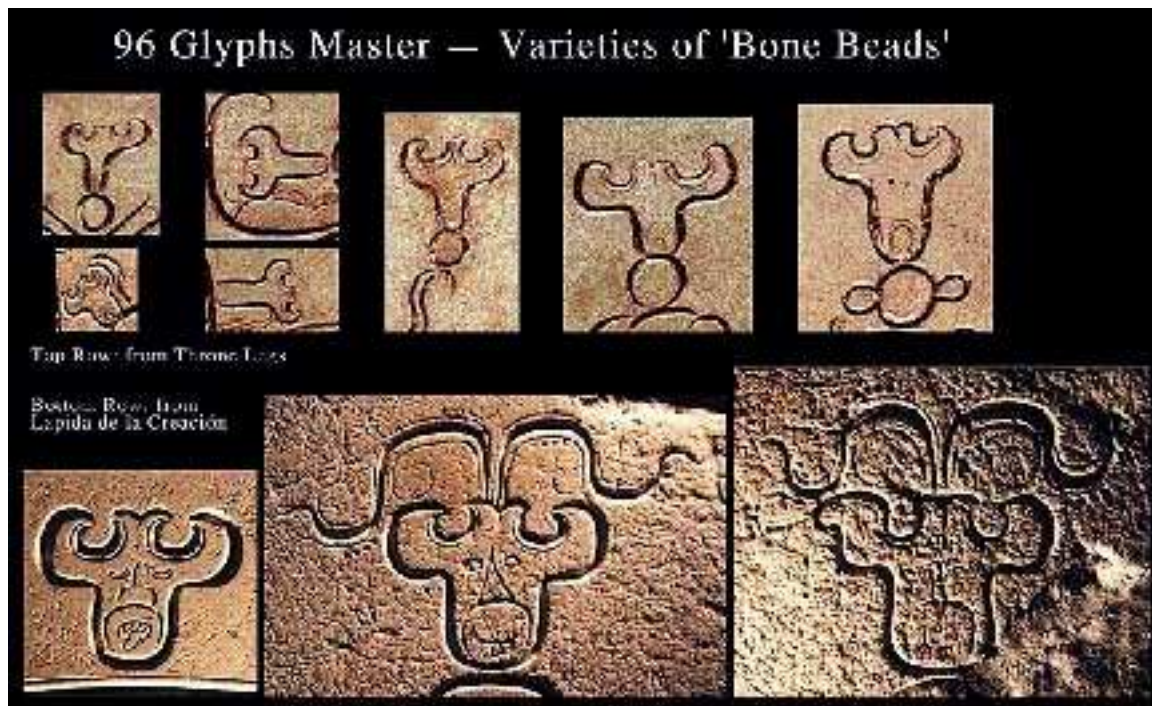


Fig. 3-26. 'Bone beads' by the Master of *96 Glyphs* from the *Throne Legs* and the *Lapida de la Creación*. Photos by author.

Yet, looking at the lush range of ten 'jewels' that the artist carved just on the 'Throne Legs' and the *Lapida de la Creación*, it is yet evident that they were all drawn by the same expert Hand. Why? This Master asserts his individuality with every virtuoso stroke of his brush. The calligraphic 'flourishes' in particular exemplify the energetic, so-called 'whiplash line' seen on the finest painted ceramics. He frequently emphasizes major curves by paralleling them with a fine, lively, thread-like line; he does so here on both sides of each 'whiplash' flourish, and along the concave curves of the 'jewel.' He masterfully constructs his 'whiplash' and the outlines of his 'jewels' with consistently-modulated strokes —bold along broad outside curves, tapering down to thin at corners —the sharper the turn, the more abrupt the modulation, the thinner the stroke as it pauses and changes direction. We can feel, we can *read* the decisions, the changing speed, the hesitations and accelerations of his brush as it lay down its stroke of ink.

3.2.3. Hand M6-N6's other 'faces' (Fig. 3-19)

[Fig. 3-19](#) above collects together all the 'faces' that substantially match those on M6-N6. They all have triangular 'noses' and round, staring 'eyes.' Some have open mouths, one a tiny grin (I-11). One (M10) has no 'mouth' at all, another (I6, an iconic drop-earring, not a glyph) lacks an outline around the 'mouth' area. Three (M6, N6, I11) wear 'caps.' Some do not match quite as well: The 'eyes' of the last three (G10, H11, I11) are smaller and less circular, and their 'mouths' are significantly larger. These three are also less strictly symmetrical than the others; they might be by a distinct Hand. Note also that they group closely together; they might still be by the M6-N6 Hand, but simply made some days or weeks earlier — an artist's work habits and whims can evolve daily. In any case, these examples all occur in the upper and middle rows of the central slab of the inscription.

3.2.4. The other 'Ajaw face' Hands (Fig. 3-27 = Fig. 3-17)

In [Fig. 3-27](#), I have arranged thirty similar 'Ajaw face glyphs' in text-sequence order. The top row, from Columns CDEF, match one another pretty well except for the very last one (E17), the territory of whose Hand we established in **Section 2.5.5**. These 'Ajaw faces' (D4, D6, D9, C12, F10, and F12) all have smallish wide 'eyes' and a distinct type of 'nose' shaped rather like a finger—perfectly parallel sides with a rounded 'bridge.' All 'noses' but F10's are distinctly narrow. D4 and D6 have smiling 'mouths,' D9 and F10 the usual tiny circle, as if whistling; C12's have no 'mouths' at all. F12's *Way-bi* and iconic 'drop-earring' are so damaged that it is hard to judge whether they fit in this category or not; but they display nothing to bar their membership. By contrast, E17's *Ajaw* daysign has an obelisk-shaped 'nose' and distinctly-oval 'mouth' and 'eyes' in keeping with its distinctive cursive character. Within the limits of this evidence, we might hypothetically assign the area from D4 to F10 (or F12) to a single Hand. Note that this requires our Hand to work on two separate slabs; Column CD is on one stone, EF on another.

The core of the second and third rows consist of the G10-N6 group we scrutinized just above. They might yet resolve into two Hands. G7, at the beginning of our second row, has 'mouths' exactly matching D4's and D6's, to whose Hand I tentatively assigned its near neighbors F10 and F12. Its 'nose' is reduced to a single slanted stroke, though, which links it faintly with J14 (a copy of which I juxtapose just below it). We need more evidence to attribute this glyph.

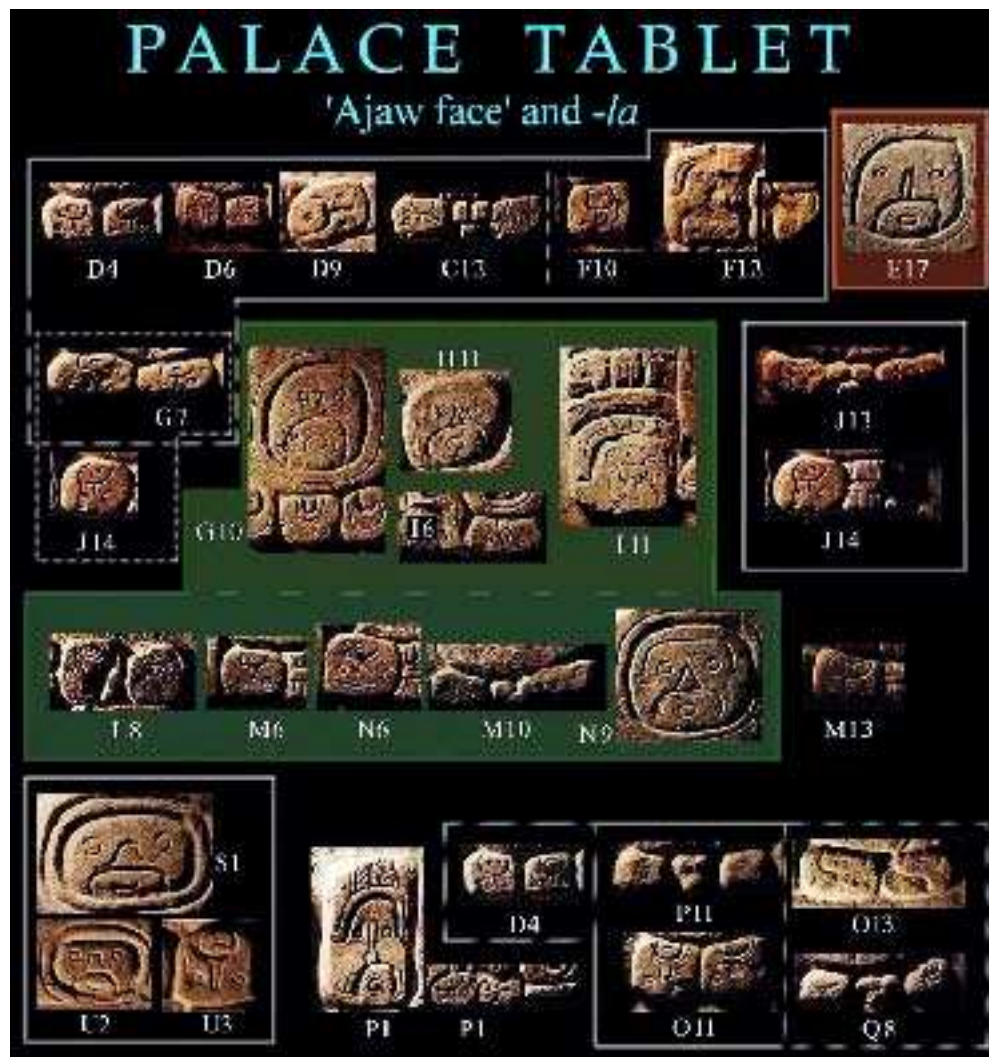


Fig. 3-27 (=3-17). *Palace Tablet*: 'Ajaw-faces': daysign *Ajaw*, syllabic *la*, and "son of father," assigned to various Hands. Photos by author.

I think that the same Hand likely carved J13 and J14, at the right end of the second row, even though one's details are drilled and the other skillfully engraved. As I argued above (Section 3.2.1.2.), M13, at the end of the third row, is by a new Hand.

There seems to have been just one carver of the text in the 'Coronation' Scene at the top of the *Palace Tablet* (fourth row, S1, U2, U3); he prefers a peculiar bell-shaped 'nose,' smiling 'mouth,' and wide, staring 'eyes.' This brings the number of individuals carving the left and middle slab of the Tablet distinguished by the 'Ajaw face' to six, possibly eight.

The right slab gives us an unusual "son of father" (*Nich?*) glyph at P1. Although its 'nose' resembles that of U3, there is little else to link this glyph with that Hand. In particular, the right

half of this glyph has a very strange form of the abstract **la** suffix. (See discussion of [Fig. 3-28](#) below.) The little triangle of dots that forms the **la**'s central element is here —uniquely— enclosed in a larger circle. This treatment, plus the highly ornamental form of the "son of father" 'face' sets this glyph apart from the others, though otherwise the rudimentary 'faces' in this suffix look like J13's.

The last four **la**'s in our Figure are hard to classify. P11 and Q8 are so eroded that little can be made of them. O11 and O13 look vaguely like D4 and G7, respectively, but not much. Probably these represent at least one or two new Hands, but their bland uniformity (or contrarily, P1's unique weirdness), fails to motivate me to offer an attribution for them. Other features will link the artists of this final slab of the Tablet.

[Fig. 3-27](#) (= [Fig. 3-17](#)) summarizes these attributions. Solid lines surrounding a group of glyphs indicates that I am confident of their attributions. A dotted separation within a solid box (e.g., that which separates the two groups in the green box indicates a possible distinction of two very similar Hands. A dotted enclosure indicates a likely (but not certain) attribution of the group to a single Hand. G7, for example, might belong to either of two Hands.

3.2.5. Abstract **la**'s (Fig. 3-28).

We turn here to the varieties of the abstract **-la** suffix. This and most Maya inscriptions offer examples in abundance; its simplicity harmonizes with its constant employment. It is abstracted from the complete form (seen here at C12 and M10) which consists of two inverted 'Ajaw-daysign faces' flanking a triangle of plain circles; the triangle stands point down (for sequence of abstraction, see [Fig 3-29](#)). My table ([Fig. 3-28](#)) contains twenty-one examples of this suffix, plus six related **la**'s (the 'double-face' alone, without the triangle of dots) which also appeared in [Fig. 3-27](#). I have arranged them in three columns, by type, in vertical text-sequence. The first column is the most abstract, consisting of a 'string of pearls' of five dots, which may or may not be distinguished by size (as H14, L8) or spacing (N12). The second column is the more canonical form, with the three central dots fit in a equal in size to the side circles. Some of these flanking circles are engraved with the '**la**-face,' most are left plain.



Fig. 3-28. *Palace Tablet: Abstract syllabic la suffix*, arranged into three categories, in text order in each category. Photos by author.



Fig. 3-29. *Palace Tablet: la suffix, levels of increasing abstraction*. Photos by author.

As you can observe by seeking patterns, this glyph is so simple and so flexible that it offers few relevant dimensions, too few to be of much use for distinguishing hands. Most Palenque artists felt free to use either version: I believe that K11 and L11, for instance, spring from the same Hand. The addition of the 'face' markings was always an option, at least on the 'triangle' version; (I have yet to find 'face' markings on a 'string of beads'). Perhaps the latter was actually considered too abstract, too squashed, too cursive to be dignified with this kind of 'finishing.' Certainly the K11-L11 Hand recognized a distinction between the two.

3.3 -*ni* suffixes (Fig. 3-30)

Another distinctive and common affix is *ni*. Earlier in this dissertation (Section 2.5.1, par. 10ff) we looked at the *96-Glyphs* Master's peculiar version of it. This glyph is one of the more

easy to recognize, by virtue of its swooping shape emphasized by its dense parallel texture. I usually liken it to a ponytail or a stream of water.



Fig. 3-30. *Palace Tablet*. *ni* subfix/postfix, arranged by form. Color photos by author, black & white by Schele & Mathews (1979).

In every example here (Fig. 3-30), the 'source' of the 'stream' is the lower right corner of a 'main sign;' from there the *ni* sweeps upward along the right side, or leftward along the bottom, in a graceful S-shaped curve. Often the curve is a bit more complex than a simple 'S.' An S-curve by definition turns twice: to the left, then to the right (or vice versa), as do the *ni*s at G11 and P13. Many of these (especially those carved most carefully), however, turn once more just at the end, providing a jaunty little fillip, best seen on N15 and O6.

Although the standard calligraphic form of *ni*, as in the *96 Glyphs*¹²⁴, terminates the 'threads' with a row of dots, none of the fourteen examples found on the *Palace Tablet* feature that detail.¹²⁵ Carved examples fall into three general categories (Fig. 3-30):

1. All 'strands' treated more or less the same, like a ponytail (D1, O6, Q15, Q16, V1).
2. 'Strands' carved in pairs, except the first. That is, the grooves defining the 'strands' alternate between bold and light (K12, P13, O14).

¹²⁴ And as seen, for example, on Kerr vase K5164, published in *The Maya Vase Book 6*, and in Dorie Reents-Budet, et al., *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*, Duke University Press, 1994, p. 107. Also, Reents-Budet Vases MS 1421, on p. 85, and MS 1416, p. 296-7. Another example is the famed *Princeton Vase*, Reents-Budet p. 357 and also item #42 in Michael Coe, *The Maya Scribe and His World*, Grolier Club, New York, 1973, pp. 90ff.

¹²⁵ This seems to have been the standard form of *ni* on Palenque Monuments from the *Temple of the Inscriptions* on.

3. The first 'strand' is thick, and its defining groove is deeper than the rest. In at least one case (Q5), the last 'strand' is also thickened and set off by a deeper groove. The most dramatic example of this can be seen on the fragment of F18, detached from the monument and stored in the Bodega,¹²⁶ but the most beautifully realized is N15, whose carver meticulously beveled the leading 'strand' along its voluptuous length, giving it an indefinable emotional power. Q5 follows N15's model, but its movement is stiffer, less graceful.

One could devise further subcategories, depending on line spacing, carving quality, sculptural modeling, and the shape of the final fillip. There are so many combinations of these qualities that very few of these *ni*'s resemble each other very closely. None match enough to demand that they spring from the same Hand. The best match is between G6 and K7, which happen to lie in the same neighborhood. When one looks to the similarly-carved 'strands' on G6, one sees (Fig. 3-31a, upper left) that the Sun God's 'forelock' and 'barbel' also provide a close match, but the artist added some fine detailing to the 'locks of hair' over his 'ear.'



Fig. 3-31a. *Palenque Tablet: ni* subfixes/postfixes, upper half; in context of full glyphs, arranged more or less in text order. Color photos by author, black & white by Schele & Mathews (1979).

¹²⁶ See Schele and Mathews, 1979, item #38p (Bodega No. 198-203) (Schele, Linda, and Mathews, Peter, *The Bodega of Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico*, Washington, Dumbarton Oaks, 1979)

To demonstrate again how these creative Hands varied their repertoire, note that I argue that the Hand that carved K12 is probably also responsible for N15 (See below, **Section 3.4**). I am reasonably certain that the N15 Hand did carve K11, L11, L12, L13, and K13; to suggest someone else inserted a glyph in the middle of that crowd strains Occam, yet the glyphs are about as different from each other as they could be. (Perhaps the *ni* of K12 was detailed by another carver while the main artist was on break...!)



Fig. 3-31b. Palace Tablet: *ni* suffixes/postfixes, lower half; in context of full glyphs, arranged more or less in text order. Color photos by author, black & white by Schele & Mathews (1979).

Thus the form of *ni* appears to provide too few data in most cases to help much in our attributions, at least by itself. In [Figs. 3-30](#), [3-31](#), and [3-33](#) I collected glyphs with similar 'parallel-thread' elements, such as the hair on G6's Sun God, the 'fins' of 'fishes' and of GI's, etc., and found that they raised more problems than they solved. Usually Maya sculptors carved these iconic elements in much finer detail than they did *ni*-suffixes, for instance. Also, none of these corresponded to my third category above, which seems to have exemplified the ideal image of the *ni* held in the mind of the best Palenque carvers. However, the 'beard' on the 'rodent' head of P3 looked enough like the *ni*'s of N15 and of its neighbor Q5, that it led me to compare the

abundant similar heads (mostly rodents) from their respective neighborhoods ([Fig. 3-32](#)). Indeed, these heads provide several characteristic points of comparison that turn out to be productive.



Fig. 3-33. *Palace Tablet* *ni* glyphs compared to similar 'hairy' elements in the upper-center and upper-right neighborhood of the Tablet. Photos by author.

3.4. Some Animal Heads of the L14 '*i-tz'i-Winik* Master

Their ancient makers rendered the eight mammals on [Fig. 3-32](#) with many similar conventions, although they represent six different readings. They sculpted seven of these glyphs in sensuous, meticulous, assertive relief. The eighth, P2, I put here for contrast; it highlights what the others have in common.



Fig. 3-32. *Palace Tablet: Mammals by the L14 (itz'i-Winik) Master; and a flatter glyph for comparison.*
Photos by author.

Let us begin by comparing P2 *tu-u-Bah* with L12 *ta-Bah-hi*:

1. L12's **highly-sculptural modeling** is particularly noticeable in the 'gopher's 'cheek' area and along the edges of syllabic elements. Although technically in equally high-relief, P2's syllabic-element-divisions are more hard-edged and linear, more graphic than sculptural. P2's 'gopher's 'cheek' area, for example, is much flatter than that of L12.
2. The '*concha*' of P2's 'ear' is nicely hollowed, with a hard edge only along the '*tragus*' (the protuberance guarding the 'auditory canal'¹²⁷). It grows organically from the 'head,' with only the barest definition of a separation. L12's '**ear**' is deeply defined, as if a separate thing laying on the 'head.' Its interior is defined all round with a firm line, carved to give the 'ear's interior a smooth convexity. The sculptor(s) define the 'ears' of K13, M12, N15, and Q5 in much the same way. On the other hand, P3's 'rabbit ear' corresponds much more closely to P2's, in the way it connects organically to its 'head' and with its less-pronounced crescent-shaped excavation (the *concha*) defining the *tragus*.
3. The '**K'an cross**' which customarily adorns the cheek of the Bah-'gopher' takes two completely different forms on these two glyphs.
4. The artist(s) of L12, L14 (on the 'vulture'), K13, M12, P3, and N15 **define the 'brow ridge' or 'supraorbital plate' as a sort of curved oval plateau arching over the 'eye.'** On L12, this feature is raised toward us, on a higher plane than the surrounding 'crown' and

¹²⁷ These anatomical terms from *Gray's Anatomy*, 1901 ed. See Chapter 2, n. 17.

'forehead,' with well-smoothed edges. It bears no decoration save a shallow but clear, crescent-shaped depression just at the front, which defines the shadow of an 'eyebrow.' This definition one sees most clearly on K13; on N15 it is little more than a simple crescentic groove. On M12, this groove extends all round the inner edge of the 'brow ridge.' P3's artist has carved it as a barely-noticeable shallow circular depression.¹²⁸ (He also details three tufts of 'hair' by fine engraved pairs of lines.) Even Q5's *Xul'*gopher,' the upper part of whose 'brow ridge' is defined not by sculpting but merely by a neatly-engraved line, has a rudimentary crescent-shaped cut—what appears to be the initial incision for a planned-but-interrupted 'eyebrow.' (Perhaps the lack of sculptural definition in the upper part of this area is simply due to incompleteness. If one sets N15 or L14 as a standard, there are *plenty* of unfinished details on the *Palace Tablet*.)

This defined oval-crescent 'brow-ridge' is common among 'rodents' and 'snakes' throughout the Maya corpus, and is more or less the rule at Palenque. Yet P2 lacks it. Instead, the sculptor has engraved a tapering pair of lines arching to the right and meandering uncertainly down the cheek. Having defined four major dimensions in which P2 differs from L12, I believe I am secure in stating that these two were created by different Hands. Other features below will support this claimed distinction.

5. Comparing these 'rodent' and other glyphs happens to spotlight an obvious difference between otherwise-comparable glyph-pairs such as L12-P2 and N15-Q5. Columns OPQR were crammed onto a **too-narrow slab of stone**: L12 is about 10% wider than P2, and N15 is fully 35% wider than Q5. The glyphs on the last column (R) actually extended beyond the edge of the stone, with the missing parts finished in (now-lost) stucco. Presumably, the supply of large stone plaques suitable for such a magnificent inscription was limited, and the artists had to make do with a right panel only four-fifths as wide as its complementary left panel. Also presumably, stucco was considered unsuitable to extend the inscription more than a crack-filling centimeter or so, or they would have simply added the extra two inches (five cm) to the right in carved stucco.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ In fact, P3's 'brow ridge' has a similar, even fainter, depression at its rear end as well.

¹²⁹ Unless there is some reason we cannot yet fathom (such as causes Central Asian rug-weavers of legend to incorporate a deliberate error in their work, to help avoid the sin of pride) that compelled them deliberately to run inscriptions off the edges and across great gaps of their Tablets.

The possibility also arises that the last panel of the inscription was replaced at a later date. Linda Schele (*Palenque Triad*, p. 190) and others interpreted the abrupt change of emphasis and tone in the final clauses of the text as reflecting the capture and sacrifice of K'inich-K'an-Joy-Chitam, the main protagonist, by Tonina, possibly during the actual carving of the *Tablet*.

6. L12's '**tongue**' (a highly-variable element of the *ba/Bah* 'gopher') is convex (and doubled?), its central groove defined by a pair of lines that taper and join together a little more than halfway down the 'tongue.' This medial line is a confidently-drawn circular arc. P2's 'tongue,' by contrast, is concave, its 'groove' an indecisive, detached, single line. I think it may be a related inclination that impelled the artist of P3 to carve his "*Etz'nab*"-marked 'rabbit ear' with the same gentle concavity as P2's 'tongue.' (Or perhaps the detailing of these glyphs was carried out by a different Hand than the main elements!)
7. Each of these creatures has a bulge along its 'snout,' whose upper end touches the 'eye-socket.' The groove or valley surrounding and defining this bulge connects to a similar groove which defines the edge of animal's 'upper lip,' and continues round the corner of the mouth. In both L12 and P2, the combination of these two grooves resembles the numeral 3, though L12's groove is markedly deeper and broader than P2's. In the other six examples here, this groove defining the 'upper lip' extends farther forward toward the nose, so the two grooves resemble intersecting canyons more than a single serpentine canyon. P2's Hand carved this 'lip' smoothly and simply, letting the V-cut of the grooves define any sculptural volume. L12's Hand, by contrast, crisply defines the 'lip:' Its sides drop precipitously at a steep angle down both sides from a sharp "hogback ridge." The Hand or Hands of L12 and the other six sculptural glyphs here each treat 'lips' in much the same way. Sometimes the two sides of the 'ridge' slope at different angles —L14 has a gentler incline on the 'inside,' K13 on the 'outside'— but each 'lip' is visually potent: a carefully-beveled, sinuous, sharp ridge.
8. The artists of K13, L12, L14, M12, N15, and O5 carefully sculpted an oval 'breath bubble'¹³⁰ into the right slope of this lip-defining 'canyon,' just at the corner of the 'mouth.' This element is usually shallowly concave (L12's does not seem to be), and always has a fine outline. This 'bubble' appears on neither P2 nor P3.
9. Some of these 'mammal heads' are ornamented with tiny engraved ovals, dots, or 'hairs.' These seem to be totally optional details, but their presence or absence may correlate with individual Hands. L14 bears the richest burden of these: a score of 'hairs' and 'whiskers' on the 'feline(?) head,' uncounted 'wrinkles' on the 'vulture.'

L14's artist distinguishes 'whiskers' (three short tapering strokes, like 'tick marks,'

¹³⁰ In a paper delivered at the UCLA Maya Weekend, 12 Oct, 2002, Karl Taube identified this and other elements connected with the 'nose' and 'corners of mouths' in various Maya images as a sign denoting "breath" and hence, "life." It sometimes appears as a 'bubble,' sometimes as a spiral, and sometimes (emanating from a 'nose') as a bone-shaped 'jewel.'

slanting upwards, barely more than chips in the 'snout's smooth surface) from 'hairs' (longer, graceful, curved strokes, usually in pairs). The three 'whiskers' on neighboring K13 and L12 are more carefully-defined slanting ovals, graduating in size; the largest oval in both cases is hollow. On Kan-Bahlam's chimera at M12, a pair of these competes vainly for our attention with the dominant crosshatched 'spots' on its 'face.' L12's *BAH* 'gopher also has a pair of 'hairs' just in front of its 'eye,' and less-graceful pair adorns the 'snout' at P2. N15's sculptural perfection hardly needs such details, but its Hand fringes its 'cheek' with them; they here closely resemble the graceful 'hairs' on L14. N15's counterpart at Q5 sports a less subtle fringe of this type, plus three triplets of graduated dots, and a faint pair of 'hairs' on the upper 'cheek.' These dots seem, unlike those described earlier, to have been drilled. If Q5 was carved by the Hand responsible for N15, he changed some of his habits in the days that elapsed between their execution. Finally, P3's 'snout' has a trio of graduated drilled 'whisker' dots and a pair of 'hairs,' in addition to the two pairs of 'hairs' on its 'brow ridge.' This rabbit-eared creature wears a 'beard' quite like a *ni*-glyph and a large *IK*'-marked 'god eye' cleanly underscored (like Chan-Bahlam's 'serpent eye'). Unusually, P3's underline is *not* adorned with 'bubbles' (Chan-Bahlam's is the more normal type).

10. Finally, I must take note of the numerals. N15's artist pays attention even to the numerical 'spacers.' In his able hands, even these inconsequential crescents have grace and style. They appear again, equally beautiful, on Q5, though the 'hairs' and 'lips' suffer by comparison. If Q5 was carved by a different Hand than N15, he was an excellent mimic. Perhaps the only details added by another Hand to Q5 were the 'hairs.'



Fig. 3-34. *Temple XVIII Stuccoes: ba/Bah glyphs with long 'tongues'.* Photos by Schele & Mathews (1979).

Despite considerable freedom of interpretation and cross-infection, certain conventions existed for depicting various species of glyphic 'rodents.' Their 'snouts' were virtually interchangeable, but they had distinctive 'eyes' and other features. The *cho* (K13), for example, has a huge round eye glaring backwards. The *Bah* 'gopher' has a tiny squinty eye, suitable for a burrowing creature.¹³¹ The *Bah* also features a long, flourishing 'tongue' —on some examples it curls halfway round the head (as [Fig. 3-34](#)).¹³² The '*Xul* gopher' has here a small eye very like that of the *Bah* (here carved slightly more open); it also lacks the long 'tongue' and '*K'an* Cross.' The 'rabbit' and "snake-jaguar" both have prominent, distinctive 'god-eyes.' For a more general comparison of animal heads, see next section.

This scrutiny helps me group most of these glyphs under one Hand. I have already separated P2 from the rest. It shares a few details with P3, including proximity, lack of a corner-of-'mouth' 'bubble,' and their 'ears.' P3 and Q5 both distinguish themselves from the lot in the top row by their fine details (less-elegant 'hairs,' drilled 'whiskers'), and Q5's carving (e.g., the 'lip'-definition) is just not as careful as that of L12 and N15. Still, these differences might be accounted for by artistic caprice or weariness; I am more impressed with the qualities they have in common than with those in which they differ.

My conclusions: For the glyphs I ascribe to this compulsively-sculptural Master, see [Fig. 4-01](#). This Hand, which carved N15 also gave us at least the 'heads' of L12 and K13 (the abstract glyphs —*ko*, *le*, *ta*— seem rushed, incomplete) and the whole of M12 and L14. P3 is less likely his, but its sculptural excellence and attention to detail also argue for inclusion here. Q5 may also be admitted —that 'snout,' that 'cheek,' that *ni*— though its 'hairy fringe' seem to come from somewhere or someone else. The decoration on Q5's numeral 5 is also identical with that on M13. So I assign to the N15 Hand a substantial part of the lower right portion of the central slab, and he probably worked on (or at least influenced) the upper part of the right slab. The *Winik* of L14, by the way, is linked to that at M13 (which we examined in Section 3.2.1.2 above [[Fig. 3-35](#)], and which we exhaustively scrutinize in the next Section). They are adjacent (they touch corners), and they share the same kind of fishhook-shapes curling inwards from the sides. Though the 'trefoil ornaments' at the bottom lean in opposite directions, they both share a spiky energy in their corners.

¹³¹ Likewise the 'vulture' has a similar 'eye,' no doubt for similar reasons —it has to reach into cavities of carrion.

¹³² Stucco glyphs from *Temple XVIII*, illustrated in Schele & Mathews, 1979, nos. 404, 431, 448, and 449. The last three are on display in the Palenque Museum.



Fig. 3-35. *Palace Tablet*: Three glyphs by the L14 *Itz'i-Winik* Master--probably: The eponymous L14 *i-tz'i-Winik*; M13 3-(*K'in*)-5- *Winik-la-ta*; Q5 6-'Xul'-*ni*. Photos by author.

3.5. Distance Numbers: Fig. 3-36

3.5.1 Hand-assignments according to the *Winik* glyphs

The many Distance Numbers in the Palace Tablet provide us with a dizzying set of parallel phrases to compare ([Fig. 3-36](#)). The most promising place to begin scrutiny appears to be the *Winik* glyphs. As noted in section 3.2, the main distinguishing characteristic is the shape of the curls on each side, so in [Fig. 3-38](#), I arranged the 'curls' into nine categories. Types A, F, and C share the same rather L-shaped left side, but their right sides differ: A's right side matches its left, but F's right element curls more tightly, while I presents us the most asymmetrical pair of the lot. D and E, with the double-curve of a fishhook, differ only in the amount of their finishing; D seems to be a sketch for E. B and C are quite similar on both sides, but C has a flattened side. H and I resemble each other mostly in their *asymmetry*.



Fig. 3-36. *Palace Tablet*. Thirteen Distance Number clauses & comparable glyphs. Photos by author.

This focus on 'curls' may seem too narrow, a waste of time, but it appears to be surprisingly productive. [Fig. 3-39](#), featuring the central area of the *Winiks*, is arranged according to these categories, and lo, in six of these groups, the two or three glyphs are near neighbors. The only two 'curls' with flattened sides occur at D5 and D7, the short-and-symmetrical 'curls' appear on the bottom of the left slab, the only 'fishhooks' are on neighbors L14, M13, and (not nearby) E15, and so on.

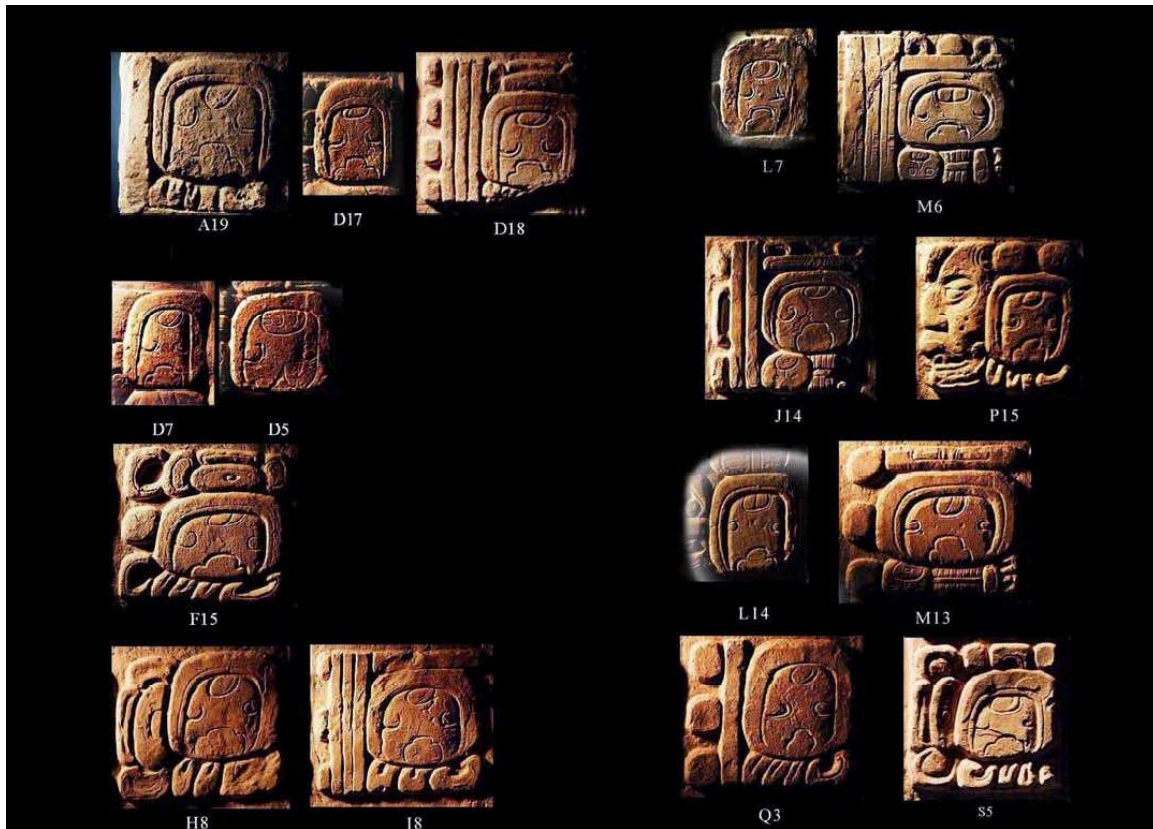


Fig. 3-37. *Palace Tablet*. *Winik* glyphs, arranged by relative location, grouped by Hand. Photos by author.

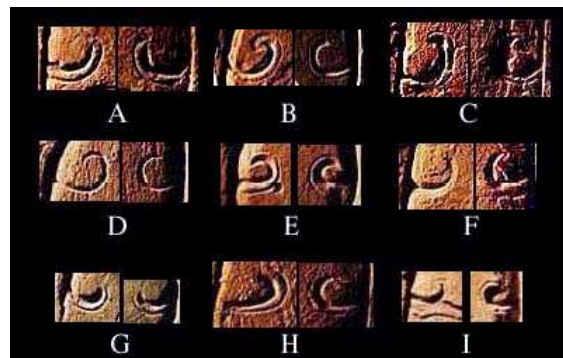


Fig. 3-38. *Palace Tablet*. *Winik* glyph 'side curls,' nine varieties. Photos by author.

Sometimes the 'trefoil' shape at the bottom of the *Winik* covaries with these categories, as well. The 'inflated' examples on H8 and I8 provide the clearest distinctive type. It is because of their very different 'trefoils' that I unlink H8-I8 from L7-M6. Unfortunately for our purposes, D7's close match at D5 is not a *Winik*, but a *Naab*; its interior furniture is completely different. However, the softened corners of D7's 'trefoil' are unique. One might wish to link it with the only other 'soft trefoil' at Q3; but D7 seems as far from Q3 as it does from, say, any of the others.

The left-leaning, flat-topped 'trefoils' in the first group (A19, D17, D18) harmonize nicely with each other.



Fig. 3-39. *Palace Tablet*. Winik glyphs. Interior panels arranged by 'side curl' forms, nine varieties. Photos by author.

Those on L7 and M6 are similar in shape, but outlined on the outside rather than the inside; they may yet link. J14 and P15 appear to share very similar 'curls,' but their 'trefoils' clash. This dissonance coupled with the intervening distance unlinks them in my estimation. If one arranged these glyphs by 'trefoil' rather than 'curls,' P15 would go with L14 and E15, and J14 with H8 and I8.



Fig. 3-40. *Palace Tablet*. Winik glyph 'side curls.' Photos by author.

The 'mirror'-like ornament in the top of these glyphs is even more capricious. M6 and L14 treat it just like a pair of 'bubbles,' like those discussed in Section 3.1.1. Yet I have already matched each of these with another *Winik* (with L7 and M13 respectively), which draw it as a single oval containing an arc. This is the canonical form of a 'mirror': an oval 'hung from the ceiling' (or wrapped around the 'arm' or 'leg' of a god), cradling a fine curved inline paralleling the right side (in D17, the left side). I have found this 'mirror' element unproductive; its examples have too much consistency from one hand to another, and sometimes too much variation within a single Hand.

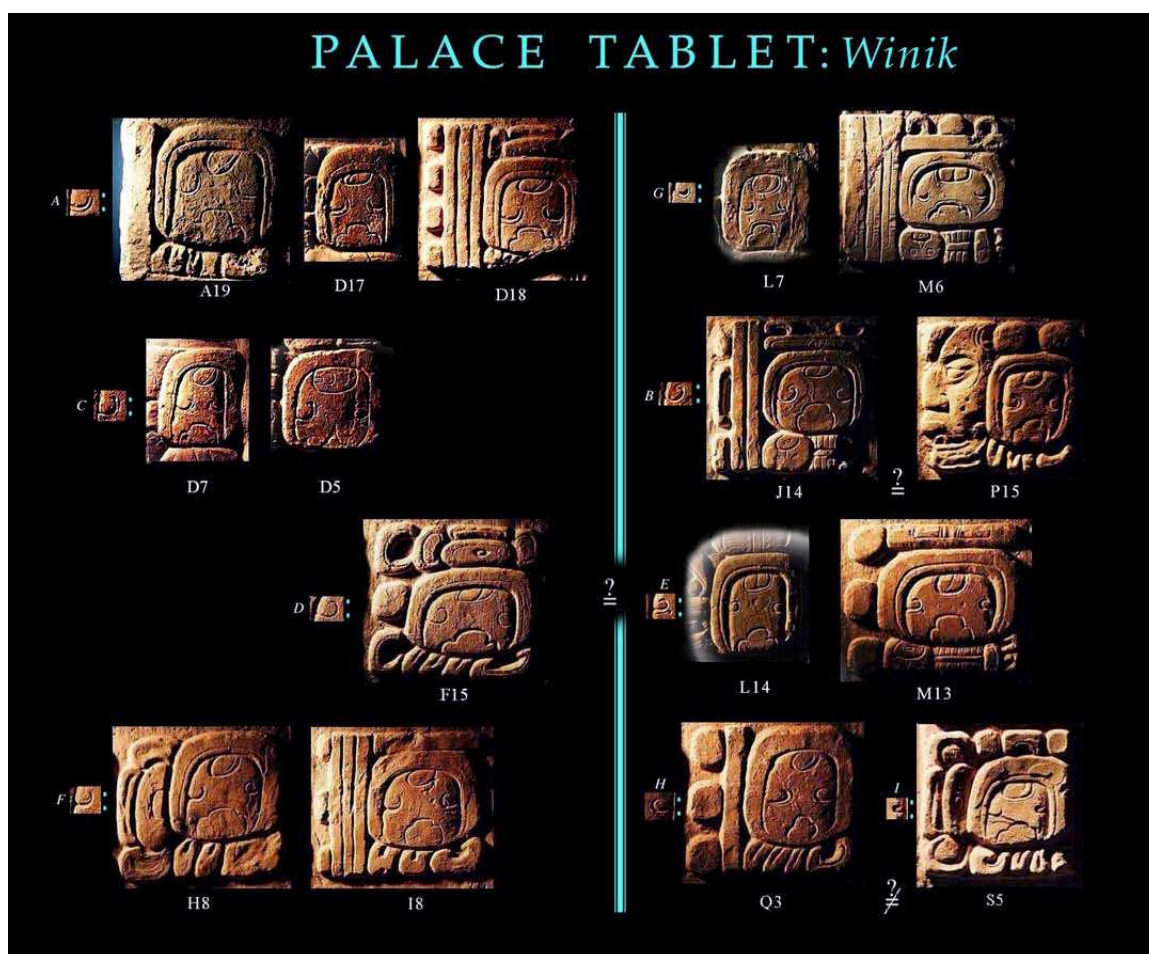


Fig. 3-41. *Palace Tablet: Winik* glyphs arranged by form of 'side curls.' Photos by author.

[Fig. 3-41](#) examines these same sixteen examples in the wider context of the whole DN glyphs (Non-DN's are still trimmed.). They stand in two columns more or less in text-sequence, grouped according to the categories established in [Fig. 3-38](#). With whole glyphs, we can

compare 'sign-form,' sculptural character, and similar suffixes. For the most part, this broader view confirms what I had decided at the micro-level.

For example, H8 and its neighbor I8 both exhibit a distinct 'flat-and fat' quality: the relief modeling of the glyphs definitely has a lower relief flavor than the others. This is partly because this Hand carves economically, cutting away as little as he can: his numerals are board-like, unmodeled, his *ji-ya* suffixes in particular have very thick elements; their negative spaces are positively tiny. The main difference between these two collocations is that H8 has a slanting 'sign-form,' while I8's is strictly upright. The *ji-ya* suffixes, on the other hand, lean at about the same angle. This Artist is given to shallowly hollowing out the 'petals' of the "Zero" coefficient, quite a distinct treatment from the "Zero" of F15 and the deeply-carved "Zeros" of D18 and S5.

The compulsively-square 'arch' on A19 is repeated, a bit more softly, on D17 and D18. This inclination is more visible inside the 'arch' than outside; and he echoes this upright stance in his columnar *ji-ya* and the 'trefoil.' The 'arches' in L7 and M6 both have a wider 'bandwidth' than A19's group, and M6's surprising asymmetric curve on the inside of this 'arch' firmly distinguishes this pair from the A19 group. F15's well-modeled and assertively-leaning *ji-ya* suffix distinguishes it from every other suffix except that on Q3, which it strikingly resembles. However, very little else of these two glyphs can be said to match, not sculptural quality and finish, not sign-form, not *Winik* details. Q3 and S5 look a lot less alike when one examines their affixes, especially the *ya*'s.

Though F15 (and the E15 group in general) has many qualities that resemble the L14-M13 group —e.g., highly sculptural finish, attention to fine detail— there are a number of idiosyncrasies that the E15 Hand seems to employ with some consistency (particularly the slanted 'sign-form,'), which do not appear in the area of L14. In order to claim that these two areas of the main slab of the *Palace Tablet* were carved by a single Hand, we would have to argue that the Hand carved the EFGH patch with a cursive-flavored 'sign-form,' then repented, carving the L14 area (lower KLM) with much more upright aspect (viz. L14, M13).

Thus, to recapitulate Hand-assignments according to the *Winik* glyphs:

Group A: Lower rows of Columns ABCD (A19, D17, D18)

Group B: J14 and possibly P15

Group C: Upper rows of Columns CD (D7, D5)

Group D: The E15 Master (F15), bearing some close affinities with:

Group E: The L14/ *Itzi-Winik* Master (lower Columns KLM) (L14, M13)

Group F: Upper rows, Middle of central panel. The "Fat/Flat" Master (H8, I8)

Group G: Upper right corner of central panel. (L7, M6)

Group H: Upper rows, right panel. (Q3)

Group I: Upper Illustration labels. (S5)

3.5.2. Assigning some other DN glyphs ([Fig. 3-36](#)), the *Tz'ak* (or DNIG) glyphs

In [Section 2.5.2](#), I grouped the *Tz'ak* and *u-Tz'ak-aj* (DNIG) glyphs into seven style categories ([Fig. 2-23](#) = [Fig. 1-91](#)). Assuming tentatively that adjacent glyphs are by the same Hand, I now venture to link these groupings with the nine I established just above for the *Winik*'s ([Fig. 3-42](#)). To expand the above list:

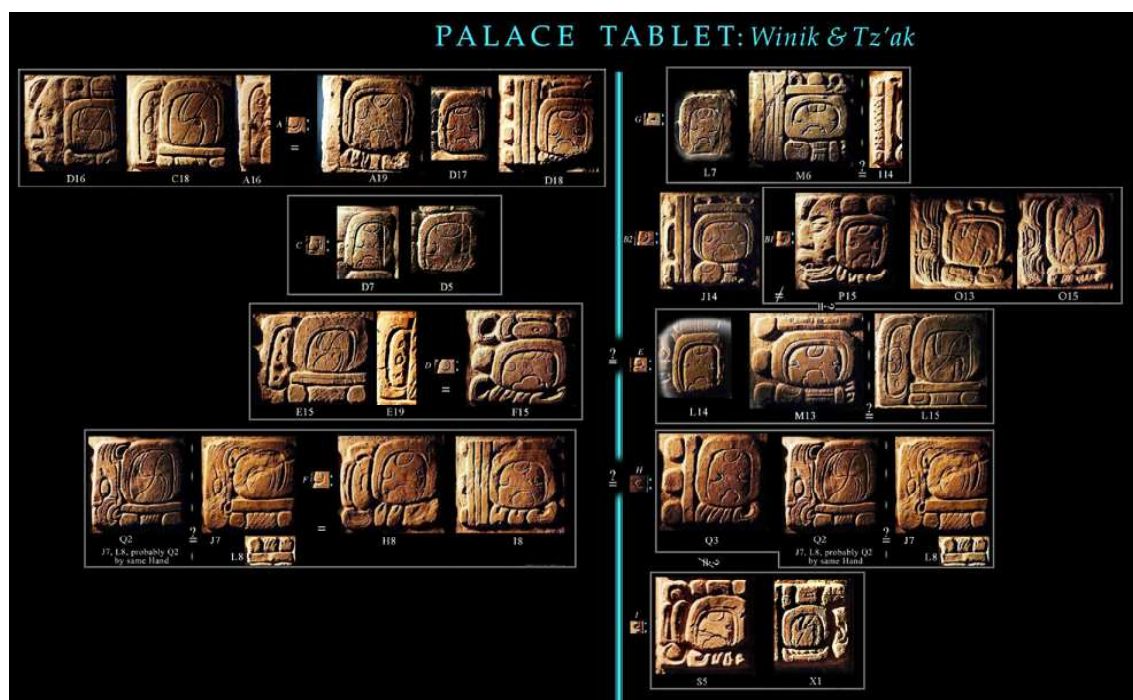


Fig. 3-42. Palace Tablet. Winik & Tzak glyphs arranged by Hand. Photos by author.

Group A: Lower rows of Columns ABCD (A19, D17, D18; add A16, C18, D16?): The squarish 'sign-forms,' sculptural finishing, and hierarchy of line-weight (placement and depth of deeply- vs. lightly-carved lines) of these two groups are consistent.

Group B1 & B2: Comparing the sculptural qualities and line-weight hierarchy of P15 with its neighbors O13 and O15, one sees immediately that these all spring from a single assertive Hand. Compare particularly boldly modeled 'skeletal mandible' and *ji-ya* suffix of P15 with the

'fish' *u*-prefixes of O13 and O15; or the very square 'main signs.' The jaunty, energetic shape of the 'trefoil' element at the bottom of P15's *Winik* matches that of L14 *exactly*, and a closer comparison of the side-'curls' on M13, L14, and P15 reveals that they have more in common than first appeared. Could there be a connection? L14 (the *i-tz'i-Winik*) and its neighbors display much more sensitive carving technique than P15 and its neighbors; I would have to reconcile that powerful distinction to convince myself that these were by the same Hand.

It becomes apparent that the flatter-carved, more cursive J14 is by a different Hand (**Group B2**); its rounder 'sign-forms,' details of its *la* suffix, and many other stylistic details offer a *very* distinct flavor.

Group C: Upper rows of Columns CD (D7, D5): no DN's here, so no new members.

Group D: The E15 Master (F15), whose members I already established in Section 2.5.5, bearing some close affinities with:

Group E: The L14/ *Itzi-Winik* Master (lower Columns KLM) (L14, M13). Does L15 harmonize with the surrounding glyphs by this highly-sculptural Hand? Although finished very carefully, it is much lower-relief than all its neighbors. All three of its elements, *u*- and *Tz'ak* and *-aj*, have highly unique forms, not only unlike any on this *Tablet*, but unlike perhaps any versions of these glyphs *anywhere* in the entire corpus of Maya inscriptions, and therefore very difficult to assign. However, M16 nearby is also uncharacteristically low-relief (see [Fig. 3-43](#)), and as we have seen, distinct from the Hand of N16 and M17 (**Sections 3.1.3 – 3.1.4**). Therefore, it seems likely to have been the last glyph in the neighborhood carved by the Hand of M15-N15, which I showed (**Section 3-4**) to be the same "*Itz'i-Winik* Master." Circumstantial evidence inclines toward assigning these two as well to that versatile Master, but I do so with firm reservations.

Group F: Upper rows, Middle of central panel. The "Fat/Flat" Master (H8, I8). I believe we are secure assigning J7 to the Hand of H8-I8; its flat relief and line quality match closely. Q2 still seems likely to spring from this Hand, though the three form a group with closer affinities to each other than to Q2.

Group G: Upper right corner of central panel. (L7, M6). Perhaps the *aj*-prefix of I14 goes with these two, though my reasons for this assignment are more instinctive than articulable.

Group H: Upper rows, right panel. (Q3). I see no reason to think that Q2 does not belong to this flattish Hand. The possibility of identity with Group F (H8-I8-J7) is still strong.

Group I: Upper Illustration labels. (S5). To this Group we can add X1, whose sculptural qualities conform reasonably well to those of S5 and the rest of its neighbors.

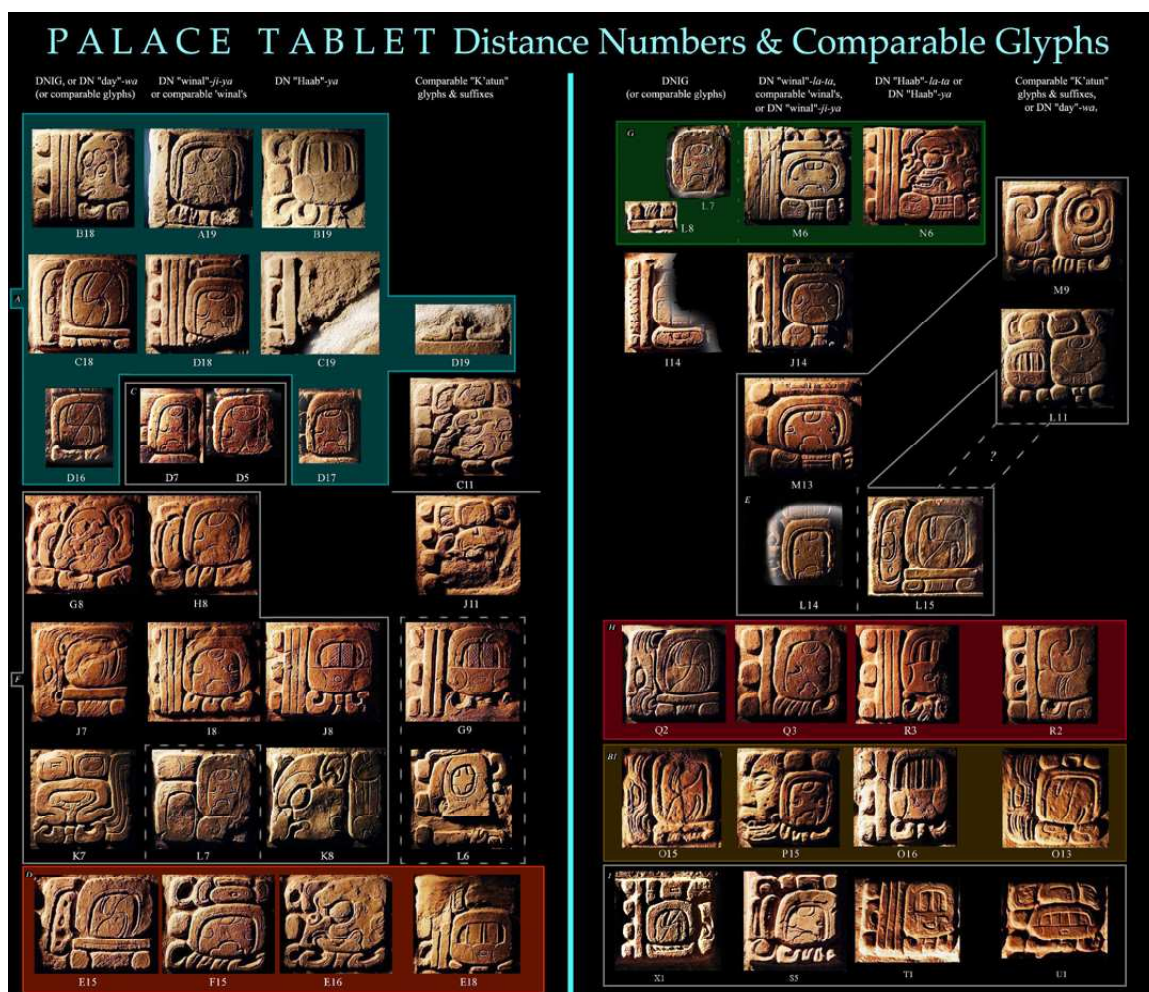


Fig. 3-43. *Palace Tablet*: Distance Number clauses attributions. Photos by author.

