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Early Notices on the Maya Paddler Gods

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In a 1977 essay on Dos Pilas Stela 8, Peter Mathews first identified the supernatural figures now called the Paddler Gods (1977:6). There the Old Stingray and Jaguar Paddlers appear in the accession phrase of Dos Pilas Ruler 2, Itzam K'awil. Mathews connected the Dos Pilas supernaturals with the duo paddling canoes on carved

bones MT38A and MT38B from Tikal Burial 116 (Fig. 1).¹

Five decades earlier, a different generation of epigraphers also commented on the characteristic K'in and Akbal Paddler nominal phrase. Hermann Beyer reviewed Sylvanus G. Morley's *Inscriptions at Copan* in the June 1927 issue of his journal *El*

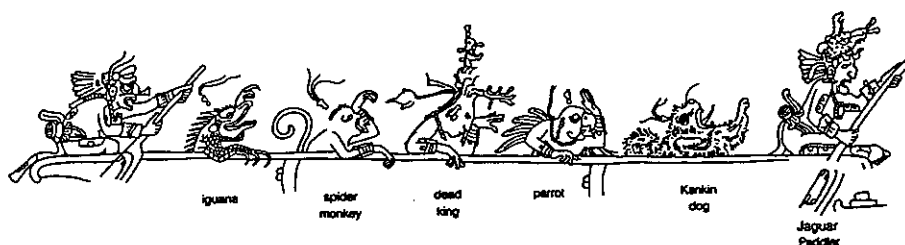


Fig. 1 Tikal MT 35 (drawing by L. Schele)

1. He also noted the pair on Quiriguá Stela C, Ixlu Stelae 1, 2, Altar 1, and Jimbal Stela 1.

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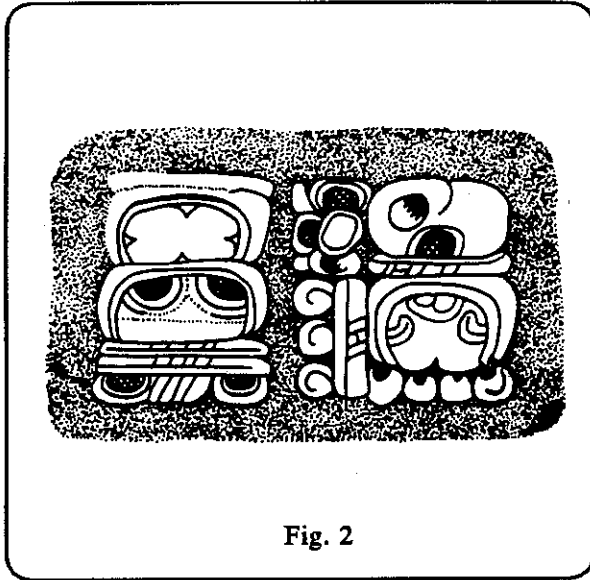


Fig. 2

México Antiguo (Beyer 1927). Beyer began by commenting that Morley's monumental epigraphic review of Copán treated only calendrical inscriptions (Beyer 1927:313). Beyer's thoughts on the K'in and Akbal collocation at Copán supported his primary criticism. Morley argued (correctly) that the K'in and Akbal phrase on Stela 10 occurred in a chronological series (Morley 1920:143) (Fig. 2).

Light and darkness icons with suffix T12 here form an elaborate Distance Number Introductory Glyph. Beyer mustered additional Copán examples and countered that K'in and Akbal together here were actually non-calendrical "explanatory" text (Beyer 1927:314) (Fig. 3). Beyer was right for the wrong reasons. Morley's Stela 10 example was calendrical. In 1977, Maya epigraphy vindicated Beyer's 1927 counter examples. All four name the Paddler Gods.

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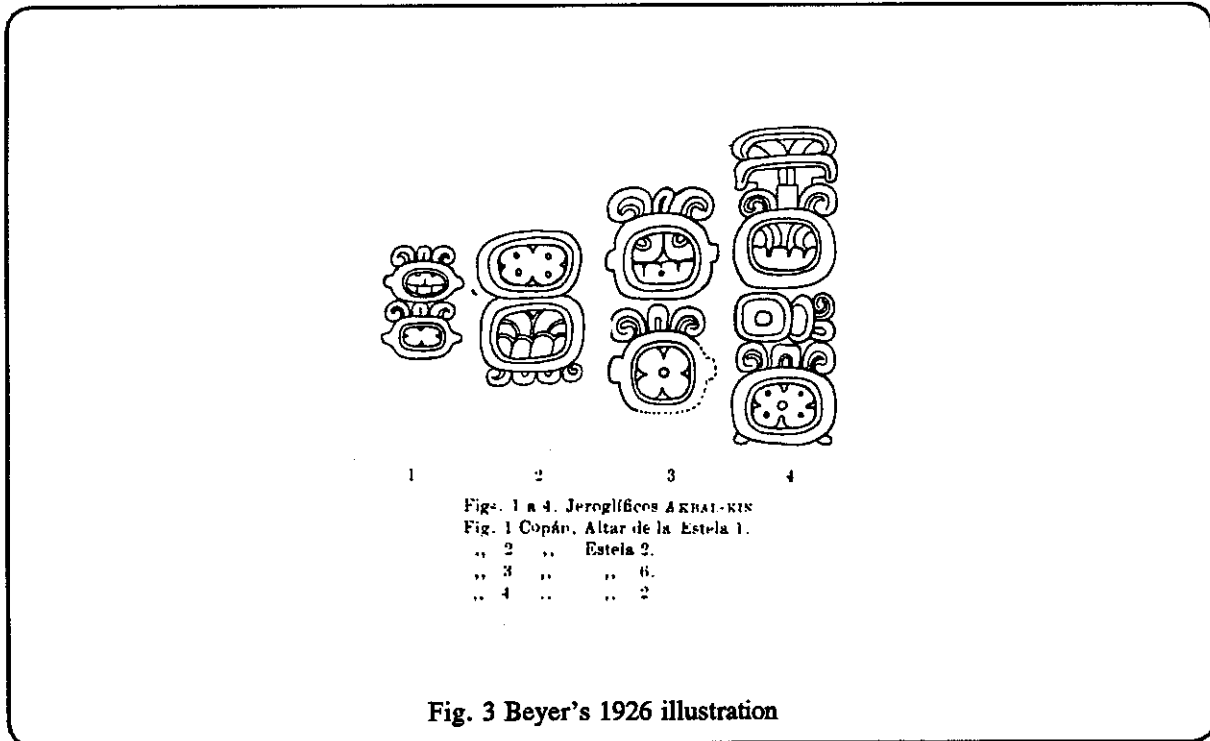


Fig. 1 a 4. Jeroglíficos AKBAL-KIN
 Fig. 1 Copán, Altar de la Estela 1.
 .. 2 .. Estela 2.
 .. 3 6.
 .. 4 2

Fig. 3 Beyer's 1926 illustration