



# Texas Notes on Precolumbian Art, Writing, and Culture

No. 33

February 1993

## Musings About the Rare Variants of Glyph A of the Lunar Series

by Barbara MacLeod

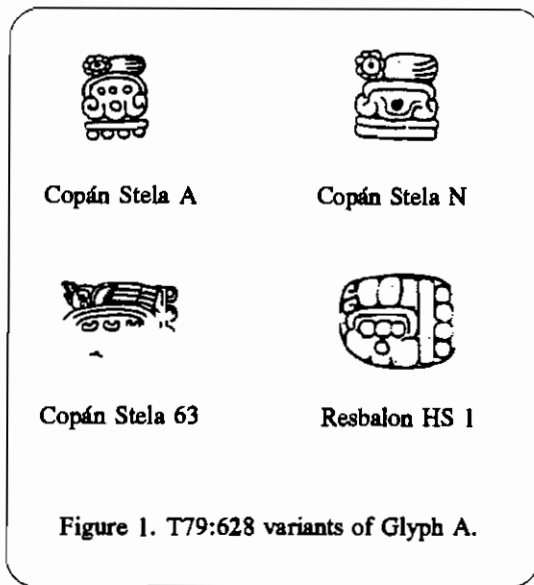
Recent discoveries about the components and structure of the Lunar Series (Schele, Grube, and Fahsen, 1992; MacLeod, 1990) have advanced our understanding not only of its periodicities but also of its grammatical integrity. We now know that Glyphs D and C contain verbs (respectively, "arrived" and probably "completed"), while X and B together represent a stative construction ("X is its name"). Schele, Grube, and Fahsen (above) have proposed that Glyph A is the nominal subject of this stative, as in "X is its name, the twenty-nine". It has long been known that Glyph A represents the number of days (29 or 30) in the lunation represented by Glyph C.

### Rare Variants of Glyph A

There are some unusual variants of Glyph A which suggest alternative structures in the Lunar Series—alternatives which, by their scarcity, obviously never became popular. Examples of the first and better-known type of rare Glyph A variant, that including T79:628, are found on Copan Stelae A, N, and 63 and on Resbalon HS1 (Figure 1). The second rare variant, in which the "nine" of Glyph A is affixed to the back of Glyph C, appears on Piedras Negras Stelae 25 and 26 (Figure 2).

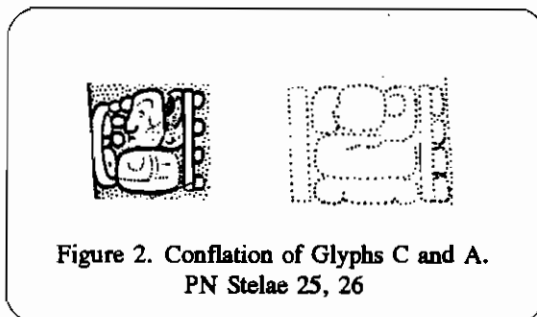
The Piedras Negras examples demonstrate that the T683a(:102) "twenty" sign found in the com-

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mon form of Glyph A—a sign probably reading *winik*—is actually superfluous information; what is critical is the "nine" or "ten" added onto it.

It has always seemed curious that the coefficient of Glyph D (which may exceed twenty) and that of Glyph A are consistently mirror-images of one another: bar-dot numerals in Glyph D are always attached to the front of the "twenty" sign while those of Glyph A are affixed to its back. While it is true that in the codices, numbers over twenty may be represented with the bar-dot component either preceding or following the "twenty" sign, the virtually unvarying relation between D and A in the



Classic inscriptions appears to be highlighting some fundamental difference between these coefficients. Perhaps this is a visual strategy for focusing upon the nine or ten of Glyph A as its critical information. In contrast, the entire coefficient of Glyph D is important.

#### A Reading for the T79:628 Glyph A Variant

The T79:628.IX/X variant of Glyph A has long eluded decipherment, largely because viable readings for T79 and T628 had not been offered. An additional obstacle, I suggest, has been the assumption that T79:628 must represent a word for "twenty".