3.5.3. Assigning other DN glyphs (Fig. 3-43)

Now we shall return to the Distance Number clauses ([Fig. 3-43](#), [3-36](#)) and try to harmonize the apparent style groups there with what we have just established. [Fig. 3-43](#) is simply [Fig. 3-36](#) slightly rearranged, with boxes drawn round the groups of glyphs I ascribe to various Hands. The colors of these areas match those on [Fig. 3-17](#) and [Fig. 4-03](#), which indicate already-established Hand-assignments.

Group A: Lower rows of Columns ABCD. In [Fig. 3-03](#), I examined the Lunar Series A15-B17, establishing it as a single Hand. [Fig. 3-44](#) compares details between some of these glyphs others

in the vicinity (D14, C18, and B19), and it should come as little surprise that I ascribe them all to the same Hand.

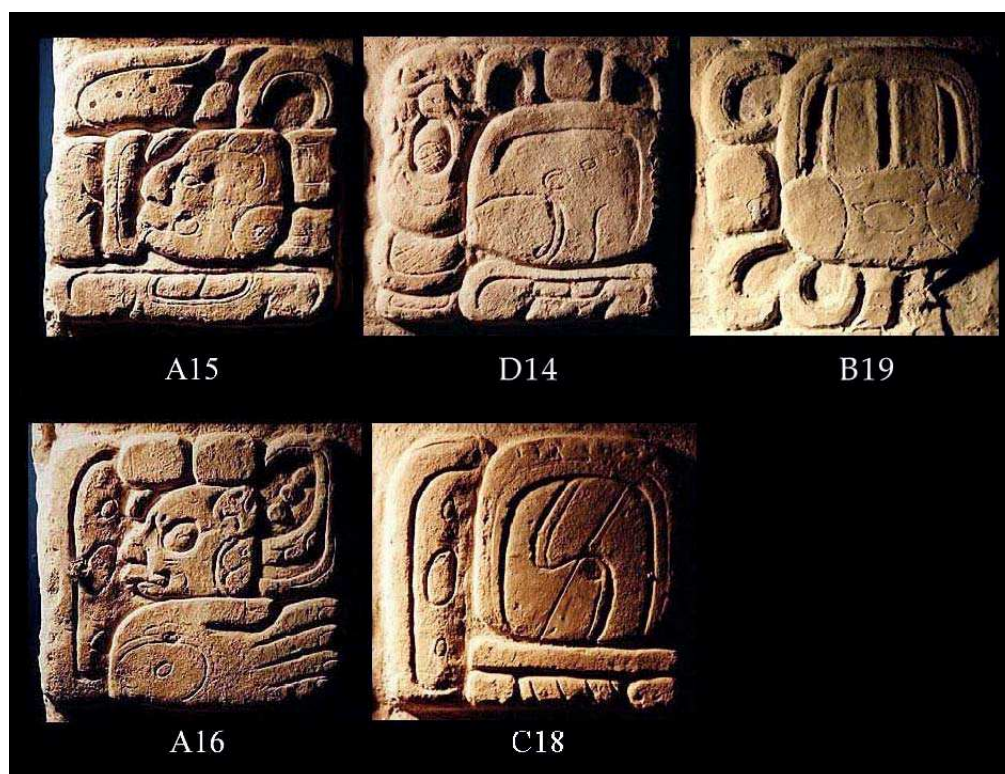


Fig. 3-44. Palace Tablet: A15 Master habits: Delicate details, rounded edges ('rubber glove' *K'ał*), notably sharp crescents, undershot 'jaws,' uniquely simple form of '*u* bracket.' Photos by author.

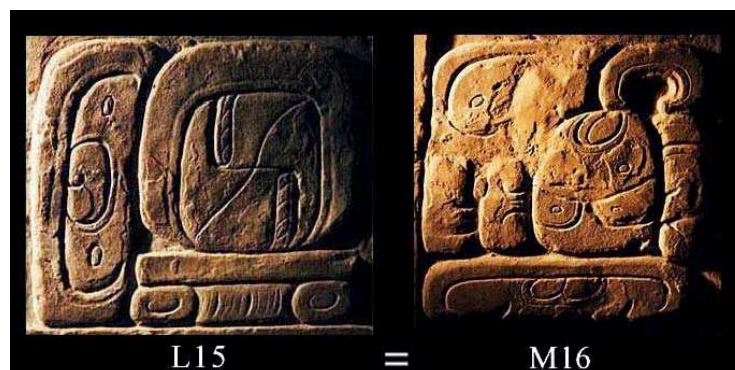


Fig. 3-45. Palace Tablet: L14 Master habits: Sure hand in fine lines (viz. the 'bubbles' in *na*), distinct sculptural finish on crescents, uniquely complex form of '*u* bracket' and *Tz'ak*. M16 is the anomalous glyph beginning the upper Lunar Series in Fig. 3-04, and its style matches that of its immediate neighbors in the rows above it (see also Fig. 4-01). Photos by author.

I do so because of the similar forms of their crescents (*-ya*, *Ti'*, numerical 'spacer'), *-na's*, and *u*'s, as well as their sculptural finish and other details. This links the Lunar Series with the DN's beginning at B18 and C18, which means that one Hand carved more or less all of the last five

rows of the left slab of the *Palace Tablet*. A few anomalous details here and there may have been added by other Hands, but in general I think that we can safely ascribe to one expert Hand this whole section of 20 glyphs. It remains to be seen which other glyphs he carved. Certainly not the adjacent rows of Columns E and F (see **Section 2.5.5**), but D14 and perhaps C14, D13, and maybe the full-figure glyph A13-B14.

Group B1: Jumping to the lower area of Columns O and P, this assertive carver seems to be responsible for at least O13-P16, and probably glyphs above and below this. The DN forms half this area, but the *ni*'s we inspected in [Fig. 3-30](#), and the related glyph at O13 here ([Fig. 3-43](#)), are all of a piece with this character.

Group C: Upper rows of Columns CD (D7, D5): no new members.

Group D: The E15 Master, carving the most slanted glyphs in the *Palace Tablet*, responsible for the lower areas of Columns EF, plus a handful of adjacent glyphs in the last row(s) of Columns G, H, I and perhaps J (F13 -E19, G14, G15, H15, I15, J15 [part?]).

Group E: The L14/ *Itzi-Winik* Master (lower Columns KLM) Nothing new yet. (See [Fig. 4-01](#))

Group F: The "Fat/Flat" Master, Rows 7 and 8 of Columns GHIJK, and probably several other adjacent glyphs. (See [Fig. 3-70](#).)

Group G: Upper right corner of central panel. [Fig. 3-17](#) assigns the 'Ajaw face' glyphs with wide, circular 'eyes' (L8, M6, N6, N9 and M10) to one Hand. (A similar Hand, which gives these 'faces' smaller, more closely-set 'eyes,' occupies the upper parts of Columns GHI nearby, but I believe this Hand to be distinct.) To the first list we added L7 in the previous Section. Though I am sure that the "Fat/Flat Master" carved glyphs K7 and K8, I am equally sure that his colleague the "Staring 'Ajaw-Face' Master" executed Glyphs L7 and L8, which interrupt the flow of text (K7 - L7 - K8 - L8). In other words, as was hinted at in Section 3.1.4 of this chapter, Maya carvers were not compelled to proceed linearly, from start to finish of clauses. They picked up and left off with little regard for the content of their texts, perhaps at random. We saw this earlier on the *Temple XIX Platform* text, wherein the work of one expert Hand was interrupted by a few glyphs by a decidedly inferior artist(s). It thus seems increasingly likely to me that we will find the odd occasion where two (or more!) Hands contribute to a single glyph. With each glyph no more than six inches square, this could only have happened occasionally, when a second Hand added finishing touches to his colleague's work. No doubt the most common scenario was a single Hand carving a given glyph from start to finish.

Group H: Upper rows, right panel. (Q2-R3). I believe we shall find that Columns OP were usually done by different Hands than Columns QR.

Group I: Upper Illustration labels. The consistency of sculptural idiosyncrasies here suggests that a single Hand carved the entire group of 'Label' texts (Columns STUVWX).

3.6. Calendar Rounds, etc.



Fig. 3-46. *Palace Tablet*: Calendar Rounds, sundry comparisons. Enlargements below. Photos by author.

3.6.1. The first three CR's

Fifteen Calendar Rounds appear on the Palace Tablet, accompanied by seven ADI's ('*u-ti-ya*') and PDI's ('*i-u-ti*'). Of these seven 'date indicators,' one (R8) is damaged to

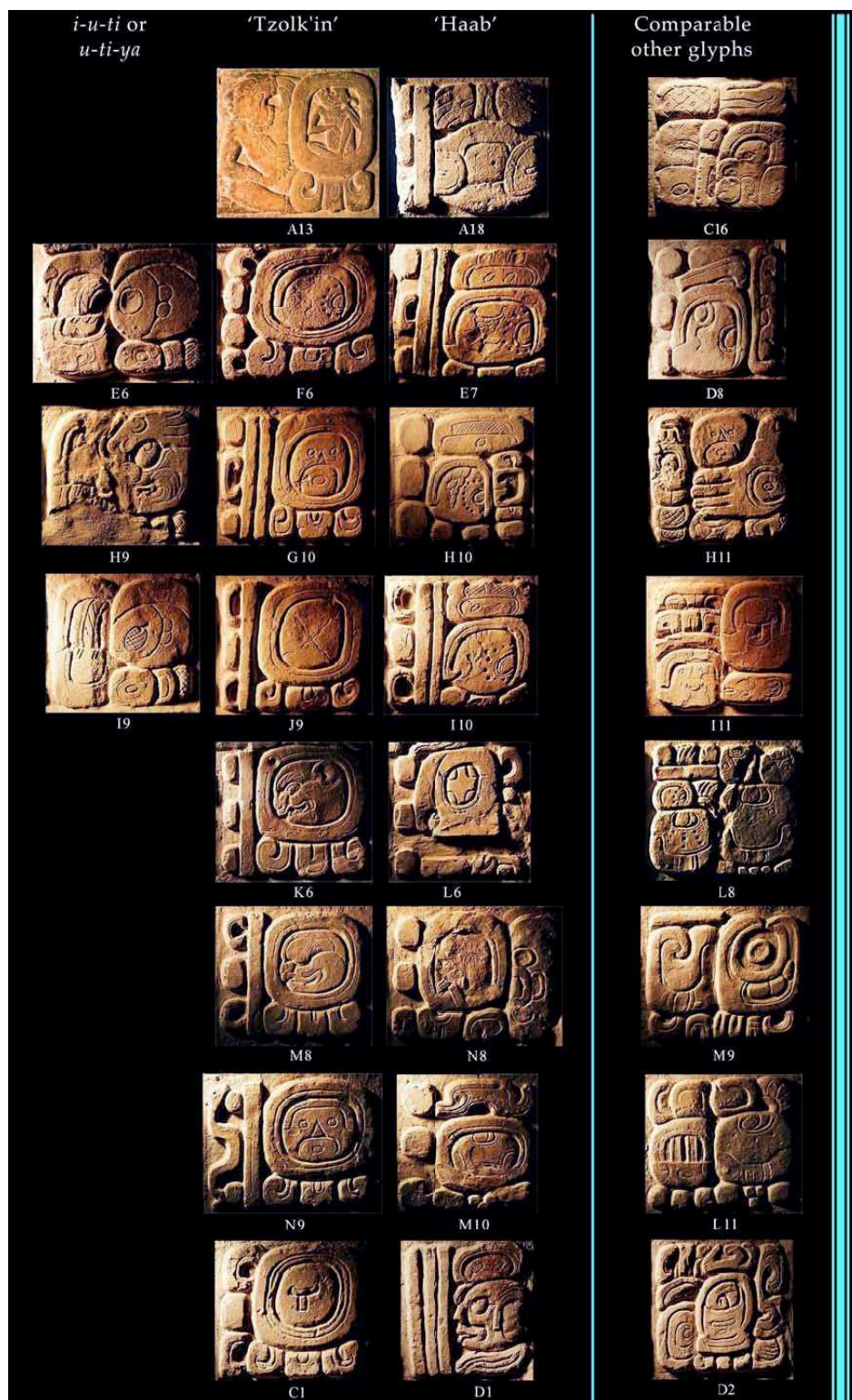


Fig. 3-46a. *Palace Tablet*: Calendar Rounds, left half. Photos by author.

uselessness for our purposes. I also include a fourth column of comparison glyphs: each of these has some major point(s) to compare with its neighboring CR-sequence.

Three PDI-CR sequences (E6-E7, H9-H10, and I9-I10) one might attribute to the same Hand by their peculiar form of *ti* (Figs. 3-65, 3-89). (The usual form of T59 (*ti*) terminates in a set of curving parallel lines, like the tuft of hairs of a brush, as we see at F16, Q4 and R15 (Fig. 3-89). Likewise T232 ('skull on a string' *u*), sometimes terminates with a similar 'tuft,' as at O10 (Fig. 3-89.) Upon comparison of their contexts, however (Figs. 3-46b), the similarity pales. E6 and I9 (juxtaposed in Fig. 3-65) are completely analogous ('*i-u-ti*') glyphs, as are E7 and I10 ("12 Yaxk'in" and "11 Yaxk'in"). Their main difference lies in depth of modeling. The '*i*' prefixes match rather closely, though E6 is more deeply cut and the 'arches' curve differently. Looking at the '*u*'s, their 'bubbles' (overlapping, non-overlapping) and 'formlines' are quite different (I9 has a distinct cursive 'chin'— a sharp corner at the lower left). And again, E6 is higher relief than I9, a distinction continued by E6's concave 'dark spot,' whose analogue on I9 is flat and crosshatched. This sculptural-vs.-crosshatched distinction carries over to the *Yaxk'ins*, whose *Yax* superfixes differ dramatically (E7 and I10, Fig. 3-46a). I10's *Yax* has archaic 'knobbed' corners with rounded crosshatched 'bands,' while the corresponding 'bands' on the (more conventional) *Yax* at E7 are outlined-concave, just like the 'spot' on E6 and the 'jaguar spots' on the B16, B17, and the 'Jaguar Throne' above G6 (in the neighborhood of E6-F6-E7; see Figs. 3-07, 3-68).

If we were to argue that E6 and company were carved by the same Hand as the next two PDI-CR groups, we should have to explain their differences. Assuming the artist worked more or less sequentially, probably a few days would have passed between the first and the second carvings, during which time it would be possible for the artist capriciously to modify one or two of his 'habits.' This could account for a few consistent character-changes (sculptural depth, crosshatching, kind of *Yax*) between E6-E7 and H9-H10. However, the more one scrutinizes these groups, the more differences one collects. The 'feet' of F6's 'daysign cartouche' are similar enough to those of J9, but its (and E7's) 'numerical spacers' are much thicker (and, of course, flatter) than J9's and I10's (Fig. 3-46a). Both 'feet' and 'spacer' on G10 are different still; they have very little in common with their F6 and J9 analogues.

3.6.1.1. Standard 'Stone sign'

These differences keep mounting up. The multi-talented 'stone sign'¹³³ is one of a few glyphs that consistently carries an asymmetric 'arch,' which seems to admit 'entry' to the inner area of the sign from the left.¹³⁴ [Fig. 3-53](#) brings a score of these together. The left end of H10's and I10's 'arch' terminates in what appears at first to be a sharp 'hook,' but on close comparison to the other 'stone signs' on this *Tablet*, turns out to be something strange and subtle ([Fig. 3-47](#)).

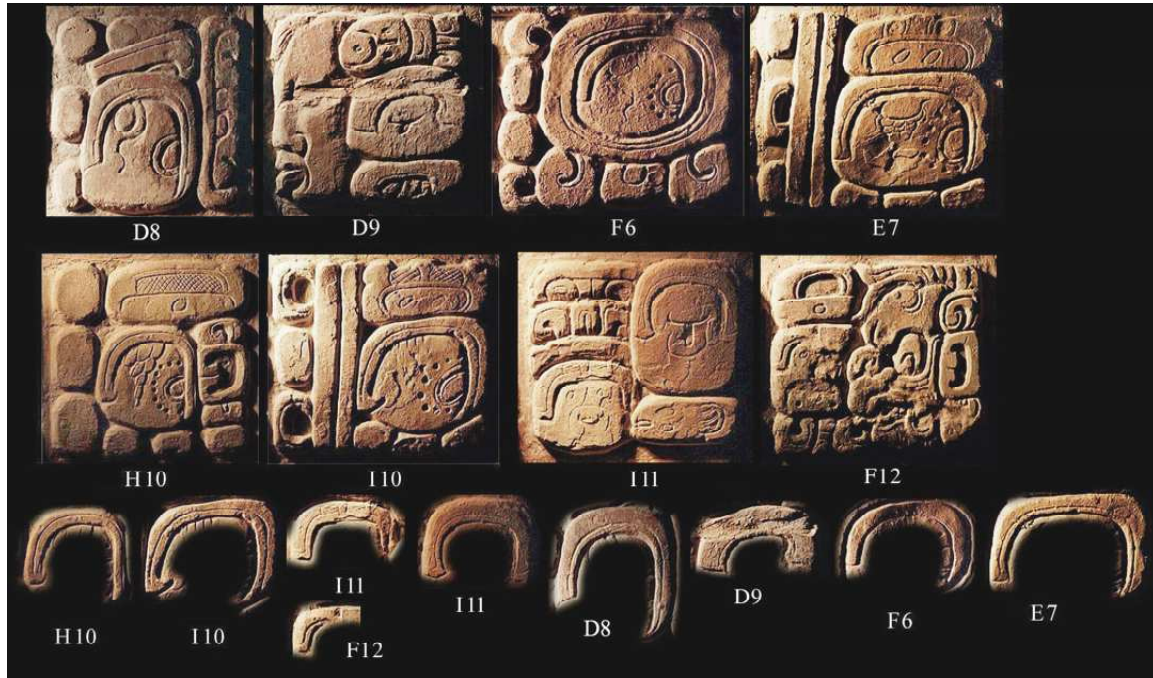


Fig. 3-47. Palace Tablet 'Stone signs' and their 'arches.' Photos by author.

Apparently the Palenque 'Manual of Style' called for one of two specific treatments of this 'arch.' In both treatments, carvers defined its inner edge with a bold inline that parallels the top all the way across, nearly all the way down the right side, and about three-quarters of the way down the left side. The usual pan-Maya treatment¹³⁵ at the 'open' left end of this inline was to turn it sharply outwards to the edge of the glyph, separating the 'arch' from the 'interior' of the sign (as E7 and F17, [Fig. 3-52](#)).

¹³³ whose readings include *Tuun*, *Haab*, *ku*, and *Kawak*, and part of "K'atun," *Pih*, *Kaloom-Te'*, *hi* and *t'u*.

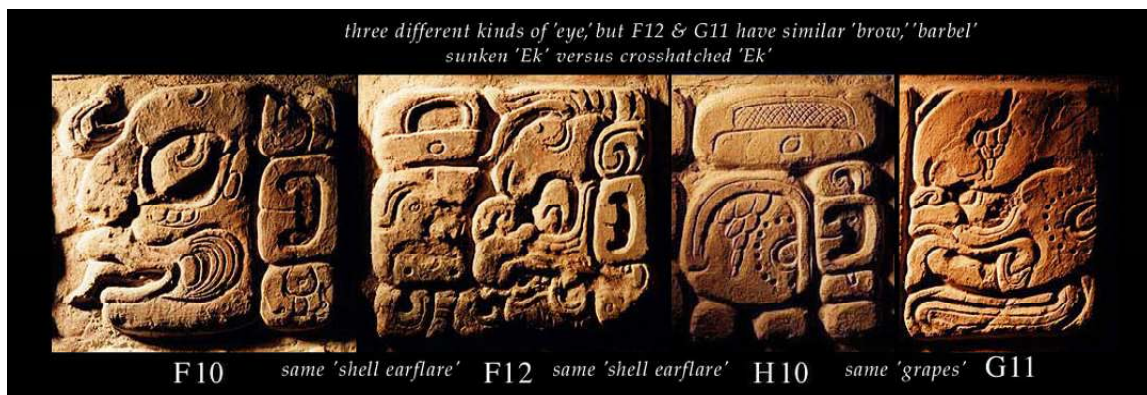
¹³⁴ Others are the 'earth sign' *Kab* / month sign *Kaban*, and the sacred place *Ch'een* / "cave," whose entrance is presumably being illustrated by this 'open-to-the-left arch.'

¹³⁵ This treatment of the 'arch' as a 'cave' (verbal description by Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube during Texas Maya Meetings, Austin, Texas, March 2001) has been the 'standard' form from the beginning. Early Classic forms of this sign (e.g. on Tikal Stela 31, from 9.0.10.0.0) present the 'arch' more or less this way, even centuries before the addition of the 'bunch of grapes' to the ensemble.



Figs. 3-48 and 3-49. *Palace Tablet*: cursive *Ik*s. Photos by author.

Several glyph carvers at Palenque favored this traditional treatment, but on the *Palace Tablet* they constitute the minority. The majority favorite is exemplified by either L7 or C11 or D12 (Fig. 3-52, top row). Palenque artists apparently preferred an 'animated' form of 'stone sign' with a notch indicating a literal 'mouth' in the 'mouth' of the 'cave.'



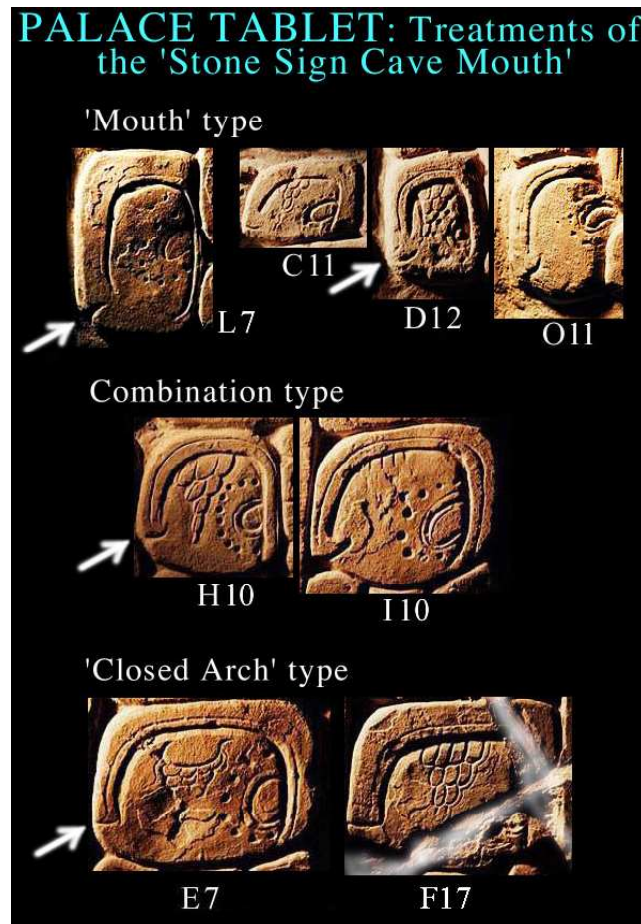
Figs. 3-50. *Palace Tablet*: Relating glyphs in the middle of Columns F, G, & H. Photos by author.



Figs. 3-51. *Palace Tablet*: 'stone sign' dots, 'grapes,' and 'whiplash' lines in upper & middle of Columns E, F, G, H, & I. Photos by author.

It is clear they intentionally separated this notch (indicated in 3-52 by an arrow) from the inline 'ceiling' of the 'cave,' which abruptly 'fades out' some distance from it. The 'mouth' usually 'smiles,' but L7's 'expression' appears more nonplussed. The positions of these engraved lines at H10 and I10—they almost touch, forming the apparent 'hooks'—seems to be a compromise between the traditional form and the Palenque 'animated' version. Our Hands seem compelled

to 'animate' this 'stone' glyph quite often; its fully-realized 'head variant' (e.g., at G11, see [Fig. 3-51](#)) is one of the commonest of 'head variant' glyphs. In any case, this 'stone-with-mouth-notch' had a long tradition at Palenque, going back at least to the *Temple of Inscriptions*, from K'inich Janab-Pakal's reign.



Figs. 3-52. *Palace Tablet*: peculiar 'stone signs.' Photos by author.

I included in [Fig. 3-47](#) the similarly-sculpted 'arches' which cap the 'heads' of the *Sak-Nich?* *Way*, and *Ik'* glyphs at D9, F12, and I11. Apparently these 'arches' sometimes approach the 'stone sign closed arch' in form, but investigating them did not turn out to be very productive here.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ These 'caps' are asymmetrical in a different way. D9 provides the clearest distinction between the two ends of the 'arch': the left end has a sharp corner, the right is distinctly rounded. The right end here is converging with the 'cap' seen on the '*K'uhul* head,' whose corresponding 'corner,' sitting just above the earflare, is also rounded in just this way. See A15, B15, C15, B16, C16, F14, etc.

The two diagnostic interior features of the 'Stone' glyphs are nicknamed 'bunch of grapes' (which usually 'hangs' from the left part of the 'ceiling' inside the glyph) and 'dotted half-oval' (usually 'growing' inward, toward the left, from the lower right wall of the glyph's 'interior'). The latter's normal form is a partial oval (usually paralleled by a fine inline or outline or both) protruding to the left, its right end covered by the 'wall,' and surrounded by a single parallel row of drilled dots, sometimes graduated in size with the largest in the center of the arc. Each of these two features has variants. The 'dotted half-oval' is sometimes more 'comma'-shaped (as O6, O11 and Q13, [Fig. 3-53](#)), and the dots usually hug this element closely, but occasionally the dots 'orbit' at a great distance (as Q13). The 'grapes' ([Fig. 3-51](#)) usually 'hang' directly from the 'ceiling,' but sometimes they depend from an 'eyelid'-like 'whiplash' flourish (as on E7, cf. the 'eyes' of the Pakal/shield, [Fig. 3-108](#)). These 'grapes' may be plain, or 'hairy,' the latter sprouting one or more energetic, finer 'whiplash lines' (as E7 and F17, [Fig. 3-53](#)).



Figs. 3-53. *Palace Tablet*: 'stone signs' arranged by location, more or less. Photos by author.

Each of these variations may covary with a change in Hand, or a Hand might consciously vary a feature like this, capriciously or for not-yet-understood reasons. The artist who carved the 'animated' (13-) *Tuun-ni* at G11, for example, added tiny inlines to four of the 'grapes' (and, also

unusually, 'mouth barbel' as well). So did the carver of H10 ([Figs. 3-51, 3-53](#)). Nowhere else on the *Tablet* (and perhaps nowhere else in the entire corpus of inscriptions) do these tiny decorations appear; and it happens that the two glyphs are corner-neighbors, and both place their dots unusually far from the 'half-oval.' This combination of peculiarities confirms for me that they arise from the same Hand. Neighboring I10 apparently lacks these inlines on its eroded 'grapes,' and graduated dots surround its 'half-oval' (H10's and G11's are all the same size), but it still seems to me to be the same Hand, or a closely-imitating apprentice.



Figs. 3-54. *Palace Tablet*: 'stone signs,' full glyphs. Photos by author.

3.6.1.2 Various evidence grouping various other glyphs: *t*'s at E6, H9, and I9; the *Ik*' glyph (I11, C1 and D9); the *Tuun*-head' at G11 shares some striking features with its neighbor *Chaak*-head' at F12b

Now to return at last to the peculiar crosshatched *t*'s at E6, H9, and I9, which originally drew these three CR's together for comparison. The 'stone signs' at F6-E7 hang their 'hairy grapes' from an 'eyelid line,' in contrast to the 'ceiling-hung plain grapes' of H10 and I10; their 'dotted-

half-ovals' are more circular; and their 'arches' are the 'closed' type, as opposed to the 'combination mouth' on H10 and I10. With so many discrepancies, I must discard the hypothesis that E6-F6-E7 are by the same Hand as the others, but there are strong reasons to group H9-G10-H10 and I9-1J9-I10 under one Hand. We already examined their neighboring 'Ajaw faces' (Section 3.2), and grouped G10, H11 and I11 together (see [Figs. 3-17](#) and [3-65](#)). Also, the peculiar 'shell earflares' of F10, F12, and H10 link these to this Hand (see [Fig. 3-50](#)). We thus establish a fairly large patch of glyphs carved by one master, covering much of the 9th to the 11th/12th rows of Columns F, G, H, and I. D10, over on the left slab, may also prove to belong to this Master.

All three examples of the *Ik'* glyph (I11, C1 and D9) take a very peculiar form, even for Palenque ([Figs. 3-48, 3-49](#)). Instead of the normal rectilinear *tau*-shaped sign found abundantly in Palace windows and in Palenque inscriptions¹³⁷, they all feature a calligraphic top stroke like the 'eyelid'-like 'whiplash' flourish in F6 and E7's 'stone signs.' Both strokes of this '*tau*' at D9 are purely calligraphic, while the vertical members of C1 and I11 stand upright, as if aspiring toward formal symmetry. Now these three *Ik*'s are probably by three different Hands, so this odd semi-calligraphic form constitutes a *convention peculiar to this monument*. That is, the set of carving conventions, the standard forms that I invoke as an imaginary Palenque Manual of Style, was flexible enough to entertain fads like this one. Is this a reflection of a graphically consistent Master Layout? A sincerest-form-of-flattery imitation of some respected forebear's peculiar habit? Some yet-to-be-deciphered connotation? I shall leave these unanswered for the time being.

Before leaving this group, note that the *Tuun*-'head' at G11 shares some striking features with its neighbor *Chaak*-'head' at F12b ([Fig. 3-50](#)). The sculpting of their frowning 'brows' is identically peculiar with a single slight concavity, and the 'barbels' issuing from their 'mouths' both have an unusual engraved axial line. Those plus a number of other similar carving conventions, strengthen my conviction that they arise from the same Hand.

¹³⁷ Palenque has more than its share of examples of the *Ik'* glyph because both the birth of the patron god GI and the accession of his mother 'Lady Beastie' or *Matan* occurred on a 9 Ik'. God GI (patron particularly of the *Temple of the Cross*) 'touched the Earth' on 9 Ik' 15 Keh, 1.18.5.3.2, while his mother's accession is recorded at 9 Ik' 0 Yax, 2.1.0.14.2, when she was some 820 years old. A few years after the dedication of the *Palace Tablet*, Ahkal-Mo'-Naab chose to accede on a 9 Ik' as well.

3.6.2. K6, M8, N9, and M15: An Intrusion of One Hand Into Another's 'Territory'

3.6.2.1 Agreement

The neighboring CR's K6-L6, M8-N8, and N9-M10 are natural candidates to examine next ([Fig. 3-46a](#)). The Ok 'Dog' at K6 and the Chikchan 'snake' at M8 have enough comparable features to distinguish them right away: K6's 'Dog' has the rounded-crescent 'dark brow' and 'snarling mouth' with exposed 'teeth,' standard on Maya 'snakes,' yet the broad, flat 'lip' and 'teeth' and 'stormy brow' (resembling a dark cumulus cloud) on M8 do not match their analogues on K6 at all. K6 also has a concave 'breath bubble' at the corner of its 'mouth' (like K13, L12, L14, M12, N15, and O5, which we scrutinized in **Section 3.4**), and M8 does not. Finally, though their broad flat surfaces superficially resemble one another, the 'feet' of the 'daysign cartouche' of K6 do not match those of M8, from the placement of the inlines to the shape of the central element: that on K6 is aggressively rounded and U-shaped, while M8's is squarish and tri-lobed, an echo of the Early Classic 'inverted *Ajaw*' form.

Which leads us to compare M8 with N9. They share the same form of 'feet' on their 'daysign cartouche,' with the same position of inlines on the same antique tri-lobed central unit. The broad, flat areas characteristic of this sculptor extend to his treatment of the *wa*- and *bu*-suffixes on N8, and the superfix on M10's Kumk'u. This latter CR appears much flatter than the M8-N8 CR above, but its one concave 'dark' area (at the left end of the Kumk'u superfix) echoes in the three 'spots' on N8's *bu*. This concavity also echoes on N10, the "half-K'atun," whose 'petals' are excavated in the same way. Despite the unusually sensitive modeling of the Chikchan 'head,' I ascribe these two CR's to the same Hand.

Elsewhere, I link N9-M10 (via '*Ajaw* faces' [[Fig. 3-17](#)]) to L8, M6, and N6; and via '*Na*/foliage' ([Fig. 3-98](#)) to the *Janab* at I13. Thus M8 is surrounded by glyphs by the Hand of N9-M10, greatly increasing the likelihood that it, too, is by this Hand. It is not, however, as simple as that. Seeking comparison to the 'cloudy brow' of M8, one finds a close analogue on the 'ophidian monster' over at G12 ([Fig. 3-55](#)). I find only one other 'cloudy brow' on the Palace Tablet, that on the "Kan-Bahlam" at nearby L9, and it is entirely different in character: carved more assertively and coarsely, with a very different shape and detailing to the 'brow.' One striking similarity does call for our attention: the flat carving of L9's 'lips,' to which M8's are much closer than they are to G12's. However, in sum, M8's 'snake head' matches that of G12 in many striking details, but matches L9 in only one or two.

3.6.2.2 Conflict

Linking M8-N8 to N9-M10 to I13, however, brings us into conflict with our linking of M8 to G12. On [Fig. 3-55](#), I13 *Janab* sits just below G12, and it is clear that G12 and J13 are manifestly carved by different Hands. Their 'Nal foliage' does not match at all. Nor do their 'teeth,' 'chin scales,' 'noses,' nor 'forehead diadems.' This leads to the *very* uncomfortable conclusion that the Hand of M8-N8 is responsible only *partly* for N9, or vice versa, or partly for G12.... Which part? Perhaps only the underdrawing? In truth, the most telling similarity between M8 and G12 lie in their eyes and their finely-crosshatched, cumuloid 'brows.' Especially around the mouth, G12's ophidian is much more boldly sculptural than M8's (which happens to resemble that of L9). G12's 'cloth knot' suffix, on the other hand, is rather flat, and certainly none would object to its being ascribed to the Hand of M8. So again, only part of this glyph can be said to resemble M8.



Figs. 3-55. *Palace Tablet: fine crosshatching*, (top row and I13) 'beetling brows' and other comparisons in the middle-right area. Photos by author.

The fine crosshatching of M8 and G12 are strikingly similar, not least because such fine hatching is rare here; most of the other examples thereof are much coarser (viz. L9, I13-J13, M12

in [Fig. 3-55](#)). Hatching is connoisseurship's stock-in-trade, precisely the kind of commonplace detail where a scribe's unconscious habits lie exposed, and might express an individual character. So look more closely: M8's and G12's hatching have virtually equal density, but G12's Hand habitually hatches at a low angle in both directions, so its individual 'diamonds' are much wider than high; their left and right corners quite acute, top and bottom obtuse. M8's hatching is more nearly at right angles, if not a little acute on the vertical corners and obtuse on the horizontals. "So what?" you are probably asking, "That would be easy to change, if one thought about it." Indeed so, and such conscious variation is a main obstacle to connoisseurship. But I suggest that this habit is one that tends to remain unconscious: Two other rare examples of fine hatching can be seen at (G12's neighbor) G14, and at J15 (also on [Fig. 3-55](#)). A third sits between them at H15. G14's low-angle hatching (especially on the 'deer-hoof') strikingly matches that on G12, while that on the other two, H15 and J15, come closer to M8. Not surprisingly, J15's flat 'lips' match those of M8 rather than G12 and I13. It is probably safe to distinguish between M8 and G12, despite their similarly-shaped and -decorated 'cloudy brows.'

3.6.2.3 Abrupt change

Comparing N8 to its sequent M9 ([Fig. 3-46a](#), row 6), I am struck by the difference in sculptural quality. Although they both wear assertive smoothed concave discs, N8 is carved flatly, with comparatively little modeling, removing very little negative space from its *-wa* suffix. M9's *-wa*, by contrast, is lighter, deliciously smooth, symmetrical (the two 'cresecentic' elements vary only in orientation), and minimalist: it displays simple, firm axial grooves instead of the more traditionally asymmetrical details seen on N8 and H11 ([Fig. 3-46a](#), 3rd row).

The character, the 'personality' of this *wa* is of a piece with the rest of M9. Modeling of the *-ji-ya* suffix and the 'horns' of the 'moon' and the 'day-shell' express the same distinctive 'personality;' M9's entire character is more in keeping with the assertive sculpturality of L11 (below it on [Fig. 3-46a](#)), L14 and K13 than with the glyphs that immediately precede and follow it ([Fig. 3-56](#)). The identification of M9's Hand as different from its textual sequents is important. It tells us something about the territoriality of these artists, how they looked upon their assignments. It tells us that at least one carver would tolerate a colleague's inserting a glyph into what must have been "his space." Now the Hand inserting is in many ways a superior sculptor; the Hand of K13 and L14 is one of the most deft, expert, and recognizable personalities on the *Palace Tablet*. Perhaps this simply represents an underling tolerating the meddling of his

Master. It remains to be seen whether the (L11-K13-)L14 "*Itz'i-Winik* Master's" text has any such intrusions. (See [Fig. 4-01](#).)

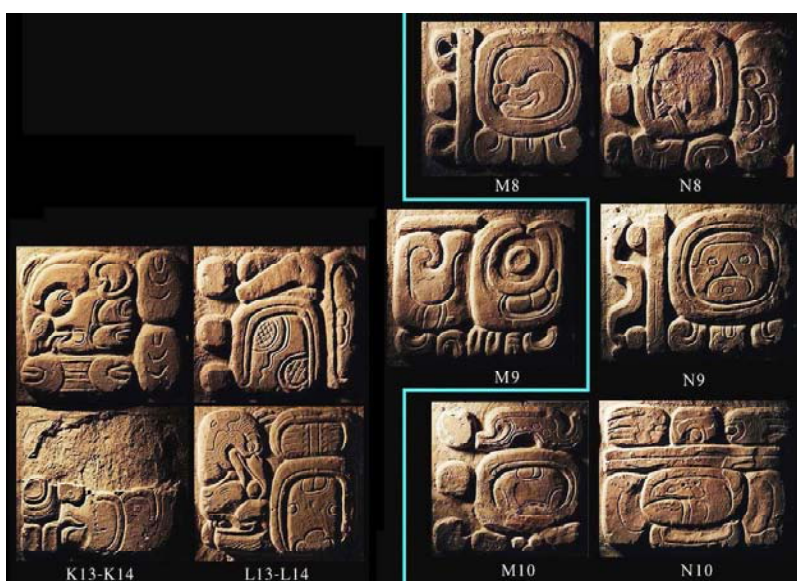


Fig. 3-56. *Palace Tablet*: The L14 Master "invading" his colleague's "territory." The right half contains a section of Columns M and N, usually carved rather flatly; the left four, for comparison, from farther down Columns K and L, carved more sculpturally. Photos by author.

3.6.2.4 M15-N15

The last CR in this group is at M15-N15 ([Fig. 3-46b](#)). It bears the same superior sculptural finish as L11-K13-L14, especially the highly-sophisticated Xul at N15, whose *ni* we have already admired (**Section 3.04**). But the "5 Lamat" at M15, though somewhat less assertively sculptural, shows the same careful modeling, the same assured line quality (e.g., in the 'wrinkles' round the 'mouth' of the coefficient), even in the skillful spirals in the 'feet' of the 'daysign cartouche.' Except for the 'Full-Figure' Initial Series, this is the only numerical coefficient in the Palace Tablet rendered as a 'head variant.' This may have some significance with respect to the expertise of the artist, or it may be totally irrelevant. A glance at the Palenque corpus reveals that —except for Initial Series, *Temple XVIII Stuccos*, and the *96 Glyphs Panel*— numeral 'head variants' are rather rare. There are three on the Cross Group doorjambs and a couple elsewhere. (Perhaps significantly, four of these are numeral 5's, all in "5 Eb - 5 K'ayab" event texts.¹³⁸)

¹³⁸ See Schele & Walld 1999, *Palenque Triad*, p. 162

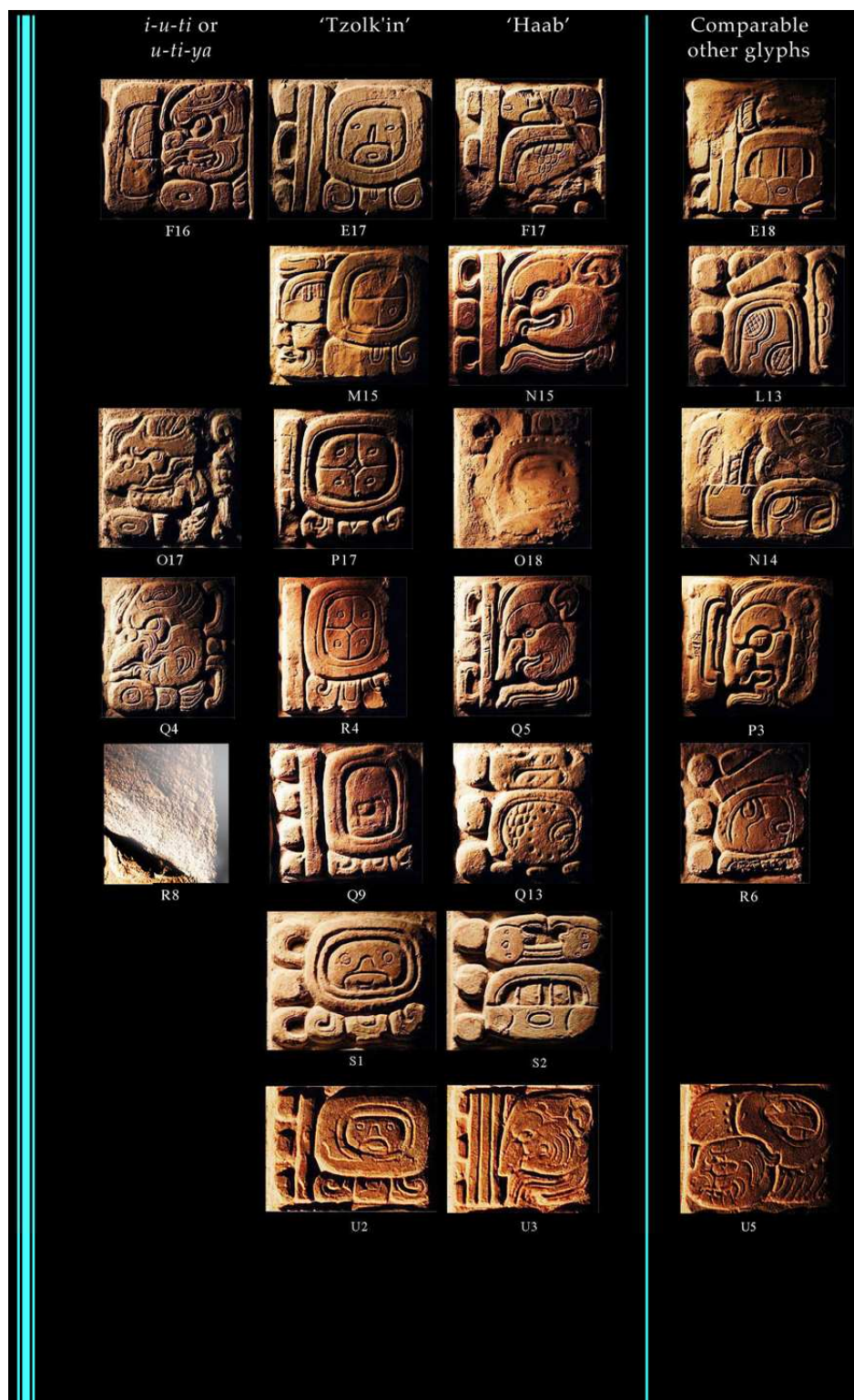


Fig. 3-46b. *Palace Tablet*: Calendar Rounds, right half. The left half of this table can be found a few pages earlier. Photos by author.

Perhaps the (apparently very capricious) choice to carve a 'head variant' numeral represents a master's relatively high confidence, or a lowered sense of urgency: The *Palace Tablet's* ambitious scope, its large number of artisans and rather chaotic distribution of labor suggests a relatively strong emphasis on finishing on schedule. Why, then, would an artist take the extra time to carve a 'head variant'? One could suppose any number of relatively untestable hypotheses. Certainly, the schedule was not so urgent to compel any of the many carvers to scrimp and leave anything unfinished (as they visibly did in most other Palenque inscriptions¹³⁹).

Two other 5 Lamat dates occur on the Tablet at P17 and R4 ([Fig. 3-46b](#)). They are manifestly by two other Hands, though the Hand that carved the Xul at Q5 closely imitates N15 (though with less care). Taken in isolation, Q5 and N15 might satisfy the criteria for a single Hand, but dissimilar details make this unlikely. For example, N15's numerical '1' and '5-bar' are flat, while its 'spacers' have skillful, sophisticated concavities; Q5's numeral is decorated, and rounded, and its 'spacers' are a bit clumsier. Comparing just the 'snouts' of the two 'rodents' gives the impression that N15's is more vital, lively, skillful than Q5's. This quality distinguishes the two no matter what details one compares: 'nostrils,' 'beard-fringe,' 'cheeks,' '*ni*-suffix.'

3.6.3. A Look Back: C1-D1 and F16-F17

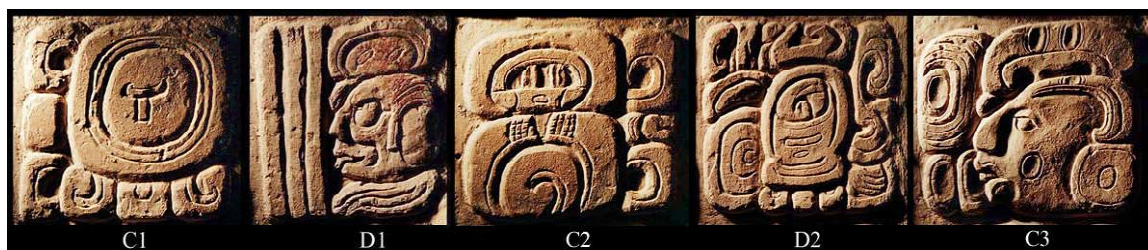


Fig. 3-57. *Palace Tablet*: First five glyphs of Columns C & D. Photos by author.

I have put off examining the CR at C1-D1 ([Fig. 3-46a](#), bottom of first column) because it seems to relate to no other CR here. This sculptor favors a fat, squarish numeral-one and

¹³⁹ The most obvious example is the sides on the *Sarcophagus of Pakal*, found in the *Temple of the Inscriptions (TI)* which were so hastily carved that Merle Greene Robertson was able to photograph uncarved brushstrokes of the underdrawing (see Robertson, *The Sculpture of Palenque*, Vol. 1, esp. pll. 171, 173, 178). One can easily imagine the urgency of that schedule! The *TI's* lengthy eponymous texts themselves were hardly more than scratched into the surface of the walls. The *Dumbarton Oaks Panel* is unfinished; details in its lower margin (including parts of the woman's dress) are only sketched lightly. When one seeks, one

'spacers,' and his line quality is rather bold but surprisingly weak. This weakness is particularly evident in outlines of his 'daysign,' the divisions between the three '5-bars' on D1, and the listless lines of the *ni*-suffix at D1. This carver scoops out a slight concavity in the 'bar' atop his Yax, and is one of only two carvers to engrave a *pair* of grooves outlining the 'daysign.' (The other is at F6, carved with more care and precision in every detail. F6's 'numercial spacers,' for example, are asymmetrical fat spiral forms, like opercula, while C1's are squarish and symmetrical.) Some differences in carving character ([Fig. 3-68](#)) call into question the superficial similarity—their gently-concave vertical 'bars,' for example—between the *Yax*'s of D1 and E7. D1's *Yax*, for example, is crisply beveled outside and its interior is deeply separated from its 'arch,' while E7's outside is rounded and its interior's demarcation hardly bolder than any other detail. However, these differences are not severe enough to dissuade me from assigning D1, C5, E7, and F7 to the same Hand.

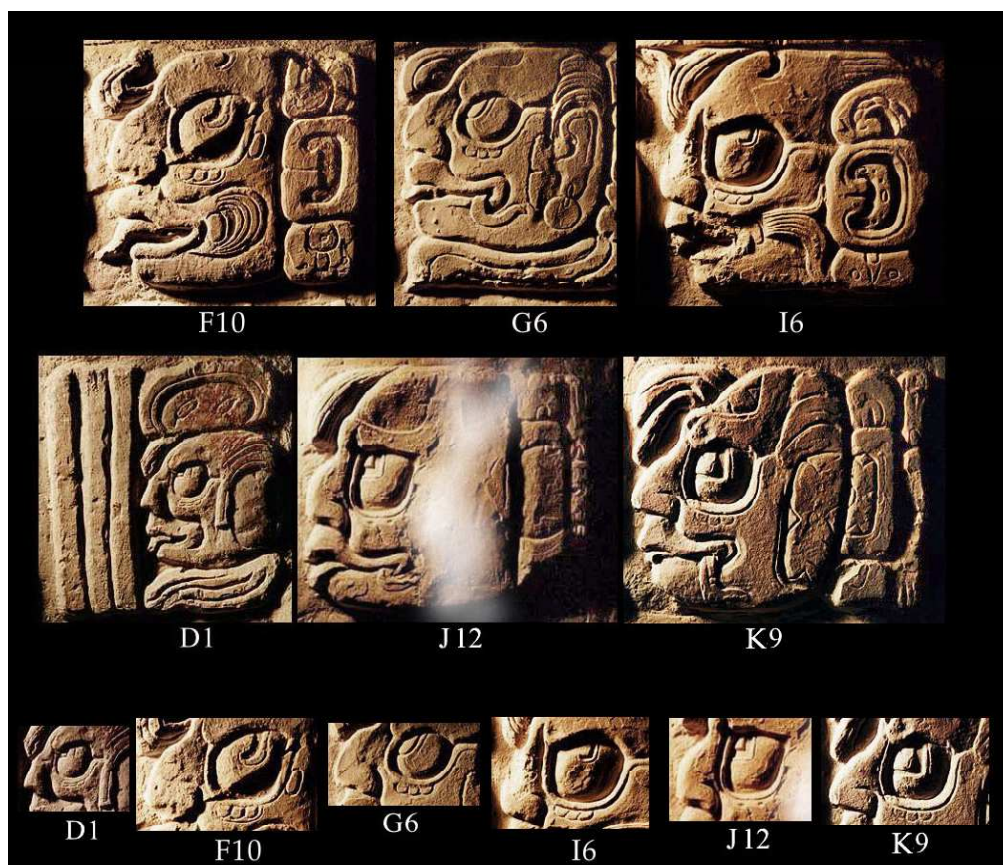


Fig. 3-58. *Palace Tablet*: comparing G1, *K'in*, & *K'inich* glyphs and their 'eyes.' Photos by author.

usually finds such lapses to be the norm rather than the exception. The *Tablet of the Slaves* and the *Palace Tablet* are among the

His '*K'in*-mark' over D1's 'cheek' is very broad, its diagnostic cardinal 'notches' very small, barely visible, like that of the J12 *K'inich* (see [Figs. 1-90, 3-101](#)). But this likeness is superficial; the two display substantially different treatments of 'eye,' 'lip,' 'profile,' and even '*K'in* marks' ([Fig. 3-58](#)). He carved D1's 'eye' quite round, its 'pupil' small and, though angular, obtuse. His '*Ik*' sign' at C1 is unique, as noted elsewhere: a deeply-carved cursive 'whiplash' (not unlike the Nike® 'swoosh' logo) modified with an extra border above and a square 'tongue' below, as if he absent-mindedly began a cursive *Ik*' and halfway through, tried to formalize it.

