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Observations on the Glyph for "Manikin"

by Matthew G. Looper

Nikolai Grube's (n.d.) decipherment of the T516 glyph as *ak'ot*, 'dance', will doubtlessly have far reaching implications for the study of Classic Maya culture. Using this decipherment as a point of departure, I recently recognized that a glyph commonly believed to mean "God K scepter" (Fig. 1) actually means "manikin" in general.

This glyph occurs on many Classic monuments and generally consists of two parts—a main sign which seems to be a stylized representation of a human backside and legs and a T86 *nal* superfix. The presence of the T178 *la* complement in the example from Yaxchilan Lintel 53 (Fig. 1) sug-



Fig. 1

gests that a phonetic reading for the entire glyph would end with *-nal*.¹ The *nal*, then, is behaving in the usual fashion, being read last even though

1. On Yaxchilan Lintel 53, Lady Eveningstar is shown holding a bundle, and Shield-Jaguar is holding a God K scepter. The verbal phrase in Shield-Jaguar's caption reads *ak'otah ti 'manikin*, while that of Lady Eveningstar reads *u bah ti 'manikin*. It might be argued that the correspondences of image and text in this lintel show that the 'manikin' glyph refers to any object used in a dance, but I think that this is not the case since in no other monuments is it possible that the glyph refers to something other than a zoomorphic manikin. In the case of Lintel 53, I believe that the 'manikin' in Lady Eveningstar's caption refers to the kind of dance being performed, not to the object she holds (see Grube n.d.). As an alternative explanation, there might be a manikin

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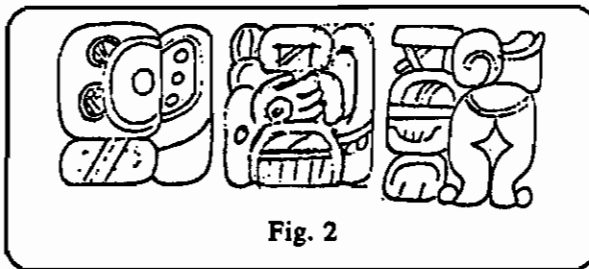