About a year ago (personal communication) Linda Schele suggested that T628 (and its semblant T629) might have a *li* or *VI* value, due to the applicability of those readings to its varied contexts. While this suggestion has yet to be proven it still stands as a good possibility. Very recently, in a November, 1992 letter to Linda Schele (Schele, personal communication, 1993), David Stuart noted an apparent substitution between the common T79:614(or 565)-*wan* "dedication" verb and an ex-



ample found in a full-figure text on Copan Altar D'in which the syllables *pa-ta*, in full-figure variants, replace the usual T79:(614/565) (Figure 3). As with many of the T79:614-*wan* "dedication" verbs, the grammatical subject of the verb here is T1.174:528, a compound which MacLeod and Villela (n.d.) now read as *\*lol-tun* "stone arch". The Altar 41 example thus fits a common pattern found with T79:614(or 565), and it was this which prompted Stuart to suggest the reading *pat* for T79 and a *tV* value for T614 (T565 has long been known to be *ta*). He noted the Cholan meaning "build houses" for *pat* (e.g. Aulie and Aulie 1978:92); thus he may also understand the T174

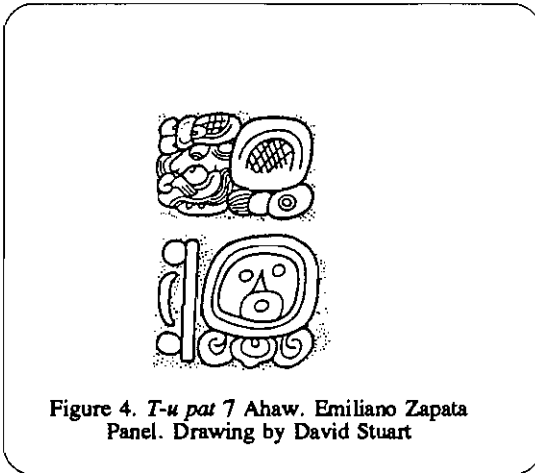


Figure 4. *T-u pat 7 Ahaw*. Emiliano Zapata Panel. Drawing by David Stuart

compounds as references to buildings, although the letter did not address them.

Linda and I and others present at her announcement of the *pat* reading resisted it because it did not explain the T79:628 variant of Glyph A discussed above; no *pat* entries mean "twenty".

Further reflection on the Piedras Negras anomalies then raised in my mind the possibility that a *pat* sign in Glyph A might refer to "back" (note *pat* "espalda", "atras" in Chol: Aulie and Aulie 1978:92). Coupled with a *li* or *VI* value for T628, the resulting word is \**patil*, with a meaning "to the back", or more appropriately "and then", in Cholan. Its equivalent in Yukatek is *pach* "espalda" *pachil* "despues", "cosa postrera" (Barrera-Vásquez 1980:615). A related glyphic form *t-u-pat* "después de" is found on the Emiliano Zapata panel (Figure 4), linking a 7 Ahau date to the "carving" event, but with syntax that is the inverse of the Glyph A variant (the difference between *t-u pat* and *patil* is comparable to "Q is after P"[Emiliano Zapata panel format] vs. "P and then Q"[Glyph A format]).

#### Summary

The T79:628 form of Glyph A may read *patil*, with a meaning "and then", or "what comes last is...(nine or ten)". This circumvents the "twenty"

component of the lunation entirely, as does the rare Piedras Negras variant of Glyph A. Recalling that the structure of the common Glyph A coefficient always places the nine or ten "on the back of" the twenty, we may find the *patil* concept embedded there as well.

While the subject of the T79 verbs and their frequent companions, the T174 compounds, cannot be addressed in this discussion, this denouement of the rare variants of Glyph A adds support to the argument that those statements refer to the construction (*pat*) of stone buildings (*lotun*, *aklol*).

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