3.6.4. Hand C1-D1's 'Territory'



Fig. 3-59. *Palace Tablet*. The Hand of C1-D1 and glyphs on the upper left corner of the middle slab he seems to have carved. Photos by author.

Now I shall attempt to discern this distinctive C1-D1-C2-D2 Artist's 'signature' in neighboring glyphs ([Fig. 3-59](#)). To recapitulate, he has a heavy hand, employing light lines very sparingly, and rarely bothering to model surfaces, nor to smooth transitions between surface-plane and its beveled edge. His lines are also relatively uncertain or roughly carved, exemplified

most meticulously finished of Palenque's corpus of inscriptions.

by his flaccid, 'uncombed' *ni* at D1, the borders round his daysign at C1, his slovenly crosshatching at C2, and the details within the 'upturned vase' at D2. Despite this laxity, he usually smooths the outer edges of his glyph-blocks as much as his fellows.¹⁴⁰ His secondary lines do not parallel their primaries very closely (See [Fig. 3-60](#)). His glyphs (such as the dot of his numeral one) tend to inflated squarishness. His *ya* (C2) has a realistic 'penis' flanked by squarish inflated 'curls' which leave only a small circular interior 'space.' All these glyphs exhibit a tendency toward 'inflation,' that is, toward each glyph's filling its space almost completely, as if the space were too small: note at D2, the *ne* or *Nen* which leaves hardly any voids, and the curls atop the *Sak*, squashed almost to illegibility. Finally, this artist sometimes shallowly scoops out 'dark' areas concave, such as the vertical bars in his 'Tun sign' (C2) and atop the *Yax* (D1).

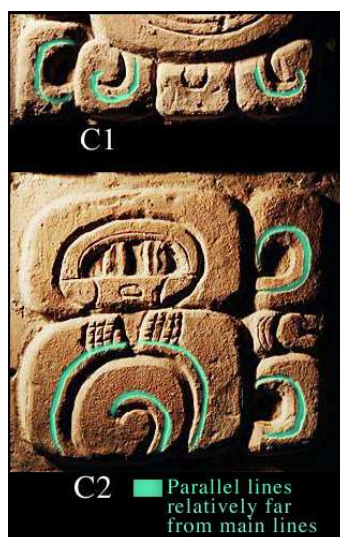


Fig. 3-60. *Palace Tablet*: The Hand of C1-D1 tends to draw his secondary "doubling lines" rather far from their primaries. Photos by author.

These qualities continue, for the most part, down Columns CD for several rows. D3, D4 and D5, for instance, satisfy most of the characteristics described in the preceding paragraph, and offer nothing contrary to them. The only difference they exhibit is that (like D2) they are somewhat flatter, the lines defining their 'interiors' somewhat less bold, but these lines are no less awkwardly cut. If anything, they seem even *more* rushed than C1-D1. These are probably the least-finished-looking glyphs on the entire *Palace Tablet*. If we then include them in our C1-D1-Hand list, we note that this artist also tends to a certain cursive style of 'bubbles' (in the *Chan*

¹⁴⁰ Or a specialist assistant? In many busy workshops, simple tedious jobs like sanding corners or polishing broad surfaces are entrusted to skilled apprentices / assistants.

"sky" and *na*'s in D3, and more boldly in the *ja* of C4). He clearly draws them 'overlapping,' making the left one first, a simple left-bulging loop, and adding the next one(s) as partial loop(s). Most other Hands draw their 'bubbles' more symmetrically, whether they be discrete or 'slices.' This Hand also prefers his *la* or *Ajaw* 'face' (D4) 'grinning' (with a squarish U-shape that echoes his 'inflated' formlines), and with rounded parallel-edged 'nose.' I compare his peculiar *yo*, *Nal*, and *K'ak* below (D4, D5, [Fig. 3-98](#)). The *ya* at C4, though a little simpler, is of a piece with that of C2.

([Fig. 3-59](#). continued:) The "North" title at C5 has all the hallmarks of C1-D1 (and particularly D2): flat unmodeled surface, widely-spaced parallels, slightly-concave 'bars' on the *NAH* (as well as the 'petals' of the *mi* suffix), the clumsy lines, etc. This 'human head' glyph also has enough in common with C3 to permit a real comparison. C3 is definitely more finished, the 'face' more modeled, the concave areas much deeper and clearer, the 'hair' uncharacteristically graceful. (This might be an intrusion; see next paragraph.) Despite these anomalies, the clumsy, concentric lines on C3's *nu* could hardly be by any other Hand; while the 'lips' are virtually identical with those on C5. With a little more finish work C5's 'face' could look a great deal like that on C3.

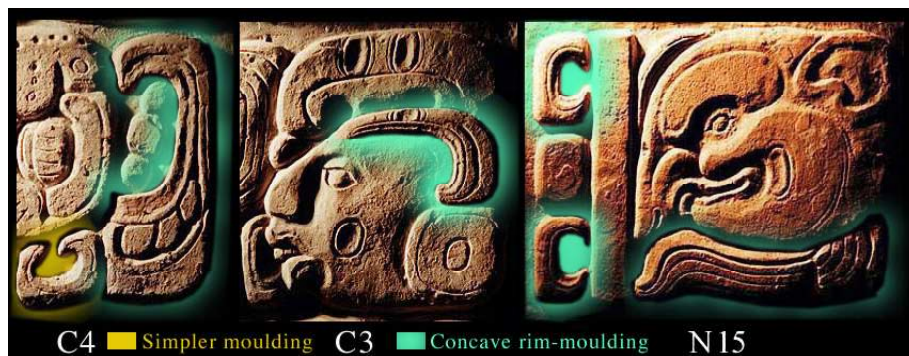


Fig. 3-61. *Palace Tablet*: Sculptural details (green) of C3's 'hair' and C4's 'moon' seem to be by the L14/N15 Master rather than the Hand of C1-D1 (yellow). Photos by author.

I noted C4's *ya* and the 'bubbles' in its 'moon' *ja*-suffix matched other glyphs in this area. The 'moon' is also 'inflated' and squarish, and both its three 'bubbles' and the three spherical 'beads' in the curve of its 'limb' also characteristically 'inflate' to fill their spaces. The complex modeling of C3's 'hair' precisely matches the 'spacers' on N15 ([Fig 3-61](#)). Although the characteristics of C1-D1 do not equal the sensitive, fastidious modeling skill of the L14-N15 Hand, this sudden attack of sensitivity suggests that perhaps the latter Master touched up this glyph for his

colleague. This could account for its unusually deep and finished concave areas. Some similarly fine carving appears on C4 as well: the peculiar concave 'inner rim' of the 'moon's crescent also recalls the 'hair cap' on C3 ([Fig 3-61](#) - green outlines), though it is not quite so fine. The 'upended frog/iguana' *Sih* is also uncharacteristically sensitive. Its many delicate details bespeak a lighter touch with the chisel. It might be the C1-D1 Hand in a delicate mood, or it might be an intrusion. (To summarize: some details in the 'heads' and 'moon' of C3 and C4 *might* represent an intrusion by a more sensitive Hand.)

([Fig. 3-59](#). continued:) One can compare C5's lines, widely spaced and a bit uncertain, to features in C1-D2. The concavities match C1-D2's as well, and the nose and 'lips,' as mentioned above, match those on C3. The only new detail here is the large ring of dots, the coarseness of whose carving reflects the line quality we associate with this Hand.

C6 as well has many comparable features: the *to* dots and *Nah* prefix compatible with those of C5; *na* like D3's, and casually-concave 'bands' on *ko* like those on the 'tun' of C2. However, the details of C6's *ta* or *Tan* take forms strikingly unlike those of D4, though the lines themselves are carved with equivalent artlessness. One might argue that this last difference could be simply capricious, but it is worth noting nonetheless. D6's *yo* and *la* link it with D4 and D5, as noted in **Section 3.3**, and its *Ha*'s coarse row of dots and casual concavity strengthen this conclusion. Though carved much more tentatively and flatly, D6's 'jaguar head' shares many features with N15's 'rodent;' perhaps this Hand was a friend or apprentice, or merely an emulator, of the L14-N15 Master. The finer details of this 'jaguar' have a lighter touch than we tend to associate with this carver.

C7 is a puzzle. Its *mu*-curl' fits right in with this Hand's undisciplined carving, but the strange *ti* and the 'head' part of the *mu* have a much more delicate quality than the rest of the glyph. However, most details of the two 'heads' in this glyph ('barbel' or 'breath-curl,' 'lip,' 'nose') match one another. The 'fishhook' shape of the *mu*-curl' also matches D7's and D5's *Winik*-curls.' I attribute D7's 'dotted-eye-skull'-*Winik-ki* to the C1-D2 Hand, mainly on the basis of three features: its squarish *Winik*, coarse *ki*, and the peculiar cursive 'swoosh' in the 'skull's eye' (which strikingly resembles C1's *Ik*). Elsewhere (**Section 3.5.1**), I attributed its *Winik* to the same Hand as D5's ([Fig. 3-41](#)), with similarities (again) to the L14/M13 Master (also [Fig. 3-46](#)), though the differences in carving quality suggests that we perceive the C1-D1 hand as student or 'follower' of the L14/M13 Hand. Also, in **Section 3.7** ([Figs. 3-78, 3-79](#)), I determine that D7's sculptural treatment of its 'jawbone' matches no other 'jawbones' in the *Tablet* (though it does

harmonize with the assertive flat inlines on many of the C1-D2 Hand's glyphs). These non-matching 'jawbones' include C11's and D13's, so we should expect to reach the lower boundary of this artist's 'territory' shortly.

If one skips ahead to D9 for a more easy comparison, one finds a completely cursive *Ik'* comparable to that of C1, and an '*Ajaw* face' (*Nich?*) of the same type as those on D4 and D6 (I ascribed them to the same Hand in [Fig. 3-17](#)). Though rather less assertive, there is little about the carving of the 'lips' and 'nose' that argues D9's 'face' to have been by a different Hand than those we've seen at D1, C3, C5, C7, etc. However, D9's *li* is entirely different in character from D4's. The close-paralleled fine inline both on D9's *li* and on the 'capped *Ik'*' above it, plus the broad 'frames' and small interior spaces of these glyphs (rather like E15's) contrasts strongly with the casually-carved, flattish *li* at D4, and the wide spacing of parallel inlines seen up to now in this group. I shall provisionally distinguish between D9 and the C1-D2 Hand we've been focusing on.

The full-figure 'bird' at C9 also looks like a Hand different from C1-D2. Its peculiarity might be seen in its very finely-carved details, both around the 'eye' and in its 'feathers.' Its tiny 'teeth' contrast with those of C4 (whose 'chin scales' and 'breath spiral,' though lightly carved, seem to follow the conventions of the neighbors). In particular, the interior of its 'breath spiral' is carefully concave (much more carefully than the concavities of the C1-D2 Hand seen so far.) Compare, for example, the 'breath spiral' here with the totally two-dimensional ones on C4's 'upended frog,' or on the C7 '*mu*-head.'

Now, we look upwards to C8. Its '*Ch'ok* head' is minimally carved, with a few wispy 'whiskers' (like D6's but more sparsely distributed), sharply beveled 'ear' and 'lip' area, and generally finer, more assured carving technique than we have seen in the C1-D2 artist. C8 and D7 do share a peculiar broken outline at the front of their 'brow plate,' suggesting that D7 (or at least its 'skull') might belong to the C1-D2 Hand after all. C8's *ko* postfix, however, is carved in a style completely different from C6's (and from C17's below; again see [Fig. 3-64](#)). We can conclude that C8 and perhaps the 'skull' of D7 — I am sure D7's *Winik-ki* is by the C1-D2 Hand — marks the advent of a new Hand: one capable of stronger lines, with deeply beveled edges (as around C8's 'mouth'). D8's simplicity and strong line quality (and its unique *na* postfix) compel me to assign it, too, to this new Hand. The proximity of C9 and D9 argues for identity with this Hand as well, but C9's carver is capable of great precision: fine 'teeth,' fine 'feathers,' fine details round the 'eye' and 'breath curl'/'barbel.' He favors broad 'frames' (as on the *Ik'* and

li in D9) with fine, close-inlines. He also takes pains to model the surfaces of his glyphs; particularly on his 'faces': compare the smoothly-rolling 'cheek' and 'eye-socket' and wall-like 'upper lip' of his *Mat* bird at C9 with their almost Cubist analogues of C8. In this feature, D8 could more resemble its following glyphs than its predecessor. In other words, C8 appears to be an anomalous intrusion of a third Hand between that of C1-D7 and the Hand of D8-D10 and below.

C10 and the (double)-*ka* prefix of D10 are crisp and assured, but bold and linear (as opposed to sculptural). The 'comb' part of the C10 *ne* suffix has doubled 'teeth,' while those on D10's *ka* are 'single;' yet they must still be by the same Hand: take away the secondary 'teeth' of C10, and the remaining strokes match those of D10 in depth, curvature, sharpness, and spacing. In other words, C10's 'comb' was simply finished one more step past D10's.

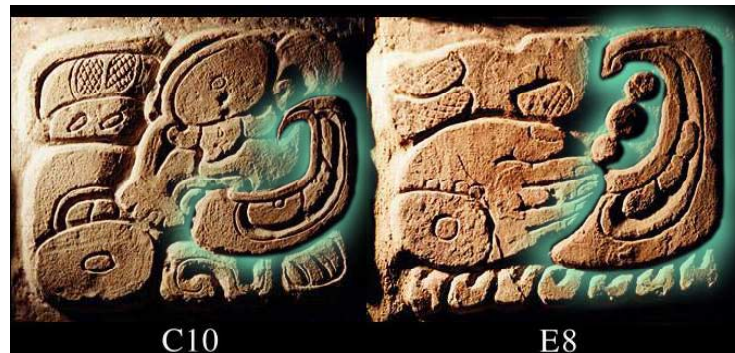


Fig. 3-62. *Palace Tablet*: C10's & E8's 'moons' compared. Photos by author.

The 'moon' *-ja* at C10 has one very peculiar detail, also found on E8: its 'bubbles' or 'kernels' have a tiny circle, a 'germ,' 'attaching' them to their adjacent lines like a clothespin to a clothesline. This detail suggests that the scribes' understood these 'bubbles' as kernels of maize—or something else—and I initially thought that this peculiar similarity proved that C10 and E8 came from the same Hand. However, a detail-by-detail comparison of these two ([Fig. 3-62](#)) reveals more differences than similarities. The crosshatching differs, the curves of the 'moons' differ, the shapes and overlapping of 'bubbles/kernels' differ. The care and crispness of carving differs. I believe this unusual detail here appears in two Hands's work, simply because they were associates, friends, and/or teacher and student. Or they both perceived these 'bubbles' as corn kernels.

D10 has a *Na*/ear ornament,' which we compare to other such elements in [Fig. 3-91](#) (Section 3.10) below. In [Fig. 3-91](#), one can see that the *Na*/whose form approaches D10's most closely is

on the '*bi*-monster' at H6, but even this is not a match, made obvious when one compares the whole glyphs ([Fig. 3-63](#)).



Fig. 3-63. Palace Tablet. C10, D10 & H6. Photos by author.

The 'noses' and 'chin scales' don't match at all. The spiral element of the '*Nal*, 'brow,' 'teeth' and 'lips' do differ, but not so distinctly; one might argue that their varying shapes fall within the tolerances of a single artist's *œuvre*. But the *ja*-prefix 'moon' at H6 and the 'moon' on C10 are as different as Io and Ganymede. Only the outline shapes are alike; the entire list of inner details are strikingly dissimilar.

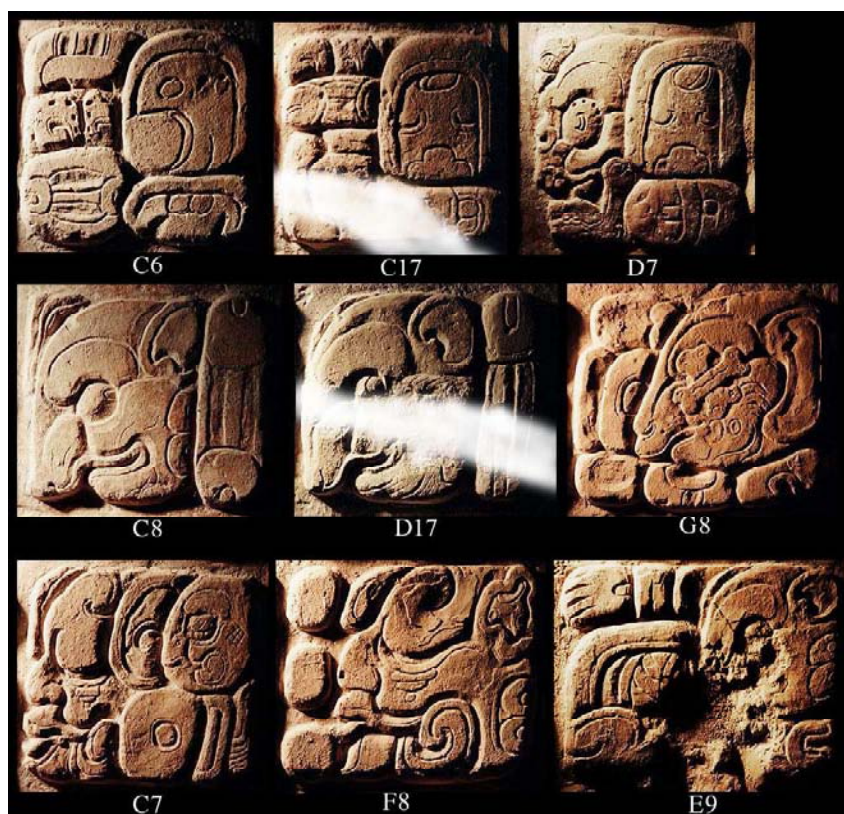


Fig. 3-64. Palace Tablet. Ch'ok-ko, to-ko-Tan, & comparables. Photos by author.

PALACE TABLE: comparing specific DN's, *i-u-ti*, etc.

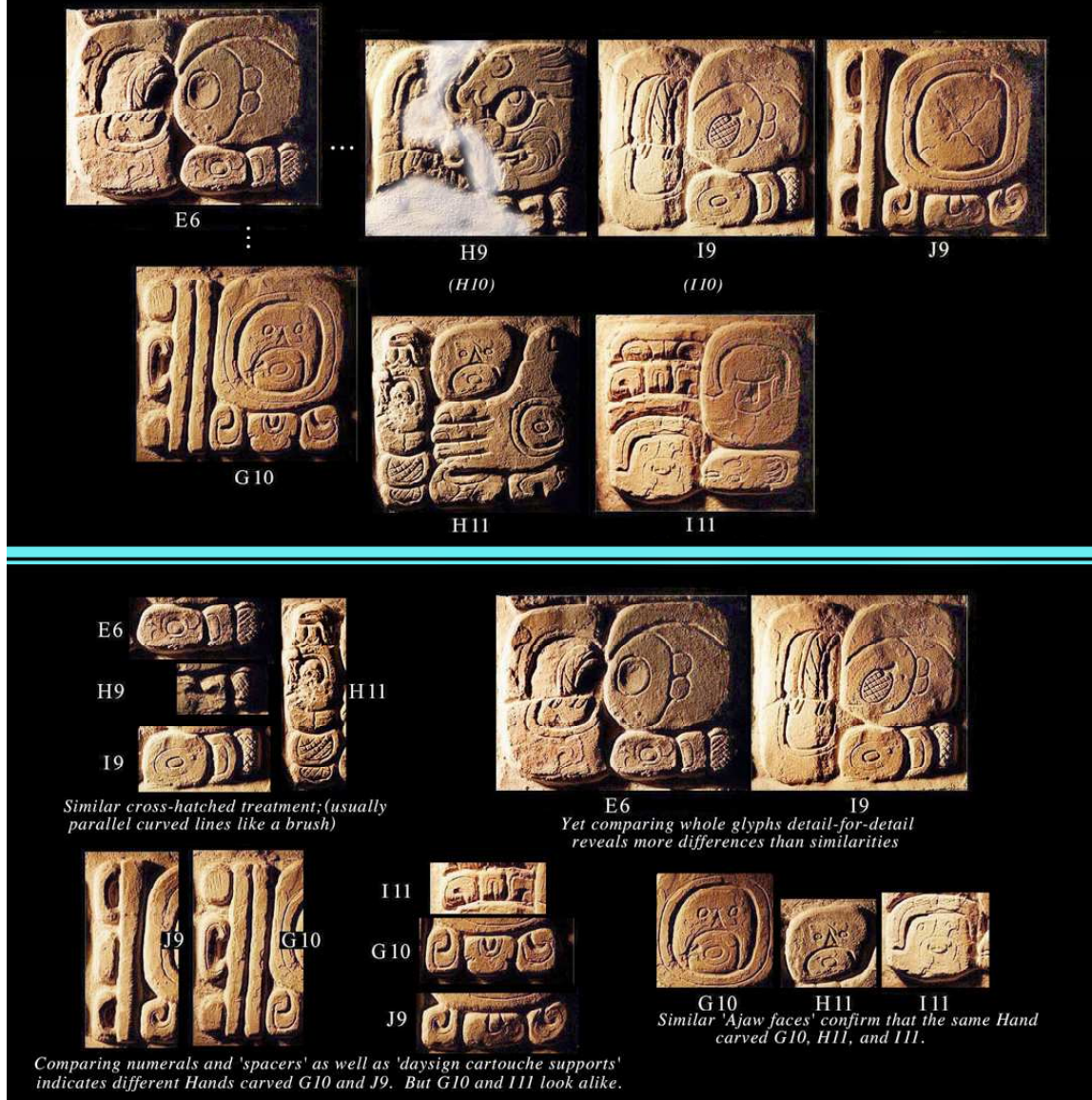


Fig. 3-65. Palace Tablet: various Comparisons: 'Ajaw faces,' *i-u-ti*, daysign details, crosshatched *ti*s, &c. Photos by author.

Although carved on a separate stone, E7's and F7's *Yax* are strikingly similar to the *Nah* of C5 and the *Yax* of D1. Likewise, the 'faces' of D6 and G8 have much in common. that I must tentatively assigned them to the C1-D1 Hand. The rest of these glyphs' details support this attribution for the most part ([Fig. 3-59](#)). Above ([Sect. 3.6.1](#)), I voiced doubts that E7 and D1

sprang from the same Hand, but they have a lot more in common with each other (and with F7 and C5) than with the rest of the examples in [Fig. 3-68](#). Comparing details of their neighbors, I find that a total of six to ten glyphs on this area (E6, F6, E7, F7, F8, F9, probably E8 and G8, and possibly E9 and G7) seem to be by the same artist. They share a penchant for concave, neatly-outlined 'spots' that we noted on C3, C5, D6, E6, and (probably a different Hand) A15-B19, and the 'Jaguar-headed throne' just above G6 (see [Figs. 3-07, 3-99](#)).



Fig. 3-66. *Palace Tablet: various Comparisons*: The *Ek* "black" glyphs atop F12 and H10 display completely different treatments of the 'darkness' in the upper 'arch.' Despite ostensibly-similar 'shell earflares,' I assign these two to different Hands. Photos by author.

However, if this be the same Hand, his carving skill seems to have improved considerably by the time he began working on the middle slab (to the right of the seam, that is, in Columns EFGH, etc). We no longer see the hesitant, sloppy parallels so salient on D1 and C5. Further, the 'moon' at E8 is certainly not by the same Hand as that at C4, yet the 'hand' closely matches its predecessor at F7. Despite superficial differences in their 'wrists' and outline shape, the treatment of 'fingernails' and indication of 'joints' are identical. (Could two different Hands have outlined these glyphs, but only one Hand finished the detailing?) Perhaps the E8 'moon' represents an intrusion. Perhaps these adjacent areas on the two slabs were carved by a particularly close pair of collaborators, one of whom was more careful or more skilled, but who freely touched up each others' work—the 'spots', for example. The two areas satisfy my criteria for identity, but only just barely.

Below ([Section 3.7](#), [Fig. 3-86](#)) I relate this Hand's characteristic 'spots' (or the 'spots' common to these two Hands) to those on the 17 *Winal*/Initial Series Glyph (at A9-B10) and the A15-B9 Hand and the 'Jaguar Throne' just above Column G5.



Fig. 3-67. Palace Tablet *ko* glyphs. Including two *to-ko-Tan*, two *Ch'ok-ko*, six *ch'o-ko*, and A18's "*8-ma-Ak*," whose 'turtlesell's' ends resemble the ends of a *ko*. K8 is by the "Fat/Flat" Master. Photos by author.

3.6.5. The K7 "Fat/Flat" Master

In Section 3.3 (see [Fig. 3-30](#)), I note that the two *ni*'s which most closely match each other are G6 and K7, and in Section 3.5 (see [Fig. 3-43](#)), I ascribe K7 to the "Fat/Flat" Master, responsible for the eighth row of Columns GHIJK and sundry adjacent glyphs. I believe the *K'inich* at G6 and its sequents *ja-na-bi* (H6), *pa-ka-la* (G7) (see [Fig. 3-101](#)), the EG at H7, and the GIII at I7 all manifestly exhibit the graphic, low-relief qualities that demand inclusion in this "Fat/Flat" group. The GI at I6 just to the right ([Fig. 3-31b](#), 3-58) of these clearly does *not*, despite a striking similarity in the treatment of the lower 'eyelid' ([Fig. 3-58](#)). [Fig. 3-70](#) defines the territory of this carver, as well as parts of the areas executed by some of his neighbors. The beautifully-sculpted GI at I6 ([Fig. 3-58](#)) is strikingly different from *all* of its neighbors—more sculptural, more assured, more detailed—an "intruder," a glyph inserted for no apparent reason by another Hand.

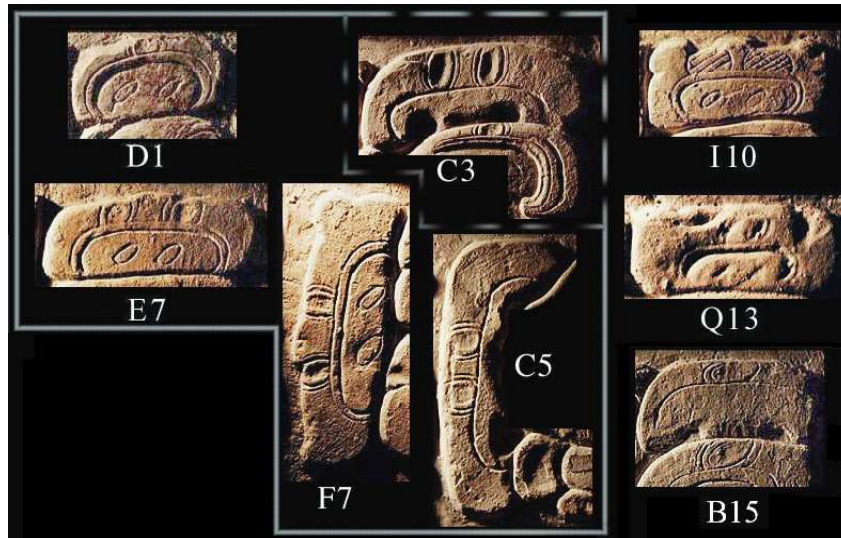


Fig. 3-68. *Palace Tablet*: Comparison of *Yax* and *Nah* glyphs. The C1-D1 Artist (outlined in white) characteristically carved the crosswise bands on both these glyphs as concave, outlined barrel shapes. The other three glyphs are by three other Hands. Photos by author.

Several other glyphs bordering this Hand's area, K6, L6, L7, L8, G9, and J9, meet many of the criteria to be attributed to him. However, I was forced to exclude them, tentatively or confidently, on the basis of various characteristics which did not gibe with the others. I excluded J9 partly because of its thin numerical 'space fillers,' for example.



Fig. 3-69. *Palace Tablet*: two kinds of *u*, by several artists. Photos by author.

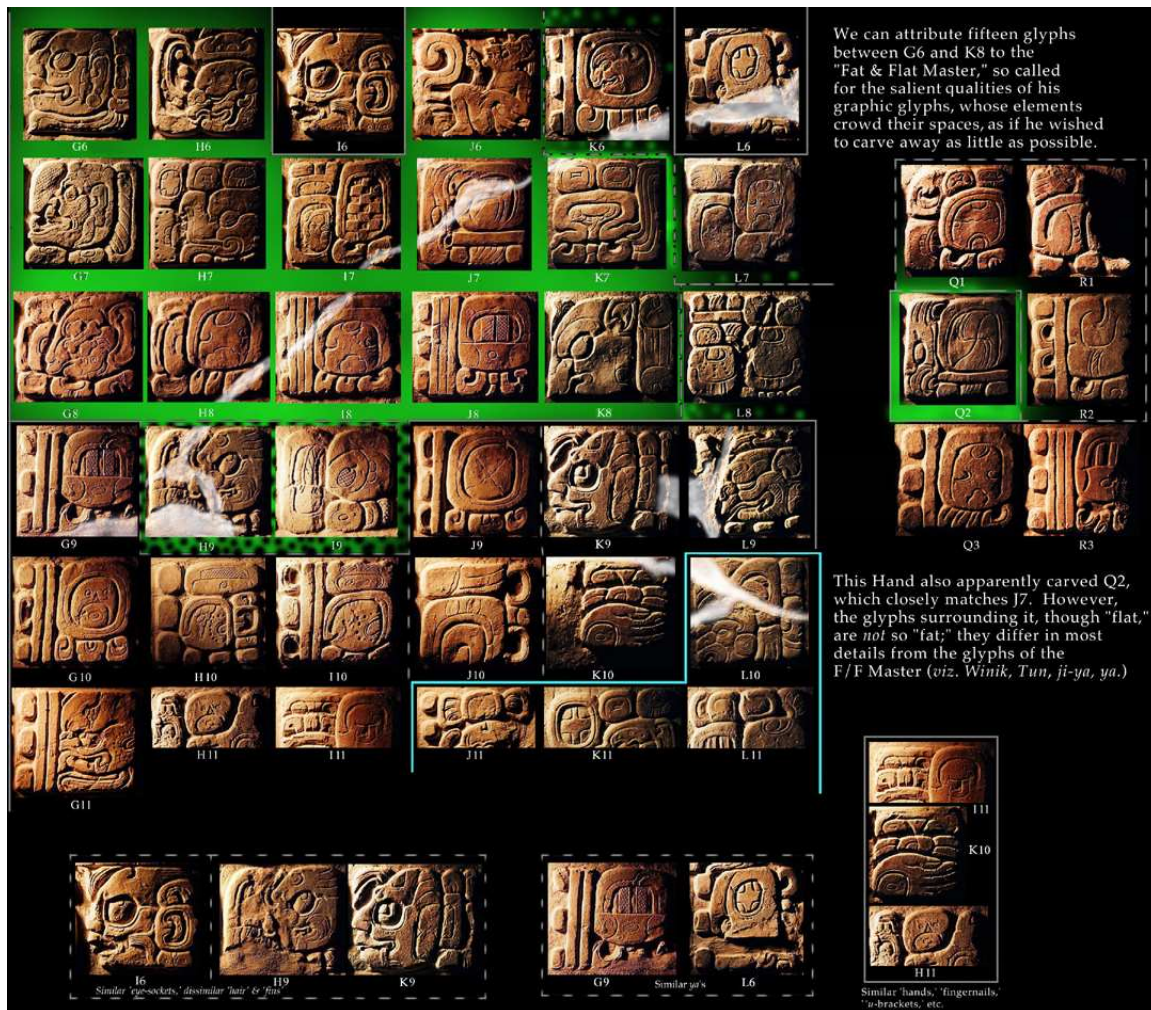


Fig. 3-70. Palace Tablet: territory of the "Fat/Flat Master" (outlined in green). Diagnostic glyphs are his *wa*, *ya*, and *ji-ya* suffixes (e.g., I7, K7, H8, I8, J8). L6 is excluded by its significantly different *ya*, for example. Photos by author.

L7's *Winik* falls in a different category than those of H8 and I8 ([Fig. 3-41](#)), and the elegant *ya*'s of G9 and L6 match each other much better than they do the distinctive *ya*'s of K7 and J8 ([Fig. 3-73](#)). G9's '*Tun*' seems at first glance to be a close match to J8, but it is in fact a close *imitation*. Compare the shapes of all their details, from the central 'spot' and its flanking 'parentheses' to the excavated area in the upper half. Likewise, J9 and J10 share a somewhat "softer," more rounded finish than either our "Fat/Flat" Master, or glyphs K9, K10, I10, etc., that flank them; these two actually intrude between two patches carved by a third Hand, responsible for several glyphs below the "Fat/Flat" Master (K9, K10, L9, and rows 10 - 11 of columns G, H, and I) (See [Fig. 3-70](#)). The difficulty I encountered deciding where some of these boundaries lay is due to perhaps deliberately smooth transitions between different Hands' territories. It seems that more

than one carver imitated the style of his neighbor. This could be an unconscious "affirming behavior,"¹⁴¹ or a deliberate attempt to give this important monument a unified style.



Fig. 3-71. *Palace Tablet*: central territory of the "Fat/Flat Master." Photos by author.



Fig. 3-72. *Palace Tablet*: comparing 'ophidian heads' of "Fat/Flat Master" (H6) & colleague (L9). Photos by author.

In [Fig. 3-73](#), we can compare one of the excluded, G9, to one of the included, J8, detail-for-detail. From two different DN's, they each consist of a numeral-*Tun-ya* of similar form and execution. The crosshatched bands in the excavated field of the two appear to be manifestly

¹⁴¹ "Affirming behavior" consists of the hundreds of gestures, nods, and poses one strikes while interacting with a friend or person one wishes to impress. Many of these consist of unconscious reflections of the other's poses, for example smiling, nodding, crossing one's arms or touching one's face when the other does so. We do this dozens, hundreds of times a minute.

identical. But G9's numeral is more sculptural than J8's, which, typically for the "Fat/Flat" Hand, is simply drawn. The excavated field in the two "Tun" glyphs have strikingly different shapes, the central 'spot' in the lower part of the "Tun" is completely different on the two, and of course, the sculpture of the *ya*'s don't match at all. So why does the cross-hatching compare so closely? Why do we find cross-hatching of this quality concentrated in this area, but divided between two (or more) Hands? I suspect that either these cronies were imitating one another (consciously or unconsciously), or perhaps the hatching was all done by the same Hand.

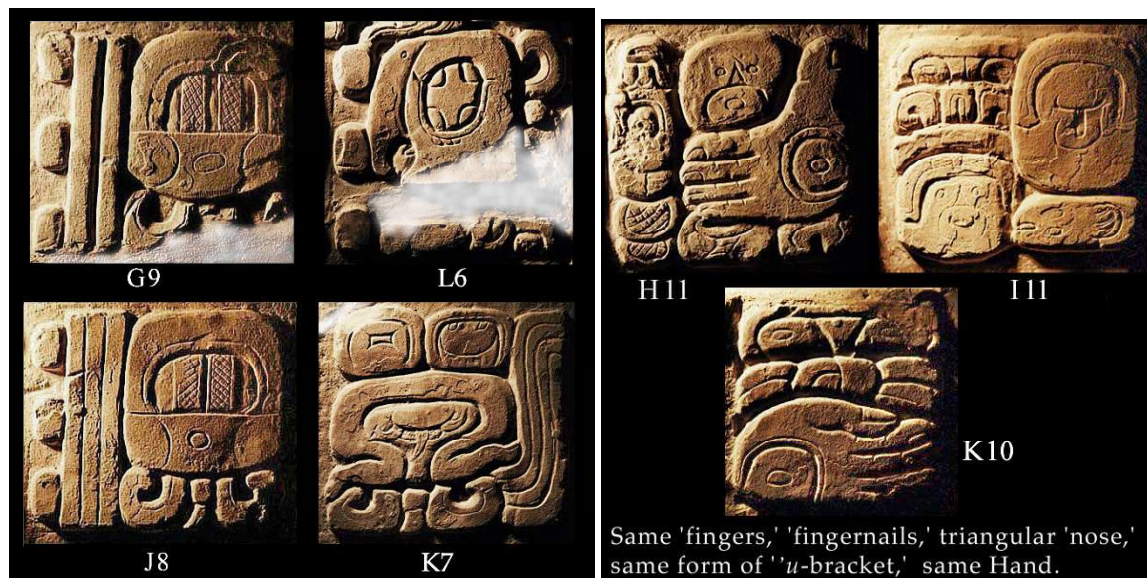


Fig. 3-73. Palace Tablet *ya*'s of the "Fat/Flat Master" (J8, K7) & colleagues (G9, L6). His *ni* and numerals are also typical of his carve-away-the-least-possible-material approach.

Fig. 3-74. Palace Tablet: The 'downstairs neighbor' of the "Fat/Flat Master." Photos by author.

While H9 and I9 were most likely by the same Hand as each other, I am uncertain whether they belong with the "Fat/Flat Master" or his colleague G10-H11-etc. The shape of the excavated 'arch' in the *z*-prefix of the two is squarish, like that of G9; the tool used to carve the secondary outlines on all three seems to be the same tool, rather than the sharper point which outlined J8. Yet H9 and I9 have an undeniably flat treatment, just a little more so than G9-H10-etc. I reserve judgement till later ([Section 3.8](#), [Fig. 3-89](#)).

3.6.6. Return of the L14 "*Itz'i-Winik*" Master

Even with such an outstanding sculptor as the Hand of L14, sometimes the edges of his 'territory' can be vague and imprecise. In [Fig. 4-01](#), I have outlined his area (some 28 or 30

glyphs) in Maya blue, but the reader will note that three glyphs —J10, J15, and N13— have only a dashed outline, indicating I am uncertain about this particular glyph's authorship. In the case of J15, the elegant 'death eyes' 'u' is *identical* to that at F18 ([Fig. 4-01](#), placed in margin below J15 for comparison), which I firmly established as a product of the E15 Master in **Section 2.5.5.2**. (For a table assigning the 'u's to various Hands, see [Fig. 4-03](#). For the E15 Master's 'territory,' see [Fig. 4-04](#).) Yet J15's *Huun* and *na* are identical to those at M14, which I assign indubitably to the L14 Master ([Figs. 4-01, 4-05](#)). Further, the fine cross-hatching on the 'death eyes' is rather unusual on this Tablet; and nearly every example of it can be ascribed to the E15 Master, for example on G14, H15 and I15. When the L14 master cross-hatches, as at L13, he tends to treat its 'net' pattern in his usual highly-sculptural way, carving the grooves deeply, sparsely, and with a wide 'gauge,' completely unlike the 'nets' at G14, H15 and I15. The many idiosyncrasies of the E15 Master establishes him as quite a distinct personality from his L14 colleague. Yet here they are *sharing a glyph*; working together in an area about *five by six inches (12 x 14 cm)*. This and other examples force me to the reluctant conclusion that this team occasionally (perhaps *often*) tolerated two carvers collaborating even at the most basic levels. This opens a can of worms. Did some of these sculptors specialize in, say, carving backgrounds, or sensitive faces, or rodents, or fine cross-hatching? (Certainly no one person specialized in Emblem Glyphs or Daysign Cartouches; there are hardly two to be found by the same Hand!) Perhaps reluctance to admit the existence of such a complex microstructure blinded me to an unexpectedly collaborative artistic community, a richly fertile environment where one person could finish another's sentences, as it were.

The same situation obtains when one compares E16 (by the E15 Hand) with G13 (by the L14 Hand). The differences in their 'jawbone' treatment distinguish them, but only barely (see [Fig. 3-76](#) below); many of their other qualities resemble each other. In sum, I think that these glyphs' similarities again reflect close collaboration and mutual influence; the kind that inevitably occurs in this kind of situation. Even if we exclude the three doubtful glyphs, this Master's 26 glyphs are not all grouped in a compact area. At least one (M9) is an 'island,' for instance; it is obvious that even this superlative carver was not working on a continuous section of text. This implies that the Palenque workshop enjoyed a deeply communal attitude: each artist contributing whatever he could, carving on whatever glyphs happened to be in front of him.

[Fig. 4-05](#) compares the six examples of the 'Jester God' allograph of *Hu'n* or *Hu'un* ("amate/bark paper," "headdress," "book"), together with glyphs abutting the two examples in

the third slab of the *Tablet* (columns OPQR). In one of these cases, two adjacent glyphs (O2 and O3) are certainly from different artists (O3 is strikingly individualistic, with an eccentric form of -*na* suffix); in the other, R15 and R16 have similar style, but very different *yo*-leaves.' I tentatively distinguish their Hand(s). And it will come as small surprise to find that O2 and R16, two glyphs eight feet apart, are also by different Hands. Surprisingly, S4 and U6, both from the 'Label' texts of the illustration in the top area, also have so many distinguishing features —'eye,' 'nose,' 'leaf,' depth of carving— that I am forced to conclude that there are at least two Hands at work here, as well. This is surprising because the carving style and scale of the texts of this area are quite distinct from the rest of the Tablet, and seem (perhaps by contrast) to possess strong stylistic unity.

3.6.7. Hands' Individual Repertoires of Line-Qualities

All in all, this Hand has some very distinctive qualities, which I shall exploit in the next section. On [Fig. 3-46a](#), I put D2 into the third column for comparison. Like C1, some of its lines seem awkward, angular, due to their relatively casual or sloppy execution. Also, each carver seems to have had his own personal set of line-thicknesses and -qualities. I have alluded briefly to this above; the particular combination of bold strokes, light strokes, beveling, and modeling gives each artist's work a distinct flavor and character. In [Fig. 3-75](#), I compare five pairs of glyphs from five different Hands to illustrate this.



Fig. 3-75. Palace Tablet: Five pairs of glyphs by five different Hands. Photos by author.

The first, carver of B15 and B16, has the lightest touch; he indicates most details with lines of two thicknesses: fine and very fine. Bolder than that are his outlines of 'earflare,' 'barbel,' 'nose,' 'mouth,' and 'hairline.' These outlines are still lighter than comparable lines in other Hands: compare B15's 'K'an cross' with the 'daysign' of C1 or the 'K'an cross' of K11. His next category of line-strength are the highly-sculptural divisions between glyphic elements: on B15, the 'sight-lines' of the *Tl*, the *Nah*'s 'emergence' from behind the top of the *K'uh*, and on B16, the 'eyes' of the 'jaguar' and 'snake,' for example. Finally, he very carefully rounded the edges of his glyph-block outlines. In sum, he defines two categories of sculptural deep divisions, and three of light details.

The C1-C2 artist, in contrast, had a heavy hand. I already noted his casual or sloppy medium lines. He employs his lightest lines very sparingly: only three can be found at all, all on C2: two 'wrinkles' on the 'penis' of the *ya*, and one inline on the 'Tun sign' emerging from the 'cleft *yi*.' His next-lightest lines are already bolder than the first three line-strengths of the B15-B16 artist

above. They nearly always parallel a yet-stronger stroke. One most easily discerns this parallel pair in partial-spirals: the 'feet' of the 'daysign' and the 'swoosh' of the *Ik*; as well as the double-outline in the 'daysign cartouche,' and the similar outlines of the *ya* 'curls' and *yi*. Next level up are the major glyphic divisions within the 'glyph-block,' and then the glyph-block's outline itself. This Hand, as noted above, appears rushed: though he carefully smooths the edges of his glyph blocks, he leaves all other lines sharply faceted, steep-walled gashes across the plane of the upper surface. He also lightly excavates the vertical 'bands' of the 'tun sign' on C2. Elsewhere these 'bands' have crosshatching or a more sharply-defined sunken band within a raised pair of 'walls,' as on the *ko* at K13 in the same Figure.

The Hand responsible for K7-L7 —the "Fat/Flat Master"— has a touch that is lighter than C1's, but firmer, more graphic than that of B15. All his elements tend to lie on the same plane. Especially on K7, hardly an element seems to overlap any other. The *ya* of K7 appears wholly two-dimensional, as if the carver did not conceive of these elements as having any third dimension at all. Even the *ni* on K7 and the *su-ku* on L7, overlapped by the *Winik-ki*, seem to leave the frontal plane only reluctantly, at the last moment. His most delicate lines and most sensitive carving appear in K7, inside the 'seating body' defining the three 'eyelashes.' Other delicate lines parallel the inner edges of the *ya* 'curls' and *Ajaw* superfix, as well as similar structures on L7. The most telling distinction between this Hand and that of B15 and B16 can be seen in the *ni*-postfix at K7. Its four 'strands,' defined by three interior lines of medium weight, appear quite broad and flat compared to comparable 'strands' of 'hair' on the '*K'uh* heads' of B15 and B16. The bolder lines define major elements within the 'glyph blocks' and, of course, the outside edges of the 'glyph-blocks' themselves. A telling comparison between the *ya*'s of C2 and K7 highlights these hands' difference in character: K7's is flat, abstract, minimalist (the 'penis' here more resembles a 'brush'), while C2's is crudely realistic.

K7's and L7's insistent flatness stands in stark contrast to the "L14 Master" who sculpted K11 and K13. We have praised him before: his meticulous modeling gives his glyphs astonishing vitality. His finest details can be abundant, (as on L14, seen in [Fig. 3-56](#)), but usually he scatters them sparingly across his compositions. On K13, they indicate 'whisker-follicles' and a few minor outlines, on K11, merely the 'jawbone cracks' and 'osteopores,' a few 'spots' on the 'ear,' and the 'line-and-bubbles' under the 'eye.' Stronger lines indicate the 'eye's 'pupil' and the 'cheek spot' in the corner of the 'rodent's 'mouth' on K13, and the details of the 'K'an cross' and *Ajaw* superfix on K11 ([Fig. 3-75](#)). His other categories of line are hard to define, because he tends to

think sculpturally rather than to draw outlines. In contrast to the planar K7 and L7, he hardly leaves a square millimeter of the stone's original flat surface. This is particularly evident in the bulging interior and inflated frame of K11's 'K'an cross' and the *K'uh* 'water group' below it. His 'lip' on K11's 'skull' has a particular elegance: this striking sculptural ribbon's curving planes set off the bulging volumes around it. Likewise with the 'skull's 'eyebrow,' and the 'lip' of the 'rodent' on K13. Finally, this Hand tends to prefer shallow excavation to cross-hatching: the concavity of K11's large 'ear-spot', and the *Chok's* 'cheek-spot' and the longitudinal 'bands' on the *ko* of K13 all show this.

The final pair of glyphs in [Fig. 3-75](#) strike a nice balance between flat and rounded form, exhibiting elegant restraint both in decorative detail and sculptured modeling. Note this Artist actually carved a sequential text passage, finishing the bottom of Columns OP, he continued (presumably) up at the top of Columns QR, carving several glyphs, down at least to R7.

Thus we can conclude that at this time the 'Palenque Manual of Style' did not specify a strict hierarchy of line-thickness, nor even distinguish between sculptural or graphic glyphs. As long as the glyphs rose to the same relief level from the background plane, artists were relatively free to be flat as a printing plate or bulging with life.

3.7. 'Jawbones' and 'Skulls': Figs. 3-76, 3-77, 3-78, 3-79

3.7.1 A rich variety

The intimate presence of Death in Maya culture reflects in how often we encounter 'bones', 'skulls', 'death-eyes', 'jawbones' and so on. The *Palace Tablets* score of 'skeletal' glyphs (particularly the Palenque Emblem Glyph itself) provide a potentially rich source of glyph comparisons. Even the 'jawbone,' though highly conventionalized, has many alternative treatments of various details: the diagnostic Y-shaped meandering axial line (a surface crack?) and 'osteopores,' for example, are highly sensitive to an artist's 'handwriting.' The 'jawbone' or 'mandible' might be sculpted convex, concave, with an engraved or raised outline, etc. This very variety suggests no strict sculptural conventions existed, though the very consistent outline and repertory of engraved details does suggest that strict *drawing* guidelines obtained.



Fig. 3-76. *Palace Tablet* 'Skulls' and 'mandibles.' Enlargements below. Photos by author.

In [Fig. 3-76](#) I have arranged twenty-one whole glyphs and a handful of details neatly in more or less text-order. In order to aid visual comparison, I have simply brought them all as close together as possible, and a few whole glyphs are repeated so the Reader can easily compare them to more than one specific glyph to which they bear an interesting resemblance.

I found the many, many variables in these glyphs' rendering demanded a narrower focus, so I collected below the whole glyphs the 'jawbones' alone for close comparison, grouping according to whether they shared two or more features. The rendering of the 'jawbones' on E16 and P8 reveal the standard drawing from which Palenque artists aspired ([Fig. 3-77](#)): a convex asymmetrical-Y-shaped outline with three rounded ends, wearing an axial engraved wavy 'crack' and two small hollow oval 'osteopores.' The 'joint' end (the Y-shape) has a 'pore' central to each rounded 'protuberance,' and an inline which usually defines only the Y-shaped ends, but may continue halfway or all the way around the 'jawbone.' Any 'teeth' attached to this 'lower jaw' appear only when the 'jaw' is open, otherwise they are hidden behind the upper 'jaw.' The 'chin' may be rounded (as E16) or more realistically squarish (as P8). Within these guidelines, the carvers varied the rendering of many features. Specifically, the 'rim' formed by the inline may be a sharp ridge (as P8) or a 'frame' (as E16), (or nonexistent as G13, [Fig. 3-76](#)); within which the surface may be convex (as E16) or concave (as P8) (or flat, as on A5 and B7). The separation between the 'protuberances' at the right end seems ideally to have been a gentle V-shaped cleft (as both E16 and P8, and many others); however, it barely appears on D13 and is a deep, dramatic notch on A5, B7, and E13. The axial 'crack' might be boldly or tentatively cut, with

rhythmic or with erratic oscillations. The 'osteopores' may take many shapes, from hollow circles (P8) or ovals (E16), to sculpted bosses (M11) or

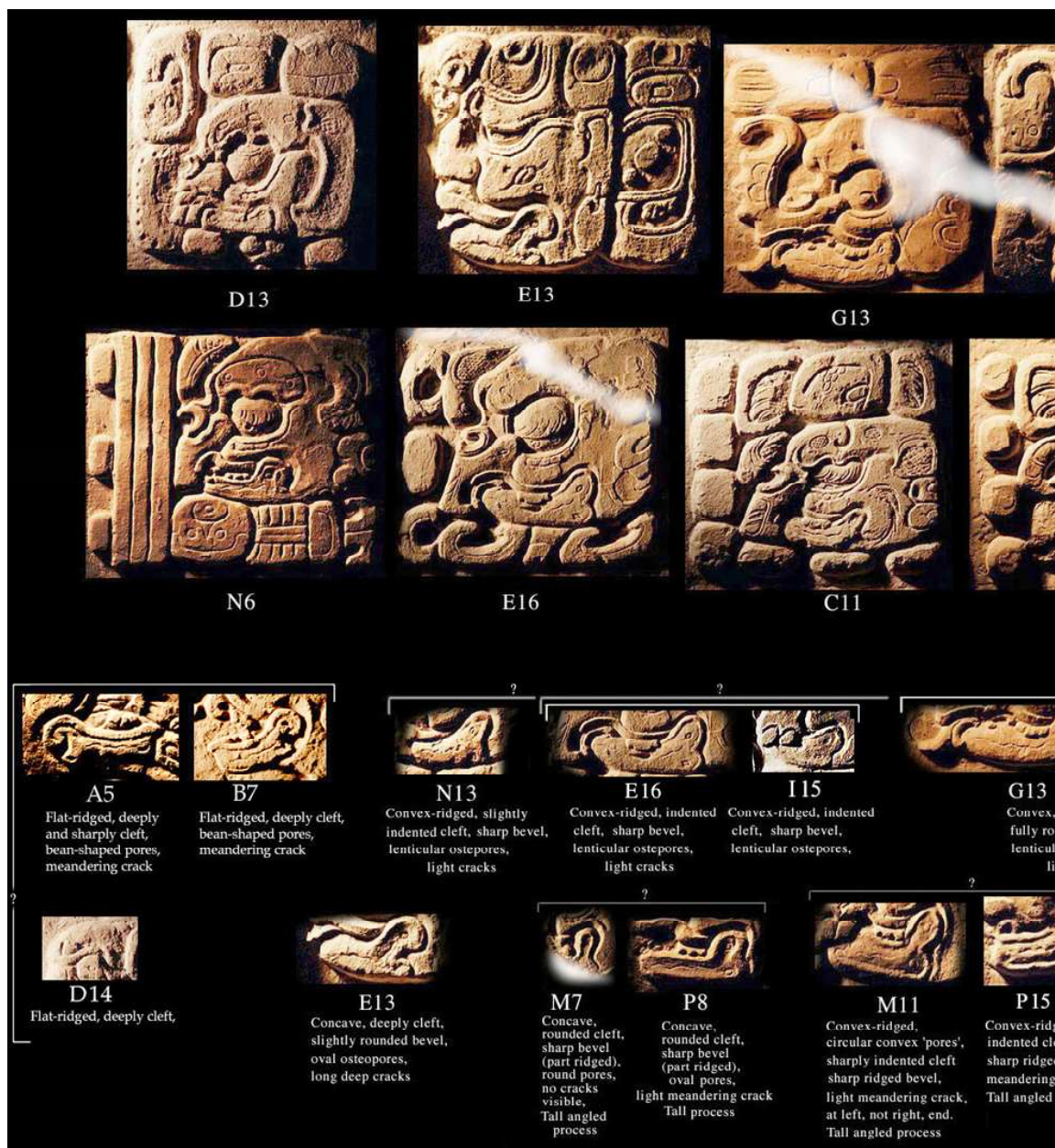


Fig. 3-76a. *Palace Tablet*. 'Skulls' and 'mandibles,' left third of table. Photos by author.

pierced bosses (O3), to bean-shaped cavities (A5 and B7) or drilled holes (D7?). I have attributed pairs or groups of these 'mandibles' to the same artist whenever two or more of these traits match closely, especially if they are neighbors.