Fig. 2

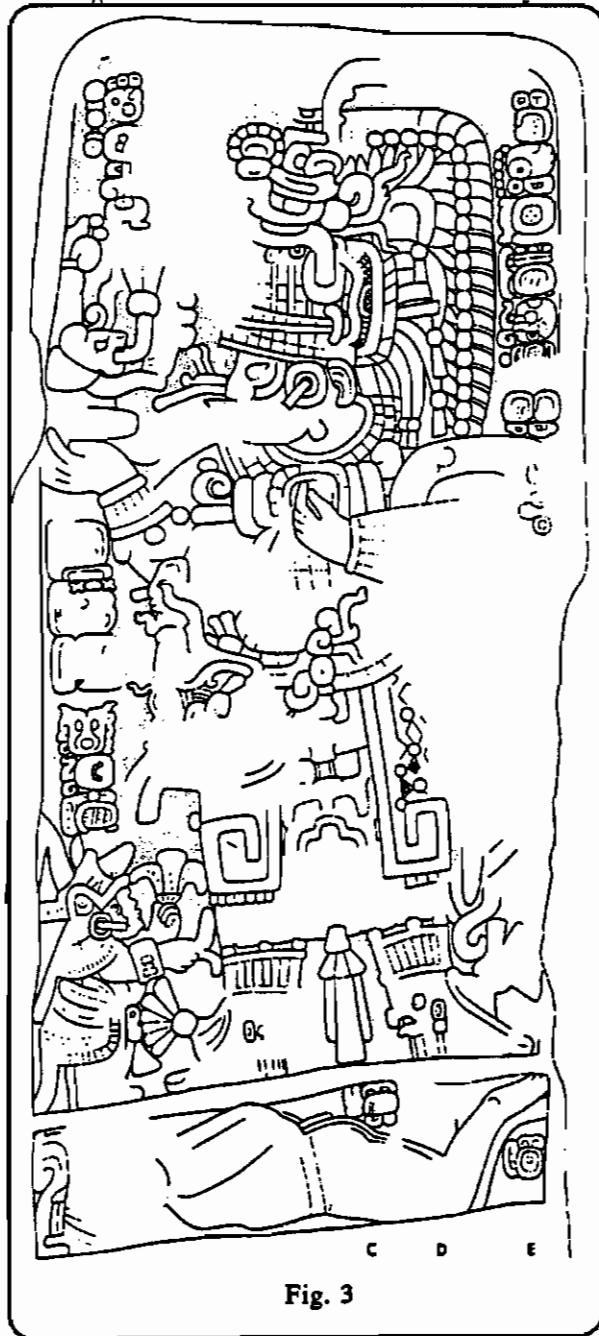


Fig. 3

its position signals that in normal reading order it would be read before the main sign.²

Nikolai Grube (n.d.) notes that in T516 verbal expressions, the T516 verb is generally followed by a *ti* construction which includes a verbal noun naming the kind of dance or the object used in the dance. Thus, a phrase from Dos Pilas St. 26 (Fig. 2) reads, *ak'otah ti-? nachan-'manikin,* glossed as "He danced with the ? serpent manikin." What leads me to believe that the "God K scepter" glyph really refers simply to a "manikin" is the epigraphy and iconography of Xultun Stela 25 (Fig. 3). The text at A1-A3 is quite eroded, but enough of it remains to recognize that it is a T516 verbal expression, and the glyph in the *ti* construction is clearly the so-called "God K scepter" glyph. In the iconography of the stela, however, no God K scepter is present. The king holds what is probably a vision serpent in his left arm and raises a small jaguar manikin in his right hand, a common posture of kings on Xultun stelae. The glyphic caption, therefore, must read, *u bah ti ak'ot ti 'manikin,* or "He goes to dance with the manikin." (I think that "manikin" is preferable to "scepter" because the latter implies an elongated shape that the Xultun jaguar does not have.) In other references to manikins, then, the glyphs between the *ti* and the "manikin" glyph itself must name the kind of manikin used in the ritual. In the case of Dos Pilas Stela 25, the manikin is some kind of serpent manikin.

The manikin glyph also occurs at L17 in the main text of the Temple of the Foliated Cross at Palenque (Fig. 4). In this text, it appears in the position of the main sign of an emblem glyph,

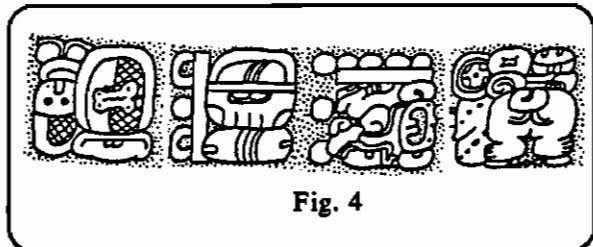


Fig. 4

2. The presence of the *nal* in the collocation in question does not necessarily signal that the glyph is a toponym. Many examples of non-toponyms containing *nal* may be identified, for example, *yichnal*, meaning "in the company of"; the name of Ruler 3 at Piedras Negras; *wak tinal*, the name of the Jaguar Paddler on the Tikal Burial 116 bones.

but I think that neither this position nor the *-nal* superfix makes it a toponym. Since the emblem glyph reading order calls for the T168 *ahaw* superfix to be read in final position, the glyph must read, *k'ul 'manikin' ahaw*, or "holy manikin lord." (Note that beneath the "manikin" main sign is a *la* complement, which reinforces the *nal*.) Therefore, the entire prepositional phrase from M15-L17 may be glossed, "at the place of the six sky *chak*, *ax bolon chak*, the holy manikin lord." Interpretation of this phrase as the naming of the *chak* as a "holy manikin lord" is

not unreasonable since *chak* manikins are commonly represented on Xultun stelae, and, more importantly, one *chak* manikin, the "dangle god," is an important part of the accession costume of kings throughout the Maya area.

References

- Grube, Nikolai
n.d. T516 as a Glyph for Ak'ot "Dance." Notes dated 28 May 1990.