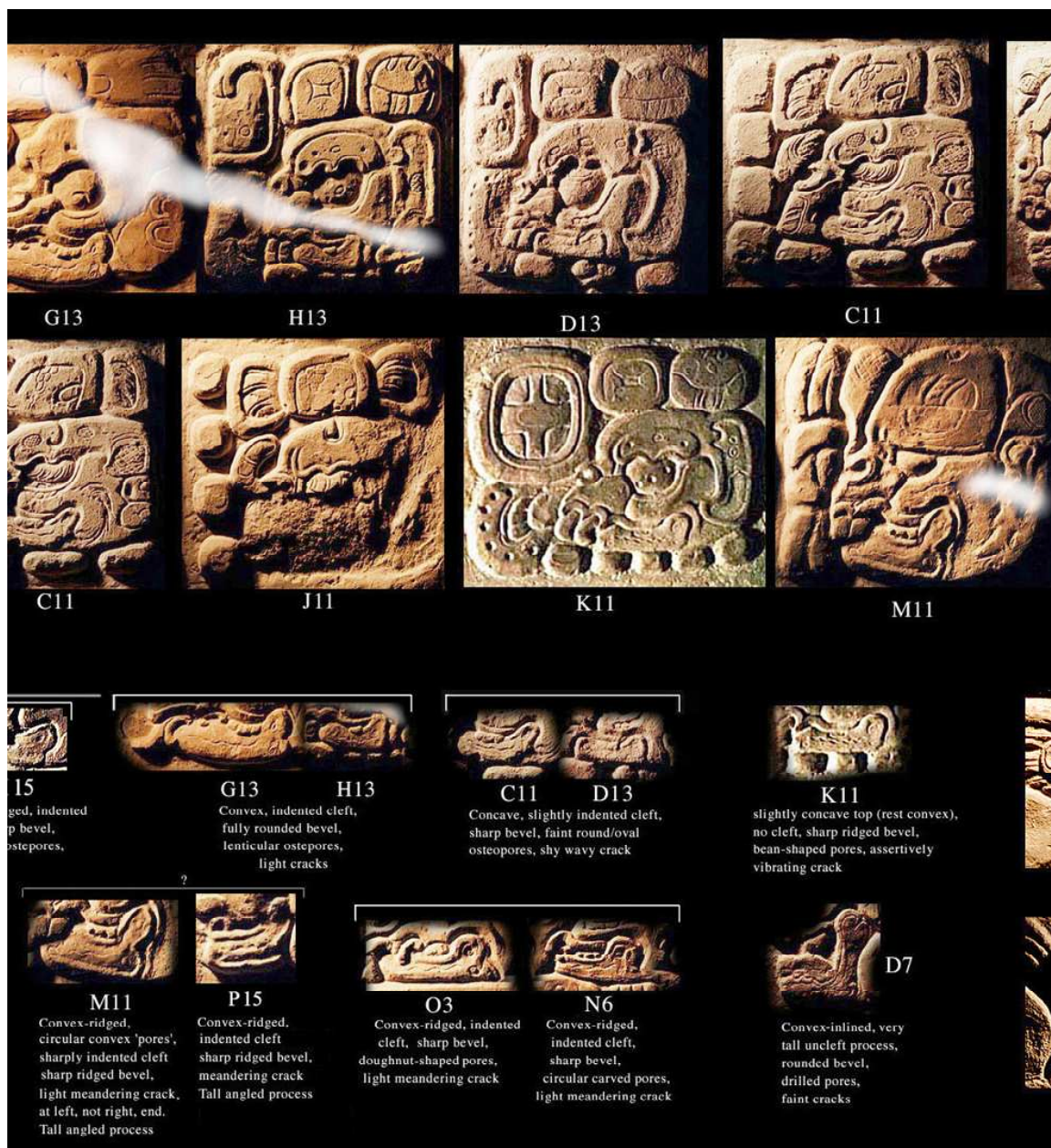


Fig. 3-76b. *Palace Tablet*: 'Skulls' and 'mandibles,' middle third of table. Photos by author.

'mandible,' and in general the attributions hold. One tentative grouping (G13-H13-?-E16-I15-?-N13) had some question marks, and indeed upon inspection of the whole glyphs, turns out to divide into three Hands. One of them, N13, even appears to belong to a different group (M11-N11-M17-?-P15), so this *'pars-pro-toto'* attribution may be good, but it is not foolproof.



Fig. 3-76c. *Palace Tablet*: 'Skulls' and 'mandibles,' right third of table. Photos by author.

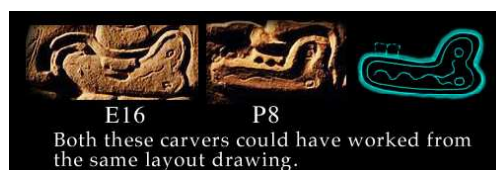


Fig. 3-77. *Palace Tablet*: Two carvers interpret the same idealized drawing. Photos by author.

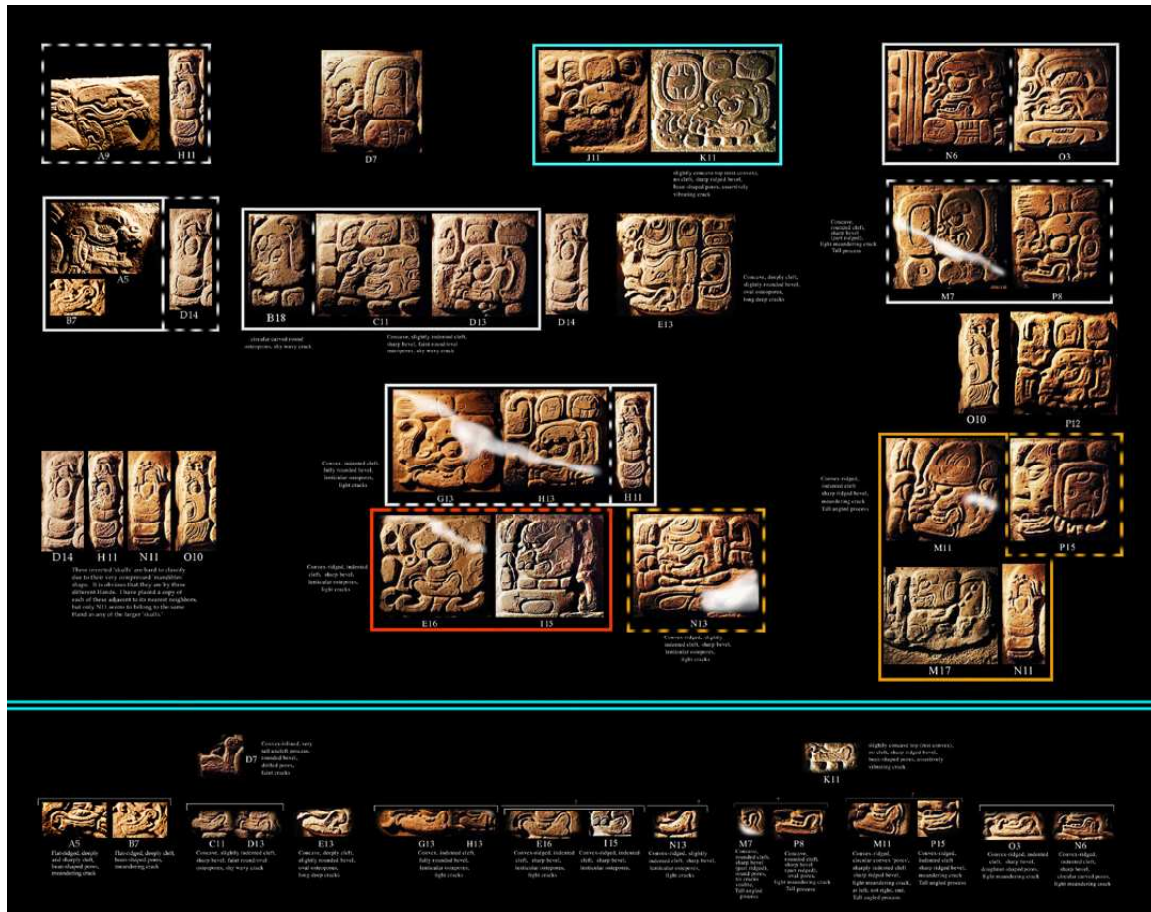


Fig. 3-78. Palace Tablet 'Skull' glyphs sorted by 'jawbones' (four enlarged sections of this Table below, slightly rearranged). Photos by author.

In [Fig. 3-78](#), the 'skull' glyphs sieve into a dozen Hands, including two in the Initial Series (I deal with the Initial Series skulls below, in [Section 3.7.2](#)). That at D7 probably is by the Hand of C1-D1 (see [Section 3.6.5](#)). C11 and D13 belong together, but D14 surprisingly seems more at home with the 'skulls' on the Initial Series than its neighbor D13—but only slightly so. There are no 'skulls' in the lower third of the left slab, but the 'crossed bones' replacing the 'deer's eye' at B18 have much more in common with the 'mandibles' of C11 and D13 than with those at A5 or A9.

Moving to the middle and larger slab, the 'jawbones' at E13 and E16 are by two new Hands, bringing the subtotal to five or six.¹⁴² G13 and H13 belong together, and the 'inverted skull' 'u

¹⁴² **Fig. 3-78** shows one other glyph, E13, with a deeply-cleft 'jawbone' like those on the 'Tun Bird' and the '10 K'atun' coefficient, but E13 is definitely by a different Hand. Its 'hogback rim' and open 'osteopores,' its strange combination of convex and concave, and—most telling—its lack of the unique 'rim' [defined-along-the-upper-edge-only] shared by A5 and B7, all confirm this. E13 also fails to match its neighbor at D13, whose cleft barely exists (**Fig. 3-78**). Since they do inhabit separate slabs, I should expect this.

nearby at H11 shares a few characteristics with both this group and the 'headdress' at A5. My criteria direct us to assign H11 to its nearest neighbors' Hand (the sixth/seventh, as assigned by 'skulls').



Fig. 3-78a. *Palace Tablet*: 'Skull' glyphs sorted by 'jawbones,' upper left corner. Photos by author.



Fig. 3-78b. *Palace Tablet*: 'Skull' glyphs sorted by 'jawbones,' lower left corner. Photos by author.

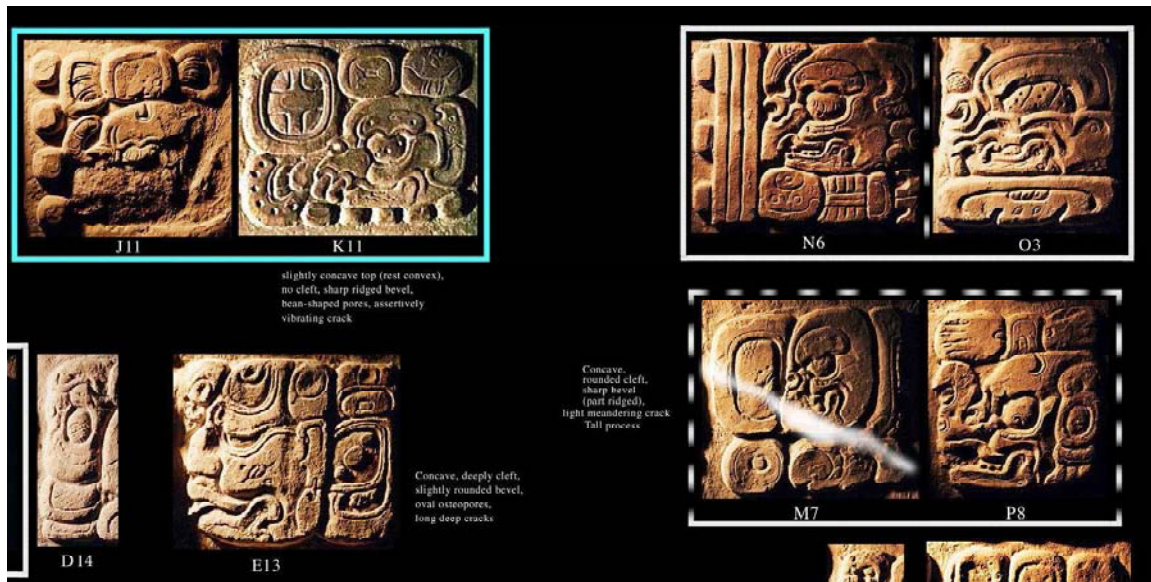


Fig. 3-78c. *Palace Tablet*: 'Skull' glyphs sorted by 'jawbones,' upper right corner. Photos by author.



Fig. 3-78d. *Palace Tablet*: 'Skull' glyphs sorted by 'jawbones,' lower right corner. Photos by author.

The striking, highly sculptural EG at K11 (see the L14 *Itzi-Winik* Master above at **Section 3.4**) finds no other 'jawbones' to compare, but its neighbor J11 has the same 'brow'. Probably the two

most peculiar 'mandibles' on the *Tablet* are those at N6 and O3 — near neighbors, but on separate slabs; they are not precisely alike, but they qualify for attribution to the same (eighth or ninth) Hand. The very distinctive concave 'mandibles' on M7 and P8 compel them into another (ninth or tenth) group, though again they lie on

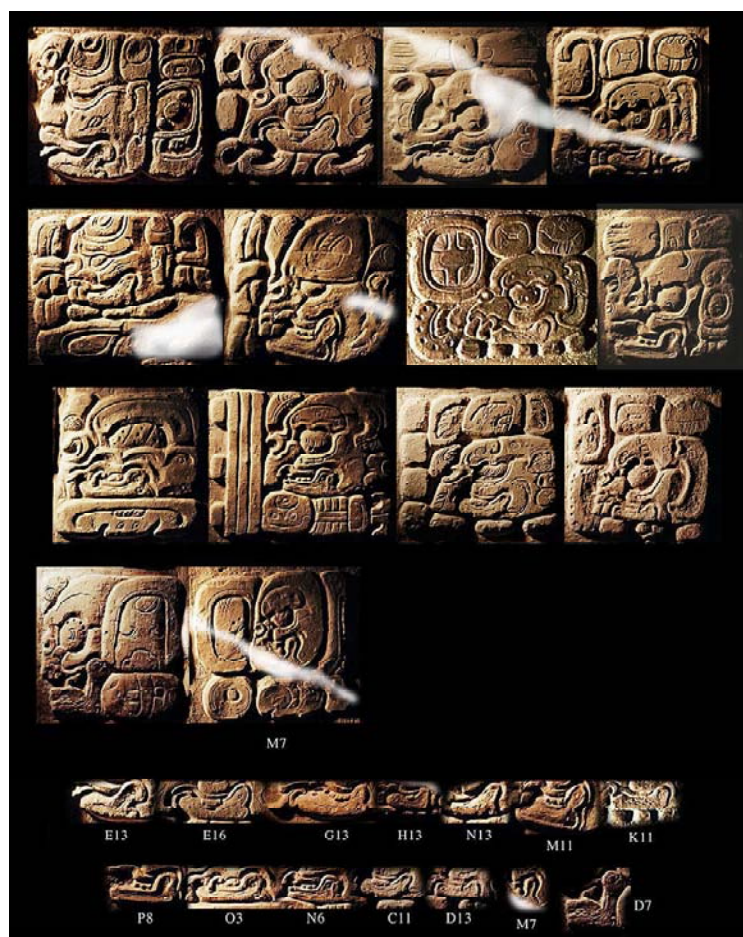


Fig. 3-79. *Palace Tablet*. Selected 'Skull' glyphs and 'jawbones.' Photos by author.

different slabs. The lower rows of column MN seem to be fairly consistent as far as we can tell (its last five glyphs have never been found), with M1, N11, M17 (and perhaps P15) attributed together to the tenth or eleventh Hand. P12 seems to be by yet another (eleventh/twelfth) Hand, though its 'jaw' is so eroded one cannot be certain. There are no 'mandibles' in the last passages of the *Tablet* (columns QR and the labels STUVWX), and the 'bone cracks' on the last three EG's are a bit too large to be of much use for comparison.

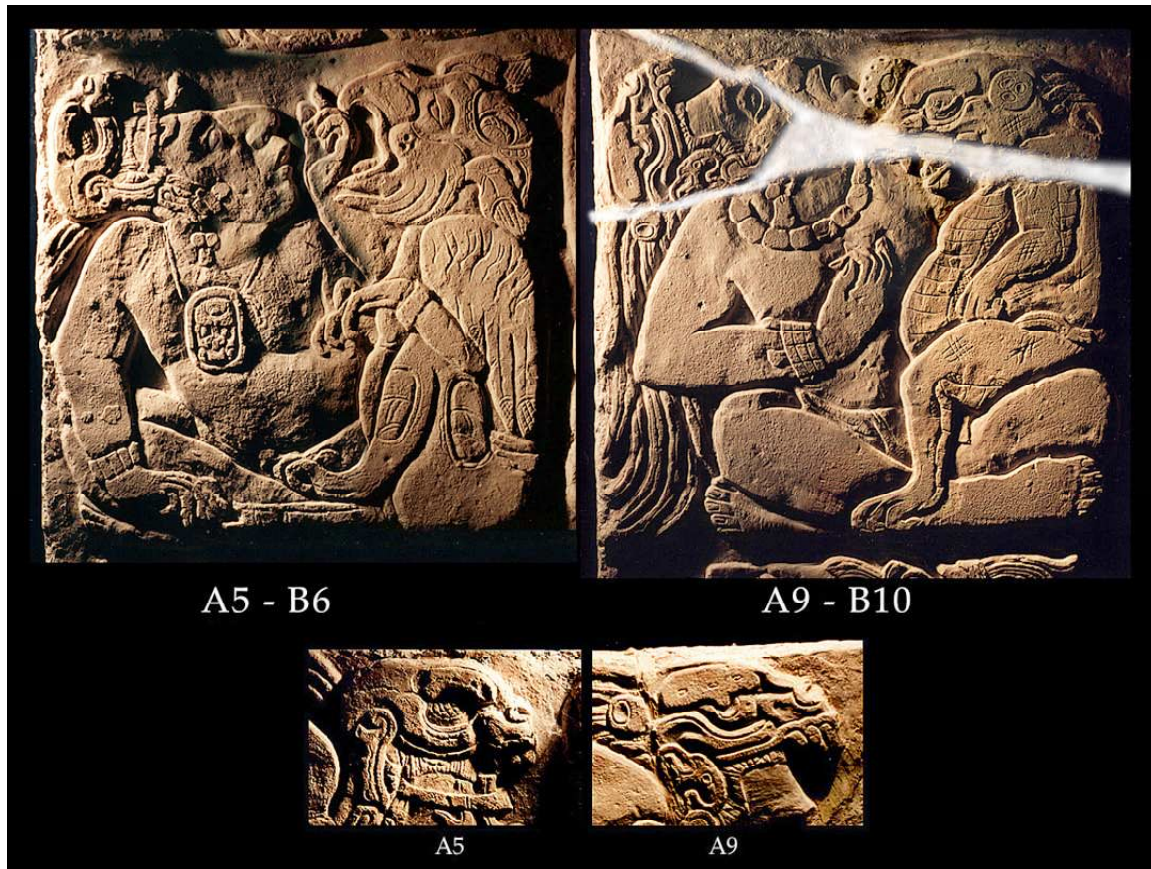


Fig. 3-80. *Palace Tablet*: the full-figure glyphs with 'skull' headdresses, coefficients of K'atun and Winal. Photos by author.

3.7.2. 'Skull Headdresses' in The Full-Figure Glyphs

Although they both appear in the relatively homogeneous Full Figure Initial Series, the 'skull headdresses' from A5 and A9 have a completely different character from each other (discussed above, **Section 2.6**). For example, A9's Hand prefers to indicate 'dark spots' with a concave excavation, neatly rimmed by an engraved line; he does so on the 'pupil' of the 'skull's bulging 'eye,' the 'spots' on the 'jaguar ear,' and most typically on the 'death eye' attached to the 'skull's 'occiput.' In this his 'spots' resemble those found nearby, in the upper part of columns CDEF and the smaller glyphs at the base of columns AB ([Fig. 3-79](#)). In particular, the 'jaguar ear' at A9 finds a very close match at F8, and another, not quite so close, on the 'Jaguar Stone Throne' just above glyph G6. I believe that the same Artist worked on all three of these. He was either one of the main (small-) glyph carvers in this area, or at least lent a hand. He carves the A9 'skull's 'brow ridge' as flat and vaguely T-shaped (see [Fig. 3-78a](#), upper left), decorated with three engraved



Fig. 3-81. *Palace Tablet*: the full-figure glyphs. Photos by author.

narrow oval 'pores' in a row. The small 'stem' of the T-shape juts down over the 'eye' and the 'mandible' is hidden behind the man's 'jaguar ear.' Many of his details are bold and confidently carved. A5's artist, on the other hand, prefers crosshatched 'spots,' a sunken 'eye,' a crescent- or kidney-shaped 'brow ridge' with small drilled 'pores,' and many delicate detailing lines. While both these carvers portray the 'skull' as a kind of rodent, with prominent incisors and a small cranial capacity, A5's has some human characteristics, with a high rounded 'forehead. A9's 'skull,' with its long, narrow 'snout,' looks more purely rodent-like.



Fig. 3-82. *Palenque Tablet*: the full-figure glyphs: Comparing human and humanoid coefficients, calendrical creatures, hand, wings, claws, faces, & hands. Photos by author.

We saw that D13 and C11 were carved by one Hand, while a few rows up, D7's unique 'jawbone' matches none of the others on the entire monument. And a few rows down, at E16, appears yet another Hand (profiled in **Section 2.5.5**). Analysis of the rest of the inscription has shown this to be typical; any given column of text will carry the handiwork of three or more individuals. This makes sense; a carver can work comfortably in a space about three feet wide — as wide as an outstretched arm. If they worked in shifts, many more individuals could leave their mark in a relatively small space.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ If one considers that the present-day town of Palenque supports a dozen or more excellent stone carvers making replica inscriptions for tourists and scholars, it is easy to extrapolate a much larger number of employed carvers in ancient Palenque.

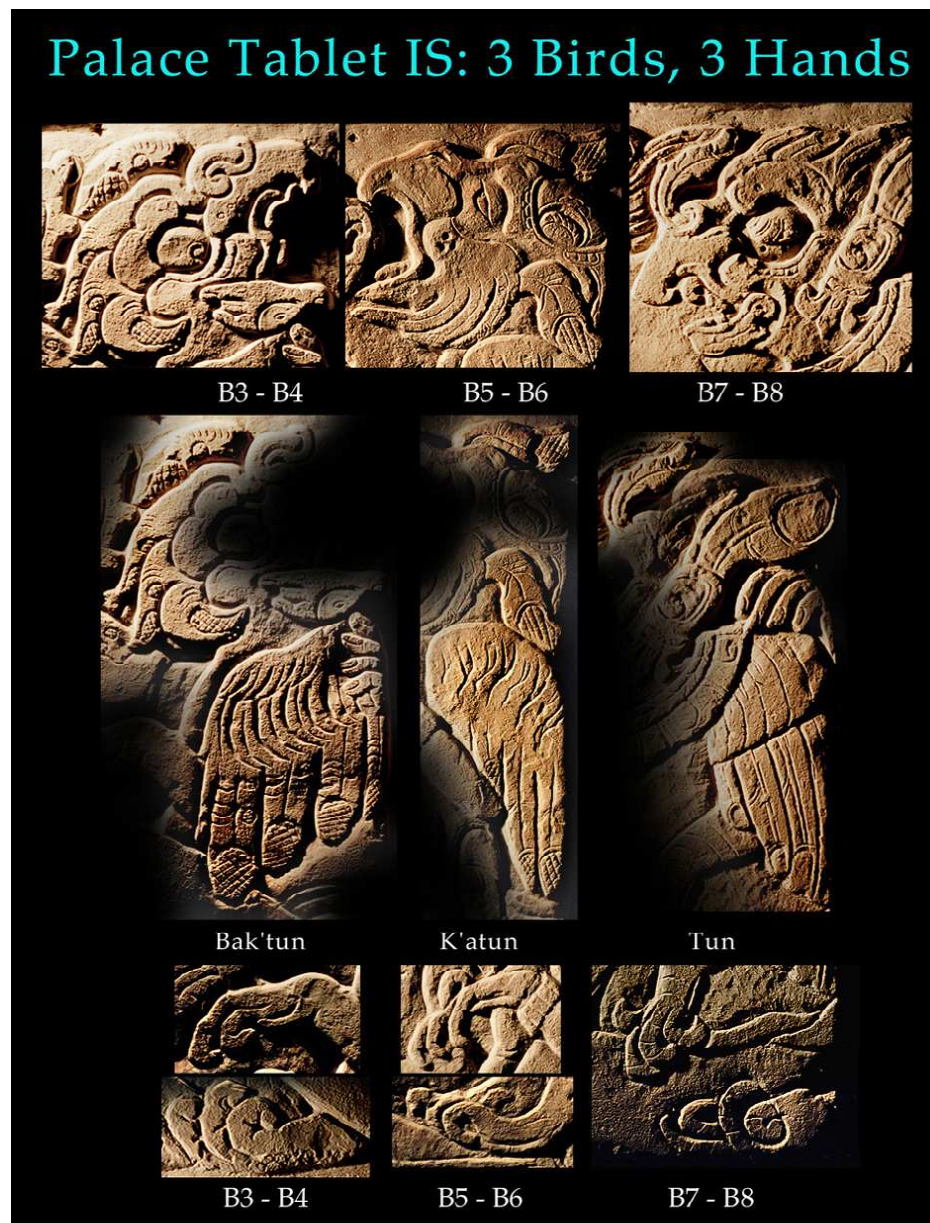


Fig. 3-83. *Palace Tablet*: the full-figure glyphs: Comparing 'birds.' Photos by author.

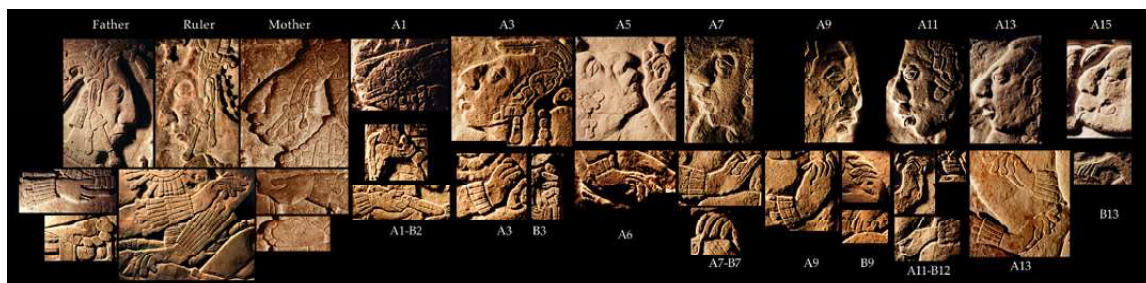


Fig. 3-84. *Palace Tablet*: the full-figure glyphs: Comparing 'faces' & 'hands.' Photos by author.

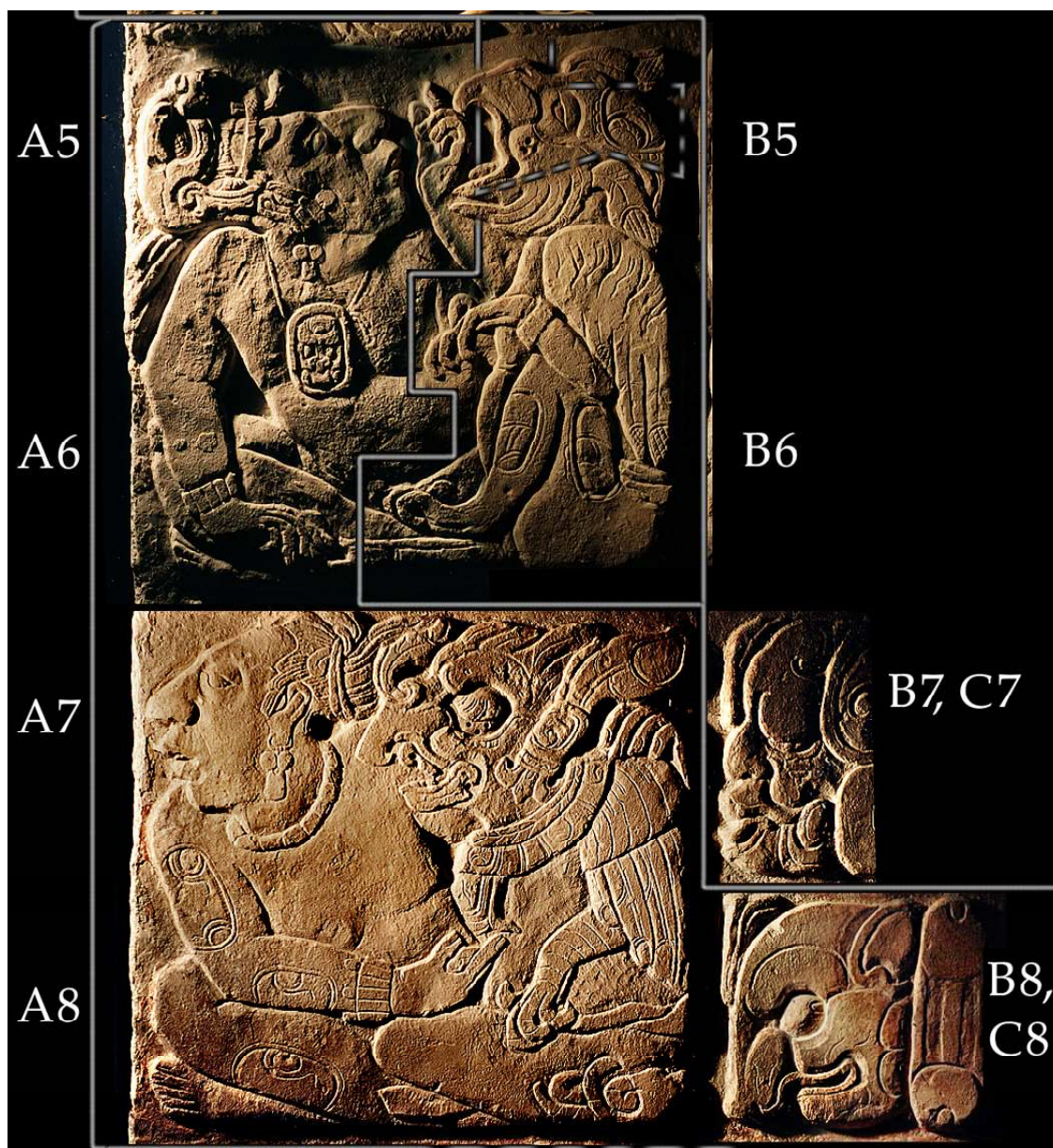


Fig. 3-85. *Palace Tablet*: the full-figure glyphs: Division of labor sometimes cuts across a single glyph. (See Section 2.6.) Photos by author.

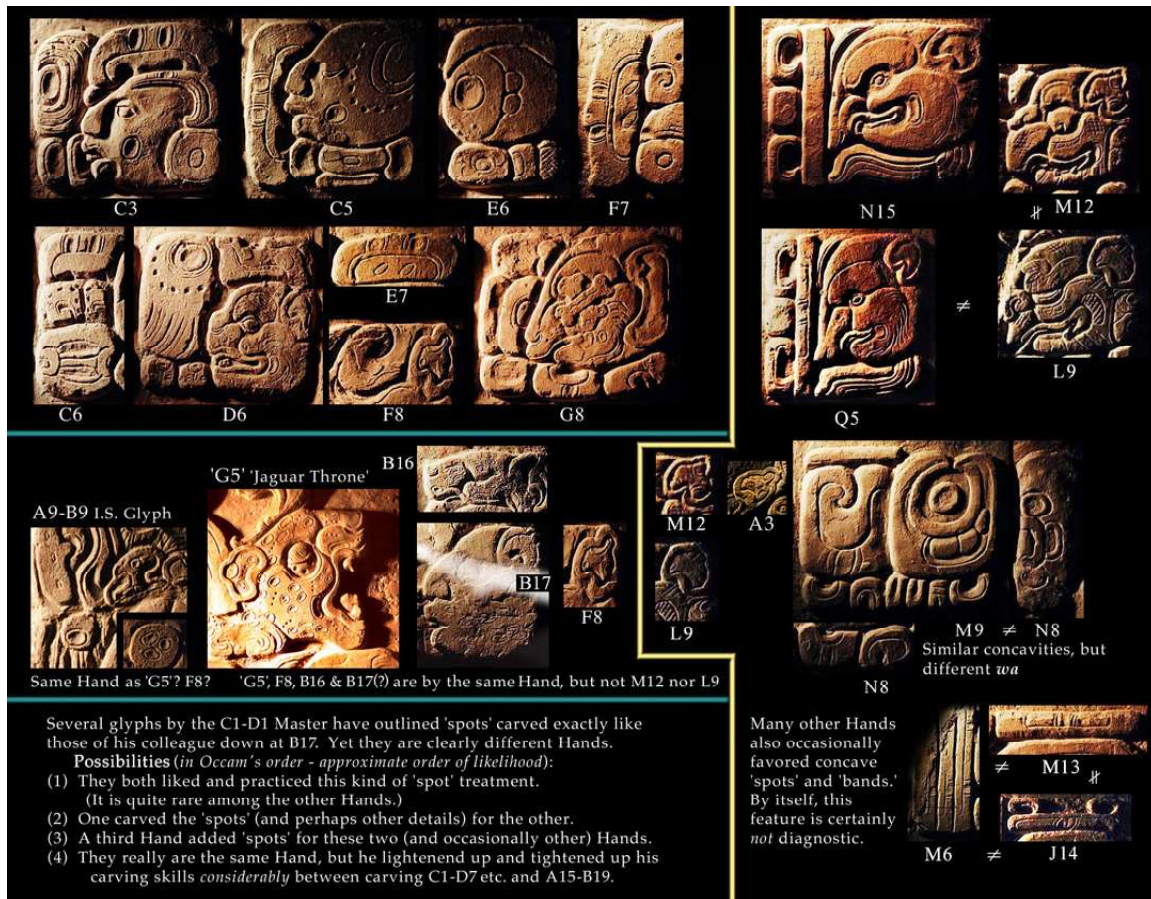


Fig. 3-86. Palace Tablet: Comparing 'spots' of in the upper left area of the Tablet. *3rd row:* The Carver responsible for the 'jaguar ear' on A9 coefficient, and the 'tympanum' of the *Winal* 'iguana-toad,' carved the spots thereon in precisely the same elegant way as the Carver of the 'Jaguar Throne' above G6. Certainly some of the other elegantly-carved concave 'spots' at the corners of the 'mouths' at D6, G8, N15 and Q5, and on 'ear' at F8 are his, as well. Just as certainly, he had one or two imitators in this. Other Carvers treated 'dark spots' differently, most often with crosshatching (e.g., at L9). Photos by author.

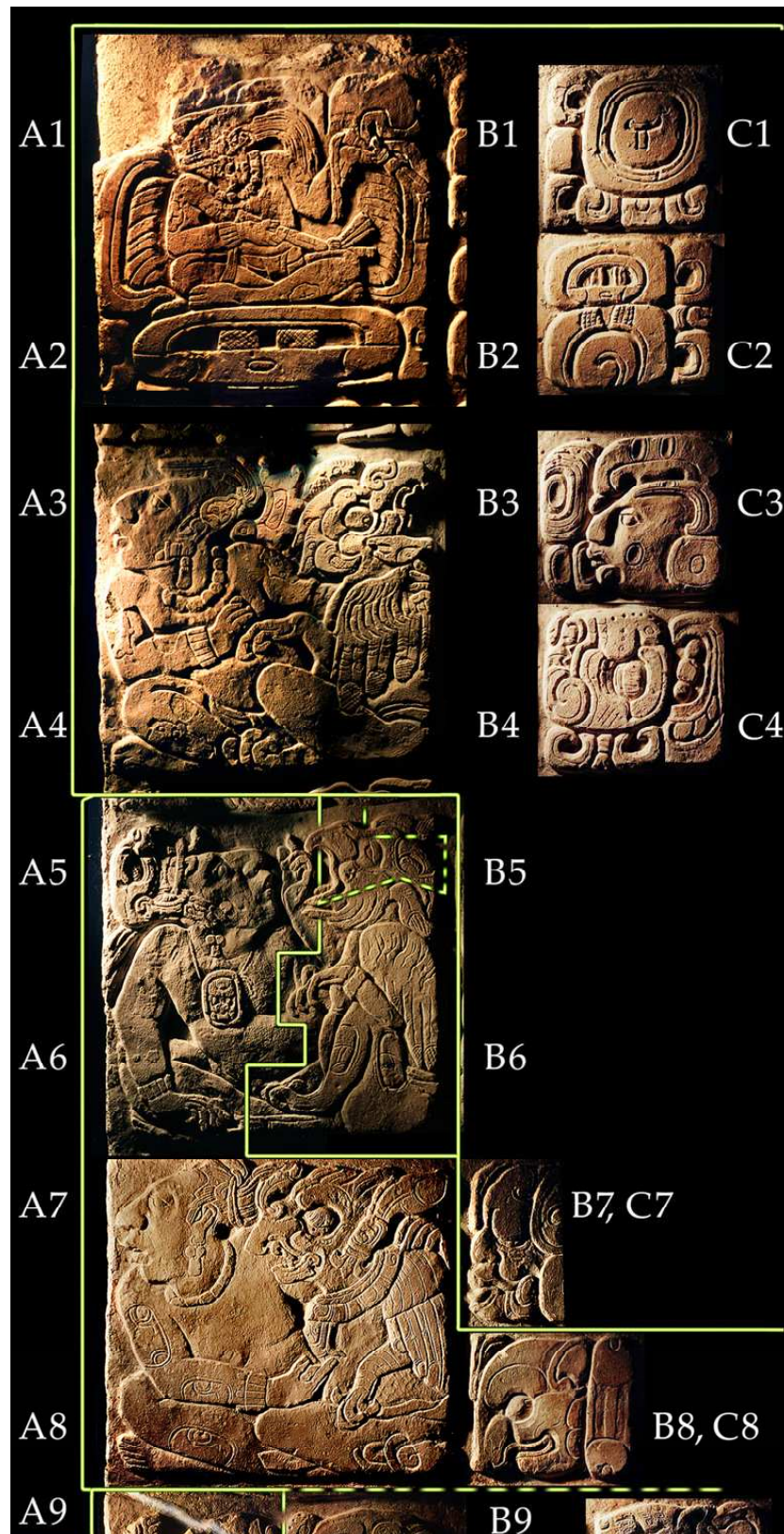
I relate this Hand's characteristic 'spots' (or the 'spots' common to these two Hands) to those on the 17 *Winal*/Initial Series Glyph (at A9-B10) and the A15-B9 Hand and the 'Jaguar Throne' just above Column G5.



Fig. 3-87. *Palace Tablet*: Full Figure Glyph A9-B10, 10 Winal. Note concave 'spots' on headdress & 'jaguar ear' of coefficient, and on the 'toad's 'tympanum.' Photos by author.

Next two pages:

Fig. 3-88a. and 3-88b *Palace Tablet*: Full Figure Glyphs A1-B8 & Glyphs A9-B14, (and adjacent Column C): attributions. See Section 2.6. Photos by author.



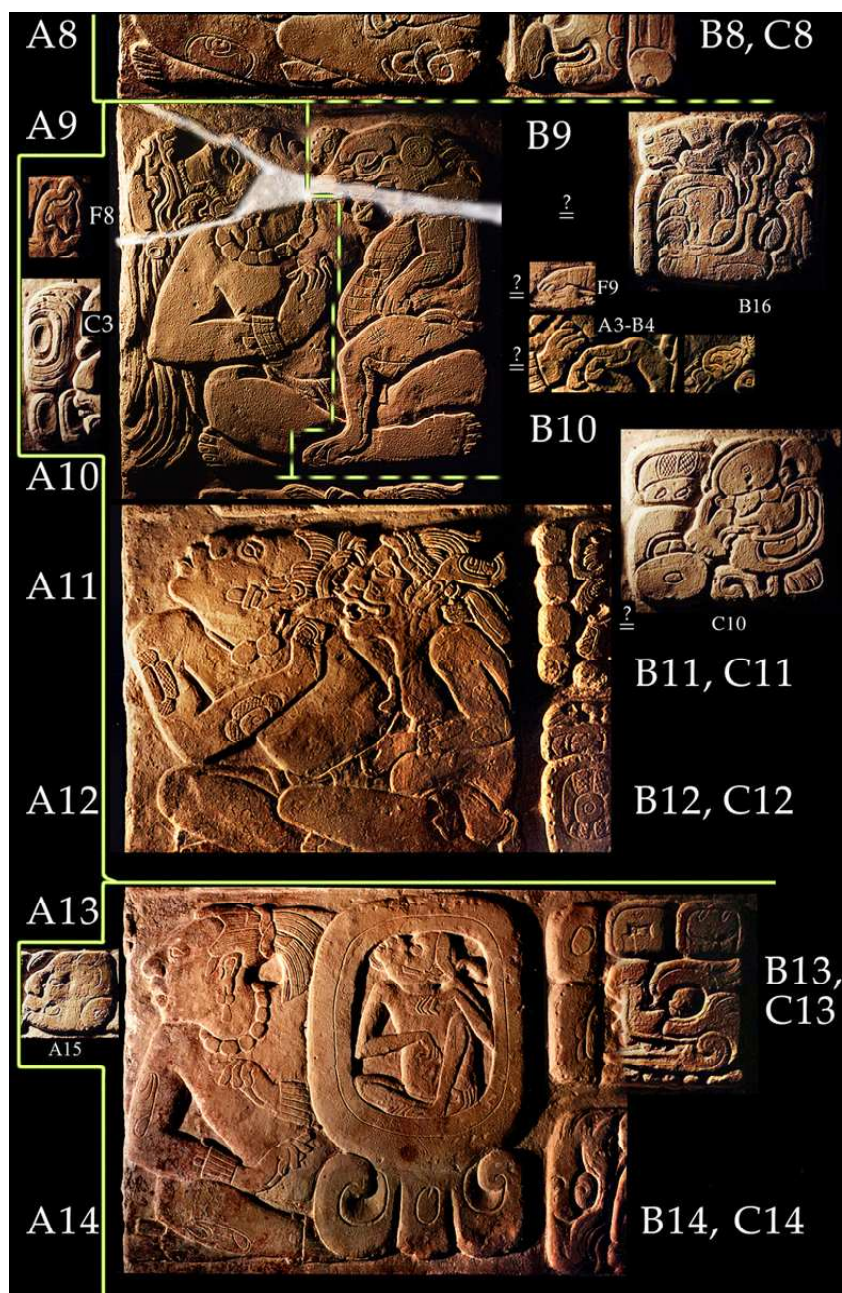


Fig. 3-88b. *Palace Tablet*: Full Figure Glyphs A9-B14, attributions, continued from previous page. See Section 2.6. A13-B14 is at eye level, and (unlike the other full-figure glyphs) finished superbly. Photos by author.

3.8. *ti*'s and *u*'s: Fig. 3-89

Like the *ni* suffix, the common *ti* syllable is complex enough to have several variants but simple enough to have been dashed off without too much consideration; therefore a prime candidate for connoisseurship analysis. In its most common form, it resembles a short

paintbrush, consisting of an oval 'handle' adorned with a concentric engraved oval, overlapping a half-oval inlined 'ferrule,' and a tuft of 'bristles,' which resemble a

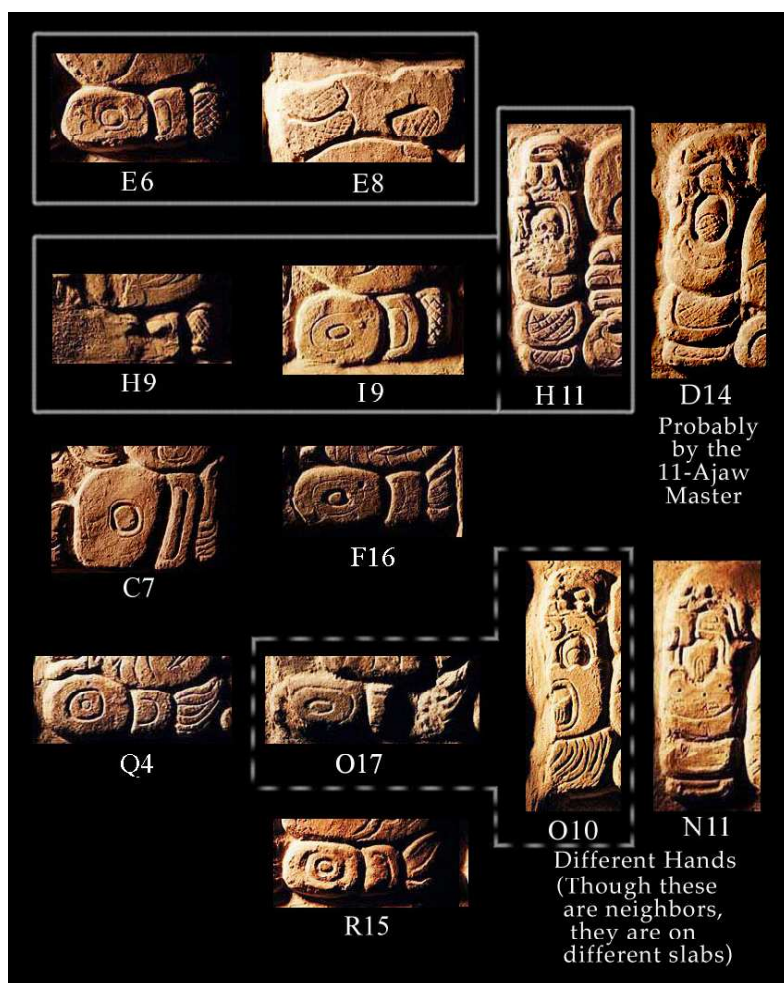


Fig. 3-89. *Palace Tablet: Eight *ti* glyphs, four *u*'s, and 'deer hoof.'* Photos by author.

miniature *ni*. Q4 is an excellent example of the standard type. Interestingly, only two other *ti* suffixes fit this category (O17 and C7, the latter of which is so short and fat it can hardly be called a 'brush,' and whose 'bristles' are nearly convergent with a *ni*). F16 more or less fits this description, but its 'bristles' are not homogeneous: As on certain *ni*'s, its sculptor has seen fit to 'frame' the 'tuft,' emphasizing the two 'hairs' on the 'outside edge' with a deep groove.

The other three *ti*'s —out of only seven— do not portray the right end as a 'tuft of hairs' at all, but rather as a crosshatched 'dark spot.' These three (E6, H9, and I9), which can be found the same neighborhood, replace the usual parallel swooping lines with a bulging, crosshatched spot, carefully ringed by a plain 'rim.' The three have enough features in common that I ascribe them

to the same Hand. To support this idea, the variety of 'u syllable which appears to portray an inverted skull threaded on a rope has two or three subcategories here: one in which the 'rope' is portrayed as a 'tuft of hairs' (O10), and another in which the 'rope' is drawn as a sequence of crosshatched spots, precisely like the right element in our latter **ti**. Sure enough, this latter example is at H11, in the same neighborhood as the crosshatched **ti**s it resembles. (Though the 'tuft of hairs' example at O10 appears in the neighborhood of the 'standard' **ti**s which it, too, resembles, I doubt that these spring from the same Hand.) Above (Section 3.6.6, Fig. 3-70), I expressed doubt that H9-I9 were from the same Hand as H11, but now, comparing details of the peculiar 'tuft of hair' common to these three (as well as the similar ones at E6 and D14), I am more convinced that H9-I9 emerged from the Hand of G9-H10, etc., than from the "Fat/Flat" Master.

3.9. *Nal*, *Nal* + *li*?, *Naab*, & related signs: Figs. 3-90, 3-91



Fig. 3-90. *Palace Tablet: Nal, Naab, and comparables.* Photos by author.

Fig. 3-91 compares the distinctive *Nal* and *Naab* glyphs along with some similar forms. There are two *Naab* superfixes, three *Nal*s, and three more apparent *Nal*s, the latter with T82 *li* affix overlapping the normal spiral 'heads' of the *Nal*s. (See Fig. 3-92. Two of these aberrant forms spell part of GI's name *Hun-Ye-Nal*?¹⁴⁴ the third is probably part of a different name. I believe that at this writing epigraphers have not yet settled the reading of this *Nal*-like glyph.)

¹⁴⁴ This 'li'-headed 'Nal' is part of the normal spelling of God GI's name in the *Temple of the Cross*.

In any case, we shall compare a number of glyphs and parts of glyphs that resemble this 'leafy' scroll, and may have been perceived iconically as the same or similar items by the ancient scribes.



Fig. 3-91. *Palace Tablet: Nal, Naab, and comparables.* Photos by author.

The standard form of *Naab* ("lake," "pool") seems to represent a lilypad, attached to an asymmetrical bifurcated scroll that looks like lush foliage or a stream of water. This foliate scroll represented a 'leaf' of some sort; it is nearly indistinguishable from syllabic

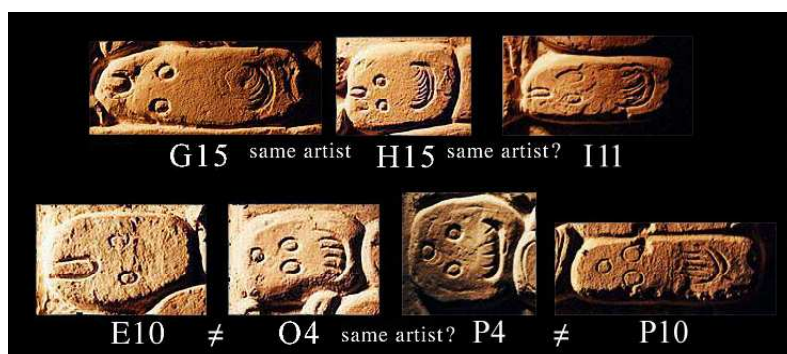


Fig. 3-92. *Palace Tablet: detail of Fig. 3-91: li glyphs seen in conjunction with Nal.* Photos by author.

yo/ logographic *Yop* (= "leaf"). (The main difference between the two is the direction of 'growth.' D5 & C16 *Naab* 'grow' rightward; D4, D6, and R15 *yo* 'grow' leftward or down.) There

is usually an axial, simply outlined 'vein' down the larger 'leaf;' in large examples (e.g., S4) this 'vein' may have branches or 'tributaries.'

The standard *Nal* ("place" or "maize") is the same, except it replaces the 'lily pad' with a left-curling spiral; the rightward-'growing' 'foliage' is quite similar (sometimes convergent¹⁴⁵) to that on *Naab*. Its outline is identical, but its 'vein' usually lies off to one side, adorned with several 'maize kernels' (which except for their number are indistinguishable from the 'bubbles' we mentioned above in *na*-suffixes). The placement of the 'kernels' seems to have been arbitrary: Often they 'hang' from a line closely paralleling the bifurcation (F9, E10, H15), but sometimes the line parallels the lower edge of the larger 'leaf,' and the 'kernels' sit upon this line, 'facing' upwards (H14, O4). This 'foliage' is the chief attribute of God E/ the Maize God (and probably actually represents an *ear* of maize), first noted by Schellhas.¹⁴⁶ The reading of this 'foliage' as a maize ear is strengthened by a strong (but not absolute) correlation between the presence of these 'maize kernels' on the *Nal* ("maize"/"place") foliage, and their absence from the *Naab* ("pool").¹⁴⁷

A handful of the 'head-glyphs' on the *Palace Tablet* wear this 'maize ear/foliage' vertically as an ear-ornament (D10, H6, G12, I13, and O4). It is nearly identical to the standard *Nal* glyph; O4 even carries *both* this 'ear-maize-foliage' and a ('*li*-headed') *Nal*. If one were graphically to flip the *Nal* and rotate it through 90°, you would approximate this 'maize-foliage' ([Fig. 3-93](#)). This 'foliage' can be found on the 'head' of Kan-Bahlam at D10 (though the other two *Kan-Bahlam*'s lack it), on the head-variant *bi* in the phonetic spellings *Ja-na-bi* at H6 and I13, on the "snake" title of the 'cord-taking' at G12, and on the apparent title at O4. All these examples of this foliate 'ear ornament' appear on royal names or titles, or on objects manipulated in royal ceremonies, which supports an identification of Maya royalty and royal ceremony with the Maize god.

¹⁴⁵ The Ucanal toponym *K'an-Witz'-Nal*, for example, often portrays the 'foliage' part without 'kernels.' Another example: Copan Stela I at C2, while further down the same column at C6 is a standard *Nal* with 'kernels.' Here on the *Palace Tablet*, the small example at Q17 also has rudimentary 'foliage.'

¹⁴⁶ Schellhas, Paul, *Representation of Deities of the Maya Manuscripts. Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology* 4 (1). Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass, 1904. Cited in the most comprehensive description of the Maize God (and many others): Taube, Karl A., *The Major Gods of Yucatan. Studies in Pre-Columbian Art & Architecture*, No. 32. Washington, Dumbarton Oaks, 1992, pp. 41ff.

¹⁴⁷ The "full form" of the *Nal* glyph consists of the 'standard' glyph (the 'spiral' with the 'foliage') sitting atop a 'main sign' which consists of an oval 'cartouche' full of three or four rows of 'kernels.' There exists at least one example in which this oval full of 'kernels' is infixed into the 'foliage' itself. When this 'cartouche' full of 'kernels' is present, the 'foliage' part usually lacks the 'kernels' (See Coe & Van Stone 2001, p. 73), which suggests that the standard *Nal* 'foliage' had developed from a *Yop*-leaf conflated with 'kernels.' This may or may not have been perceived technically as a 'maize ear.'

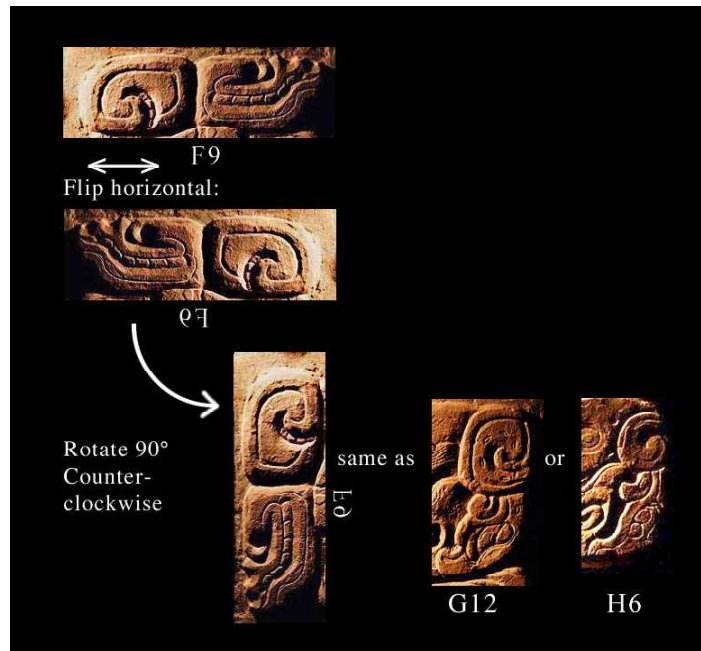


Fig. 3-93. *Palace Tablet*: a kind of foliate 'ear' or 'ear' covering might have been identical with Nal 'foliage.' Photos by author.

The possibility crosses my mind that the essentially-identical spiral element topping the 'standard earflare assemblage' indicated this 'maize foliage' *pars pro toto* (as if the 'leafy' part were hidden behind the flare). This 'standard assemblage' is certainly a badge



Fig. 3-94. *Palace Tablet*: the foliate 'ear' covering might be identical with the upper element in a standard earflare assemblage. Photos by author.

of high noble rank; it would not surprise me in the least to discover the main attribute to the Maize God was meant to be represented. However —this is too consistent to be ignored—, the spiral element of the 'standard assemblage' always appears rotated 90° from the position held by the corresponding part of the 'royal ear foliage' ([Fig. 3-94](#)). This demands an explanation. Either (1) The Maya scribes chose to indicate the 'maize foliage' by simply attaching the *Na*'s spiral 'head' to the top of an earflare, without rotating it as it "ought" to be, or (2) They wanted to make a distinction, and the two are not equivalent at all. Given the Maya scribes' penchant for invention and variation, and the occasional subsequent convergence/confusion of formerly-distinct glyphs and glyphic elements, I feel that the first choice is much more likely than the second.

Some carvers rendered the bifurcated foliate part of *Naab* identical to their *yo* glyph. The hand of D5 *Naab* carved matching *yo*'s at D4 and D6; his neatly-engraved 'vein' in each flat 'leaf' is quite consistent and unlike any of the *Naks*. I would assign C16 to this hand on the basis of its *Naab* 'foliage' and, though more complex, the details of its 'lilypad' also matches D5's adequately to support this attribution. But these two glyphs are far apart, and other characteristics might outweigh the tentative attribution.



Fig. 3-95. *Palace Tablet*: six glyphs from Columns E, F,& G, and some neighbors. Photos by author.

In [Fig. 3-95](#), I compare many of these glyphs whole, along with a few other nearby glyphs, likely prospects for products of the same Hands. A group of six adjacent glyphs from Columns E, F, and G (outlined, in their original orientation) form the center here, and three from Column H and three details from the 'full-figure' Initial Series are juxtaposed. Alas, not much matches. Although E10 succeeds F9 textually, their *Na'* 'foliage' are hardly similar. Neither their line quality, nor their line spacing, nor the sizes and shapes of the 'kernels' are comparable, and the sculptural qualities differ vastly. Likewise, adjacent glyphs H14 and H15 differ almost as dramatically —their 'foliage's modeling, 'sign-form,' and detailing could hardly differ more. The

delicacy of H15's hatching finds no analogue at all in H14's dramatically-cut details; the closest parallel we can find is between the engraved 'bubbles' ('kernels?') on H14's 'hand,' which arguably match the 'kernels' in H15's 'foliage.' *Not one* of the five examples of 'foliage' here looks much like any of the others.

E10 is flat (with slightly rounded outlines), F9 more modeled. E10's 'maize kernels' for example, are engraved, tiny, and round; F9's sit in a sculpted ramp, they are much larger parallelograms, though his smaller 'kernels' filling F9's spiral element's groove are about the same size and shape as E10's. Details on F9, especially the 'hand' and the *ni*-like 'ponytails' hanging down on either side, are much more delicately engraved and sculpted than anything on E10, which seems particularly heavy-handed in comparison. The F9 'hand,' in fact, most closely resembles 'hands' in the Full Figure Initial Series, such as the 'frog's 'hand' at B9. It also finds a close echo in the GII's 'hands' at F11 whose delicacy (and the extraordinary detail of the 'K'awiil head') contrasts with the glyphs above and below it. It even contrasts with its own coarse *ne* antefix. It is as if a specialist carved just the hands and face on F9 and F11. This possibility is not so distant; in the European Renaissance and later periods, busy Master painters such as Rubens frequently entrusted the less-demanding areas of a commission to their junior partners (or apprentices), to cite just one comparable example. We have established these monuments as team efforts; it hardly strains credibility to theorize that an artist with expertise in hands or faces—even the Master—should be expected to step in and finish a colleague's glyph. The alternative, that the boldly-carved F10 and F12 were carved by the same Hand (possibly on the same day) as the more delicate F9 and F11, is less credible.

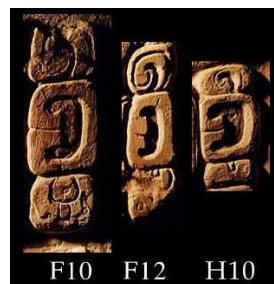


Fig. 3-96. *Palace Tablet*: the unusual 'shell-earflare' assemblage. Photos by author.

However, we are on firmer ground comparing F10 and F12 ([Figs. 3-95, 3-96](#)). Both their 'earflares' treat the central 'shell' element in a very peculiar way, with deeply-carved interior space and sharp corners on the inner 'valve' of the 'shell.' This 'shell earflare' also appears nearby

at H10 on a *Ch'en* glyph (for unknown reasons), see [Fig. 3-95](#). This F10-F12-H10 Hand, if it be one Hand, systematically varies his treatment of the spiral element above the 'shell': H10's has a delicate inline close to the inner spiral channel, in the other two this inline parallels the *outer* edge. He also chooses to crosshatch the interior area of the largest of these three spiral elements, and to vary their 'sign-forms' and modeling: F10's is flat and squarish, F12's more rounded, and H10's an oblate spheroid. The *Ek'*/"black" superfix on F12 has its 'dark' area excavated, while the corresponding area on H10 is crosshatched. However, the carving quality of these three earflare assemblages is otherwise consistent —'shell' with deep interior and flat 'rim,' spiral groove matches— and I still think it likely that they come from the same Hand. D10 may also spring from this Hand; many carving details match, particularly the peculiar modeling of its 'nose,' identical to that on F12.

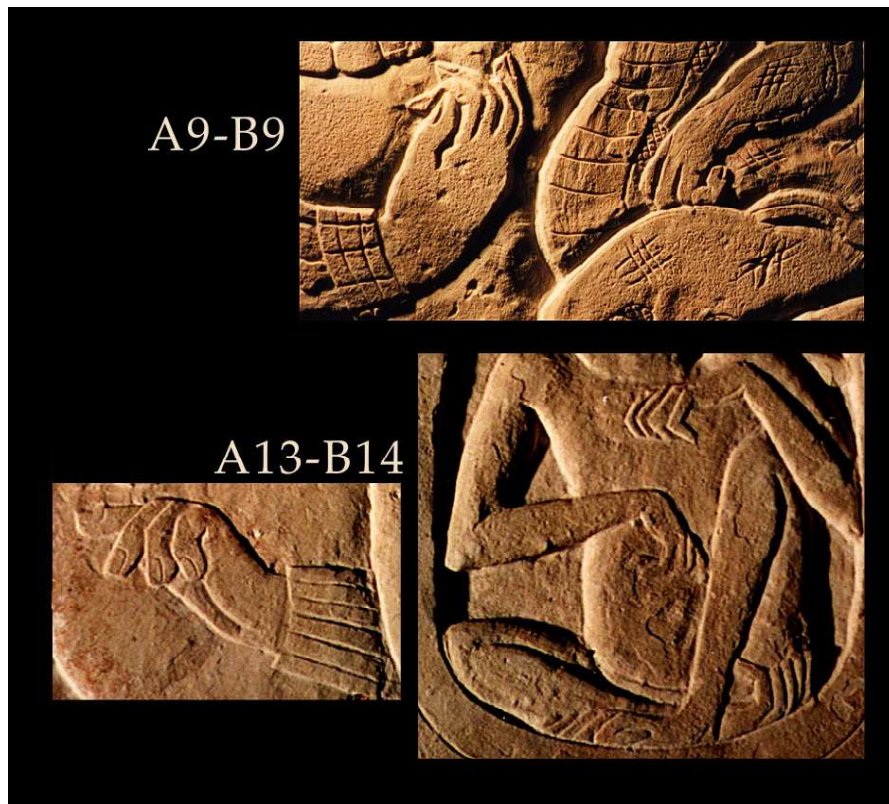


Fig. 3-97. Palace Tablet: 'hands' from two full-figure glyphs. Photos by author.

When confronted by the two *Hun-ye-Na*(?) collocations at E10 and H15, one is struck by their divergence. Comparing these two can convince even an untrained eye that they were carved by different individuals; even the *Hun*'s differ markedly. H15's crisp delicacy, its restrained, fine, precise detail, its squarish 'sign-forms' (especially the compact, controlled *ye*),

tersely contrasts with the flamboyant E10, with the jutting 'thumb' of its *ye*, flourishing 'foliage,' the raw, assertively-carved details, its unfinished air.

The careful, finely-detailed monster at G12 is also hard to categorize: Its flamboyant '*Nal*' 'ear ornament' with its crisp, deep bevel, back-curved smaller 'leaf,' tiny lenticular marks, large curved window-like 'kernels,' is unlike any of the others. The abundant, finely-wrought crosshatching covering its beetling brow, its well-finished strings of tiny 'bubbles' under the eye, its sketchy 'looped cloth cord,' find few parallels nearby (Excepting the fine crosshatching does appear in the 'spot' in H15). Their '*Nal*' 'foliage' share so few attributes, I would be hard-pressed to believe they came from the same hand. Could the crosshatching have been added by a separate detail specialist? Or a gang of them?

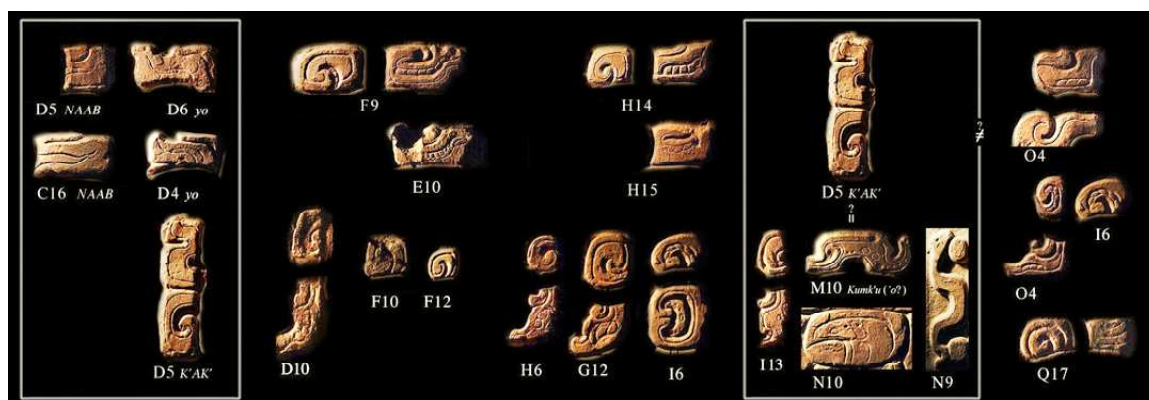


Fig. 3-98. *Palace Tablet: Nal*'foliage' and comparables. Photos by author.

[Fig. 3-98](#) focuses on the 'spirals' and 'foliage' alone. D4, D5, D6, and C16 associate together by virtue of their flat surfaces, decorated by clear, simple, engraved lines; this carving quality extends to D5's *K'ak'*. A few other items also feature this similar treatment: I13 (*Janab*), M10 (*Kumk'u*), and O4 (a title?). Of these, O4's similarity is superficial; the whole glyph (see [Fig. 3-90](#)) is really highly rounded. I13's angular, vertical '*Nal*' foliage is quite atypical; rather than 'maize kernels,' it is decorated with a crisp, angular inline and three small, separated ovals. The closest analogue to this sculptural treatment appears on the *Kumk'u* superfix at M10, which also has crisp, angular inline and ovals. Its unusual mixture of open and drilled 'dots' and distinctive inline continues in N10's *Tan-Lam*. M10's angularity precisely echoes the treatment of the 'snake' affix on N9. In the other direction, I13 distinctly fails to match both the highly-sculptural I6 and its flatter neighbor H6. Although I13 and H6 are in adjacent columns, and they constitute the

only known phonetic spellings of *Janab* (-*Pakal*) displayed after his reign,¹⁴⁸ it is clear that they were carved by different Hands (see [Fig. 3-101](#)).



Fig. 3-99. *Palace Tablet*: The block of glyphs A15-B19 / C15-D19, compared with the passage C4-D7. Photos by author.

3.10. Royal Names, EG's, *Mat* 'Birds,' Fig. 3-100

3.10.1 Introduction

[Fig. 3-100](#) compares the names of Palenque rulers and some of their titles, arranged more or less like an epigraphic distributed analysis. Of eight *K'inich* titles (top row, and [Fig. 3-104](#)), four include the big-eyed, barbeled, Roman-nosed 'Sun God head.' Of ten named *K'inich Ajaws*, four are Janab-Pakal, three Kan-Bahlam, and three K'an-Joy-Chitam

¹⁴⁸ See n. 4 above. The stucco inscription on the *Templo Olvidado* together with the *Tableritos* (both dating from Pakal's reign; for the latter, see Figs. 3-109 and 3-110) are the only other places where we have found this phonetic spelling of *Janab Pakal*. If this "archaic" spelling is intended to connote something specific here, it is indeed interesting that the scribes also chose to spell this great ruler's name twice with the more customary logograms, at C12 and P19. These two examples are respectively the *Palace Tablet's* first and the last mentions of Pakal, and bracket the other two "archaic" spellings.



Fig. 3-100. *Palace Tablet*. Royal names, titles, & comparable glyphs. Enlarged below. Photos by author.

(one of which is entirely lost but for a nostril). The distribution of spellings is interesting. As mentioned above, Janab-Pakal the Great enters and leaves the discussion in his usual logographic spelling, but the two central mentions are phonetic, which may have been considered archaic and connote a connection to earlier monuments. However, this supposition is complicated by the fact that, of three uses of the *Kalom-Te'* title, the first two (one for Pakal, one for K'an-Joy-Chitam) are the usual logographic spelling, the final (at R1, following a logographic spelling of Pakal) is the Early Classic spelling (Fig. 4-02), whose ostensibly-phonetic "*ma-ku-Te*" Schele and others initially read as (*ma*)-*Chak-Te*. To further complicate this supposedly-transparent archaism, there is an imbalance among the spellings of the Palenque Emblem Glyph: Q1, Q8, and Q18 are the *only* three examples (of twelve on the *Tablet*) of the 'abstract Bone' EG. For the first 89% of the monument, the artists use the 'Rabbit-Skull' or the 'Mat-Bird' as the sign of Palenque. Suddenly, in the final double-column, they switch exclusively to the "old" spelling. This may have something to do with the supposed "interruption of the work" on the *Palace Tablet* due to K'an-Joy-Chitam's capture by Tonina in 9.13.19.13.3 / AD 711.¹⁴⁹ Perhaps this has something to do with the (unknown) reason the *Palace Tablet* is the only known

¹⁴⁹ The last double-column, starting at Q2, is the only place where we read of events after K'an-Joy-Chitam's capture.

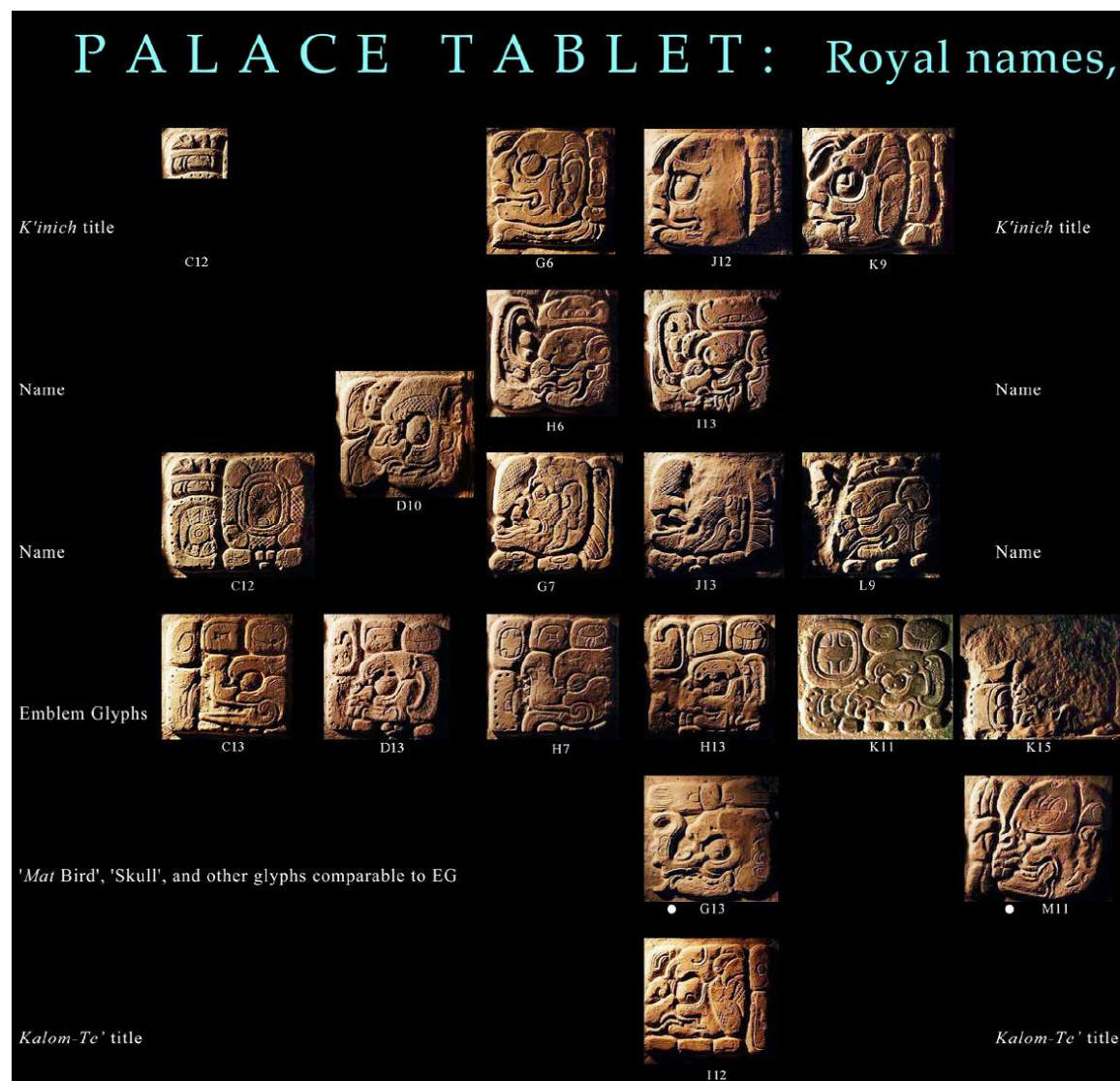


Fig. 3-100a. *Palace Tablet*: Royal names, titles, & comparable glyphs. Left half. Photos by author.

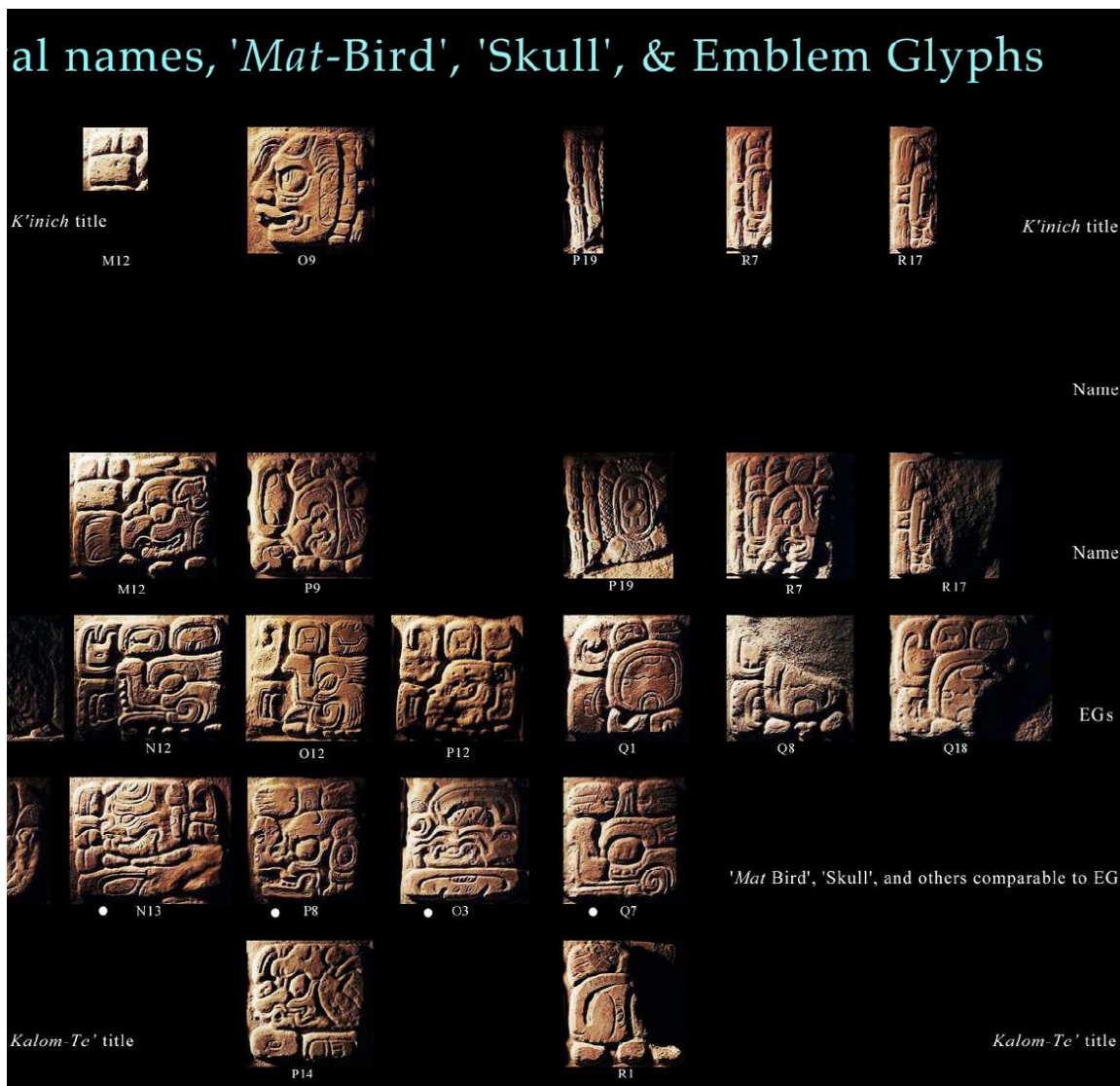


Fig. 3-100b. *Palace Tablet*: Royal names, titles, & comparable glyphs. Right half. Photos by author.

Palenque text which, like Yaxchilan, uses a double EG. Both times they appear together, the pair is written as the 'Bird' followed by the 'Skull'.¹⁵⁰ The rest of the EG's claim an almost-equal measure of 'Birds' and 'Skulls,' until the final double-column.

3.10.2. Phonetic spelling of K'inich Janab Pakal

For whatever reason, these names and titles provide much to compare. First, the two phonetic *Janab-Pakals* (Fig. 3-101) offer some telling comparisons. The 'eye' of the 'Sun God' at G6 is circular, with a rounded 'iris,' deeply modeled round the sides but essentially flat in the

¹⁵⁰ The first double EG [C13-D13] entitles Pakal; the second [O12-P12, almost a mirror-image placement] K'an-Joy-Chitam.

middle 50%. This rather flat modeling treatment is repeated on the 'cheek,' 'chin,' 'lips,' 'barbel,' 'nose,' 'forelock;' and the rest of the glyph. J12's 'eye' is much more squarish, with an almost straight 'brow' and a deeply-channeled right-angle 'iris.'

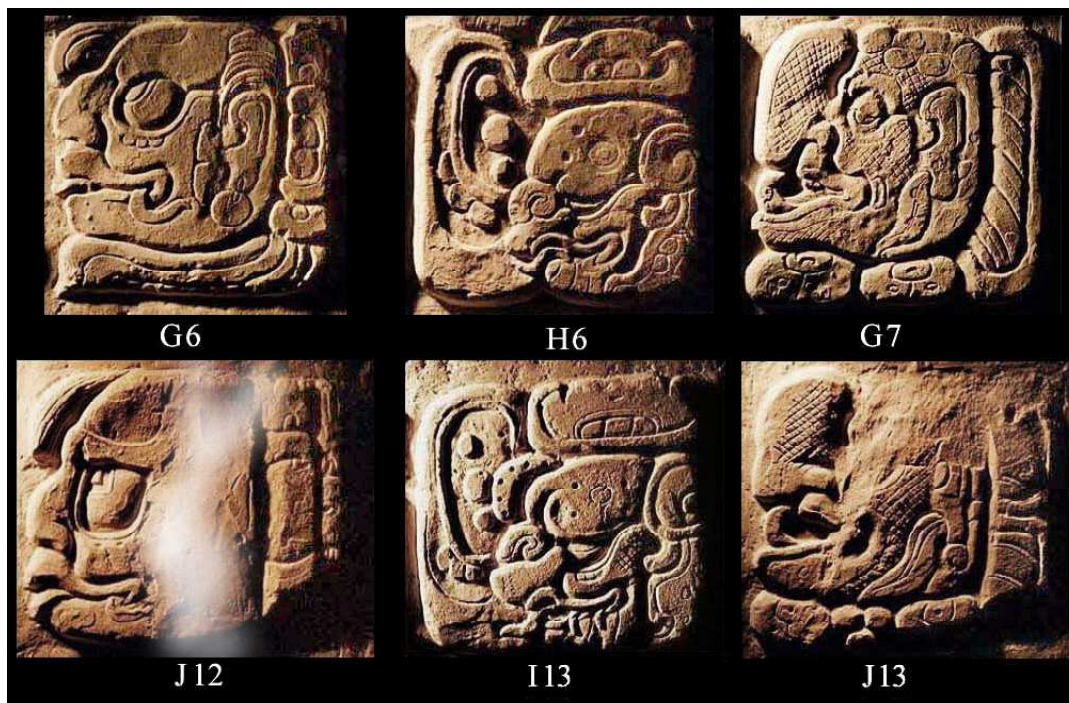


Fig. 3-101. *Palace Tablet*: logographic *K'inich*, phonetic spelling of Janab Pakal. Photos by author.

The 'eye,' 'chin,' and 'forelock' are completely modeled, with only a hint of level area on the 'cheek' and 'nose;' his upper lip is carefully beveled to create a sharp ridge. One might say that the G6 Hand prefers a flat surface with engraved details, while his compatriot at J12 is much more interested in creating a sense of volume. Other peculiarities: J12's '*K'in* signs' on the 'God's' forehead and in the *K'inich* postfix are very large, their diagnostic cardinal-point 'notches' minimal, barely there. G6 'notches' his (much smaller) '*K'in* signs' slightly more emphatically, making them more legible. J12's distinctively-channeled square 'iris' is very unusual,, but finds a larger parallel in K9 (see below). I noted G6's treatment of 'hair' in broad, flat locks in **Section 3.04** (discussing *-ni* suffixes) as relating it to K8 and to the 'comb' of its sequent G7; J12 prefers to engrave many, finer, 'strands.' Also, the 'cheek spot' on G7 is carved in much the same way as those spots on B16, B17, and the 'Jaguar Throne of Creation' above G6 (see **Sections 3.1.1, 3.6.1.1**).

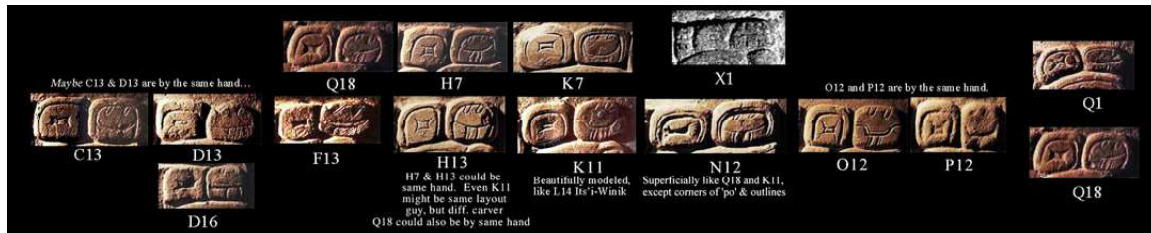


Fig. 3-102. *Palace Tablet: Ajaw* superfix. Color photos by author, b&w by Robertson (1985b).

Compare G6's 'jaw' with that of the *pa-* at G7. Notwithstanding the hatching and outlining details on G7, the shape is the same; likewise for the flat treatment of their 'upper lips.' Paralleling this, the sculptural treatment of J12's 'jaw' is echoed in the 'jaw' of J13, again despite the latter's carefully defined 'lower lip.' Other than this difference in 'jaw' treatment, their divergent affixes, and their slightly-different 'noses,' these two 'big-nosed Pawahtuns' are remarkably similar. I would have assigned them to the same Hand, were it not for the fact that their slight differences are consistent with stronger differences between the two groups: The more-rounded 'nose' on G7 is consonant with the rounded 'eye' of G6, and its sculptural flatness with that of G6 and H6; likewise the slightly-more-emphatic relief on J13 (particularly on the aforementioned 'jaws') harmonizes with that of J12 and I13.

The *Janab*'s differ in every detail. The excavated area around the 'bubbles' on the *ja*-prefix of H6 is a flat sunken area, consistent with its Hand's affinity for minimal relief. The comparable area on I13 is a slope, also consistent with this carver's treatment of 'lips.' Despite the J12-J13 Hand's more sculptural style (compare the 'teeth' and 'foreheads' of the '*bi*-monsters'), his *drawing* is rather stiffer and more upright; this is especially evident when you compare the *na*'s. The drilled holes of the '*bi* quincunx' and the 'maize foliage ear-ornament' of I13 are also upright, just as those of H6 lean to the right. Even I13's 'moon' has a squarer outline. This geometrizing tendency dominates the secondary lines in the '*Naal*-ear-ornament' and the *na* superfix, especially the former; it links I13 to N9, M10, N10, and possibly D5 ([Fig. 3-98](#)).



Fig. 3-103. *Palace Tablet: K'inich Janab-Pakal, logographic form.* Photos by author.

Comparing the two logographic spellings of Pakal's name at C12 and P19 advances our findings but little ([Fig. 3-103](#)). Below the '*ma*' syllable, C12's *K'inich* seems to portray an 'offering plate' marked with the '*K'in*' sign, while P19's corresponding central area is a more abstract sausage-shape. Separate from the *Janab* 'flower', C12's *Pakal*/"Shield" shows its 'handprint-over-the-mouth mask' emblem, its 'eyes' drawn half-closed in a vivacious crescent seen at its best in [Fig. 3-108](#), the (*Took'*) *Pakal* offered by the Mother on the *Tablet of the Slaves*. The details of the 'flower' at *Janab*'s center are simply engraved or crosshatched on C12, while P19's Hand scoops them out like the 'jaguar spots' on B16, B17 and the 'Jaguar Throne' above G6. Other than that, both examples are carved 'flat' —little or no relief—, are crosshatched and drilled similarly, etc. The most salient distinction between the two 'shields' is the differently-shaped 'corner bosses' and the treatment of the 'woven' or 'braided' central 'frame:' C12's is flat and braided anticlockwise, P19's is more rounded and braided clockwise. We have different Hands here.



Fig. 3-104. *Palace Tablet: K'inich variations.* Photos by author.

3.10.3. Kan-Bahlam's name

[Fig. 3-105](#) also reveals three different Hands working on the two *Kan-Bahlam*s and the comparable *ka-Kan* at D10. Every detail one could specify — 'teeth,' 'lip,' 'chin scales,' 'nose,' 'eye,' 'waterlily diadem' (atop the 'head'), *ka* prefix— are differently rendered on



Fig. 3-105. *Palace Tablet*: Kan-Bahlam's name, plus two *ja-na-bi*'s for 'ophidian' comparison. Photos by author.

each of these. The heavy-browed example at L9 closely parallels the '*bi*'-monsters in *Janab*'s phonetic spelling at H6 and I13 (upper row in the [Fig. 3-105](#)). The other two, with god-like huge 'snake eyes' (diagnostic: spiral 'pupil,' and crescentic dark 'supraorbital plate'), are yet strikingly different from each other. I believe that I13 resembles M12 in several ways (especially around the 'mouth' and the 'dark spot' at their respective 'temples'); I have already linked I13 with M10 above (**Section 3.6.2**). Likewise, H6 resembles L9's flattish relief, though L9 displays much more detail; I suspect this latter pair are by different Hands.

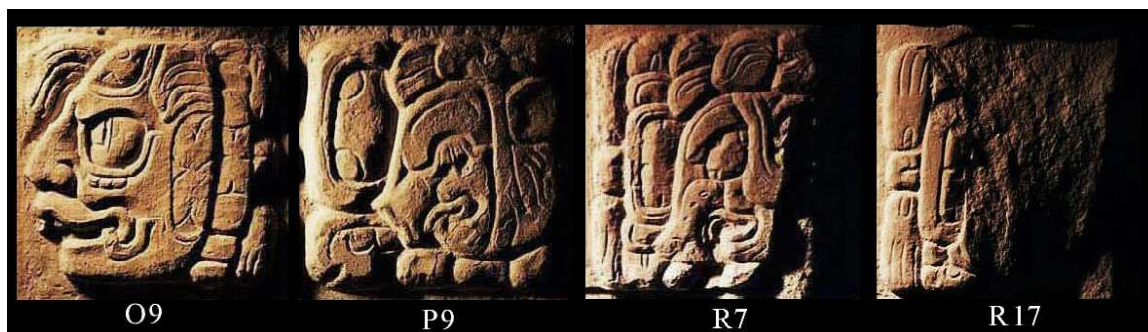


Fig. 3-106. *Palace Tablet*. K'an-Joy-Chitam's name thrice. Photos by author.

3.10.4. K'an-Joy-Chitam's name

[Fig. 3-106](#) focuses on the names of the reigning Ajaw (at least, apparently, when the Tablet was commissioned), K'an-Joy-Chitam. His adult, post-coronation name only appears near the end of the narrative, and all three mentions of it were carved by different Hands. This is apparent even in the details of the simple *K'inich* title (the full form of which appears only once, at O9, and whose 'head' offers little help in this distinction), confirmed by a look at the *K'an*'s, the *Joy*-knots' and the *Chitam* 'heads' themselves: They match on almost no counts, from the 'knot' to the 'nostril.' (We are reduced to nearly complete dependence on the *K'inich* in the case of nearly-lost R17.)

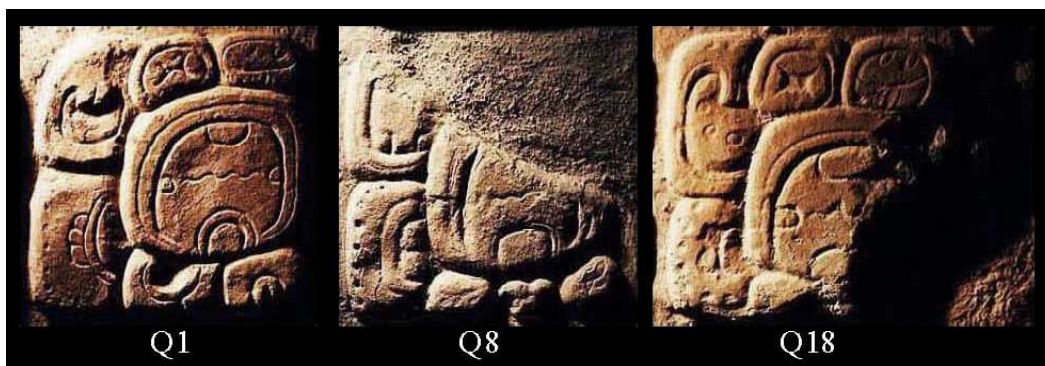


Fig. 3-107. *Palace Tablet*. The 'Bone' Emblem Glyphs, all in Column Q. Photos by author.

The 'Matbird' in his 'titles' or 'youth-names' at O8-P8 and R6-Q7 (3-[variable]-*ma-Mat*) are also strikingly different from one another ([Fig. 3-112](#), or [Fig. 3-111](#) for their context and relative position). His 'youth name' appears at least six times in the Palace Tablet, but the several variations in spelling appear deliberate, seemingly variation for its own sake. The upturned-'beaked' 'Mat-Bird' (topped by a phonetic complement *ma*-) takes two forms: that at C9 and Q7,

essentially identical to the Palenque 'Bird EG', and that at G13 and P8, a (human) 'skeletal head' with a rather ornate version of the '*Mat*-Bird's 'beak.' A third spelling of this name/title, at E9, is phonetic *ma-ta* plus the youth-designation *ch'o-ko*. The first glyph of his full name consists of *ox-* (the number three) plus a 'variable' element consisting of a heavy-lidded 'human head' with 'jaguar ear,' whose 'lower jaw' is replaced by scrolls which may designate blood (F8, H12, O8); or *ox-* (again), followed by *Ch'ak-Kaban-na* (D8, L13, R6) ("Thrice-Earth-Striking" or perhaps "Thrice-Struck-Earth")



Fig. 3-108. *Tablet of the Slaves*. The (*Tok'*) *Pakal* shield offering by Ahkal's mother. Photo by author.



Fig. 3-109. *Tablerito*. The early phonetic spelling of *Pakal*. Detail of Fig. 3-110. See Schele & Mathews (1979), #36. Photo by author.



Fig. 3-110. *Tablerito*, whole. See Schele & Mathews (1979), #36. Photo by author.



Fig. 3-111. *Palace Tablet*: upper half of Columns OPQR. Photos by author.

The variants of the first glyph of this name (*Ox-Ch'ak-Kaban-na* vs. *Ox-??*) imply that the jaguar-eared-human-head-streaming-scrolls-from-its-mouth (of blood?) has at least a synonymic semantic equivalence to (*Ox-*) *Ch'ak-Kaban*, with which it apparently freely substitutes. I guess that it is a synonym rather than the same word, because the latter always displays a *-na* suffix, while the former *never* does.

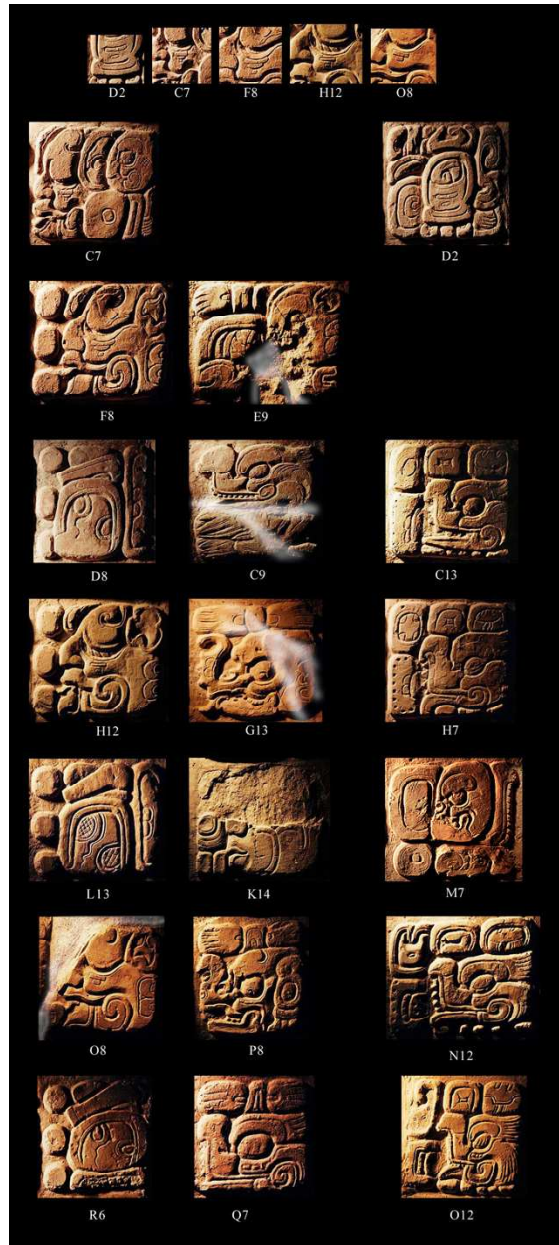


Fig. 3-112. *Palace Tablet*: Youth names of K'an Joy Chitam. Photos by author.

Comparing like elements in [Fig. 3-112](#), we see slight differences between C7 and F8: C7 is more rounded, modeled more deeply (particularly on their 'noses' and 'foliage'); yet the treatment of 'lips,' 'forelock,' and deeply-overhanging 'brow' are strikingly similar, particularly when contrasted with the other two examples of this glyph at H12 and O8. In sum, the similarity of these two supports the attribution of these two glyphs to a single master (or two very close collaborators). If we eventually distinguish two Hands in this "C1-D1 Territory" (the "Clumsy" and the "Skilled"), then C7 definitely represents the more skilled master of the pair, despite its being surrounded by clunkier glyphs such as D2, shown here for comparison. D2 has in addition a rare detail, an inverted 'water stack,' which also decorates the 'eyeliner' under the lower lid of these glyphs. Loosely drawn, its elements separated, it belongs to the "Clumsy" group of these glyphs.

Its near neighbors D8-C9, however, I attribute to a different Hand (**Section 3.6.5**, [Fig. 3-59](#)). Except for the numeral *Ox* / "3," these two glyphs spell *Ox-Ch'ak-Kaban-na Mat* with *entirely* different glyphs than F8-E9, leaving us little to compare here. However, the fine details of C9, particularly its 'feathers,' stand in sharp contrast to the simplicity and thick lines of the C1-D1 Hand(s). The 'Bird EG' at C13, despite much larger 'teeth,' does compare favorably with the C9 'Mat-Bird,' particularly in its 'feathers' and the bulbous end of its 'beak.' Comparing it with the numerous other examples of this 'bird' (H7, N12, O12, Q7), it is clear that C9 and C13 match each other quite closely, and match the others *much* less. There are few other matches to be seen in this table: the three '3-heads' (F8, H12, and O8) are by three different artists, as are the three *Ox-Ch'ak-Kaban-na*'s (D8, L13, and R6); as can be deduced immediately in the Figure ([3-112](#)).

The two 'skeletal' 'snake-eyed' renderings of this *Mat* glyph (G13 and P8) show striking differences of interpretation of this chimera, especially its peculiar upturned 'nose.' I distinguish their Hands above, on the strength of their 'jawbones' alone (they are about as different as two Palenque 'jawbones' can be, **Section 3-07**), but they are distinct in every other detail as well ([Fig. 3-112](#)). Likewise for the preceding head-glyphs H12 and O8.

The six mentions of this 'youth name' display a possibly deliberate pattern of spelling variation. The first part of this name-or-title (the part that begins with the numeral "3") alternates forms in a straightforward ABABAB pattern, which immediately raises the suspicion that the variations are mechanically ordained¹⁵¹, rather than signal some subtle connotive distinction we just cannot yet discern. The second element, *Mat*, varies in a more complex way.

¹⁵¹ See n. 30 above.

Only one pair (G13 and P8, *ma-Mat*) can really be said to have precisely the same spelling, since there seem to be two distinct allographs of the 'Mat Bird.' The similar *ma-Mat* at Q7 employs the more purely-avian 'Bird.' C9 is a full-figure 'Bird,' and like most full-figure glyphs it carries no phonetic complements. E9 is wholly phonetic (*ma-ta-ch'o-ko*), and K14 appears to be phonetic as well, but with a head-variant *-ta* prefixed, inexplicably, by a *nu-* rather than any proven form of *ma-*. Thus the variation pattern for the second part of this *Ch'ok* name is ABCA'CC' (or ABCDCE). Yet the neat explanation that these artists conspired to introduce every possible variation into these six versions of K'an-Joy-Chitam's 'Ch'ok-name' is maimed by the coincidence that (unlike the situation on the sides of the *Sarcophagus of Pakal*) H12-G13 and O8-P8 appear to exhibit precisely the same spelling.

3.10.5. Trust me

At this point, I think the need to articulate my comparisons of each and every detail of every pair of glyphs becomes less critical. The reader understands my methodology and decision-process well enough that to continue belaboring these images with a flood of verbiage is unnecessary and mind-numbing. I shall henceforth in this section simply summarize my attributions. Those items that present particularly illuminating comparisons or particularly difficult problems I shall note in detail, but I beg the reader's confidence that I have analyzed each further attribution as exhaustively below as above.

3.11. Workshop practice

Historians and *National Geographic* artists often portray ancient Maya carvers sitting on scaffolds, chiseling away on a stela already set in place. In the case of large and unwieldy monuments, such as we see at Copán and Quiriguá, it is quite likely that this was the case; it is much easier to muscle a huge stone into place in a roughed-out, unfinished state than to have to do so while worrying about damaging fragile carvings on every surface. Smaller stones, like the panels at Palenque and Piedras Negras, however, could have afforded more flexibility. They could be carved in a more comfortable situation —propped at an angle or laying on a workbench— and carefully carried and set into place by a few laborers. The low-relief surfaces of these panels also contributes to their safety and ease of handling.

The three stones of the *Palace Tablet* are ten feet tall. It demanded skill and planning just to position and cement them into place. Erecting them in a finished state would have multiplied the precision and difficulty necessary. Despite this, I cannot imagine a multitude of carvers working on it from scaffolding. Laid out on a bench, a slab of stone ten feet long can accommodate three carvers to a side simultaneously. Were the stone positioned vertically, the upper carver would stand in the way of the lower ones. At most, two could work at once, and that in an uncomfortable crouch. (I would therefore expect to find that the Hands at Copán and Quiriguá dividing their work into much larger vertical territories.) I conclude that they carved the slabs horizontally, probably in the very doorways of House A-D¹⁵², then carefully set them in place.

3.12. *Te'*

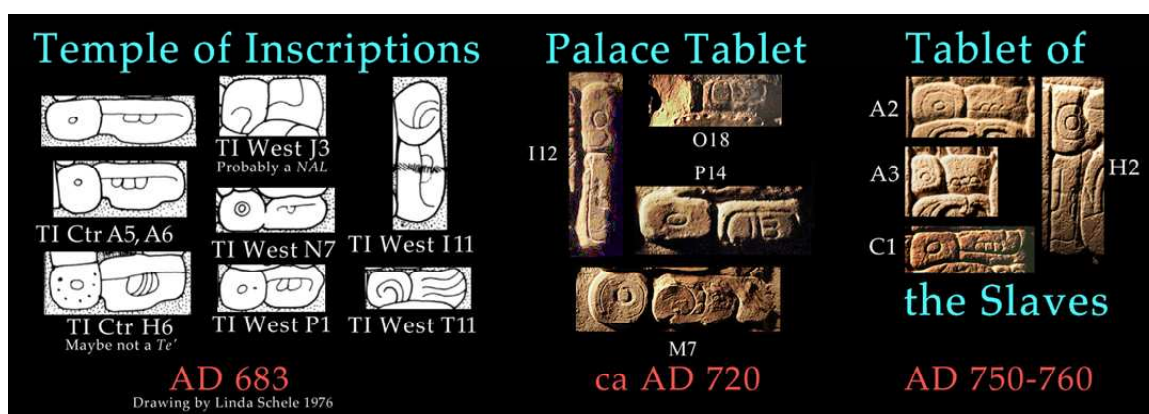


Fig. 3-113. *Temple of Inscriptions, Palace Tablet, and Tablet of the Slaves*. Examples of Palenque *Te'*s. Photos by author. Drawings by Linda Schele (see Mesoweb.com).

The artists of the *Palace Tablet* all carved an unusual form of *Te'*, the larger of the two elements having a smooth convex outline, its interior details crossing it at right angles rather than running lengthwise. (The standard example shapes this element as an elongated inverted L, kind of like a flag, with a narrow 'neck' and larger squarish 'flap,' reminiscent of the ancient Olmec jade 'spoons.')

The *Te'* glyph is relatively rare in the Palenque corpus (which is itself notable), but it appears forty years earlier several times on the *Temple of Inscriptions* Middle

¹⁵² The galleries are over two meters wide, and the doorways between piers almost three, more than enough to accommodate the 170-cm width of the largest slab. Probably the workshops stood in the doorways very near to their intended destination, a mostly-shaded area which faces north. Northern light, strong but indirect, is the light sought by artists for their studios to this day.

and Right Panels. At TIm-A5 and TIm-A6 *Te'* appears in its normal indented form, but those at Tlw-N7 and Tlw-I11 anticipate the unindented shape (though not the peculiar crosswise innards) of the *Palace Tablet* type. (Tlw-P1 is barely indented, a sort of compromise, while Tlw-T11 is the peculiar 'hatching-infected' form usually found in this still-semi-deciphered collocation.)



Fig. 3-114. *Tablet of the Slaves C1: 9-Ik', 5-Te'-K'an-a-si-ya*, a later Palenque *Te'*. Photo by author.

So the seeds of the local "dialect" form of this glyph seen later in the *Palace Tablet* at I12, P14, and O18 were planted at least as far back as the *Temple of Inscriptions*. This is not to deny that the *PT* carvers were all following a Master's painted layout; just that this example cannot be used as evidence to support such an argument.

As time passed, Palenque's peculiar form of *Te'* diverged even further from the standard form found elsewhere. In the *Tablet of the Slaves*, carved a generation after the *Palace Tablet*, the interior details (of examples by three different Hands) have returned to the standard lengthwise arrangement, but the outline has converged more or less completely with the bifurcated 'leaf' of *yo* (Fig. 3-114). One Hand of the *Palace Tablet*, working at M7, seems to have anticipated this furcated form, but it is only the overlapping lower 'lip' of a *wi* postfix.

The last three illustrations of this chapter supplement arguments presented above, and suggest future comparisons. The task is endless.

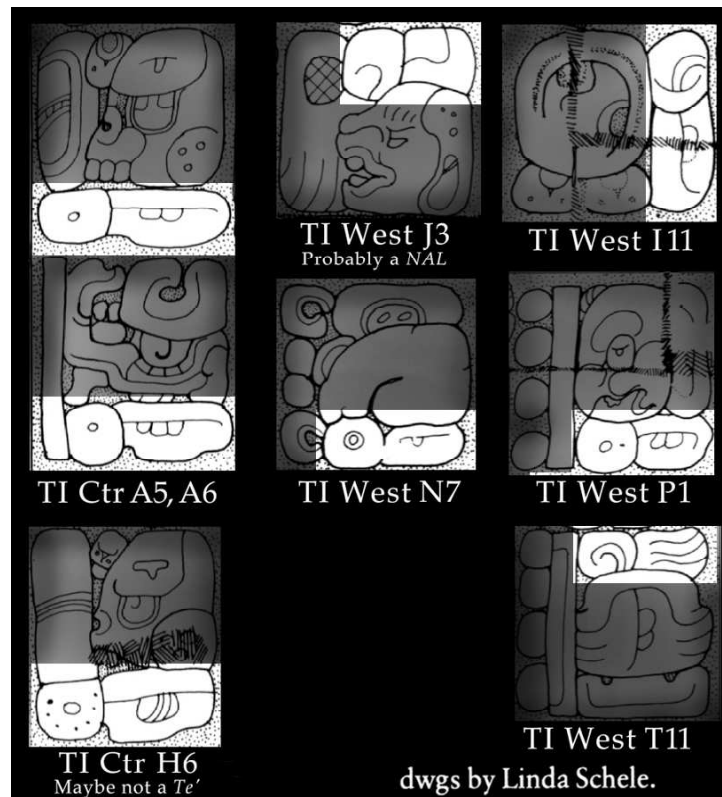


Fig. 3-115. *Temple of the Inscriptions*, earlier Palenque *Te*s. The seeds of later peculiar *Te*s were sprouting even in Pakal's reign. Drawings by Linda Schele.

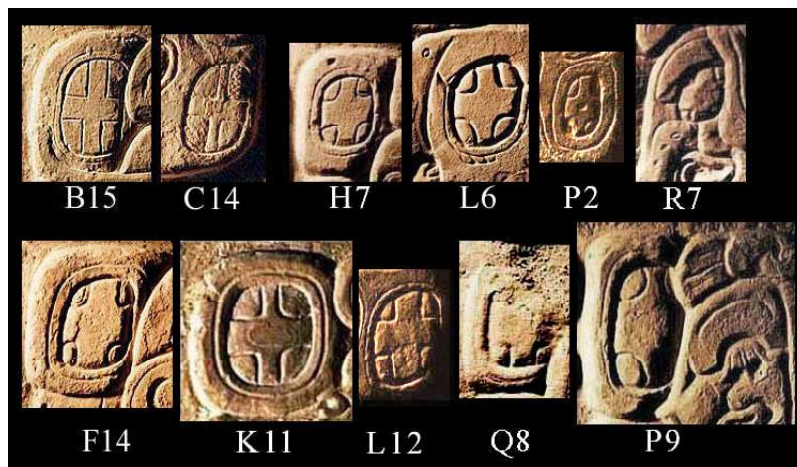


Fig. 3-116. *Temple of the Inscriptions*, eleven 'K'an-crosses.' It is astonishing how many variations artists can make on such a simple form. Photos by author.

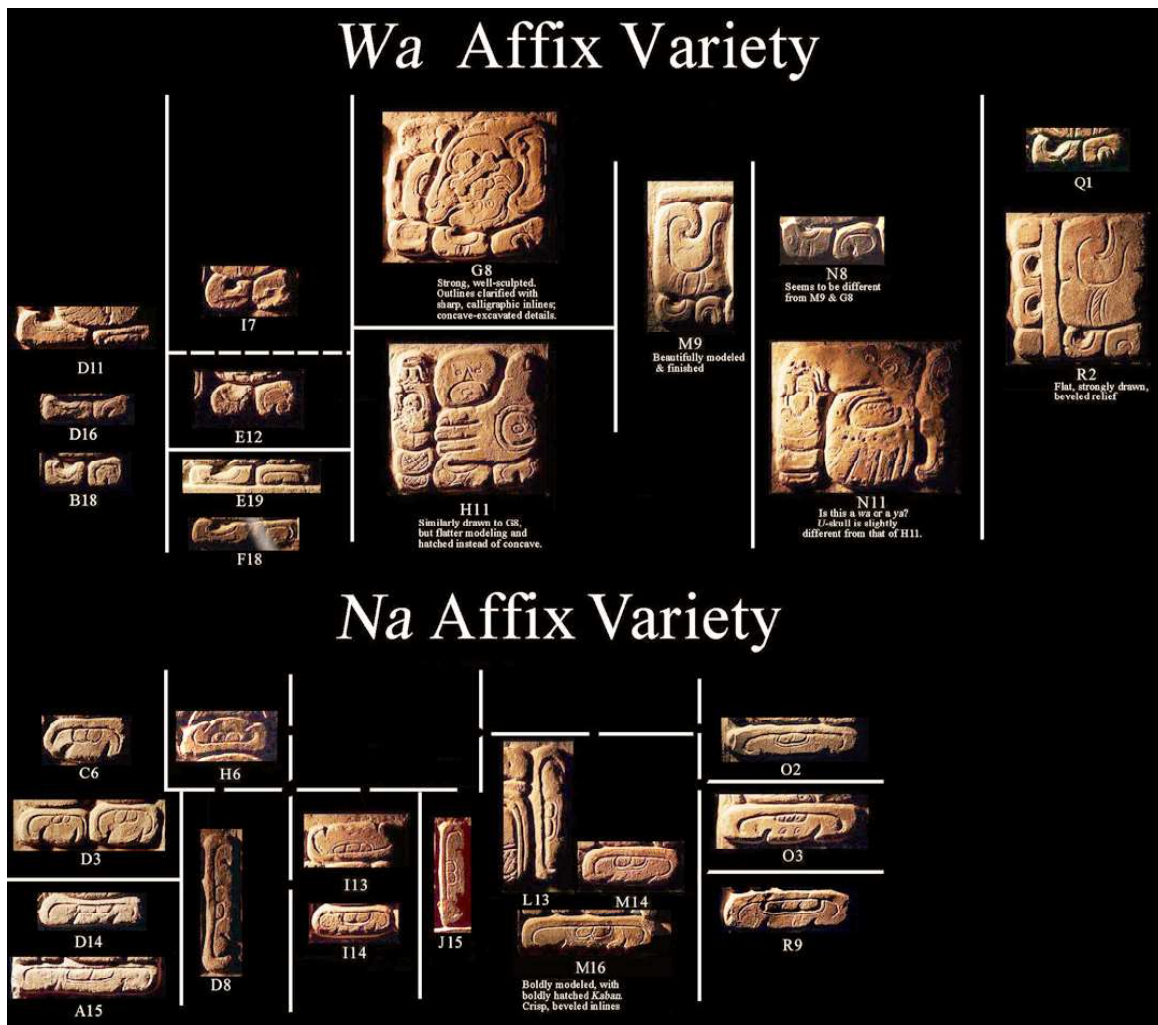


Fig. 3-117. *Palace Tablet: wa and na glyphs*. Lines indicate distinctions between Hands. Photos by author.

Chapter 4. Summary, Conclusions, etc. What do we do with this information?

4.0. Introductory

The previous chapters analyze the distribution of sculptors' work on a few important inscriptions at Palenque. Some monuments were carved vertically *in situ*, others apparently on horizontal worktables, presumably nearby to their final place of installation. Large teams of sculptors worked together, larger than previously thought, larger than expected.¹⁵³ Some of these artists carved coherent continuous passages of text, others worked on whatever fell in front of them, sculpting, say, two, three, or four glyphs in each of six or eight adjacent columns, without any regard for the textual continuity.

So what?

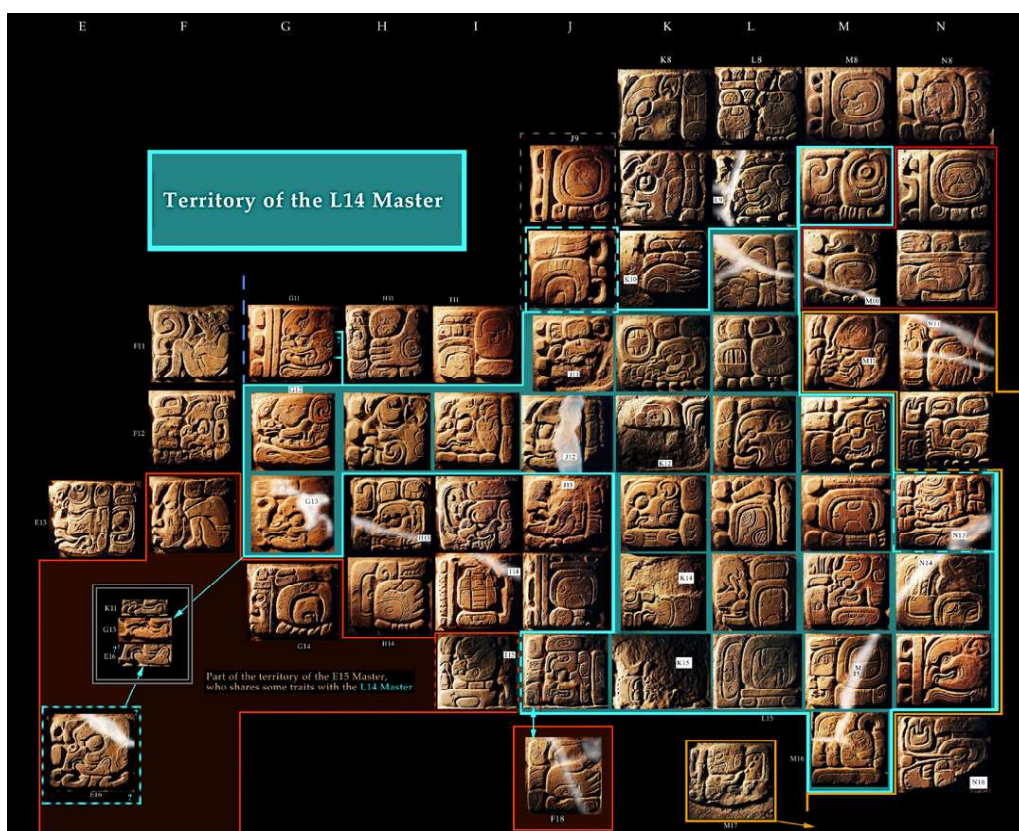


Fig. 4-01. Palace Tablet. The glyphs carved by the L14 / *Itz'i-Winik* Master: His territory is completely gerrymandered. Enlargements below. Photos by author.

¹⁵³ The artists' signatures found on some monuments in Bonampak, El Peru, Calakmul, etc., numbered as many as eight. Nobody expected such a small monument as the *Temple XIX Platform* to have involved eleven carvers, nor the *Palace Tablet* to have employed twenty or more.

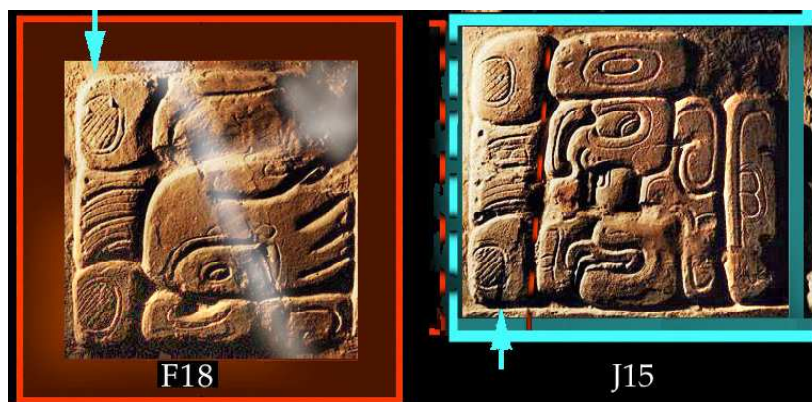


Fig. 4-02. Palace Tablet: The L14 / Itz'i-Winik Master (J15) and the E15 Master (F18). It appears that the latter Carver executed the *u* prefix at J15. Other enlargements below. Photos by author.

4.1 We can better estimate/imagine the pool of high-quality artists in Palenque.

4.1.1. Production during a golden age

At its height, Palenque, like any major Maya city, bustled and hummed with activity — administrative, mercantile, ceremonial, and artistic. Its builders have left us with hundreds of stone structures, each one intended to be a jaw-dropping artistic monument. These temples and palaces were adorned inside and out with intricate murals and polychrome stucco reliefs, crowned with even more intricate *cresterías*, hung with colorful textiles and perhaps wind chimes, and filled with intricately-carved furniture and dinnerware and libraries and beautiful people wearing an incredible variety of jewelry, clothing, and all the trappings of noble one-upmanship. At the city's heart, on every corner of every step, dozens per building, incensarios billowed serpentine streams of sweet-smelling incense to honor their gods, perched almost at eye-level on astonishing sculptured stands. Above every doorway carved wooden lintels rivaled the stone and stucco reliefs in beauty and intricacy. In the streets and plazas, armies of street-sweepers, plasterers, and other construction- and maintenance-people vied with merchants and shoppers to enrich the view, just as crowds of costumed priests and celebrants kept the many temples and public spaces in a hum of dazzling ceremony.

Territory of the L14 Master

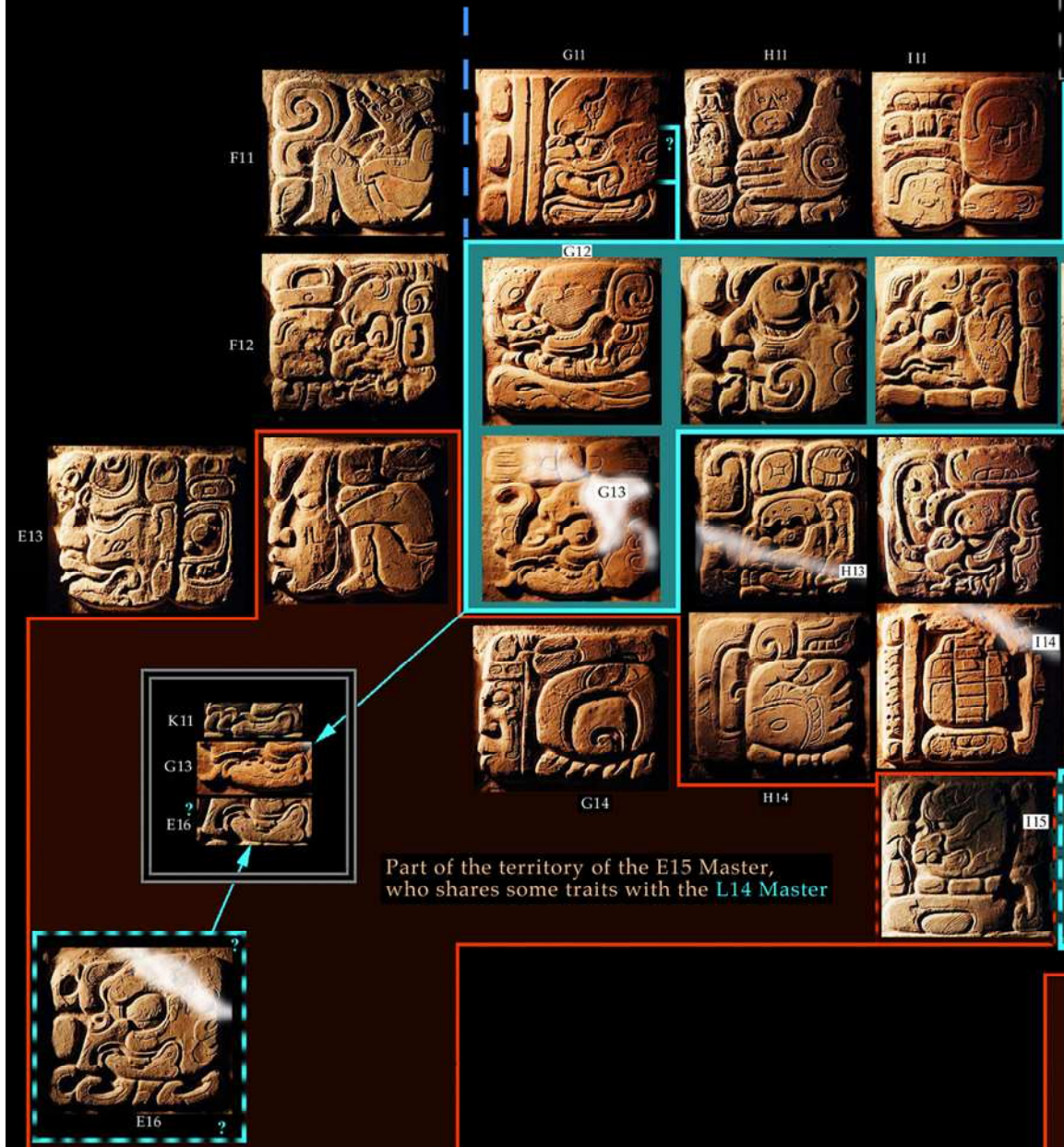


Fig. 4-01a. *Palace Tablet*: The glyphs carved by the L14 / *Itz'i-Winik* Master, Left half. Photos by author.

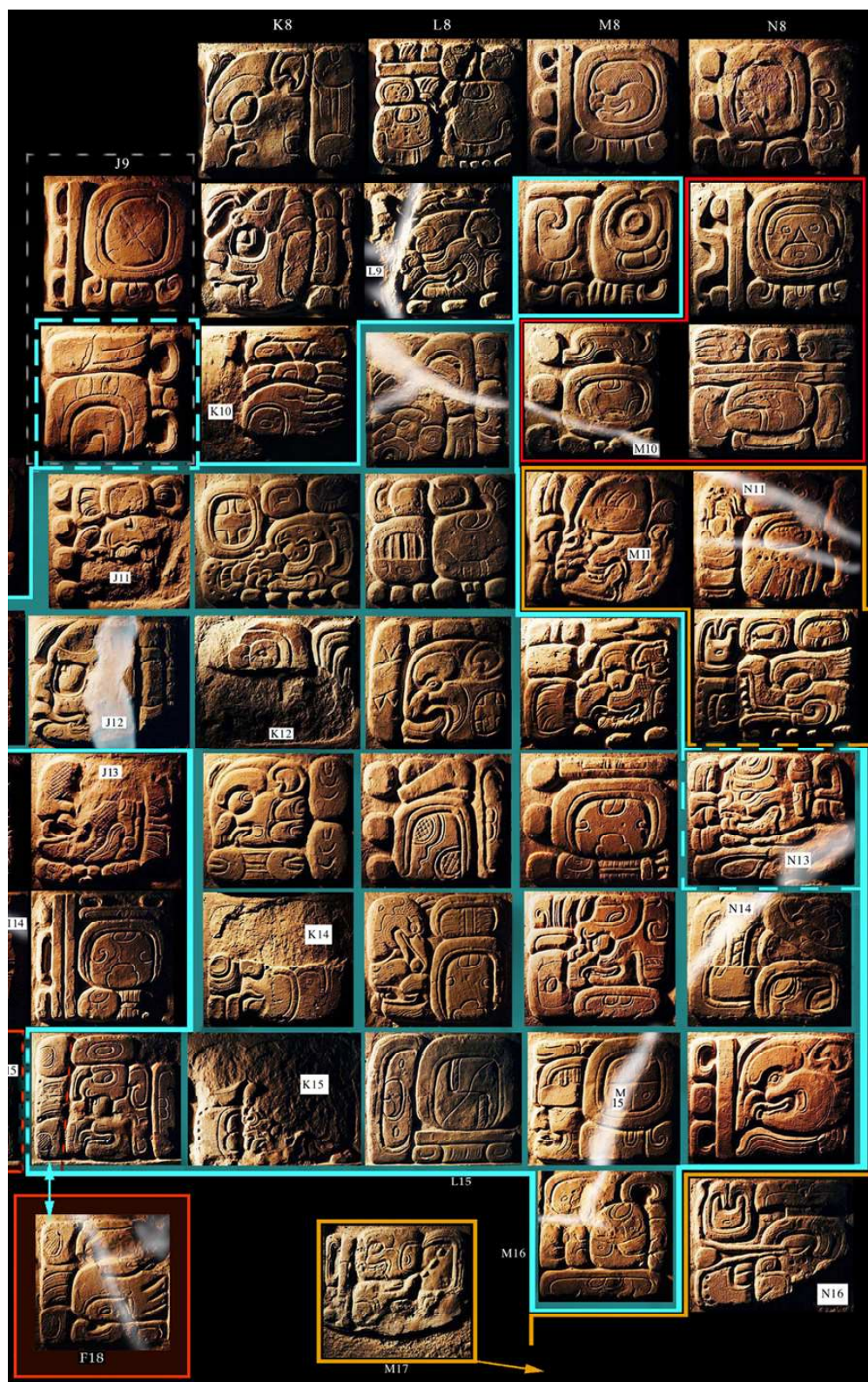


Fig. 4-01b. *Palace Tablet*: Glyphs by the L14 / *Itz'i-Winik* Master, Right half. Photos by author.

Nearly all these visible buildings were finished in the last century before the Collapse. They represent an astonishing outpouring of focused artistic energy, like Florence in the fifteenth century or Paris in the 1890's, or any of several places during a "golden age" of prosperity and heightened aesthetics. Further, underneath these buildings lie the remains of multiple older structures, evidence that at least a few surges of activity of this type graced the city during earlier centuries. A people united by prosperity and good leadership and high morale can produce wonders. Wherever they are respected and endowed with opportunity, artists spring up like poppies in the desert after spring rains.

4.1.2. Modern carvers in Palenque

Around every cultural or historical site, visitors are showered with souvenirs to purchase: T-shirts and keychains and other trinkets adorned with images of the attractions at hand. Especially at archaeological sites and museums, among this tide of *tchotchkas* can be found replicas, of varying quality, of the famous works of art which grace the site. In Palenque today, for example, one can buy at a number of shops hand-carved limestone plaques sculpted with replicas of some of her more famous reliefs.¹⁵⁴ These particular replicas are of very high quality, sought by archaeologists and other discerning customers, and the shops in which they are sold usually contain one or more young men (often teenagers), bent over their work, learning to carve. Of course, many discover that they lack the skill or patience for this work and find other diversions, but others stay on, and even after only a few months capably produce very high quality reliefs.¹⁵⁵ I'd estimate that modern Palenque has produced a dozen or more limestone-carvers of superior skill, and perhaps twice that many try their hand at it from time to time. Consider that these carvers are employed by just a small fraction of discerning tourists. Imagine, if you will, that the demand for high-quality carvings were to multiply ten- or twenty-fold, and that the power and prestige accorded the artists were likewise to expand. If this demand and prestige were to be spurred by a *de rigueur* compulsion that every rich family and public official and house of worship compete as major patrons of the arts, modern Palenque, *very* roughly the

¹⁵⁴ These replicas are of high quality because the artists who first started carving them thirty years ago, the Morales brothers (Alfonso Morales is now a noted Palenque archaeologist) set a very high standard of precision and skill. Their products attracted not only high-end customers, but also inspired high-quality imitators.

¹⁵⁵ No one of these skillful carvers has yet come to my attention for his creative skill yet. That is, they are excellent copyists, but do not readily understand the visual and iconographic language of their forebears. This is understandable; even among professional art-historians one would find very few capable (or willing!) of drawing a respectable forgery, because we understand too little the intellectual language of the original Maya artists. However, many of these young carvers *can* draw details —eyes, hands, 'whiplash-lines,' face-profiles, daysigns— with great fluency and authenticity. It is only a matter of time until one of these boys masters enough Maya iconography to start creating new works in the old vernacular.

size of ancient Palenque (and of fifteenth-century Florence), could easily produce or attract a hundred, two hundred, superlative carvers. With a pool of talent like this available, it is no wonder that we find so many excellent sculptors at work on any one ancient monument.

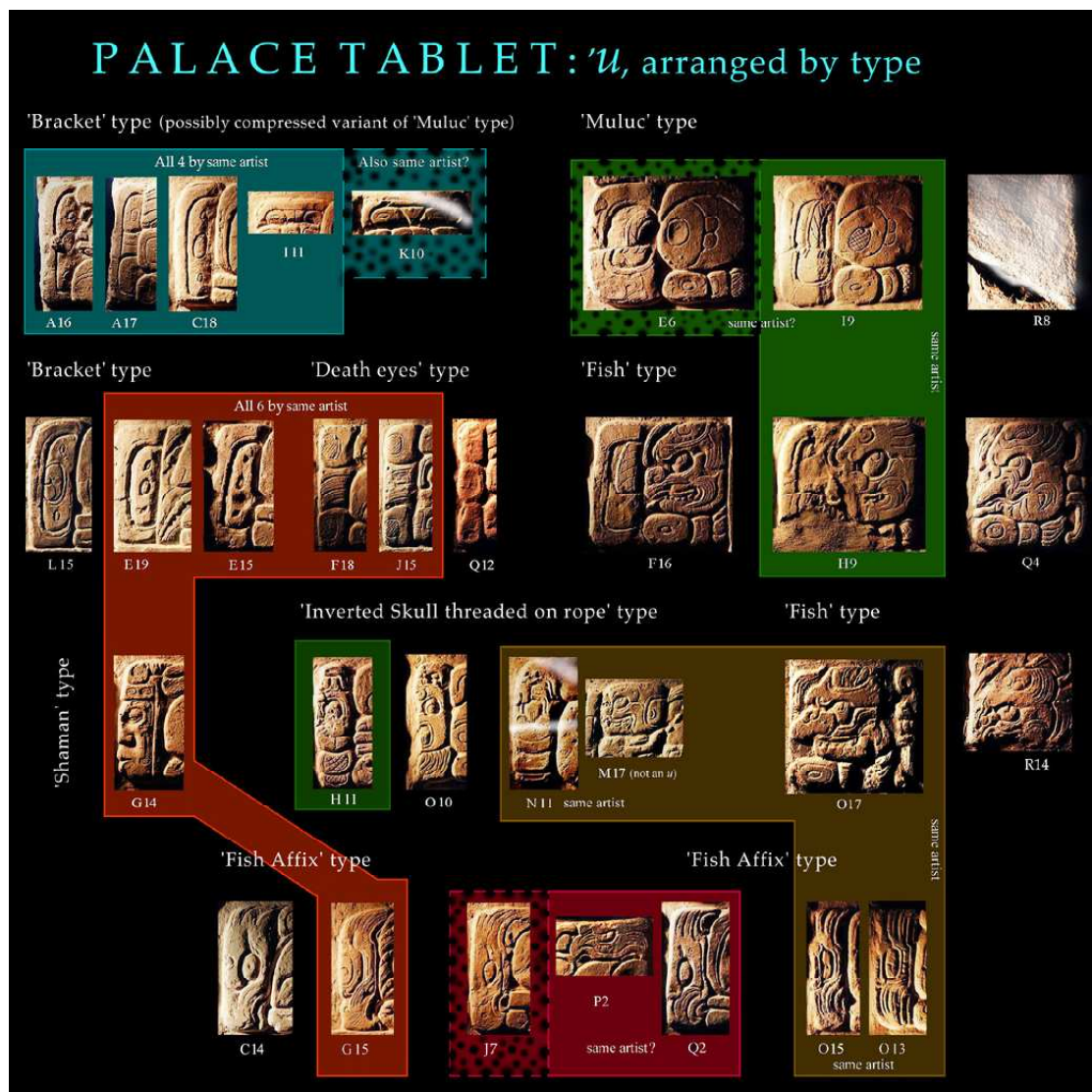


Fig. 4-03. *Palace Tablet: 'u* glyphs assigned to prominent Carvers. Photos by author.

4.1.3. Why

The next question is, "Why?" Why should any patron want to hire ten or twenty artisans to work on a panel or stela or stucco inscription? The most obvious possible advantage is one of time: Many hands make fast the work (see next section). But perhaps there existed among the Late Classic Maya other, ritualistic or political, reasons for involving many hands. For example, perhaps the task of creating a monument involved a purpose of uniting the community in

common service; the honor of contributing the work of one's family artist added to the prestige of that lineage.

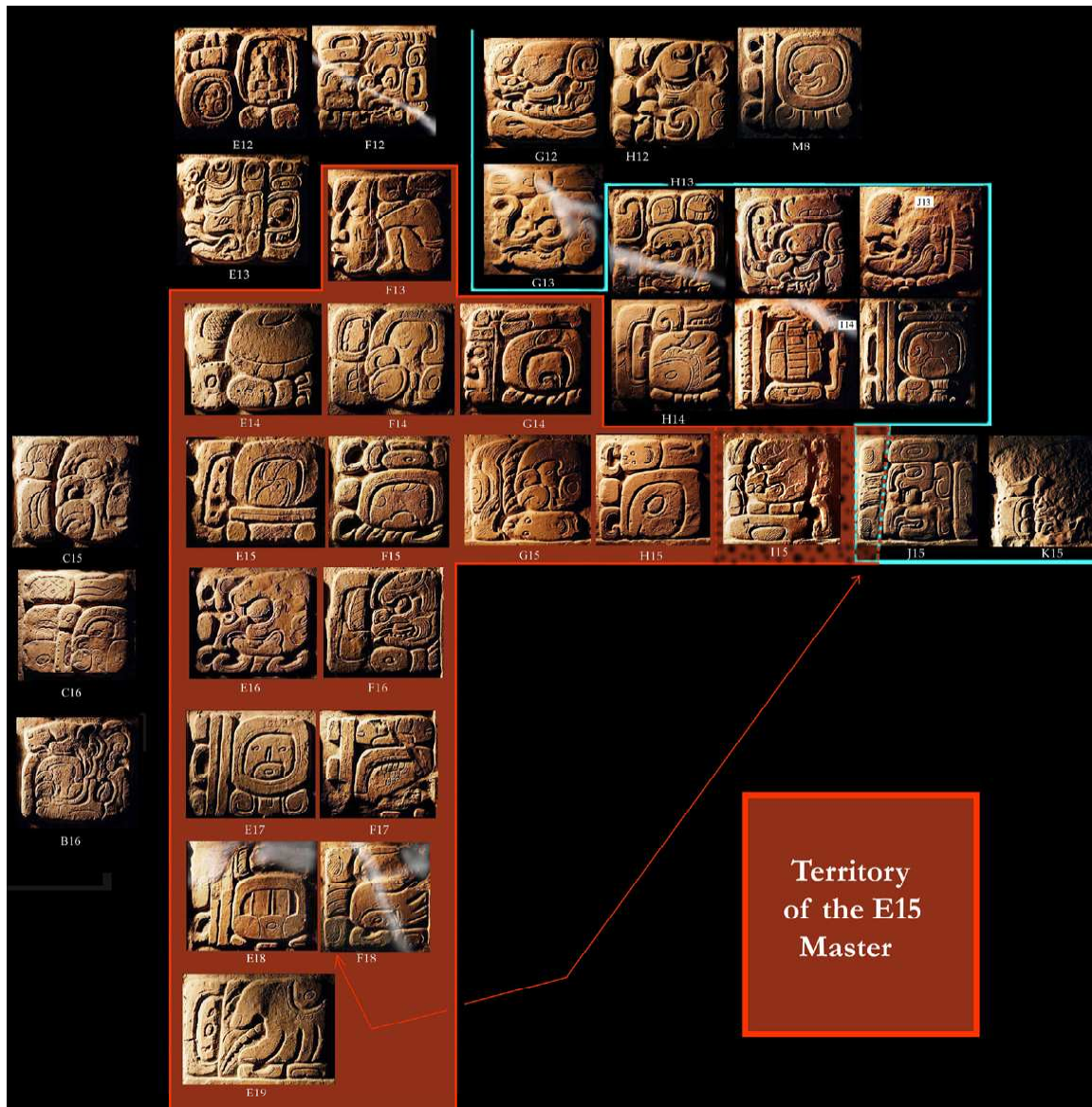


Fig. 4-04. *Palace Tablet*: glyphs carved by the E15 Master. Photos by author.

To support this idea, observe that a number of artists' signatures include designations such as *Yajaw Kaloomte'* (one such signed *Stela 12*, *Stela 13*, and *Panel 3* at Piedras Negras¹⁵⁶), a title implying that he was "owned" by the *Ajaw Kaloomte'*. However, this title is not very common; most of these signatures seem to be simply nominal rather than titular, only a few carry any such

¹⁵⁶ Stuart, D., *The Maya Artist, an Epigraphic and Iconographic Study*, Princeton University senior honors thesis 1989, p. 47.

"ownership" titles. If the use of certain artists reflected on their family associations, one might expect to see more explicit connections in the signatures.

Or perhaps, (and frankly more likely in my opinion) the schedule of creating such a monument was dictated by astrological parameters which brooked no delay. Why the astrologers did not give the artists and patrons more lead time for their monuments remains a mystery. Perhaps the large pool of artisans set a standard for speed that allowed and encouraged the prognosticators to impose a tight schedule; the two reasons thus could spur each other.

Another question: "Why not?" Any advantage gained would have to offset the *disadvantages* of assembling and orchestrating a large team. One major problem is stylistic unity: each sculptor has to submerge his own preferences to a "house style" in order that the final product have stylistic unity. Within this unity there is some room for individual variation, of course (or this whole dissertation would not be possible). But the peculiarities shared by all four artists of the *Tablet of the Slaves* (noted in Section 2.7 above) point to a project director who kept his team on a short leash. My own experience as a member of a similarly-motivated team of animators, however, shows that it is relatively easy for a good sculptor to assume a "house style" of this type.¹⁵⁷ And it is true that on some monuments, such as the *Palace Tablet*, individual styles vary much more broadly than one might expect to find in, say, an animated film. But a large team of experts also concentrates many egos in a small place; petty differences must have made many a project director wish for long-gone good old days of one-man or two-man shops.

¹⁵⁷ In 1990-1991, I worked for Will Vinton Studios, a Claymation® film animation studio in Portland, Oregon, on a CBS television project featuring the California Raisins®. The first task before me upon joining the Will Vinton team was to learn the "house style": with seventy animators employed there, we all had to submit our sculpting proclivities to a very strict set of parameters. "We make hands like this, with this proportion of finger-thickness to length, and with this kind of cuff on the hand," I was told by my trainer as he deftly shaped the plasticine. "Legs have just enough muscle to be believable without their looking like Betty Grable's. You don't need to worry about the eyes; they're all manufactured in our 'eye unit,' but each Raisin has different colored irises, and Be-Bop (the drummer)'s irises are two millimeters larger than the others, so don't mix the eyes up and put them in the wrong character. The bodies/faces are even more exacting, but luckily for you we have standard casts for each of the guys; you don't even have to clean off the casting-flanges. That's the job of the animator to whom you are delivering the fresh Raisins...." With twenty scenes from our project being filmed simultaneously, it was crucial to the film's continuity that we adhere to these parameters strictly. Even so, with constant exposure we became adept at recognizing the hand of certain animators, especially the masters: "Oh, nobody does sadness like Sarah," one of my colleagues admiringly commented after viewing the rushes of a particularly emotional closeup scene.

4.2 We can better estimate the production time of a major inscription.

4.2.1. Assumptions

Assuming that the time for carving a single glyph on the *Temple XIX Platform* to have been a quarter to a half an hour¹⁵⁸, its entire text could have been finished with sixty to a hundred twenty hours' labor. Divide that by eleven carvers, and you have six to eleven hours; one to two days. The relief figures on the *Platform* cover somewhat less than twice the area of the inscription, and they took perhaps twice as long to carve, so they multiplied the work by a factor of three to four. Thus, assuming that the inscription-carvers also executed the figures, and that rituals surrounding the making of sacred dynastic monuments did not significantly prolong the process, the *Temple XIX Platform* could have been executed from start to finish in *a single week*. Faster, if they worked in shifts. The *Tablet of the Slaves*, with four artists and less than half the surface area of the *Platform*, might have taken as little as half that time.

Depending how one counts the Initial Series, The *Palace Tablet (PT)* has approximately 280 relief glyphs, with figures filling the space for 40-50 more. The whole is carefully carved in low relief, and I estimate that to execute each glyph occupied roughly an hour of a carver's time, perhaps half that. Thus the twenty or so PT carvers could have finished the whole tablet in about 19 hours, or two to three days. Less, if they worked in shifts.

On the other hand, artists working on sacred objects suffered many interruptions for prayer and incense-burning, as described in section 4.4.1 below. This may have added some hours to the production time, perhaps even doubling it.

4.2.2. How much was actually produced

Ambitious, high quality monuments like these three, however, are uncommon. No more than twenty or, depending on one's criteria, perhaps thirty have been found at Palenque. If they could have been finished in such short time, why aren't there more?

First, archaeologists have only scratched the surface at Palenque. Certainly far more monuments still lie underground than above. I have little doubt that when Temple XI and the

¹⁵⁸ I base this number on observations of the young artisans at work in Palenque, and on my own experience as a carver. My very first Maya inscription involved relief glyphs in limestone about two inches square, copied from Thompson's drawings of *Naranjo Stela 24 (Maya Hieroglyphic Writing, Fig., 3)*. I hand-held very crude but effective chert flakes, and found that carving my glyphs to a very respectable completion took no more than an hour apiece. I assume that a professional carver, working with better tools, could halve or quarter that time.

residential compound "Temple" XXII, etc., are properly excavated (soon, one hopes), that more such reliefs will come to light.

Second, many buildings already excavated lacked major stone carving; they were decorated almost exclusively in paint and stucco, such as Temples XII, XIII, and XVIII. Every building carried far more stucco than stone decoration, on its piers, *crestería* (roof comb), mansard roofs, balustrades, etc. It is probable that some, perhaps many, of Palenque's limestone carvers also worked in stucco, particularly when one reflects that the *Temple XIX Platform*, the *Tablet of the Slaves*, and especially the *Temple of Inscriptions* reliefs possess major lacunae which were undoubtedly corrected with stucco. One can hardly imagine a situation in which the strokes carried over onto these stucco fill-ins were not carved by the same artists as the stone bits that flanked them. However, it is likely that many stucco sculptors worked exclusively in that medium; probably more than worked in stone, since the demand would have been greater.

Third, every doorway had hardwood lintels. Some of these were certainly carved (Those spanning the inner shrines of the Cross Group, for example, would have continued the surviving flanking texts.). Many, perhaps most, of the rest were also carved intricately, if remaining lintels in neighboring Yaxchilan and distant Tikal are any indication. Sapodilla wood is quite hard; techniques of carving were largely identical to those for carving limestone. It is more likely that a panel-carver also did lintels than that he would work plaster.

These carvers also no doubt found work carving decorative furniture, palanquins, masks, book-covers, room-divider screens, and perhaps facades and *cresterías* on some of the nicer wooden homes (that far outnumbered surviving stone buildings). The work that has been lost staggers the imagination.



Fig. 4-05. *Palace Tablet. Hu'n 'heads.'* . Photos by author.

4.2.3. Color painted on these reliefs

These inscriptions were painted after carving, though not usually in detailed polychrome. Some surviving fragments of the reliefs once mounted near the *PT* still retain much of their color, and reveal that they were painted simply.¹⁵⁹ The glyphs and their background were consistently painted solid red, including a part of the background frame, out an inch or so from

¹⁵⁹ See the Frontispiece to Schele & Mathews *The Bodega of Palenque*, which includes at center right a color plate of Bodega fragment #210 (Schele & Mathews item 44). Descriptions of *Bodega* items 39, 40, and 44, despite some small inconsistencies in color placement, show that in each case, the entire glyphic area was solid red, while the rims of the frames surrounding these glyphs were turquoise blue (just as shown in the frontispiece). In other areas of the Palace, glyphs were painted solid blue with red frames (Frontispiece left center, no. 84, from the Northwest Court). Schele and Mathews do not specify the color distribution on item 42, from the gallery near the *Palace Tablet*, but imply that, unlike its neighboring reliefs, it is painted more intricately: the glyphs are red and the ground around them blue, or vice versa.

Stucco glyphs also tend to be monochrome, as seen from the *Stucco Reliefs of Temple XIX and XVIII*. For example, those from Temple XIX still bear their vivid solid blue, and were placed on a red ground. Likewise, Temple XVIII's glyphs (Schele and Mathews items 395 - 548) tended to be blue "on top," with red "edges" or "sides" and red ground. A couple of these have a single glyphic element picked out in red: item 404, contains T212, the 'stingray spine,' followed by T501:130?:116 (*HA/ba-wa?-ni*) and T1:757-1017?:missing (*U-Bah*). The authors specify, "The T212 glyphic element is painted red; the remaining surface is blue. This single glyph (a stingray spine) is the *only element* in the entire Temple XVIII stucco inscription that was painted red on the front surface. All other glyphs were painted blue with red in the ground." (italics mine).

(Possibly the ground was painted incautiously enough that some of the red paint slopped up onto the edges/sides of the glyph 'cookies.' Also possibly, the artists may have had some aesthetic or other reason to paint the edges of the 'troughs' between glyphs red. Schele and Mathews do not specify whether the red paint ever continues round onto the reverse. If so, that would prove that the artists had painted the glyphs before installing them in the wall, which I think unlikely. I did examine the stuccoes from Temple XIX while under restoration, and I saw no evidence of paint on their back sides.)

In contrast to the *Temple XVIII and XIX* stuccos, all ten stucco glyphs found in or near the Palace's North Façade were, consistent with nearby stone reliefs, painted solid red on a blue ground. As with the one exception in Temple XVIII, there exists one polychrome emblem glyph from the North Façade (Schele & Mathews item 51) whose *BAAK* "bone" is red and blue, whose T38 'drops' / 'water group' affix is blue, and whose T168 *AJAW* is red. In general, however, the glyphs were monochrome for the most part, which adds little significant time to their hourly budget.

the carved area. The outermost part of the frames —a band a couple inches wide— were blue. This apparently was also the case on the *Palace Tablet* itself.¹⁶⁰

This practice may surprise us, particularly because carefully-placed color can improve legibility and definitely enhances visual appeal (a fact not lost on the T-shirt designers whose sellers swarm around Mexican archaeological tourist areas). Particularly unexpected is the practice of picking out only *one* glyphic element in (apparently) an entire long inscription. The spotlighting of a stingray spine in Temple XVIII's otherwise blue inscription has an appealing explanation: the instrument of bloodletting is appropriately red. The Palace's North Façade Emblem Glyph (Item 51 in Schele & Mathews 1979) is also apparently unique among its red fellows in having true polychrome: the "bone" *Baak* is "red and blue," the *K'uh* prefix blue (inappropriate if the drops were conceived of as blood or incense, but appropriate for water), and the *Ajaw* superfix red. Why only one glyph in an entire inscription should merit this treatment, however, is still a complete mystery.

The mystery deepens when one examines polychrome vases, which frequently exhibit multicolor glyphs, so much so that one might discern relatively standardized patterns.¹⁶¹ Even "monochrome" codex-style vases sometimes color 'daysign cartouches' red, as in K6751, K1371, K1372, K1302, etc. the "Site Q Dynastic Sequence Vases."¹⁶² Though uncommon, they are not hard to find, especially in vases from the Petén region, such as Naranjo and Waxaktun.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Traces of this background color are preserved under a layer of calcification on the extreme lower left of the Tablet

¹⁶¹ The extraordinarily research-useful website of the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Sciences, Inc., <FAMSI.org> exhibits hundreds of Justin Kerr's justly-famed rollout photographs of Classic Maya vases, in the sub-site <<http://research.famsi.org/kerrmaya.html>>.

¹⁶² Kerr, Justin *The Maya Vase Book*, Vol. V, New York, 1997, pp. 846ff.

¹⁶³ Vessels presumed to be from Waxaktun with multicolored glyphs include (using Kerr's designation):

K4552 with very large glyphs (Kerr Vol. 3),		
K4692 / MS1432, a rather spherical bowl from around the year AD 600 (Reents-Budet 316),		
K1379 (Kerr Vol.1),	K1901 (Kerr Vol.1),	K3996 (Kerr Vol. 3),
K3459 (Kerr Vol. 3),	K3881 (Kerr Vol. 3),	K4143 (Kerr Vol. 3),
K4922 (Kerr Vol 4),	K4962 (Kerr Vol 4),	K5637 ,
K7525 PSS on lower rim,	K7727 (Kerr Vol. 6),	K8526 .

An example from Naranjo: **MS0285**, a Middle Classic spherical bowl, (Reents-Budet 78 & 206).
From Motul de San Jose, a vase depicting the Ballgame: **K2803** / **MS1526**, (Reents-Budet 250).

Several of the Altun Ha' type:

K2993
K3034 / **MS0253**
MS0108
K5446 / **MSC091** "The Quetzal Vase" (Reents-Budet 98, Cat. #57)
K4681

A few others of uncertain origin:

K5458 / MS0040 Early Classic plate (Reents-Budet 82, Cat. #23)
K8089 "Painted Underarm" series of Court scene vases. (Kerr Vol. 6)
K1183 / MS1126 November Collection yellow (Middle Classic?) "Itzamnaaj & Hero Twins Vase" (Kerr Vol. 1)



Fig. 4-06. Plate with stuccoed rim from Tikal Burial 195, and details of 8 glyphs: *K'awiiil*, Tikal Emblem Glyph, *Yax*??-*K'uh*, *ya-ja-la*, *K'inich Ajaw*, "child-of father"-*Chan-Kab*-. The terracotta color is the original surface of the plate showing through the flaked stucco. Held by Norberto Tesucun, photo by author.

Tikal in particular produced several inscriptions painted on stuccoed vessels in Burial 195 (ca. AD 600) with extraordinarily colorful glyphs. In [Fig. 4-06](#), for example, one sees some appropriate colorations: the 'moon' sign is black-and-white, *K'inich Ajaw*'s head and the 'flames' issuing from *K'awiiil*'s head are red, *Yax* is blue-green. However, some are *not* intuitively colored: the 'monkey-face' we usually call the 'Ajaw daysign' (K533) is white with a wide vertical red stripe, in both its 'upright' (K533) and 'inverted' (K534) forms, even though their readings are *completely* distinct. Even the iconic version of this K534 (*la*) glyph which dangles from earflares features this coloration, as does the '*po*' portion of the *Ajaw* superfix on the emblem glyph.

So, apparently, there coexisted two or more —perhaps many— traditional color schemes for glyphs, perhaps varying by locale, or by individual, or specific to various media. A comprehensive study of color symbolism in Maya art, particularly its calligraphy, is still to be written, and beyond the scope of this dissertation.

4.3 We can better understand the relationship between the artistic Master of the project and his Carvers.

4.3.1. The Palenque form of the 'daysign cartouche'

There are two main forms of the 'daysign cartouche,' the "complex" form with 'feet' supporting the maize-grain-shaped¹⁶⁴ frame (the usual type we encounter in Classic inscriptions), and a simpler form lacking 'feet.' The 'footless' form of the 'cartouche' is common in the Postclassic Codices, but rare during the Classic Period, except at Palenque.

One might infer that this particular habit was part of the general Palenque style, in much the same way as we describe that style as associated with extraordinarily sensitive portrait work, extravagant stucco sculpture, very low-relief carving, fluid linear quality, and so on. In other words, individual Palenque carvers adopted a local style during their apprenticeship, or perhaps in a formal scribal school where one particular Master's habits predominated. However, a close examination of the distribution of this habit shows that at least two competing styles coexisted, indicating two or more such 'schools,' whether formal institutions or informal 'schools of thought.'

This is because we find some monuments at Palenque consistently employ the simple 'footless' form of the cartouche, while others prefer (with equal consistency) the more universal 'footed' form. This is not due to a particular artist's habit, nor is it confined to a historical period. For example, the prolific *Cross Group* carvers (ca. 692-695) all carved their cartouches in the simpler 'footless' form. A generation later, twenty or so artists of the *Palace Tablet* (ca. AD 720) all consistently used the more common 'footed' cartouche. This is not mere change of fashion, since we see that the 'footed' cartouche was also seen a generation *earlier* in the *House C Stairs* and the *Olvidado*, while the two decades AD 700 - 720 provides us with a handful of appearances of *both* forms.

Three examples of the consistent use of the simpler form date from the beginning of the eighth century, while some later inscriptions use it inconsistently:

The *Cross Group* inscriptions (Panels, alfardas, and jambs, comprising nine major panels, and several others) (early 690's) (consistent),

¹⁶⁴ This round-cornered rectangular shape is usually described as resembling a pebble or a CRT television screen, but it is clear that the Maya designed their glyphs to resemble grains of maize, just as their stelae represented sacred ears of maize. Sometimes it takes an untrained eye to see the obvious: my wife Janis Olsen observed this in 1988.

The *Panel of Temple XVII* (ca. 700, reign of Kan Bahlam) (consistent),

The *Panel of Temple XIV* (ca. 705) (consistent),

The *Temple XVIII Jambs* (ca. AD 730) (mixed, only a few dates),

The *Tablet of the Slaves* (ca. AD 750-760) (consistent after the first glyph)

The *Initial Series Vase*, an inscribed ceramic blackware vessel bearing Palenque's final recorded date (799). These latter three inscriptions, like the *Temple of Inscriptions* texts, mix both forms (see below).

But those consistently *with* 'feet' also appear in the earliest and the latest periods:

The *House C Hieroglyphic Stairs* (ca AD 654?),

The *Olvidado* stucco inscription (perhaps ca. 660-682),

The *Del Rio Throne* (702-709),

The *Dumbarton Oaks Panel* (ca. 715?) (either pre-accession or post-mortem K'an Joy Chitam),

The *Palace Tablet* (ca. 720),

The *Emiliano Zapata Panel* (ca. 720),

The inscriptions from *Temple XIX* (ca. 736),

Kan-Tok' Panel, Temple XVI (ca. 775),

The *Tablet of the 96 Glyphs* (783),

Several stone *incensario* stands,

all stucco glyphs,

and apparently nearly all minor inscriptions, with the exception of the blackware vessel mentioned above.¹⁶⁵

Then there are the four inscriptions that employ *both* forms.

The highly important (and early) texts from the *Temple of Inscriptions* (AD 683) mix the two styles. The 'footless' form predominates in the *Sarcophagus* (the first two daysigns include 'feet,' but the rest all lack them).¹⁶⁶ And the three long text panels in the Temple itself mix the two

¹⁶⁵ *Not rated 'Jonuta Panel'* ensemble (Mexico City, California & Houston collections): ca. 700 (Reign of Kan Bahlam)

¹⁶⁶ We also see this, the use of 'feet' on the opening clause or clauses, and leaving them off everywhere else, in the *Tablet of the Slaves* sixty years later, and in the *Initial Series Vase*, the very last date recorded at Palenque. This *might* constitute a pattern, comparable to that of the use of more formal 'head-variant' numerals in the opening dates of the *Cross Group* inscriptions,

types without apparent pattern. For example, the first *II Panel*, that on the east, has twelve cartouches with 'feet' and three without. The *Middle Panel's* three dates all wear 'feet,' and the third, *West Panel*, has nine with 'feet' and fifteen without. Neither form predominates in any particular area, except on the *Middle Panel*, which could be due to chance.

One might suggest, considering the rather hurried aspect of the *Sarcophagus*-lid inscription, that the sculptors consciously chose, after the first few glyphs, to carve the daysigns without 'feet' to save time. But no such pattern can be seen in the long texts upstairs in the same Temple. Obviously, the text compresses as it approaches the end—in the *West Panel* there are about 113 glyph-elements in the last double column (S-T), compared to 67 in the first (A-B) and 75 in the second (C-D)—yet of the three daysigns in the last double-column, two lack 'feet' while one (S1) is the more complicated form. One might infer from this that the strict separation of the two types of cartouches had not yet hardened at this early date.

But then there are the *Temple XVIII Jambs* (ca. AD 730) and the *Tablet of the Slaves* (ca. AD 750-760). Three of the latter's four artists all made their 'daysign cartouches' without 'feet' (B4a, C1a, C3a, D1a, E3a, F1a, F4b, G3a, G5b, and H3b). The first daysign, however, (glyph A1a), uses the more fancy type. The former, the tall inscription flanking *Temple XVIII's* entrance also uses both types of cartouche in its few dates. It was made at the behest of Ahkal Mo' Naab, not long before he built neighboring *Temple XIX*. This and the *Temple of Inscriptions'* apparently-indiscriminate use of the two varieties has been taken to imply that Palenque scribes generally made no distinction between the two types. Yet the other fifteen or twenty inscriptions (depending on how you count) offer overwhelming evidence to the contrary. At least *some* Palenque artists *very* consistently distinguished the two.

Finally, the *Initial Series Vase*, carrying the final date recorded at Palenque (799), has two surviving daysigns, one of each type. Stephen Houston and others have observed¹⁶⁷ that spelling rules—distinctions between simple and complex vowel-spellings, and between the three allographs of *Chan/Kan* meaning "four," "snake" and "sky," for example—break down in the Terminal Classic.¹⁶⁸ Perhaps *some* Palenque artists made a distinction between the allographs of the daysign cartouche, but only for a few decades.

wherein the artists see fit to open the text with more complex allographs than the rest of the text displays. This might constitute a third concurrent 'school' of inscription design, but the examples are too few to be sure.

¹⁶⁷ Personal communication in several conversations, 1998-2005.

¹⁶⁸ As seen in the *Temple XVIII Stuccos'* spellings of 'Long-Lips' Chan-Mat, the father of Ahkal Mo' Naab (ca. 731-736) and the Copan spellings of Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat's name (after 763).

It is entirely possible that some individual carvers did not distinguish between the two types, and had no preference for one type of cartouche over another. It is even possible that some artists deliberately alternated between the two forms, for variety's sake, just as they surely alternated between allographs of the syllable 'u'.¹⁶⁹ It appears that artists of this persuasion worked on the *Temple of Inscriptions* and the jamb inscriptions of *Temple XVIII*. They, however, form a distinct minority compared to those working on a score of other inscriptions. There, the artists working on a particular project submerged personal preferences in this matter to the Master Designer. (Or, perhaps the Master chose to hire carvers only from his own "school.") And the design preferences of these Masters fell into two camps. Likely there are other, subtler differences of style that will be discovered to distinguish "schools" of carvers within various cities, just as we already see styles distinguishing artists of one city versus another.

For the time being, suffice it to note that although wide stylistic variances were tolerated between individual carvers' preferences—for spelling, for use of cross-hatching or concave 'dark' areas, for line quality and for simplicity/complexity of glyph-design—at least some artists' preferences were overruled by the Master Design in certain areas. Yet these Master Designers' preferences, in turn, were not universally held, not within the same city, or apparently, even the same court.

4.3.2. Artists enjoyed some freedom

This observation confirms another: While some of these sculptors carefully followed the painted master layout, at least in their choice of certain allographs, other Hands were independent enough to draw or re-draw an individual glyph's under-layout, and insert their own idiosyncratic spellings. These were, after all, expert, seasoned carvers, with habits and opinions of their own. This implies a design situation on even a major monument, where several expert Carvers working under a Master are each given paper copies of the Master's layout, and are expected to put specific words in specific spaces—but not necessarily specific spellings of those words. Perhaps the Master sketched a light cursive drawing of each glyph in their proper

¹⁶⁹ It is also possible that they chose specific allographs for subtle reasons not yet visible to our crudely-discerning consciousness. These choices would not affect the literal reading of texts, but might convey some other, more poetic meaning.

places, but it must have been either erasable, or faint enough to cover effectively with the Carver's more formal redrawing.¹⁷⁰

We see this in the distribution of certain spellings in the *Palace Tablet*. Of the four examples of the name K'inich Janahb Pakal (C12, G6-G7, J12-J13, and P19), the first and the last are compressed into one glyph-block. The other two are precisely the same peculiar phonetic spelling, found, in a slightly simpler version, only twice elsewhere (the much earlier *Tableritos* and *Olvidado* stuccos, Schele & Mathews #36, & #617-#618 [+ #623?]). Schele supposed once in a lecture¹⁷¹ that these unusual *Palace Tablet* spellings might have been a conscious archaism, referring to the *Olvidado*, *Tableritos*, or other Pakal-contemporary inscriptions of a half-century earlier. Whatever their motivation, the two examples on the *Palace Tablet* are carved by different Hands, suggesting that the Carvers here felt compelled to follow their Master's layout, though why the other two spellings are different remain a mystery. Perhaps Schele's conjecture holds part of the answer.

The various Palenque Emblem Glyphs also distribute in a surprising pattern. The *Palace Tablet* is the only known text which gives the king a double EG like Yaxchilan's: twice (at C13-D13 and at O12-P12) we find the lord titled "*K'ul Ajaw Mat-la, K'ul Ajaw Baak-la*," or "sacred *Mat* king and sacred Bone king." The *Mat* is always portrayed as the head of a toothy sea-bird, the Bone as a rabbit-like skull, complete with ears and buck teeth. Elsewhere in the *Palace Tablet*, the several Emblem Glyphs appear as either the 'bird' alone (four times) or the 'rabbit skull' (once) —until the final double-column. (See [Fig. 3-100](#)). Suddenly, starting at R1, and repeating twice more at R8 and R18, we find the last three EG's in the text have as their main sign the simpler, more common 'wavy bone' glyph T570 (See [Fig. 3-107](#)). This striking departure is at present incomprehensible. Was the last double-column carved under a different Master? Did the two or three Carvers responsible for the last double-column of text just happen to have conservative taste in Emblem Glyphs and both happened to end up on the last patch of text? Or is there some as-yet-undetected subtle connotation to the 'wavy bone' Emblem Glyph that demanded its use in the final mentions of Lords Pakal, K'an-Joy-Chitam, and Ox-Yo-Hun, —and its avoidance the first nine times?

¹⁷⁰ One sees evidence of similar delegation in Egyptian monuments. Where incomplete carving reveals still-preserved underdrawing in Egyptian reliefs, the figures are only sketched out rudimentarily. The carver is trusted to fill in all details of clothing, feathers, musculature, etc. And some figures' positions are altered in the final carving, usually only adjusted a little to the left or right.

¹⁷¹ Maya Meetings at Texas, March 1986

At present, lacking any new insights into the subtle logic of Palenque scribes, it appears to me that my second proposal is the most plausible: The artists who carved the final long columns of text were allowed to use their own preferred spellings of the Emblem Glyphs (and presumably of other things), and thus must have been free to some degree to design their own underdrawing. This leads inescapably to the conclusion that there must have been a grid painted on the stone, and a Master version of the text — but only on a paper *cartoon*. Individual glyphs were indicated on the stone, if at all, by a brief sketch which afforded the artist freedom to design a much bolder and more careful final underdrawing (with perhaps entirely different allographs than the original.) Perhaps the paint that they used for layouts was as easily erased as that in the cave at Naj Tunich.¹⁷²

The Carvers did not work on continuous texts. Many clauses are begun by one Hand and continued by another, sometimes to be concluded by a third. They seem to have been able to step in anywhere, and did. The distribution of work by a single Artist crosses columns; usually a patch by one Hand is only four or five glyphs high but six or eight glyphs wide. Obviously this suggests that they worked on scaffolds, standing or sitting at a particular height for several hours. Just as obviously, their layout *must* have specified which words went into which blocks.

4.3.3. Individual spelling styles

The *Temple XIX Platform* inscription gives us the clearest evidence that individual Hands painted their own layouts before engraving them in stone. Their individual handwriting styles are here petrified, brushstrokes engraved into stone. It is obvious where one Hand leaves off and another begins, more than on any other monument, because the drawing style, as well as the carving style, changes.

The Platform carries an interesting rendering of Ahkal Mo' Naab's name, spelled with a half turtleshell and a whole 'macaw-head' draped with a 'lily pad.' The many, many other examples of his name vary dramatically, and only one other spelling like this occurs in the entire Corpus: also in *Temple XIX*, in the final line of the limestone *Tablet* inscription on the Temple's central pier. David Stuart was so struck by this duplication that he suggested the two inscriptions might be by the same Hand.¹⁷³ But they are clearly not so; despite the difference in carving technique

¹⁷² In 1989, vandals succeeded in completely destroying two dozen paintings in the cave, simply by smearing them with their fingers. Stone, Andrea, *Images from the Underworld, Naj Tunich and the Tradition of Maya Cave Painting*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1995, pp. 110-111.

¹⁷³ Private communication, 2000.

— one is engraved and the other in relief— the drawing of the macaw's head (especially the beak) and details like the turtleshell show the two certainly followed different scribal drawings, and the carved line-quality of the two is quite distinct ([Fig. 3-02](#)). The fact that they both use the same peculiar spelling suggests rather that they once had the same teacher, or worked from the same copy-book, or copied each other's spellings.

4.4. We can better understand the Carvers' attitude toward their texts.

4.4.1. Trying to read minds across gulfs of time and culture

While analyzing the *Temple XIX Platform*, I noted that the number of Carvers seemed to match the number of nobles illustrated. The idea entered my head that each of these nobles could represent a different lineage, and that perhaps each lineage supplied an artist, kind of a tithe, perhaps, to the completion of the monument. It also occurred to me that being asked to contribute a significant portion of the carving of such a monument could be a signal honor, rather than an onerous tithe.

Then, while making up the 'Ajaw superfix' table for the *Palace Tablet* ([Fig. 1-94](#)), I noted that every one of them appeared (at first) to be by a different Hand. If a lineage gained honor or *ch'ulel* by contributing the labor of their family Carver, perhaps certain glyphs (such as *Ajaw*) might bestow more honor than others, and the carving assignments for the text might be distributed —gerrymandered— so that each Carver had the honor of executing one *K'uhul Ajaw* glyph. This would be comparable to the practice of carefully cutting a child's birthday cake so that each celebrant receives a piece with a strawberry on top, and no-one feels unfairly treated.

I no longer subscribe to either of these hypotheses, but they highlight how many unknown variables exist in ancient artists' choices. There are many things that we may never know, that we *cannot* know, about these works of art and their makers and their motivations.

De Landa describes the making of "idols" as routinely accompanied by much ceremony:

"Among the occupations of the Indians were pottery and wood-working; they made much profit from forming idols of clay and wood, in doing which they fasted much and followed many rites." (De Landa 37)¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ De Landa, Diego, *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán*, translated by William Gates as *Yucatan Before and After the Conquest*, Baltimore, the Maya Society publ. #20, 1937. Dover Reprint 1978.

(Referring to ordinary people:) "In some of the fasts observed for their fiestas they neither ate meat nor knew their wives. They always fasted when receiving duties in connection with their festivals, and likewise on undertaking duties of the State, which at times lasted as long as three years; those who violated their abstinence were great sinners." (De Landa 46)

"One of the most arduous and difficult things these poor people had to do was the making of images of wood, which they called their gods. Thus they had a particular month designated for this work, and this was the month of Mol, or some other if the priest said it was right. ... The *chacs* whom they had chosen to serve in the matter, together with the priest and the artisan, began their fasts." (The patron ordering the idols then collected cedar wood from the forest.) When the wood arrived they built a small fenced-in hut of thatch, in which they put the wood and a large urn into which to put the idols, and to keep them covered up while they were working." (They also supplied the house with incense and statues of the four *Acantuns*, gods of the cardinal directions.) "They also brought the instruments with which to scarify themselves or draw blood from their ears; and also the tools for carving their black gods. When all these were ready in the hut, the priest, the *chacs*, and the artisan shut themselves in the hut, and they began making the gods, from time to time cutting their ears and anointing the statues herewith, and burning the incense. Thus they worked until they were finished, their families bringing them their food and needs; during this period they were not to consort with their wives, even in thought; nor could any one enter that place where they worked.

"They worked in much reverence and fear, as they say, making the gods. When they were finished and the idols perfected, the owner made them the finest present he was able, of birds, game, and their money, to pay for the labor of those who had made them. Then they removed them from the hut and set them in another enclosure of branches prepared for them in the court, where the priest blessed them with great solemnity, and an abundance of devout prayers; but first the priest and the artisans removed the soot with which they had covered themselves during their fasting. Then having exorcised the evil one and burned the sanctified incense, they put the images wrapped in a cloth in a chest and delivered them to their owner, who very devoutly received them. Afterwards the good priest preached a little on the excellence of the artisans' profession, or making new images of the gods, and on the ills that would have attended them had they not been faithful to the precepts of abstinence and fasting. After that they ate much and drank more." (De Landa 76-77)

I have little doubt that such reverence and ceremony attended the making of these inscriptions during the Classic period, though there seems to be no physical evidence that the makers of stucco glyphs were covered head to foot in soot. My feeling at this point is that the carvers, though reverent and doubtless bound by many complicated and perhaps incomprehensible procedures, worked freely and rather improvisedly on their respective areas of the stone. They may have been given specific assignments, but the irregular shapes of their territories on the *Palace Tablet* suggests that they began and ended their work arbitrarily. The boundaries of their work seem to have been governed by convenience rather than any ritual or political reason.

4.4.2. The *Palace Tablet* Carvers

Palace Tablet List of Carvers as delineated in [Fig. 4-07](#), (next page):

Left slab (A1-D19):

1. **ISIG Master** (*Dark Blue*): ISIG & Bak'tun collocation, and the neighboring glyphs C1-D7. Also Winal coefficient, whole of K'in glyph, D9, C11, D11, C15-D15, D16 and part of C16 and perhaps the Winal toad, C9, C12-D12. He carves boldly and rather simply, successfully rendering the many details of his glyphs capable of reading at a distance — appropriate to their placement high on the Tablet. Some details appear a bit shaky or rushed.

2. **Full-Figure-Tun Master** (*Halloween Orange*): Full Figure *Tun* glyph, *K'atun* coefficient, C8-D8, and perhaps the Winal toad and C9. Like his colleague, he carves details confidently, boldly, and with restraint.

2a. The '**Winal toad**' and the '**Mat bird**' next to it at C9 displays characteristics of both the ISIG Master and the Full-Figure-Tun Master. Both Artists may have worked here, or one of them could be imitating the other, or an expert associate imitated them both.

3. **C10-D10 intruder** (*Violet*): C10 and D10. His flat, engraved glyphs are closely related to the three-glyph patches over at P18-P19 and Q1-R1 and R2, especially the latter. He may be identical to this Hand or Hands.

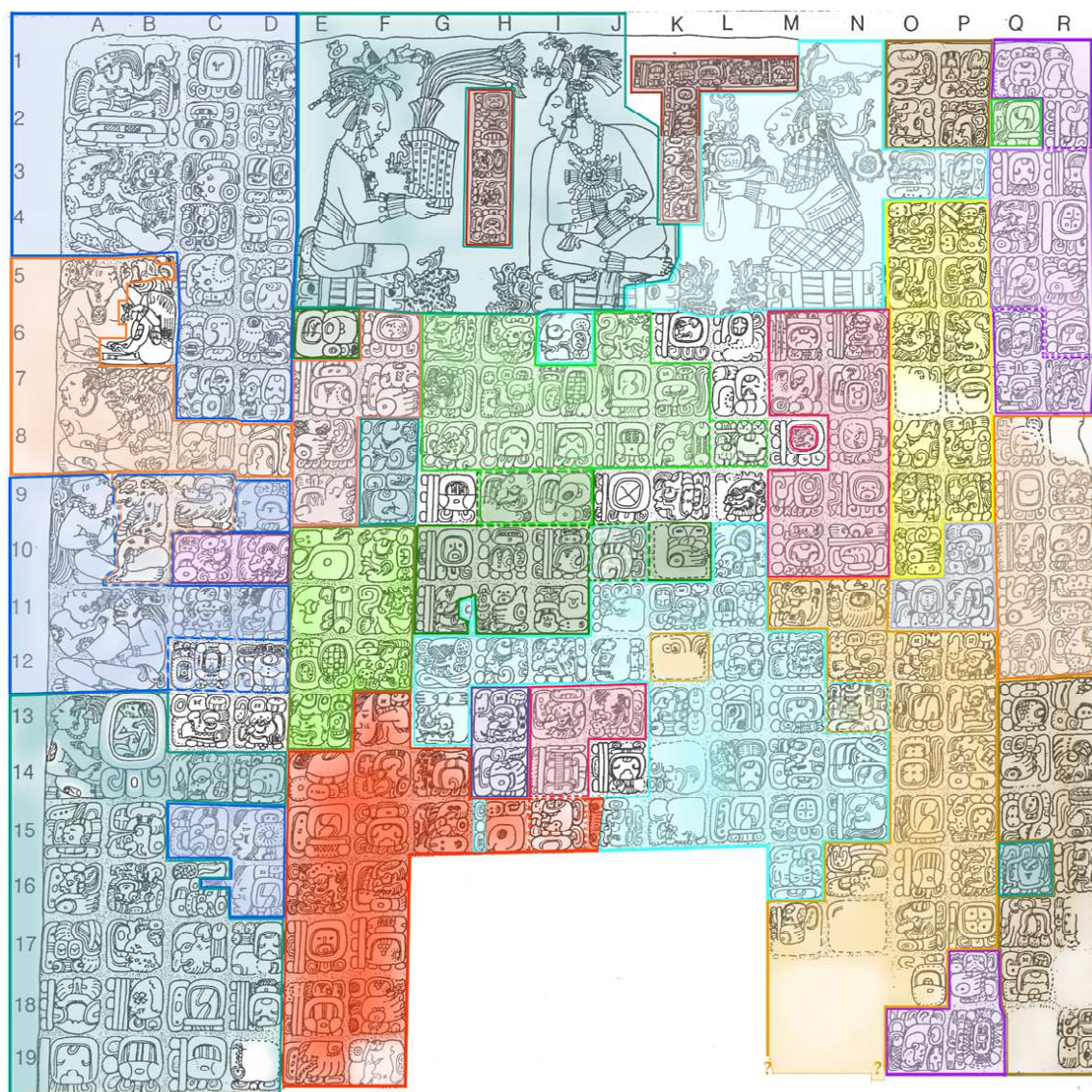


Fig. 4-07. Palace Tablet, distribution of major Hands' work-'territories.' Drawing by Merle Greene Robertson, colors by author.

4. The **body of the 'K'atun Bird'** (*uncolored*) is by another Artist, but I haven't connected him with any other carvings here. He is an inexpert draftsman, perhaps an apprentice, or one of these Masters on a bad day.

5. **The Full-Figure-Ajaw Master** (*Teal*): The possible Project Master, his work is brilliant and delicate, outstanding even among this crowd of experts. He executed almost all the lower third of the left slab of the *Tablet*. (An inexpert assistant intruded some details on his full-figure glyph, and the ISIG Master carved three glyphs and part of a fourth.) On the other two slabs, he carved glyphs E9, F9, Q16, and, significantly, the two male figures in the coronation scene, and the

jaguar-head and left snake-head on their thrones. This Master's work appears on all three stones, which further supports the argument that he was Project Master.

5a. **C12-D13**, containing the name and some of the titles of K'inich Janab Pakal, remains unattributed, though the first two of these glyphs display some characteristics of the ISIG Master.

Middle panel:

6. & 6a. '**Coronation**' Text Master and **Associate** (*Brick Red*): The fifteen glyphs labeling the (typical Palenque) tri-figure scene occupying the top five rows of Columns E through N (a double square) are by two Hands. The main Artist accomplished twelve of these, and an associate carved the last three glyphs in Column U. These two Hands appear nowhere else on the *Palace Tablet*. I see no evidence that these anomalous labels were recarved at a later time; they stand up from the background as high as the figures do.

7. A minor Master (*Light Pink*) carved **F6-E8 and E9**, at the top of Columns E-F, (including the mysterious events of K'an Joy Chitam's childhood on 2 Kawak 12 Yax, described as "tying the 'deerhoof'" and the "new tying" of something else). Glyphs by two different Hands (one of them the Full-Figure Ajaw Master) intrude into the beginning and end of this clause.

8. Another minor Master (*Jade Green*) carved, at **E10-E13**, some of the supernatural witnesses to this event. His work is flattish, like that of the upper glyphs of Columns Q-R, and he favors 'shell earflares' with distinctively angular interior details (F10 and F12).

9. The **E15 Master** (*Red*) carried on, finishing Columns E-F (F13-F19) and continuing horizontally with glyphs G4, G15, and parts of H15, I15, and J15.

10. The **K7 Fat/Flat Master** (*Green*) carved most of the upper middle texts of this slab (G6-H8, J7-J8, K7, K8, and perhaps L8, H9 and I9). His hand also appears in a single glyph, Q2, over on the right slab. His work is characterized by large planar surfaces, notably on his -*ya* suffixes (K7, J6, H8 and I8). A highly sculptural I6 intrudes, by the L14 *Itz'i Winik* Master (below).

11. The **H11-I11 Master** (*Dark Green*), working just below and closely related to the Fat/Flat Master, is responsible for G10-H11, I10, I11, most of J10 and K10, and perhaps H9 and I9. These last two share characteristics with the Fat/Flat Master, even more than usual. (Part of H11 also may have been finished by the *Itz'i-Winik* Master.) Hallmarks of this Hand are staring circular 'eyes' of his 'Ajaw'-type glyphs (G10, H11, I11) and a peculiar 'shadowed' form of 'the 'bunch of grapes' diagnostic in his 'stone signs.' His abstract 13-Ch'en, uniquely, wears a 'shell earflare' not

unlike those by the E10-E13 Master.

12. A minor contributor, but by no means a minor Artist (*Dark Violet*), sculpted **H13 & H14** with a sure, bold, angular hand. His work resembles that at O4, with whom he might be identified.

13. Another superlative sculptor is the **L14 Itz'i-Winik Master** (*Sky Blue*). Responsible for much of the right area of the middle slab, his work is the most dramatic and skillfully three-dimensional modeling of any Hands on this Tablet. He carved the 'Mother' figure and her *Took'-Pakal* above, her 'shark throne' and the right 'snake head' of the middle 'throne,' glyphs G12-G13, I6, J11-J12, L9-L15 [except K12], M12, M13, M14-M16, parts of H15 and J15, and perhaps parts of N13 and G11. Also, on the third slab, he carved glyphs O3-P3, which touch the 'Mother's' 'lilypad' headdress. This Artist appears to me to have been the second-most important participant in this project. At the very least, his skill as a sculptor is on par with the Full-Figure-*Ajaw* Master, the only carver I would describe so.

14. The **M6-N6 Master** (*Hot Pink*) is responsible for ten glyphs at the top of Columns M-N (M6-N10, with the probable exception of the 'daysign cartouche' at M8) and three more at I13-I14, dead center at eye level. His style seems to imitate that of his neighbor the *Itz'i-Winik* Master.

15. The **M12 & O15 Master** (*Ochre*) worked on adjacent areas of two slabs (M11-N11, N12, N16-N17 [and maybe the rest of the now-lost M-N column], possibly N13, and on the right slab, O12-O18). His work-distribution and that of his close neighbor the *Itz'i-Winik* Master both bridge the gap between the middle and right slabs, the only evidence that the slabs may have been sculpted *after* assembly, which I still think highly unlikely. He employs a limited toolbox, preferring bold lines even for internal details which other hands engrave lightly (as seen on his *u*-fish,' O13 and O15 in [Fig. 1-91](#)).

Right slab (O1-R19): This stone is a good 15% narrower than the left slab, and its carvers, unlike those elsewhere on the Palace Tablet, appear to have tried to distribute their work in continuous texts.

16. The **O1-P2 & Closing Master** (*Brown*): He began and ended the text on the right slab (O1-P2 and Q13-R19, except Q16), with one intruding glyph by the Full-Figure-*Ajaw* Master.

17. – 18. The **O19 & Q6 Master** (*Light Purple*) carved a continuous text from P18 to R2, three more glyphs (Q6, Q7-R7), and may have been responsible for the intervening glyphs (Q3-R5, R6).

If these latter seven (the **Q4 Master**) were indeed by a different Hand, he was a close imitator of his colleague.

19. The **Q8-R12 /Second Supplementary Series Master** (*Light Orange*) carved the eponymous ten glyphs. His work is bold and confident, though not of the finest skill, and he excavates flat-bottomed troughs where others crosshatch or carve slopes (such as the 'dark' areas on 'moon signs').

20. – 22. I have left ten glyphs unattributed. (C13-D13, G9, J9, J14, K6-L6, L7, K9-L9. The body of the Tun 'bird' I deal with in #4 above.) Some of these may eventually find kinship with some of the above-described Artist territories, but they remain homeless because each had some significant anomalous features which denied it membership in any other glyph groups. I am sure that adjacent glyphs like C13 and D13 are by the same Hand; likewise for K6-L6 and L7. However, for example, the daysign cartouches at K6, J9, and M8 are all unique, unlike any others on the Tablet, including each other. So these ten unattributed glyphs suggest the appearance of two or three more Hands here.

4.4.2.1. A closer estimate of the time required

So, despite uncertainties about whether some Hands are identical or distinct, we can confidently say that about a score of expert Carver-Artists carved the *Palace Tablet*. The most accomplished of them, the Full-Figure-*Ajaw* Master, carved an area equivalent to about sixty glyphs. If each glyph took two or three hours' carving, he put in 120 to 200 man-hours, just carving. Layout, ritual, and administrative work might roughly double this total, to a maximum of ten 40-hour weeks, with a minimum of perhaps two-thirds that. However, Bishu Saito, my *netsuke*-carving *sensei* in Japan, has worked seventy hours a week all his long life, and the young limestone carvers in Palenque put in similar hours, so our estimate could be reduced another third.

As his colleagues almost certainly worked concurrently, this constitutes an estimate for the whole Project, minus installation and painting. (This would not take much time, as the text of the *Palace Tablet* was [almost?] entirely monochrome red with a blue frame. The three figures were probably polychromed like those on the *'Warrior Panel' of Temple XVII*. The possibility of multicolored full-figure glyphs is charming to contemplate, but I know of no evidence for it). So the total time to complete this masterpiece was, very roughly, about five to eight weeks.

4.4.3. Artists' territories are generally contiguous

One thing surprised me about these Artists' 'territories': few Carvers on any of these monuments worked in two separate places on the same stone. They exist, particularly the three lead sculptors (ISIG Master, Full-Figure-*Ajaw* Master, *Itz'i-Winik* Master), but even these tend to have one or two main areas and only a glyph or two elsewhere.

If an artist were working till he dropped, then picking up the next morning, one might expect that while he slept another Carver might step in and continue where he left off, and the next morning the first Hand would pick up somewhere else. In other words, we should expect to find two or several disparate patches of one Hand's work, separated by other Hands' work. But we hardly ever do. The only example of a distribution that we would expect from this scenario is the patchwork carved by the ISIG Master, whose territory is interrupted by the Full-Figure-Tun Master. Usually, we find that a particular Artist carved some 10 or 20 glyphs, all in a connected area, as if he had staked out a spot on the stone (or on the scaffold) and returned to it day after day. It would be possible for a carver to finish his allotted 20 glyphs in a single sitting (*circa* 20-40 hours), but I find it highly unlikely. The task of engraving in buttery limestone is pleasant, but backbreaking over long periods.

4.4.4. Limestone not in infinite supply

The right panel of the *Palace Tablet* (columns OPQR) is some fifteen percent narrower than its "mirror" on the left (Columns ABCD). I can think of no plausible reason for such asymmetry except that they did not have a big enough slab of limestone to match the left panel. I have little doubt that similar motivation accounts for the tripartite division of the *Tablet of the Slaves*, and for the many inserted blocks in the *Temple of Inscriptions* panels. This tells us several things, not the least of which is that, though blessed with an abundance of excellent-quality limestone to make into their famous reliefs, the Palenque artisans did not have an infinite supply of it.

Further, one presumes that these panels were laid out with geometric "sacred" ratios such as the Golden Section and root-two rectangles, as Maya houses and *milpas* are laid out even today. The upper illustration of the Palace tablet, for example, is a double-square. Yet there is no way that the left and the right slabs of the *Palace Tablet* were laid out according to the same geometric proportion, despite the fact that they are visually symmetrical and contain the same number of (apparently) same-size glyphs. Obviously the acceptable set of geometric ratios for

inscriptions was wide and tolerant indeed. Perhaps the left panel was larger to showcase the full-figure glyphs.

4.4.5. K'an Joy Chitam's capture

The idea that work on the *Palace Tablet* was interrupted by the capture of K'an Joy Chitam has floated around the Texas Maya Meetings for many years. I heard it as an offhand remark from Linda Schele in 1986, but the observation was presented even then as an accepted and well-known proposition. In any case, the idea is that in the final columns of the main text, and concluding in the captions of the upper illustration, the text suddenly change rhetorical course, leaving behind mention of K'an Joy Chitam (who presumably had commissioned the *Tablet*, and focusing on the character of an otherwise unknown personage named *Ox-Yop-Huun* ("Three-Leaf-Headdress"). Now, if the last slab had suddenly had to be *replaced* at the last minute, in order to alter the text to fit the new situation, one might expect that they might not just happen to have an extra ten-foot-by-two-foot slab handy lying around the warehouse, suitable to carry a corrected text, and had to make do with one a few inches too narrow. This modified final text, or simply an interruption, could also explain somewhat the sudden difference in the use of the 'Bone' Emblem glyphs, which only occur in Columns Q-R.

What of the supposed final inscription, that surrounding the figures at the top of the *Tablet*? It is definitely carved by different Hands than the rest of the *Tablet*, but I have measured it carefully, and I believe it has never been erased and recarved — its upper surface is level with that of the figures and the main text below. It therefore did not have to be modified to accommodate this supposed new information, replacing K'an Joy Chitam with Ox-Yop-Huun. In other words, if work *was* interrupted and the text altered by the king's capture, this text lay unfinished, which increases the likelihood that the final paragraphs of the main text also lay unfinished. The interruption also is likely not have been very long, because at least two Hands worked on both the main slab (glyphs N11 and N12) and the right slab (glyphs O12-P12 through O18-P18). Another Hand continued O19-P19 and also Q1-R1, including the first of the 'Bone' emblem glyphs. The non-sequential process of carving this monument means that if the monument was in the midst of being carved when K'an Joy Chitam went on his ill-fated raid, we cannot know which part of it was undone. True, the final slab could to have been carved more or less sequentially, but the diagonal symmetry between the Hands at its top and bottom again

suggests a non-sequential process. It is possible that the purported interruption occurred at O19, but I doubt it, and here's the main reason why:

My calculations indicate that the whole *Tablet* could have been completed in a month, even including delays due to censuring, sacrifice, and prayer. Although a war event might come at any time, this is a small window during which to send off a royal raiding party on an ill-fated junket to Tonina. The probability that such an event happened *during* this particular month is small compared to the likelihood of its happening between projects. Also the *Palace Tablet* was the most ambitious and high-profile inscription of its time. After the *Cross Group* inscriptions, it is the most sumptuous and well-carved inscription ever found in Palenque. (The *Temple of Inscriptions* texts are longer but carved relatively carelessly.) I think it rather unlikely that its dedicating king would choose to go adventuring off to war in the middle of such an important project, but, in the words of Julie Guernsey, when has politics (or a religious war) ever taken "a backseat to art making" (even politico-religious art)?

4.4.6. Falling through the cracks

A greater mystery is why the artists of the *Platform of Temple XIX* felt the necessity to design the final column of text to fall on the crack-seam near the corner. It could have been easily avoided. Surely if they wished not to leave an inch-wide blank space there, they could, with little extra effort, have joined the corner of the stones at an angle or with a step-shaped joint, and not have had to cut through a column of glyphs. Likewise, the crack-spanning missing parts of glyphs in the *Tablet of the Slaves* and the *Temple of Inscriptions* panels are substantial, often more than a centimeter wide. Their artists apparently were completely comfortable with the way fill-in stucco matched the carved limestone. A coat of paint no doubt concealed any difference in color or texture.

The Artists of the *Palace Tablet*, however, carefully designed the texts to fall on either side of the cracks between Columns D and E and between N and O. This tells me that they did perceive some advantage to avoiding carving glyphs across breaks between slabs. It could have been the difference in quality, or of maintenance —the fact that not a shred of stucco survives in these interstices today suggests that the stucco deteriorated with some rapidity. Possibly these patches needed patching within a few years.

On the other hand, the last half-centimeter or so of Column T is missing, and was likely also filled in with stucco, just as on the *Temple XIX Platform*. This lack is slight but definite. They obviously had little compunction about completing a stone inscription with stucco, but to me the greater mystery is why they should so often have designed inscriptions that were just a half-centimeter or so too large for the stone at hand. Perhaps some rule of geometric proportion applied to glyphs and inscriptions, but not necessarily to the stones that carried them.

There are many possible motivations, having to do with custom and ritual, that we will likely never learn about. I can guess one more: Maya mathematics, sophisticated and subtle as it was, did not deal well with fractions. Maybe their methods of dividing up a stone into text-columns was approximate, and they sometimes under- or overestimated the width of a column of glyphs, and the accumulated error caused the last column to spill over the edge a bit. In my own experience as a calligrapher, I often have to divide up a given sheet of paper into a specific number of lines, and the arithmetic involved in fitting, say, nineteen lines of text $3/16$ of an inch high into an eighteen-inch high piece of paper—I will usually guess that an interlinear space, say about $7/16$ of an inch, will do, and begin to mark out the guides for ruling the lines... and find that I have underestimated. I'll then add a tiny fraction to the interlinear space, say, a sixteenth of an inch, and find that the text now takes up too much space. The result is a lot of erasing and resetting of guide marks, until I feel satisfied. Though I could do the entire calculation mathematically, I prefer to see it on paper to know whether it will work or not. Perhaps some Maya scribes worked the same way, but were not allowed to correct their work after a miscalculation of this type. On the correction of errors, see below, section 4.5.

4.4.7. Carving *in situ*

While it is clear that the *Palace Tablet* was carved while laying horizontal, it is just as clear that some other monuments were carved *in situ*, in a vertical position. When one examines closely the inscription of the *Temple XIX Platform*, one marvels at the delicacy of the glyphs, each scarcely over an inch high. One also notices that pitting and other damage increases near the bottom of the monument, especially on the long "front" side, as if careless janitors had banged cleaning equipment against it. Most importantly for my purposes, some of the glyphs near the bottom of the text, particularly M8-N8 and W8-X8, are less skillfully-carved than the others. I attribute this to the fact that the glyphs are a few inches from the floor, and that the carvers were working *in situ*, after the *Platform* had been installed, and the bottom edge of the

monument forced them into an awkward position. This accords with the fact that the plaster seam, now lost, that once completed the right half of Column X, could only have been carved *in situ*. It seems impractical to have carved the stone half-glyphs of Column X before the stucco patch was in place. The most likely way the carvers accomplished this would be to have carved the whole thing—or at least the last column—after assembly in *Temple XIX*. This would have been true also of the *Temple of Inscriptions Panels* whose many major seams crossing through glyphs also would have had to be filled with carved-to-match stucco.

On the other hand, one might expect that the big gaps in the first and last columns of *Tablet of the Slaves* also demand that it had been sculpted *in situ*, but the fact that the glyphs that straddle the breaks are executed by different Hands on either side of the break argues the opposite. Like the *Palace Tablet*, the *Tablet of the Slaves* was carved horizontally, four Carvers gathered round three worktables, and the stucco filling was carved later, *in situ*, to match the layouts. The *Temple XIX Platform* might indeed have enjoyed the same treatment, though we then must come up with another explanation for the lower quality of the last-row glyphs. Perhaps the Artists were simply trying to get it over with, rushing wearily toward the finish line, or driven by a looming deadline. Many other monuments, such as the *Dumbarton Oaks Tablet*, show distinctly unfinished details near the bottom of the slab ([Fig. 1-39](#)), which scholars usually attribute to the Artists' having run out of time.

Maya artists were no strangers to sculpting vertical surfaces. Though individual stucco glyphs were probably made comfortably on a horizontal table, pier figure sculptures at Palenque, for example, were certainly built directly upon the wall. Just as certainly most large stelae were carved—at least the fragile details—after erection.

4.5. A word about errors and corrections.

4.5.1. The European tradition

In European Medieval manuscripts, one commonly finds letters or words or whole phrases (in the *Book of Kells*, a whole page) canceled and corrected, after the scribe (or a proofreader) has discovered he or she made an error. Likewise, if a letter or word or passage is skipped and the omission discovered, we often find a contemporary insertion, using various strategies. Since Medieval ink bonds indelibly to vellum, European scribes were rather nonchalant about these

many unavoidable corrections. Erasures exist, but erasing changes the surface texture of the vellum, and are often more unsightly than crossouts or marginal insertions.

Roman inscriptions before this also contain their share of corrections, and even more often than corrected errors we find variations in spacing, crowding the final letters of a line, or allowing the end of a text to spill over onto the inscription's carved frame. This is also because of limitations of the media: Classical stone inscriptions were carved mainly on marble, travertine, and sometimes limestone (other stones, mainly granite and slate, they inscribed rarely). These media are absorbent, and the paint of choice, *minium* (cinnabar), permanent. Correcting the layout apparently was not worth the bother to them.

Roman, Greek, and Egyptian deletions usually take the form of simply chiseling out the offending words, leaving an obvious channeled gap in the design. (In ancient Rome, these channels were often filled with plaster, leaving a slightly-less-unsightly blank space.) Sometimes the corrector would simply carve a correct letter directly over the incorrect one, and fill in the mistake with plaster. Over the centuries, these plaster corrections erode away, leaving what appear to be "double exposures" here and there.

Insertions require a more laborious "dishing out" of a part of the inscription. The carver simply lowers the surface of the stone a centimeter or so in a shallow "saucer" shape, erasing anywhere from twenty to fifty letters before recarving. This subtle dip in the surface of the stone is only perceptible in raking light.

Ancient European scribes blithely made these corrections to carved and written texts, rarely bothering to disguise them, even in obvious deluxe manuscripts such as the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (ca. AD 700). This last example even had a full Anglo-Saxon translation inserted (some 150 years later) between the lines in a tiny, not-so-tidy minuscule script.

Occasional manuscripts were so highly regarded as visual showpieces as to demand elaborate procedures to achieve invisible corrections. Skilled correctors would carefully erase three or four lines of text, and laboriously re-prepare the vellum surface, in order to rewrite text in a slightly denser format to insert accidentally-skipped words. This was the case with the sumptuous *Trés Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* around 1412. Other scribes simply chose never to fix textual errors at all, so as not to disturb the lovely texture of the richly-wrought calligraphy. The *Book of Kells* is such a work; its text is corrupt, with errors on virtually every page, including an entire page duplicated (although this page —f. 218r— was "canceled" by a number of discreet red crosses placed round the margins). Only one page carries proofreaders'

corrections, as if to test how distracting they might appear; apparently the Master decided them too unappealing, and banned corrections elsewhere in the *Book*.

4.5.2. Maya scribes made no corrections

This last practice is what we find to be universal in Maya inscriptions. *Not one* shows any evidence of having been corrected by erasing, 'dishing out,' recarving, retouching, or rewriting. And there are plenty of errors, including obvious ones. Likewise with their books; not a single correction can be found in any of the four extant Codices.¹⁷⁵ (For Mesoamerican erasures *without* correction, see below, section 4.5.8.)

This is remarkable. This practice is probably unprecedented, unique. F. Kent Reilly (personal communication, 11 Aug 2004) explains it: "A card laid is a card played." Calling monuments "ritual moments set in stone," he proposes that the Maya (and other Mesoamerican cultures) appeared to believe that their hands were guided by the gods, and that any "error" was an intentional message from On High. This would explain why some apparent errors at Copan are repeated on more than one monument.¹⁷⁶ Linda Schele and Mary Miller concluded likewise in 1986:

"Mistakes in computation, drawing, and execution provide interesting information about the artist. At Palenque, Dos Pilas, and elsewhere, blatant errors of mathematical computation or in the use of signs were not corrected. Either the Maya did not proofread the first drafts made by the masters, or errors were considered to be divine intervention and protected from correction. The frequency of such mistakes also suggests that the process of creating the master drawing was a ritual occasion of major importance that included fasting, bloodletting, and, perhaps, heavy drinking of Maya beer, called *balche*. If so, the masters were probably not at their best when they drew the master painting."¹⁷⁷

Schele goes on:

"The kind of errors are those that should have been caught with even casual proofreading: for example, the Long Count date on Dos Pilas Stela 8 does not match the recorded Calendar Round date although subsequent calculations on this monument are

¹⁷⁵ Bruce Love observed that scribes added "correction numbers" (not for scribal errors, though) in the *Paris Codex*, (Love, *Paris Codex*, pp. 90, 99-100) and the corrections are obviously squeezed in, but the obsolete numbers are in no way crossed out or erased.

¹⁷⁶ This also could account for some of the more incomprehensible "exceptions" and other weird spellings that have bedeviled epigraphers who are at this writing still working out Maya patterns of indicating vowel-complexity, tense, aspect, and such.

¹⁷⁷ Schele, Linda, and Miller, Mary, *The Blood of Kings*, Fort Worth, the Kimbell Art Museum, 1986; p. 39.

made from the correct position, rather than from the erroneous one. The inscriptions of the Group of the Cross at Palenque are particularly notable for this kind of error. The Distance Number used to establish the 819-day Count station for the Long Count date of the Temple of the Foliated Cross is correctly calculated, but is incorrectly used in the inscription. It is likely that a master scribe calculated the correct Distance Number, then turned the information over to someone of lesser skill, who was to calculate the Calendar Round date of the 819-day Count. This secondary craftsman mistakenly added the Distance Number rather than subtracting it, as he should have. Since the 819-day Count is always earlier than the main date, the scribe should have caught the mistake with the most superficial check — he did not.

"The most revealing error, however, is on the Tablet of the Cross. The first clause of the text records the birth of the mother of the Palenque Triad gods before the beginning of the current era. This important date was recorded in the Long Count format, along with the Lord of the Night, the age of the moon and its 819-day Count station. Later in the text, the scribe recorded her accession 815 years later; in calculating that date, however, he made two errors: he counted the Distance Number from the 819-day Count station, rather than the date of the birth, and, in using tables of 1.0.4.0 (twenty computing years) to find the name of the day in the Calendar Round system, he stopped one line short, obtaining the wrong month position: he wrote 0 Zac, but he wanted 0 Yax. Furthermore, we know that the scribe was aware that he had made these errors, because in the next clause he used the correct date rather than the erroneous one. Furthermore, he used very unusual syntax in that clause to call the reader's attention to the presence of the error. In other words, the scribe of the Temple of the Cross knew he had made an error; he could easily have corrected it by simply washing off the paint of the master's drawing and redrawing the correct glyphs before the text was carved in relief —yet the erroneous date and Distance Number were deliberately left in the text.

"A later king, Chaacal III (*our Ahkal-Mo'-Naab III—m.v.*), used the same date on the doorjambs of Temple 18, in order to establish the date of his own accession and to sanctify that event by linking it to the accession of the Mother of the Gods. In this situation, the scribe of Temple 18 chose to use the erroneous date as it was written on the Tablet of the Cross, rather than the arithmetically correct date. If scribes allow such easily corrected errors to be retained in a text of such critical political and religious importance as the Tablet of the Cross,

especially when we know they had caught the error by the time they wrote the very next sentence, then it is possible that the Maya considered such errors to be the result of divine intervention. If in sanctifying so important an event as the accession of King Chaacal by linking it to the accession of this Mother Goddess, the scribe chose to use the incorrect date instead of the corrected one, then the Maya may have considered the written record to be more important than the arithmetically correct one. History as recorded in stone became the truth, even when the Maya themselves knew it to be in error."¹⁷⁸

4.5.3. Deliberate "errors"

Floyd Lounsbury, Bruce Frumker, and others have also demonstrated that Maya scribes likely made some deliberate "errors" (at least in calendrical information), sometimes simply by skipping information which we hadn't yet caught, or perhaps for the sake of better auguries or political reasons.¹⁷⁹ Joyce Marcus takes this a step further. She claims that such calendric errors

¹⁷⁸ Schele and Miller, *Op. cit.*, p. 59, n. 47.

I should add that the great Linda Schele herself was notorious for her sloppy spelling, the result of the furious pace with which she typed when in the grip of her muses. Her *Texas Notes* series of decipherment notices are rife with these errors. See the Texas Notes Archive at <www.utexas.edu/research/chaac/txnotes_archive.html> (July 2005). A few weeks before her death, she honored me with the commission to carve her epitaph on her burial urn. She calculated (under sedation) her birth date as 12.16.8.15.7 7 Ajaw G3, deleting the month. Even a total neophyte glypher knows that Ajaw only falls on Long Count dates ending in zero; a date ending in seven must be a *Manik'*. The point is that even a first-rate Maya scribe is capable of such errors, especially (as she noted) under the influence of drugs. And, just like a Maya carver guided by a Higher Power, I dutifully carved the error into her urn. (Fig. xyzz)

¹⁷⁹ Lounsbury demonstrated that Palenque's *Tablet of the Cross* date was not in error, just that the origin point of the next DN was suppressed. See: Lounsbury, Floyd, "Some Problems in the Interpretation of the Mythological Portion of the Hieroglyphic Text of the Temple of the Cross at Palenque," in *Third Palenque Round Table*, 1978, ed. Merle Greene Robertson, Part 2. Austin & London, University of Texas Press, 1980. As our understanding of Maya inscriptions improves, doubtless some other "errors" will be explained in similar ways.

Frumker, Bruce, "Nights Errant: A Look at Wayward Lords of the Night," #43 in *Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing*, #42, 43 44, Washington DC, August 1999. Frumker lists the following G-glyph "errors:"

Tikal St. 31 F8-F9: 10 Kaban **G4** 10 Yaxk'in (**should be G8**, but they apparently wished to harmonize with the G4 who ruled on Nuun Yax Ahiin's inauguration)

Palenque TFC Doorjamb records a "house event" on 9.12.19.14.12 5Eb **G3** 5 K'ayab; **should be G4**. Schele noted Kan Bahlam's heir apparenacy date (9.10.8.9.3) was also a G3, and suggested that they wanted the two dates to "harmonize..."

Yaxchilan Lintel 1 records Bird Jaguar's accession as falling on the Tun-ending (9.16.1.0.0) 11 Ajaw **G5** 8 Tzek. Obviously the date **demands a G9**, not G5. The 3rd, 4th, and 5th rulers of Yaxchilan all acceded on a G5 day, as did Jaguar Paw of Calak'mul and Jasaw Chan K'awiil of Tikal. (However, **Yaxchilan Stela 11** records the same accession correctly, as 9.6.1.0.0, 11 Ajaw, **G9**, 8 Tzek.)

Tikal Marcador records the conquest of Waxaktun on 8.17.1.4.12 **G5** 11 Eb, 15 Mak (**should be G2**).

Copan Stela P dated 9.9.10.0.0 **G8** (**should be G9**, of course) The reigning ruler Butz' Chan acceded on a G8 day (9.7.5.0.8), though on the Hieroglyphic Stairway, this date is called a **G4** day(!) (p. 24)

Copan Stela 5 dated 9.11.15.0.0 **G3** (**should be, of course, G9**) and again this matches 'Smoke-Imix's accession day (9.9.14.17.5 G3). However, "Smoke Imix had an erroneous Lord of the Night written for his accession date, **G7**." (p. 24) There is a pattern here, but damned if Frumker knows what it means...

Frumker notes that the augury of G4 and G7 are Maize God (very good) and Love Goddess (bad[!]) respectively, and these are the most common Lords of the Night, once you bar births, deaths, PE's, anniversaries, and some "obvious astronomical associations." G9, the reigning monarch of period-endings, has the augury Quiauitecutli/Tlaloc, the Lady/Lord of Rain (good).

Frumker mentions the long count on **Quirigua Stela E** is carved as 9.14.12.4.17 but **should be 13 tuns** to arrive at 12 Caban 5 Kayab. This error appears to be a simple carver's slip, replacing a dot with a hollow 'space filler.' Frumker also refers to **Dos Pilas Stela 8** (as did Schele), whose IS reads 9.12.6.15.11 13 Chuwen 19 K'ayab; it *should* read 9.12.0.10.11 13 Chuwen 19

are part of a larger, Orwellian pattern of falsification of Maya "history" for cynical political ends. She argues that Maya decipherment offers little value to the archaeologist or historian, since we cannot trust what they say.¹⁸⁰

An exhaustive list of calendrical and other unexplained errors in Maya inscriptions seems to be enormous. A sampling of some notable examples suggested by my colleagues:

Quirigua Stela E West: 9.14.12.4.17 12 Caban 5 Kayab ... Tun coefficient should be **13**. (noted by many, see n. 27)

Dos Pilas Stela 8: Initial Series reads 9.12.6.15.11 13 Chuwen 19 K'ayab; *should read* 9.12.0.10.11 13 Chuwen 19 K'ayab. (mentioned above).

Tikal Marcador records the conquest of Waxaktun on 8.(17).1.4.12 **G5** 11 Eb, 15 Mak (sort of). It has 3 errors *just in the Initial series*: there is no coefficient for K'atun, "10 Mak" should be "15 Mak" & G number is wrong (see n. 179).

Tikal Stela 8: "7 Ahau 8 Kankin date should really be (9.7.0.0.0) **7 Ahau 3 Kankin** (AD 573)."

Nakum Stela C: "has a 9.19.5.0.0 date recorded as 2 Ahau **14 Kankin** (should be 2 Ahau **13 Yaxkin**), and even records 10 tuns in place of the proper 5."

Copan Stela 63: "makes a similar mistake." (that is, a 10 for a 5)¹⁸¹

Frumker's list of Lords of the Night "errors" (see n. 27 for complete data):

Tikal Stela 31 F8-F9: 10 Kaban **G4** 10 Yaxk'in (should be **G8**)

Palenque Temple of the Foliated Cross Doorjamb: 9.12.19.14.12 5Eb **G3** 5 K'ayab; (should be **G4**).

Yaxchilan Lintel 1: (9.16.1.0.0) 11 Ajaw **G5** 8 Tzek. (Should be **G9**)

K'ayab. Marc Zender conjectures that this date was deliberately falsified—shifted over six years—so the ruler could be "born" in a free Dos Pilas.

¹⁸⁰ Marcus, Joyce, *Mesoamerican Writing Systems - Propaganda, Myth and History in Four Ancient Civilizations*. Princeton University Press, 1992. Three quotations suffice to elucidate her point of view:

"The story of how the Mexica achieved their independence (1426-1428) by overthrowing the yoke of Azcapotzalco exists in different versions, each having been recorded by a different ethnic group with different propaganda goals." (p. 144)

"One of our most important points, however, is this: because cultures like the Maya could calculate dates that were accurate to the day, scholars and laymen alike have often assumed that their goal was to record accurate 'history.' As we shall see...this is not the case. We will see cases of rulers with implausible reigns of 80 years and life spans of 95 years, royal women who were said to have given birth at age 700, and ancestors who supposedly were alive before humans entered the New World. To believe these ages and dates would be to miss the point. The calendar was a tool of the ruling class to be manipulated for propaganda purposes, by linking actual rulers to renowned mythical ancestors, selecting names that ensured good fortune for rulers, and removing blame for nobles' bad decisions by attributing it to the inevitability of fate. If an important 'historic' event took place on an inauspicious day, the rulers did not hesitate to move it to a more favorable date." (p. 142)

"Mesoamerican rulers were not attempting to write truthful and objective history, but to communicate official propaganda. Their writings have historic content, but it is a manipulated history in which the facts are altered to meet successive rulers' changing political and ideological needs. Past events were fabricated to suit current policies, conquests were exaggerated, lies were told about genealogical relationships, and secondary centers claimed independence from primary centers even when such control had never been relinquished." (p. 143)

Yaxchilan Stela 11: records the same accession correctly, as 9.6.1.0.0, 11 Ajaw, **G9**, 8 Tzek.)

Copan Stela P: 9.9.10.0.0 ... **G8** (should be **G9**)

Copan Hieroglyphic Stairway: 9.7.5.0.8 ... **G4** (should be **G8**)

Copan Stela 5: dated 9.11.15.0.0 ... **G3** (should be **G9**)

Dresden Codex: Examining the Dresden Codex, I found several items that appear to be genuine errors in just a few pages¹⁸²:

P. 18c: The text describes the three burdens of the Moon Goddess as:

2- *Yax-K'an, u-ku-chu, Itzamnaah-na*, "Moon Goddess;"

mu-yu, u-ku-chu, u-Mut?-ka, "Moon Goddess;"

Sak-Chak-death-head', *u-ku-chu**, "Moon Goddess," *wa*-death-head'-*la*. (*Notably, the third *chu* is **incompletely drawn**; it is missing its 'spoon,' as is the adjacent one on p. 19c(1) (and possibly 19c(3)).)

The first burden (in her tumpline) is nothing more than the glyphs *Yax* and *K'an*;

The second burden is a *Mut?*-headed, 'death-eye-collared skeleton.' His head-glyph here sometimes substitutes for the first glyph in these "burden" texts... But here it is **named mu-y(u)**; where the *yu* suffix is *pretty* close to the *ti* suffix we are used to seeing in the word *mut* "bird/burden."¹⁸³ I believe this to be a scribal error: a substitution of *yu* for *ti*.

The third burden is a 'skull-in-a-bundle' or 'bound-up skull.'

The difference between *kuch* burdens and *mut* / *Mut?-ka* burdens is that the latter perch bird-like on the head or neck/shoulder of the goddess, while the former are always in a tumpline under her arm.... Note: The second text has *both* terms, *u-ku-chu, u-Mut?-ka*. Presumably one can infer that the Maya made some (meaning) distinction between these two words for "burden."

Page 19c(3)'s text is **out of order**, if you read it the usual way, A1-B1-A2-B2. It makes sense, follows the pattern, if you read it as single-columns: A1-A2-B1-B2.

Page 23c(1 & 3) begin with the same glyph, but in the latter the superfix is missing its outlines of tiny dots.

¹⁸¹ These three courtesy of Stan Guenter.

¹⁸² A high-resolution downloadable facsimile of the entire *Dresden Codex* in .pdf format is available online (as of Nov 2005) at <http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/dresden.html>.

In this fairly superficial examination of what is clearly the work of one of the better *Dresden* calligraphers, *chosen at random*, I found at least *three* minor errors, and maybe a couple more. The *Dresden* must be *full* of little errors. None of them seem to have been corrected. What a problem for text-transmission! Maybe they had Priests' Councils from time to time where they issued Authorized Standard Versions of their almanacs, complete with footnotes citing variant forms, like an RSV Bible, or the texts would have become *incredibly* corrupt. Perhaps it already is; perhaps these many variations represent very careful copies of copies of earlier versions of this almanac, containing the accumulated "errors" of a thousand years' transmission.

In the *Paris Codex*. Bruce Love observed that scribes added "correction numbers" (not for scribal errors, though) in the Paris Codex.¹⁸⁴ There, in a section of astronomical movements, some of the numbers had become obsolete, and a later scribe has obviously squeezed in numbers to bring the tables up-to-date. However, the obsolete numbers are in no way crossed out or erased.

If some or all of the "Lord of the Night" errors Frumker notes are indeed intentional, and likewise the falsification of the birth date on Stela 8 of Dos Pilas, then we get a glimpse of the Mayas' regard for historical precision. The desire for rigorous modern academic accuracy was subservient in some way to political and religious needs. They seem to have believed that deliberately changing the text to say that, for example, G4 instead of G9 presided on a particular day, actually made a difference to the gods; gods who could see right through their subterfuge. They must have *really* believed in the power of the written word. Or perhaps they were simply, as Marcus believes, totally cynical, like Karl Rove, only expecting to fool the *hoi polloi*. Or, more likely, something else entirely. Or, even more likely, a mixture of these motivations.

Finally, Bob Wald offers an example of a non-calendric error at Palenque:

"I have also thought for several years and still think that there is an error in the birth glyph on the *Palenque Temple of the Cross* at P11. Throughout that whole text there is an alternation between **SIY-ya-ha** (or if you prefer **SIH-ya-ja**) *siyaj* and **SIY-ya-ji-ya** *siyajiy* (or if you prefer: *siyajiiy*). *Siyaj* occurs after a calendar round date and *siyajiy* after a distance number. This is as it should be since the past enclitic signals a counting away from a previous event in the past (more accurately stated: a back reference). But in the narration about "Casper" (or whatever his real name is), both of the birth verbs have the enclitic attached. This is to me clearly an error. A comparison with the other

¹⁸³ He also appears as her *kuch* on the next page 19c, named by a portrait head with a black 'ear-ornament' prefixed by a coefficient 10. On the next page, 20c(1), this same death-god is named by the usual God A name ['mirror'-'God A']

¹⁸⁴ Love, Bruce, *Paris Codex*, pp. 90, 99-100

passages gives a hint that something is wrong here since the syntax is otherwise the same or very similar. But most important, the first verb (at P11) is not making a back reference which would allow the enclitic to make sense. Instead, they used the same form as at two rows below it (at P13) where it makes perfect sense."¹⁸⁵

4.5.4. Jewish and Chinese scribal corrections

Two other scribal cultures offer comparison. Jewish *sofrim* (scribes) are charged with writing sacred texts according to rather complicated rules. One of these dictates that each letter in a *Torah* scroll stand alone, close to but not touching its neighbors. In some cases, if a scribe accidentally allows two adjacent letters to touch, the scroll is thereby made void, and must be discarded (in a specific ritual way) and begun again. No erasing or correction is allowed. But neither are errors tolerated.

Chinese and Japanese calligraphers have similar strictures, but applied to *any* aesthetic writing—secular or sacred—as well. In East Asian calligraphy, each character is made with a well-established technique, a specific series of strokes, within which expressive variation is expected. However, each stroke can be done once and once only. One is never allowed to "touch up" or to go over a stroke a second time. If one slips or errs, the entire work is ruined and must be done over. Legends abound about famed calligraphers making hundreds or thousands of attempts before achieving a particular masterpiece.

An exception that tests the rule is illustrative. The greatest masterpiece by the most renowned Chinese calligrapher is reputed to be The *Lan Ting Hsü* or "Orchid Pavilion Preface" by Wang Hsi-Chih of April 353.¹⁸⁶ This spontaneously-written piece contained a slight error, a connection between two characters that Wang felt improper. He wrote it over, again and again, trying to capture the balance of spontaneity, balance, and skill, and to correct the error, but he acknowledged that none of his later attempts equaled the sublime balance and all-round excellence of the first. So his initial essay, error and all, became the Holy Grail of Chinese calligraphy. Today, though the original has disappeared, some 117 copies, mostly made during the T'ang Dynasty, survive.

¹⁸⁵ Personal communication, 16 August 2004

¹⁸⁶ Chen Chih-Mai, *Chinese Calligraphers and Their Art*, London, New York, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press and Cambridge University Press, 1966, p. 62

4.5.5. Guided by forces beyond oneself

Both these traditions suggest an aspect of how the Maya might have regarded scribal errors: the *act of writing* was inspired and guided by forces outside the scribe (in Jewish tradition, God; in China, something less deistic but equally extra-intellectual). The act was *itself* sacred, was at least as important as its tangible, visible product. The *recording* of a ceremony was itself an essential part of the ceremony. This would help to explain why so many Maya monuments are self-referential.

This is also in accord with the most oft-repeated phrase in Maya literature, the opening words of Michael Coe's "Primary Standard Sequence" (which David Stuart prefers to call the "Dedicatory Formula"). The usual first two glyphs *Alay t'abay* "Here ascends.../Here is presented..." are followed by the type of vessel ("plate," "drinking cup," etc.) which itself is very often described as *u-tz'ib* /*tz'ibnaj* or *yuxul*(?) "painted/written" or "carved/engraved." The act of decorating the vessel sanctified it as much as any prayer or incensing. This would also go a long way to explain the abundance of "pseudo-glyphic inscriptions." The gibberish or repetitive words scrawled on the sides of "illiterate" vases mean nothing to us as texts, but the act of "*writing*" them meant enough as a sanctifying act, a dedicatory act, to compel hundreds of "unschooled" Classic painters to try.

One more mysterious piece of evidence might be explained by this attitude. The process of inscribing a monument or a vessel not only sanctified it, it was important enough an act that the scribe/carver in some contexts signed his (or her) work. This act—signing one's name—is extremely rare in any ancient art, and occurs in Ancient Mesoamerica only in a very narrow window of time and in a few sites, all of them Maya. These signatures on ceramic vessels usually consist of the phrase *u-tz'ib*... "the writing/painting of..." followed by what is evidently the artist's name. Likewise, and much more commonly, on monuments we find the formula *Yuxul*(?)¹⁸⁷... "his carving/engraving..." followed by the artist's name. Many monuments display two or more signatures, and some monuments carry as many as eight.¹⁸⁸ Knowing that

¹⁸⁷ The particular glyphic combination that translates as "his carving" is not completely understood. The first and last glyphs are the syllables *yu* and *lu*, but the ('bat head') middle one's reading (T756) is not at all established. In some contexts it (or something very like it) apparently reads *ts'i*, but here it likely does not. The Maya word *uxul* means "carving" and if T756 in the context of "signatures" conveniently reads *xu*, then we would have *yuxul*, "his carving. Further, the Yaxchilan king nicknamed 'Bird-Jaguar' spells his name *ya-T756-na Balam*, and this *xu* reading produces the name of the 'Bird': *yaxuun*, which happens to be the Maya name for the Lovely Cotinga, a brilliant blue bird. If we substitute *ts'i* for *xu* in these readings, we get *yuts'iin* and *yats'iin*.

¹⁸⁸ *El Peru Stela 34*, now in the Cleveland Museum, and *Piedras Negras Stela 12*, now in the Guatemala Museo Nacional, have eight signatures each. These signatures carry names of otherwise unknown individuals, and all are in different handwriting styles. Surprisingly, *El Peru Stela 33*, now in the Kimbell Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, was clearly made at the same time as *Stela 34*.

major works such as the *Palace Tablet* (which, like all Palenque tablets, is unsigned) had upwards of twenty artists carving on them at one time, this is not so surprising.

4.5.6. Motivation for artists' signatures

What is surprising to our modern sensibilities is the fact that the carvers signed the work, but apparently the Master of the project, the boss who laid it out, did not. We like to think of a signature as a means to give credit where it's due, and of course the Master of a major project deserves more credit than his hired lackeys. Obviously the Ancient Maya's motivations for "signing" their work was substantially different from ours, and we must take great care in interpreting the meanings of these "signatures." Keep in mind that the body of "signed" work is anomalous, only a tiny fraction of the corpus of Maya inscriptions. Many cities with important bodies of inscriptions never adopted this practice, and even the ones who did, did so erratically¹⁸⁹, and only during a relatively short era, barely a century during the Late Classic.¹⁹⁰ This suggests that whatever confluence of beliefs and attitudes these "signatures" represent, it was not at all universal among the Maya.

As to why we find no "Project Director credits" in these "signatures," several possible explanations arise, none of them particularly satisfying:

1. The Project Master was himself a carver, a kind of "first among equals;" his signature as simply one of the carvers was perceived as acknowledgment enough.
2. The Project Master was obliged to remain anonymous for ritualistic or other reasons unknown (as were the priests who cast the auguries to determine the auspicious dates for dedication of the monument, and who—at least in part—composed the monument's text).
3. The final execution of the painting/writing (on vessels) or carving (on stone, wood, and carved vessels) was the most important step in a sanctification-by-inscription process. This final step alone was worthy of recording in a "signature." The author of the preliminary spoken and painted work, which the carver made permanent, was below

(the two were set up as a pair), but carries *no* signatures on its surviving face. Monuments from Calakmul (*Stela 51* for example), Yaxchilan, Bonampak, El Peru. and several other western Maya cities have signatures. At Palenque, no major objects carry "signatures," with the possible atypical examples of the *Aj-K'uhu'n* portraits on the *Pakal's Sarcophagus*. The two surviving "signatures" appear on minor objects such as stone incensario stands (e.g., Item 282 in Schele and Mathews).

¹⁸⁹ See previous note.

¹⁹⁰ At Piedras Negras, the earliest and latest dates for these "signatures" are 687 (*Stela 6*) and 795 AD (*Stela 12*)

some threshold, not worthy-to-be-carved. This reason could overlap that of the previous suggestion.

4. The so-called *lu*-Bat' verb *yu*-Bat'-*lu* or *yu-lu*-Bat', found exclusively on carved objects, may indeed read *yuxul* "his carving",¹⁹¹ but this word might in Ancient times have had a more complex meaning; something more like "his painting-and-carving."¹⁹²
5. It is possible that some title in the latter portion of the "signatures" denotes mastership, though there are few likely prospects for this. We should expect to find *ba-u*-Bat'-*lu*, *ba-tz'i-bi* ("first carver" or first scribe"), or some such. Many titles that we *do* find, for example, *Aj-bi-k'i-la*, (*PNG Stela12*), frequently occur in two or three "signatures" *on the same monument*, so they cannot be a Master's title.
6. Possibly the Maya monument-carvers' workshop was organized so differently from ours that there existed no official master. Somehow the committee of scribe-carvers decided amongst themselves the layout of the monument and the distribution of labor.

Comments:

1. If indeed "acknowledgment" was even the purpose of Maya "signatures." This explanation depends on the assumption that the Western concepts of "fame" or "respect" provided the main motivations for the existence of these "signatures," which may or (more likely) may not have been the case. In my estimate, the motivation for them *could* have included some facet of what we understand as "acknowledgement," but certainly the situation was more complex and alien than that.
2. Despite the fact that even captives were so immortalized. There must have been some overlap between carver, calligrapher, noble, and priest/shaman. The king and other noble celebrants who were recorded performing the event were apparently assuming the role of priest/shamans. Yet Landa asserts that in Terminal Postclassic Yucatan the roles of ruler and priest were separate. We may safely assume that although in Classic times it is possible that all rulers were shaman-priests, it is highly unlikely that all shaman-priests were rulers. If a *lu*-Bat' list of carvers (such as that on *El Peru St. 34*) does not include the Project Director specifically, as seems the case, then it is possible that he may have

¹⁹¹ Nikolai Grube some years ago published the reading *yu-xu-l(u)* / *yuxul* / "his carving..." offering what amounted to circumstantial evidence for the reading of the 'Bat head' as *xu*. Partly because there is strong evidence that an apparently identical glyph reads *ts'i* in certain contexts, and uncomfortable with the idea of polyvalent Maya glyphs, the epigraphical community has since retracted support for the *xu* reading for the 'Bat head.'

¹⁹² This was suggested by Michael Coe in Coe & Kerr 1997, p. 133f.

been seen as a mere facilitator, a mid-level intermediary between the sacred celebrants and the sacred makers-of-permanency.

3. This proposal compares to our "ribbon-cutting" ceremonies, or the "Driving of the Golden Spike" which marked the completion of the American Transcontinental Railroad.
4. This implies that the typical carver executed his own painted layouts. A comparable example: among the small community of inscription carvers working in America and Europe today, this is precisely the case. For example, Ieuan Rees in Wales, Kristoffel Boudens in Belgium, David Kindersley (carver of monuments in Westminster and Coventry Cathedrals in England), and John Benson of Newport, Rhode Island (carver of the Kennedy and Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorials in Arlington Cemetery near Washington, DC)¹⁹³, all are famed calligraphers as well as carvers, and work at least as hard on their layouts as on their final product. Yet all are known primarily as inscription carvers; their skill as calligraphers hardly acknowledged.

However, in China and in Ancient Rome, the situation was reversed: The carver was totally anonymous, though it took extraordinary skill to cut the layout artist's calligraphy precisely. In Rome, this calligrapher (*ordinator* or "layout man") was usually the boss of his shop, though he was accorded hardly higher status than his carver(s) (*sculptor* or *marmorius*): neither *ordinator* nor *sculptor* ever signed their work. The Chinese calligrapher, respected as a practitioner of the most-esteemed artform, invariably signed his pieces or was celebrated elsewhere, but his meticulous carver(s) remain totally unremarked.

In Medieval Europe, both layout artist and carver, who were most likely separate — even belonging to distinct craft guilds —, were respected no more than any other craftsman. Many Medieval books, on the other hand, name their scribe in their colophon, often alongside the name of the binder, illustrator, and patron. Payment records indicate that the scribe was valued no more than any of the other craftsmen who contributed to the work. Usually the cost of the vellum was the largest item in the budget, far above the salaries of the scribes and artists.

¹⁹³ These artists and many other great carvers: the other members of the Boudens family, Father Edward Catich of Iowa, Other members of the Benson family, Brenda Berman of London, and many other carvers, are personal friends of the author. John E. "Fud" Benson was my first calligraphy and carving instructor, and I recall vividly his telling me that I had already taught myself what I needed to know about carving, but I had a great deal to learn about Roman Capitals. In other words, learning to be a good calligrapher is considerably harder and longer than mastering carving.

Ancient Greek artists, on the other hand, were better known, though through literature and word-of-mouth more than physical signatures seen on their paintings or statues. Painted Greek vases frequently honor their makers (in the modern sense): they carry the signatures of painter and, almost as often, the potter. This, too, is different from modern attitude, which never esteems the lowly potter-craftsman in the same category as the painter. Even the Greek appreciation of the individual artist, linked to their invention of democracy, and ancestor to our own attitude, has its mysteries.

5. One Piedras Negras carver signed both Stelae 13 and 14: *yu'-Bat' -lu, ko-to-lo, tz'i-ba*, (undeciphered title), John Montgomery's *Kotol Tz'ib*.¹⁹⁴ His title "*Tz'ib*-something" means "writing/painting - something." This sounds suspiciously like a carver who is also a scribe, but his is virtually unique among "signatures." The more common title *Aj-Bik'il* means something like "scribbler," in 16th-century Maya as it does today, which hardly connotes a highly-regarded calligrapher!
6. A situation like this I frankly find hardly conceivable, especially considering the highly-stratified arrangement of every other aspect of Maya society. I think we understand so little of the meaning of these "sculptors' signatures" that we need to remain very, very circumspect about what we infer from them about Maya culture.

4.5.7. Patronage versus authorship

Art historians and various cultures through history have often metaphorically applied the term "built" or "made" to the patrons of, say, castles (as "William the Conqueror built the Tower of London") or simply attached a patron's name to major works of art (as "Nebuchadnezzar's Hanging Gardens," "The *Libri Carolini*" or "The *Henry the Lion Gospels*"), but *yu-lu'-Bat'* signatures never seem to carry this metaphorical meaning. If that were the case here, we would expect sometimes to read a patron's name after the *yu-lu'-Bat'*. But we never have. The closest are the "signatures" which identify the sculptor only by his association with his "owner." Whoever these signatories were, they were not ever mentioned in other contexts, such as royal

¹⁹⁴ John Montgomery, *Piedras Negras*, Austin, Texas Maya Workshop Foundation, n.d. See also his Master's Thesis.

succession. Though there exists some evidence¹⁹⁵ that scribes and artists were drawn from noble families, we have not yet found an incontrovertible signature of a royal-family scribe or carver.

The small images of *Aj-K'uhu'ns* on the lid and legs of the *Sarcophagus of Pakal* at Palenque¹⁹⁶ have been interpreted as artist- or architect-portraits, but lacking specific attributory verbs, we cannot be sure who these otherwise-undocumented Palencanos were.

4.5.8. Complete erasures and other destruction of inscriptions

4.5.8.1. Unlike correction, *erasure* was frequent

Despite the Mayas' respect for what appear to be god-guided errors, there exist many examples of *erasure* and *destruction* of texts. There are examples of monument deconsecration and ritual "killing," and even monuments which were recycled into other monuments and other purposes. Many of these destructive events seem to have been at the hands of conquerors, of enemies, and many others are surely "respectful" destruction and annulment by later inhabitants of the same city-state. Many occupy a grey zone, destruction so weird and unexplainable that it is hard to tell the motivation. Perhaps some suffered both, for example the inverted monuments at Tikal, which may have been lovingly re-erected after their partial destruction during a war.

But just as there appear to be few universal guidelines as to what offerings a royal tomb should contain, or where it should be situated, we find an enormous range of deconsecration and destruction of monuments, in scale and in type.

4.5.8.2. Aztec destruction of art

Let us begin with two observations of the Mexica. The first is their glyph for "conquest:" a temple in flames, pierced by an *atlatl* dart, its roof fallen. This ominous symbol of their ferocity shows that they had no regard whatever for the sacred monuments of their neighbors. A quotation from Sahagún shows that, at least by the Late Postclassic, the Aztecs/Mexica were equally indifferent to the historical accuracy of the histories written by their neighbors. After the

¹⁹⁵ This evidence is mostly circumstantial. Diego de Landa (Gates ed., p. 13) states that in addition to the sons of priests, the second sons of nobles were taught to read and write "if they found them inclined toward this office." Assuming they had to be literate, presumably the carvers of inscriptions were also drawn from the families of priests and nobles. Since many second sons eventually became rulers, a number of *Ajaws* must have been skilled scribes themselves.

¹⁹⁶ See Robertson, Merle Greene, *The Sculpture of Palenque*, Vol. 1, *The Temple of Inscriptions*, Princeton University Press, 1983, plates 152 - 169.

pacification of Azcapotzalco and Tlatelolco in 1428, the conqueror Itzcoatl found extensive histories in their libraries, but

"... it was burned at the time that Itzcoatl reigned in Mexico. The Aztecs (led by his advisor Tlacaelel) decided it, saying, 'it is not wise that all the people should know the paintings. The commoners would be driven to ruin and there would be trouble because the paintings contain many lies, for many in the pictures have been hailed as gods.'"¹⁹⁷

4.5.8.3. Maya destruction of art during "star wars"

This ungentlemanly behavior towards one's enemies' sacred art appears, from archaeological evidence, to have been the rule rather than the exception throughout Mesoamerican history. While many wars among the Maya appear to have been little more than ritualistic, captive-taking raids, not unlike the later Aztec "flowery wars," some qualified as genuine wars of conquest. There was a specific Maya glyph for this type of warfare, ([Fig. 4-08](#), left half), in which a "star" glyph appears to 'rain' down something onto the emblem of some city-state. The outcome of this type of war usually involved the **Ch'aking** ("decapitation") of some major temple, or the king, or the entire city. The logogram for **Ch'ak** (T333) consists of an 'axe' (often accompanied with a **-ka** phonetic complement) penetrating, 'chopping' the glyph for whatever is being decapitated ([Fig. 4-08](#), right half). Linda Schele describes the **Ch'aking** of a building as "cutting a trench through the floor, knocking down the roof-vaults, and often burning the remains." She called this kind of offensive, with her customary wit, a "Star War."¹⁹⁸ Clearly, the Maya often showed no respect for the sacred buildings of a rival city, even though their rivals worshipped the same gods, honored the same holy days, and wrote the same sacred glyphs.

¹⁹⁷ This chilling passage, sounding ominously like Landa, comes from *Códice Matritense de la Real Academia de Historia* [in Paso y Troncoso, *Fray Bernardino de Sahagún: Historia de las Cosas de Nueva España*, 8:192. Vol. 8 of the *Códice Matritense de la Real Academia de Historia*. Madrid: Hauser y Menet, 1907], cited in Marcus, p. 144.

¹⁹⁸ Lecture, fall 1996. The "star" in question appears usually to have been Venus, the brightest star-like object in the heavens, whom the Maya considered their War Portent, and there is some evidence that Maya wars were scheduled according to the movements of Venus.



Fig. 4-08. Glyphs for 'Star War' (left) and for *Ch'ak* "Decapitation" (right). Drawings and photos by author.

4.5.8.4. Yaxchilan *Hieroglyphic Stairway 1*

There is a single monument at Yaxchilan, *Hieroglyphic Stairway #1* (before Structure 33), in which large glyphic cartouches have been carved directly across an older(?), smaller text. Unfortunately, the inscription is in medium-poor condition, and it is difficult to determine whether the cartouched texts were meant to supersede or enhance the original inscription. I am of the opinion that the cartouches are meant to supersede the older inscriptions, and that perhaps the old inscription was even "erased," filled with stucco by the later cutters. If these later glyphs were carved by conquerors, as Erik Boot conjectured¹⁹⁹, one would think they would have done more damage to the statue inside Structure 33, than just to decapitate it. Its head was found not far from the body; almost as if the decapitators were behaving respectfully.

Also at Yaxchilan is a recycled stela, first erected in AD 514 and reworked around the mid-8th century. According to Simon Martin (Martin & Grube 2000, p. 120), "Stela 27 is of particular interest since it was clearly damaged at some point and subsequently restored. Reworking is evident over much of the lower third of the stone and can be dated by style to the reign of Bird Jaguar IV (the crudity of the restored left hand led to this figure being nicknamed the wooden soldier')." Apparently the first to notice this reworking was Linda Schele in 1991.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Personal communication, summer 2004.

²⁰⁰ Cited in Maya Chronicles Synopsis (last paragraph) on the Mesoweb website. Stephen Houston discusses the Late Classic recarving of this and other monuments in (Houston 2000)

At Palenque can be seen three fragments of inscribed stone recycled as building material.²⁰¹ Though they are fairly prominently placed—two in front walls of *Temple IV* of the North Group, one as a threshold of a main entrance into (residential) Group A—, one of these is mounted upside-down, partly covered by a crosswise wall, and all are fragmentary. I find it difficult to believe that Maya viewers were meant to see these re-uses as ritually respectful, or that they were meant to communicate the texts' original meaning.

There are a few examples of Maya monuments being recycled, cut down to smaller size: *Uaxactun Stela 10* and *Uolantun Stela 1* were each reshaped to serve as an altar.²⁰² The texts and pictures were preserved as far as possible, which suggests that this recycling had been done respectfully. Perhaps the texts had been "whitewashed," filled in with stucco which has since fallen out, but I think that the writing and carving on them made them more powerful, and it was displayed, in a way that emphasized its inscription. Despite many examples of inscriptional recycling and even destruction, we still have never found any texts *corrected*.

4.5.8.5. Olmec ritual destruction and monument recycling

The recycling of an old monument into something else has a very long history in Mesoamerica. As early as the late Early Preclassic (ca. 1200 - 900 BC), at San Lorenzo, Olmec *Colossal Head 7* seems to have been made from a much larger "tabletop altar" or throne.²⁰³ Most of the seventeen known Olmec Colossal Heads are distinctly flat on the rear side²⁰⁴, and *San Lorenzo Head 7* bears two deep cavities on its right ear that match the shape of the "ruler-in-niche/ruler-emerging-from-cave" on the sides of surviving Thrones. The prevailing hypothesis posits that a Throne was made specifically for an individual, and upon his death, his Throne would be recarved into his portrait as a funeral monument.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ As at Palenque, where a fragment of inscription is used as a step in Group A [at the bottom of the steep trail downhill behind the North Group], and two Pakal-era fragments re-used in North Group Temple IV, [Robertson, Merle Greene, *The Sculpture of Palenque*, Vol. IV, Princeton University Press, 1991, pll. 214-216]."

²⁰² Marcus, p. 151f.

²⁰³ "According to some specialists, the two sunken arches on the right side are the remains of the front niche of the throne this head was made from." Of the ten Heads found at San Lorenzo, nine are distinctively flattened on the occiput, which would correspond to the flattened bottom or top of the "tabletop altar" thrones they were presumably carved from. This is also true of two of the four Heads from La Venta. The one San Lorenzo exception, *Head 8*, also happens to be the best preserved of the seventeen Colossal Heads found to date. The Heads from Tres Zapotes/La Cobata the two remaining La Venta Heads are rounded on their backs. Cyphers, Ann, "Catalogue of Olmec Heads," *Arqueología Mexicana* Special Edition, México, D.F., n.d. (ca. 1993) inside front cover.

²⁰⁴ Though this flattening might have been nothing more than an expedience to ease the transport of these heads. It might in addition have evinced contemporary comparisons with cranial deformation practices.

²⁰⁵ Reilly, Kent, and others, Personal communications, 2001-2004

This idea also suggests an alternative explanation for the puzzling effort to which some destroyers of Olmec monuments went. Michael Coe and Richard Diehl thus describe the vandalism subjected a Throne: "Monument 20 exhibits the scars of massive flakes that were struck off by gigantic hammerblows. In our bewilderment, we have postulated large tree trunks being lashed together into huge tripods, from which great pieces of already shattered monuments could be suspended by ropes and sent oscillating to smash into their appointed targets. In no other way can we account for the power of these blows."²⁰⁶ Later, Coe says, "The fury of the destructive force visited upon these stones astounded us, for in some respects it matched the labor and ingenuity of which went into their creation. Civilizations went out with a bang, not a whimper, in early Mesoamerica."²⁰⁷ Perhaps these "gigantic hammerblows" were controlled, large-scale stone-tool technology, simply the first steps in chipping off the corners of a large rectangular stone to rough out a Colossal Head "blank." Despite the work, this might involve substantially less effort than sawing or grinding off the large corners. Certainly these artisans were experts in the principles of controlled flaking, they simply applied them here on a larger scale.

I hasten to add that Coe and Diehl do not subscribe to this hypothesis. As Coe points out, this destruction happened at the end of San Lorenzo's Olmec phase, and that there was probably little interest at that time in carving new Heads or Altars. Also, other kinds of defacement, involving equally bewildering effort, ravaged these monuments.²⁰⁸

The inhabitants (or perhaps conquerors?) of San Lorenzo had, in a final ritual act, moved a substantial number of large basalt monuments —many already substantially damaged— to be buried along one or more of the city's major axes (particularly the Group D Ridge), which pattern allowed Coe's team to find more than they otherwise might have.²⁰⁹

"Destruction of monuments was not a one-time act. It was, rather, something which apparently took place regularly. With a few exceptions, every portrait monument in the

²⁰⁶ Coe, Michael D., and Diehl, Richard A., *In the Land of the Olmec*. Vol. I. *The Archaeology of San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1980, pp. 297-298.

²⁰⁷ Coe, Michael D., *Mexico*, revised and enlarged edition, London, Thames & Hudson, 1984, p. 71.

²⁰⁸ "Your argument sounds good, except for one thing: the monuments at San Lorenzo show abundant mutilation of other kinds, apart from the smashing. These include the pitted "negative breasts", axe-grinding marks, etc. When all this happened, San Lorenzo was at the end of its great Olmec phase, ca. 900 BC (radiocarbon years). I think it's unlikely that they were much interested in making altars* at such a time. I still think that the destruction was by the invaders or revolutionaries. ...Dick Diehl and I are in agreement about this." Personal communication, 12 July 2005. (**MV comment*: For "altars" here I think Mike means "any monuments," specifically "heads.")

²⁰⁹ Coe, *Mexico*, p. 71; Coe and Diehl, p. 298

[Olmec] heartland was mutilated. This means that monuments personifying each and every ruler over a long time-span were destroyed."²¹⁰

Coe, Diehl, Grove, Clewlow²¹¹, and others have contemplated this mysterious destruction, which, besides the violent breaking off of huge chips from the Thrones, falls into these categories:

1. **Beheading** of statues and other fracturing: "Few figures are found with their heads and, for the broken-off heads that are recovered (such as San Lorenzo Monument 6), one never finds the bodies. Incidentally, bodies greatly outnumber heads, which must have been disposed of elsewhere."²¹²
2. **"Slotting"**...oblong compartments pecked out of the monument surface."²¹³
3. **"Pounding"** — the surfaces of most monuments show some signs of pounding with stones to obliterate features; this is the way, for instance, that the seated figure in the niche of ... Monument 20 was made almost unrecognizable."²¹⁴
4. **Sharpening grooves**, as termed by Clewlow, which are "longitudinal grooves or boat-shaped channels, carved into stone as an apparent result of the grinding or sharpening of axes or celts."²¹⁵ Coe and Diehl: "This is quite rare at San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán but can be seen, for example, on the front of ... Monument 14."²¹⁶
5. **Pitting**, which comes in two forms: smooth, shallow, and relatively rare "ground pits" and the distinctive and common "dimpled pits," "cup-shaped depressions with central deeper "nipple or dimple-like concavities,"²¹⁷ which Coe, noting they often come in pairs, calls "negative breasts."²¹⁸ The former were formed by simple grinding of any small object against the surface of the monument, and appear infrequently at San Lorenzo, perhaps suggesting that this type of damage was too time-consuming to bother with much. The

²¹⁰ Grove, David, "Olmec Monuments: Mutilation as a Clue to Meaning," pp. 48-68 in Benson, Elizabeth P., *The Olmec and Their Neighbors: Essays in Memory of Matthew W. Stirling*, Washington, Dumbarton Oaks, 1981, p. 59

²¹¹ Clewlow, C. William Jr., "A Stylistic and Chronological Study of Olmec Monumental Sculpture," *University of California, Archeological Research Facility, Contributions* 19, 1974, pp 13 ff.

²¹² Coe, Michael D., and Diehl, Richard A., *In the Land of the Olmec*. Vol. I. *The Archaeology of San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1980, p. 297.

²¹³ Coe and Diehl, p. 298. They continue, "Good examples... right end of SL Monument 14, where an entire surface has been slotted with multiple depressions to largely obliterate the relief figure of a captive, and the back of Monument 20, a complex production which almost suggests a bar-and-dot numeral. Possibly the celt-shaped depressions of SL Monument 8 are a case of slotting, although they look original."

²¹⁴ Coe and Diehl, p. 298.

²¹⁵ Clewlow p. 13, cited in Coe and Diehl, p. 298.

²¹⁶ Coe and Diehl, p. 298

²¹⁷ Clewlow p. 13, cited in Coe and Diehl, p. 298.

²¹⁸ Coe and Diehl, p. 298.

latter, on the other hand, are so common and consistent and distribution-patterned, that they must have had very specific meaning. Unfortunately, the logic of their distribution-patterns is tantalizingly erratic:

- A. Not only are these nipped pits rare outside of San Lorenzo, they rarely occur on *any* type of monument except the Colossal Heads. (A possible exception is *San Lorenzo Mon. 21*.) With few exceptions, this damage is confined to the face and front part of the headdress, as if to achieve maximum visual (or, more likely, magical) effect.
- B. *San Lorenzo Head 3* has 27 such pits in its **headdress**, and no substantial damage anywhere else. Other monuments with dimpled pits in the headdress also have them elsewhere: *SL Head 2* (a dozen or so on the headdress), *SL Head 5* (five), *SL Head 6* (two or more, at the cardinal points), *SL Head 7* (three or more; pounding-damage makes it hard to see others), *SL Head 9* (half a dozen or more), *SL Head 10* (one or two only, with one more on his left nostril, maybe another elsewhere), *La Venta Monument 3* (ten or twelve on headdress, along with many grooves and pounding mutilation), perhaps *La Venta Monument 2* (maybe four or more, much disguised by extensive pounding). None of the two Tres Zapotes Heads nor the La Cobata Head show these dimpled pits, nor any substantial damage, save chipping to the noses of *TZ Mon. A* and the La Cobata Head. See below for more on *TZ Mon. A*.
- C. *SL Head 1* has two on the **nose**, one on the upper curve of each nostril. Others on the nose: *SL Head 2* (with three on the point of the nose and dozens more all over the face and headdress), *SL Head 6* and *Head 7* (one on the bridge of the nose of each), *SL Head 9* has one on the bridge of the nose, and another on the tip. *SL Head 10* has one on the upper curve of his left nostril. *La Venta Monuments 3* and *4* are so pounding-damaged that the noses have been obliterated.
- D. **Eyes.** *SL Head 1* has a large dimpled pit below his right eye. *SL Head 2* has many pits avoid the eyes themselves, but more than half a dozen cluster round the lower outer corners, like flies on an African refugee. Likewise, *SL Heads 5* and *6* have two or three pits at the outer corner of the right eye (our left), and *SL Head 5* also has one precisely at the outer corner of his left eye. One of these pits on *Head 6* lays, uniquely, half on the lid and half on the eye itself. *SL Head 7* has one below

the outer corner of each eye, and two or more on the upper lid of his right eye. *SL Head 9* has one *above* the corner of his right eye, and there appears to be a couple below the eyes of *La Venta Monument 3*.

- E. **Lips.** *SL Head 2*'s lower lip has at least five pits, with another handful of smaller ones concentrated on the right half of his upper lip (our left). *SL Head 5* has one centered on his upper lip. *SL Head 7* has one definite pit on his right lower lip, and one more below the right corner of his mouth, and probably others obliterated by the pounding. *La Venta Monument 3* has a deep *un*-dimpled drill hole in the right corner of his mouth that is likely to have been original, defining the corner of his mouth (as do the two drill-holes on *La Venta Monument 4*'s mouth.)
- F. **Chin.** *SL Head 2*'s chin is completely covered with seven overlapping pits. *SL Head 5* has but one carefully centered. *SL Head 7* appears to have at least one; *SL Head 9* one also, well to the right (our left). *La Venta Monument 3* has two or three deep grooves rather than pits, though we appear to have one off to the far right (our left).
- G. **Cheeks.** Three monuments with dimpled pits on the cheeks seem to be ones with many pits (*SL Head 2*) or severe pounding (*SL Head 7*, *La Venta Mon. 3*). The only other pit is found on a cheek in *SL Head 9*.
- H. Other damage of note: *TZ Mon. A* seems to have suffered intentional, severe blows to the left eye, left lips, and nose. Likewise with *SL Head 9*'s lip and bridge of his nose. As mentioned above, *La Venta Monuments 2*, and especially *3* and *4*, suffered severe pounding and grooving.

The distribution pattern emphatically implies that these nipped or dimpled pits had potent meaning. These pits are no mere vandalism; they were carefully made, and must have taken an hour or two apiece to accomplish. Despite variations in where they cluster, they are confined to the faces of Colossal Heads (and fronts of headdresses) with remarkable consistency. They almost never intrude into the eyes, though they cluster round them, as they do on lips, chins, and noses.

The reasons for the variation in their quantity, and in where they cluster (twenty-seven on *SL Head 3*'s headdress and nowhere else, one under the eye and on each nostril on *SL Head 1* and

nowhere else), remain a mystery. Perhaps *Head 1* was renowned for his life/breath and vision, *Head 3* for his thinking, or perhaps —as in Maya times— damaging the nose and eyes was understood as a way of severely limiting the power of the carved figure to see or breathe (or, having a similar notion to the Japanese concept of self, which resides focussed in the nose, priests sought to deconsecrate or "kill" monuments with this careful destruction.)

Grove and others have suggested that these pits result from some ritual "tapping" or "controlling" the sacred life-power of these monuments.²¹⁹ In this scenario, these pits were made respectfully by the San Lorenzans, in sacred rituals that sought to distribute a portion of the power in these monuments to other purposes. The basalt from which they were made was itself sacred, the carving (and recarving from a Throne into a Head) rituals added sacred power, the rites celebrated with the king seated thereon and the subsequent rituals which the Head witnessed, all added still more power to these sculptures. If the San Lorenzo Olmec believed that this accumulated energy might reach unmanageable or unstable levels, they may have tapped a bit of the energy by way of this drilling to keep the monument "safe." Or perhaps they felt they needed some of this Head's power to use somewhere else, and they could collect and transport it in the form of ritually-collected dust. Possibly the "sharpening" grooves represent a form of this belief, in a ritual which imbued weapons and tools with this power.

Stan Guenter suggests that they represent a long-term effort by conquerors to dispel the power of the dead kings installed in these stones:

" I like Dave Stuart's article on stone monuments²²⁰ and how stelae were imbued with part of the spirit of the portrayed individual; very similar to the way ancient Egyptians had their *ka* statues that, in the case the mummy itself was destroyed, would function as a stand-in for the actual body. Thus I see the desecration of the Olmec monuments as likely occurring by enemies living in the same cultural world where the huge heads were thought to embody the spirits of past rulers. The conquering enemy was trying to prevent the spirits of these ancient kings from remaining in the monuments at the defeated city."²²¹

²¹⁹ Grove, pp. 59 ff.

²²⁰ Stuart, David , "Kings of Stone: a Consideration of Ancient Stelae in Maya Ritual and Representation," in *Res 29-30* (1996), Cambridge, MA, pp 148-171

²²¹ Personal communication, July 2004

4.5.8.6. Maya ritual defacement of monuments

Whether by friend or foe, the practice of ritual defacement or recycling continued. Among the Maya nearly all the figures in the *Bonampak Murals* have had their eyes scratched out; likewise the eyes and lips of *Bonampak Stela 2*. These monuments have remained aboveground since their erection, and might have been defaced at any time in history, though I believe they were deconsecrated at the time of Bonampak's abandonment around AD 800. For one thing, the vandals apparently refrained from damaging any other part of the monuments; the stela in particular is in excellent condition. If it were vandals, they were well-behaved Maya vandals, restrained from simply using the stelae for target practice.

There are countless other examples, and it is telling that *Tikal Stela 31*, which was ritually buried during the Midclassic era, also exhibits this evidence of disempowerment: its three figures' eyes, lips, and feet have all been damaged, leaving the rest of the stone in beautiful repair. The collapsed Palenque *Temple XIX* contained two superbly-preserved stone reliefs (discussed herein above): the *Platform/Throne* and the three-meter-tall limestone *Tablet*. *Temple XIX* may have been deliberately destroyed by its makers only a few years after its construction; Alfonso Morales and his colleagues point out that this Temple's vaults had the widest spans of any in Palenque, and were inherently unstable. It is likely that cracks appeared almost immediately. The Tablet was ripped from its pier, broken into large pieces, strewn about, and one of the pieces—that carrying the portrait of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab—placed on a pyre before the *Platform*. The eyes, nose, and lips of the three figures on this tablet, as well as on the stucco panel on side of the same pier, were also carefully scratched out. The *Platform* itself was broken into, and the foundation offerings therein thrown onto the same pyre. Interestingly, the ten figures on the Platform itself suffered no such "blinding," though the central figure of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab was broken by a direct blow just to the left of his face, destroying most of his headdress. This broken figure sat just a foot away from the sacrificial pyre containing his other portrait.²²² This pattern of "deconsecration"—by damaging eyes, nose, mouth, and feet—repeats, proliferates across the Maya world. It may indeed have been carefully-prescribed destruction by timorous enemies, but I think it more likely that this is "respectful deconsecration," a ritual execution, ending the life contained in the monument. That these "vandals" carefully preserved the remaining portions of these monuments, even burying them as

²²² Personal communication, principal archeologist Alfonso Morales, 1999, 2000

if dead kings, or as foundation sacrifices, testifies to the Ancient Mayas' belief that there was still some power there worth respecting.

The re-erection of damaged monuments at Tikal speaks to this issue. A number of them were found broken, but re-erected in a fragmentary state. One of them, *Tikal Stela 4* (which happens to be one of the most ancient at Tikal), was found erect but upside down!²²³ Tikal suffered a "Star War" / *Ch'ak* conquest in 9.6.8.4.2 / AD 562, and most scholars believe that the conquerors smashed the visible monuments at that time (nearly all monuments older than the "star war" have suffered genuine vandalism). This evidence indicates the difference between destruction by a friend and a foe. Even though the warriors of Caracol and Calakmul who rampaged through Tikal worshiped the same pantheon and erected the same kind of monuments, they had no compunction about going after their enemy's sacred stones with sledgehammers. A century later, when Tikal *Ch'aked* Naranjo, Lord Jasaw Chan K'awiil captured Naranjo's royal palanquin and had himself portrayed riding it on *Tikal Lintel 1*. This indicates that *some* of an enemy's sacred art was considered worth preserving, appropriating, even in a violent conquest.²²⁴

One monument that seems to have suffered an especially humiliating fate is *El Hombre de Tikal*. Found in a tomb in the northern part of the city, *El Hombre* is an Early Classic larger-than-life-size stone statue-in-the-round carrying a very important text engraved on its back. In many ways it reminds us of Olmec objects, particularly in the way it was vandalized. Decapitated, it was re-commissioned as a base for a flagpole or tent-post or some such, a six-inch-deep socket drilled into its back, destroying a few glyphs in the center of the text. In its new role, it lay on its front, in the same pose as humiliated captives. It seems likely this was conquerors' vandalism, carefully construed to commemorate Tikal's defeat and rub it daily in the face of the defeated. It appears to have been respectfully buried, probably during Tikal's resurgence after its conquest of Calakmul, which is likely the time all those broken monuments were re-erected. (No archeological report has been written on its discovery, but rumor among

²²³ Jones, Chris, & Satterthwaite, Linton, *The Monuments and Inscriptions of Tikal: The Carved Monuments*. *Tikal Report* 33a, *University Museum Monographs*, No. 44, Philadelphia: University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 1982, p. 13 & p. 117. See also Satterthwaite, Linton, "The Problem of Abnormal Stela Placements at Tikal and Elsewhere," pp. 61-83 in *Tikal Report* 3, *University Museum Monographs*, No. 15, Philadelphia: University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 1958. See particularly p. 68.

²²⁴ See Martin, Simon, and Grube, Nikolai, *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens - Deciphering the Dynasties of the Ancient Maya*. London, Thames and Hudson, 2000. More specifically, Martin persuasively argues (mainly because the *Hieroglyphic Stairway* now at Naranjo states that it was made for Caracol's *Ajaw K'an II*) that it was made and originally installed at Caracol, but was later stolen and set up in Naranjo as a war prize once the tables were turned and Naranjo beat Caracol. (Martin 2000, pp. 57-58)

the guides and archeologists there describe it as having been found in the tomb's antechamber, surrounded by offerings.)²²⁵

Despite many examples of inscriptional recycling and destruction, we still have never found any texts *corrected*, in the sense of proofreaders working on the same side as the author. The overlaid texts on Yaxchlan's Stairway do not appear to modify the old text so much as to supplant it.

4.5.8.7. Mesoamerican ritual art-sacrifice

Mesoamerica has a long and noble tradition of ritual art-sacrifice. Copal (and rubber and corn meal and no doubt a dozen other sacred materials) was burned copiously as grains (*ch'aj*) or shaped into little balls, but also, on occasion, it was shaped into more elaborate forms, some no doubt quite fantastic and representing much time, skill and creativity, before being burned or buried. This is not unlike the astonishingly complex, ephemeral offerings of Balinese festivals, artfully-sculpted food items which are thrown into the sea or burned upon altars. Examples of such temporary-art sacrifice can be found in every culture, in every era. From the Olmec rubber balls and wooden sculptures cast into the waterhole at El Manatí and the burned jade masks thrown into the spring at Rio Pesquero, to the crumpled embossed gold disks and jades and wooden objects and who knows what else in the Cenote of Chichén Itzá, to the foundation-deposits of every era, sacred and beautiful objects have been given to the gods, destroyed so that they may be reborn in the Next World. I have little doubt that the Maya also sacrificed many elaborate constructions made from paper, perhaps some covered with hieroglyphs as well as the frequently-illustrated strips of blood-spattered paper. This form of respectful destruction may shed light on the Mayas' attitude toward erasure of sacred texts.

The Maya shared with other Mesoamerican and even North American peoples the practice of "killing" vessels. Plates and shallow bowls often are found in tombs with a "kill-hole" carefully drilled (or not-so-carefully punched with a sharp object) in the center. Though the phrase implies that the bowl itself has a spirit which must be released, a crucial item of information explains a very important distinction. The "killed" Maya vessels are nearly all plate-like objects which were placed upside-down over the face of a deceased person. This is also true of the beautiful Mimbres bowls of the Early Postclassic Mogollon people of New Mexico, a thousand

²²⁵ Personal communications, officials and guides at Tikal, 2000

miles to the north: they were "killed" before placing over the face of the dead. Here we see that the spirit which must be released was that of the dead person, not the bowl. The many other vessels found in Maya and other Mesoamerican tombs were left "alive," so they could carry the offerings of food, drink, copal, etc., into the Afterworld, however long that might take. The fact that most Maya "kill holes" were carefully drilled suggests that the artwork painted or carved into the plates was highly valued —or still retained some power.

4.5.8.8. Patterns (or lack of them) in reconstruction of pyramids

Mesoamericans are well-known for their unique pyramids, built on geomantically-sacred sites and rebuilt-enlarged repeatedly over the centuries, until they are layered like an onion. The Great Pyramid of Cholula compelled archeologists to dig seven kilometers of tunnels inside it, exploring all the layers. The stump of the Aztec *Templo Mayor* in Tenochtitlán shows seven layers built in just a century. The Acropolis of Tikal revealed over a dozen expansions, between 50 BC and the eighth century AD. The way the Maya built a new temple over an old one is revealing. Nearly all these renovations can be assumed to be relatively respectful, at least as respectful as Donald Trump's construction of *Trump Tower* over the old Tiffany's jewelry house.²²⁶

For the most part, the construction process as revealed at Tikal's Acropolis might be considered typical.²²⁷ When the rulers and priests initiated a new construction phase over an older pyramid, usually they would first raze the temple capping the pyramid. This "respectful" destruction was as total as any visited by enemies. The rubble from the old structure was used as part of the fill to support the new construction. Sometimes archeologists discover bits of decorated stone and stucco from these older phases while exploring inside pyramids. So in certain contexts, Maya elite showed no respect at all for preserving even their own sacred art.

Yet at other times they lovingly preserved certain buildings, packing a façade or an entire building in fine sand before entombing it inside a later structure. Such was the treatment afforded the renowned Early Classic *Rosalila* structure inside *Temple 26* at Copan, and one of the older temples inside the *Temple of the Warriors* at Chichén Itzá, and the tiny four-stairwayed late Preclassic pyramid *E-Sub-VII* at Waxaktun, and the throne room inside Chichén's *Castillo*.

²²⁶ Trump is renowned for ignoring the guidelines of the New York architectural heritage commission, and destroying an important architectural relief. He did build a new, grand Tiffany's in the base of his Tower, but many consider his destruction of the old landmark an act of artistic sacrilege.

²²⁷ See the Pennsylvania University Museum *Tikal Reports*, particularly No. 12.

The *Marcador* was likewise carefully dismantled and preserved inside its shrine in the "*Mundo Perdido*" Complex at Tikal. So, for reasons yet unclear, the Maya showed extraordinary respect for certain "obsolete" buildings. *Waxaktun E-Sub-VII* is an *omphalos*, a symbolic center-of-the-world, and probably the first such building at Waxaktun; perhaps its preservation has something to do with that role. Likewise with *Rosalila*, a building dedicated to the fifth-century Founder of Copan Yax-K'uk'-Mo. But this pattern is not at all consistent.

4.5.8.9. Late Preclassic inscription-erasure

Relative to the Classic period²²⁸, somewhat less is known of the Late Preclassic Maya florescence, which peaked in the short period 50 BC - AD 100, and in some places lasted until the third century. Cities like Kaminaljuyu, El Baul, and Takalik' Abaj in the southern Guatemalan Highlands, Cerros in northern Belize, and El Mirador and Nakbe in the Petén enjoyed extraordinary growth and art-production.²²⁹ However, Kaminaljuyu's monuments suffered ferocious destruction not unlike that seen at San Lorenzo several centuries earlier, and the known stelae from El Mirador and Nakbe were all damaged as well. However, as more than one investigator has observed, the *texts* from Mirador/Nakbe seem to have been particularly targeted for destruction. Glyphs in those days were not large and boldly sculpted in relief like we see later, in Early Classic stelae such as Tikal's *Stela 29* and *Stela 4*. All surviving late Preclassic inscriptions in stone are small and lightly incised (including *Kaminaljuyu Stela 10* and surviving bits from El Mirador), and would be easy to erase, should one have the notion. And apparently someone did. Whether by friend or foe, respectful or vengeful, *every* known hieroglyphic inscription from the mighty cities of El Mirador and Nakbe has been carefully scraped from its panel.²³⁰ *El Mirador Stela 2*, discovered in 1962 by Ian Graham, is informative in that the vandals failed to complete the erasure: traces of four or five glyphs remain. The glyphs' small size (about five cm / two inches wide) and light incision make them very similar in technique to contemporary jade inscriptions and to the glyphs on *Kaminaljuyu Stela 10* and the

²²⁸ A major contributor to this imbalance was the prosperity of Late Classic cities, whose ambitious urban renewal programs razed or buried almost all Preclassic and Early Classic construction. Luckily, a substantial portion of this was preserved inside pyramids, and can be recovered by tunneling.

²²⁹ As did their neighbors at Izapa, Monte Alto, Tres Zapotes, Chiapa de Corso, and La Mojarra. More distant Monte Albán II, the copious production of Colima ceramics, and the foundation of Teotihuacan also occurred at this time. There must have been a long run of benign weather coupled with governmental and economic innovations all across Mesoamerica, to bring about such sudden prosperity.

²³⁰ Richard Hansen, principal excavator there, personal communication, 2001

La Mojarra Stela. Richard Hansen dates *El Mirador Stela 2* to ca. 8.0.0.0.0 / mid-first-century AD.²³¹

Although this dissertation focuses for convenience on glyphic connoisseurship, its analytical method readily applies to illustrative, decorative and other non-glyphic (and non-Maya) artforms. Therefore, despite a relative lack of known texts from the period, the method could shed some light on the process of Preclassic art-making, and through that on the cultures of the time.

We see that at least during this earlier stage, Maya felt it necessary to deconsecrate at least some of their own (or perhaps their enemies') hieroglyphic texts by erasing them, rather like the way they later destroyed the vision and voice of Classic stone effigies. Their neighbors to the west, in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, left us very few inscriptions: the *La Mojarra Stela* and perhaps the two earliest monuments carrying a Long Count date, remained aboveground, subject to deconsecration or vandalism, but *their* texts show no signs of erasure, for what it's worth.

²³¹ Hansen, Richard D., "An Early Maya Text from El Mirador, Guatemala," *Research Reports on Early Maya Writing*, no. 37, August 1991. Center for Maya Research, Washington DC.

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