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The Nal Suffix at Palenque and Elsewhere

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While working the inscriptions of Quirigua in my 1990 course on hieroglyphic writing, I noted a title on Stela D and F in which T4 *na* substitutes for the combination T4.1008 (Fig. 1). It occurred to me that the version with the head attached might simply be the head variant of the simpler sign. Two contexts confirm this idea: G7 of the Lords of the Night which have the two versions in free substitution for each other (Fig. 2) and a incised panel from Site Q which has the word for "house" spelled T4:1008:683 or *nah* (Fig. 3). Interestingly, a significant number of north glyphs during the Classic period are simply written with this *na* head variant along or combined with T178 *la*. At least one term for north may simply have been *nal*.

This new identification of the head variant of T4 *na* also clarifies part of the mythological pas-

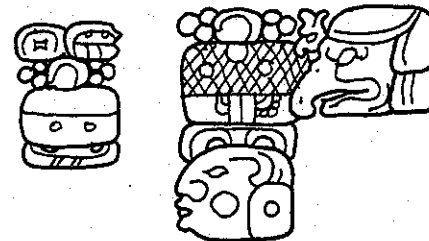


Fig. 1 The Quirigua Titles

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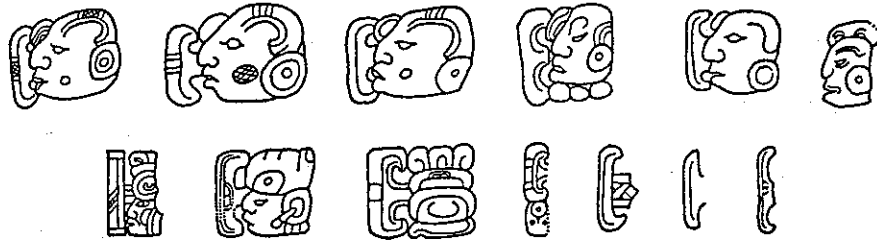


Fig. 2 G7 of the Lords of the Night

sage of the Tablet of the Cross (Fig. 4). One of the most important events recorded there is the dedication of a house by GP, the father of the Triad, 1.9.2 after 4 Ahaw 8 Kum'k'u. This passage consists of the calendar round date 9 Ik' end of Mol, the God N dedication verb which is followed by three glyphs, then *u ch'ul k'aba'* ("[is] its holy name"), and finally *yotot xaman* ("the house of the north").

Given the standard formula of dedication phrases, the three glyphs between the verb and *u ch'ul k'aba'* are the proper name of the house that was dedicated. The first component is *wak ah*



Fig. 3 Nah from the Site Q Panel

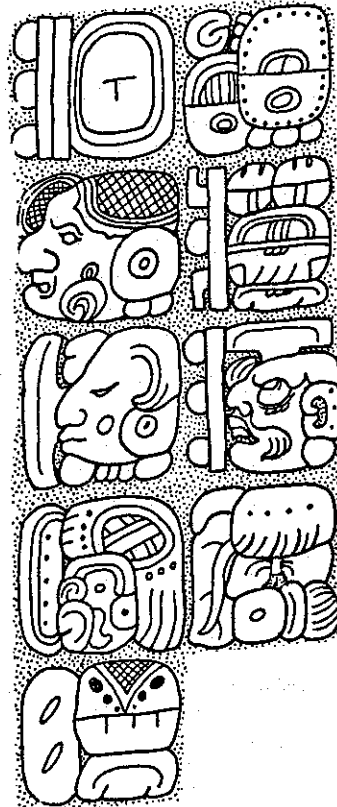
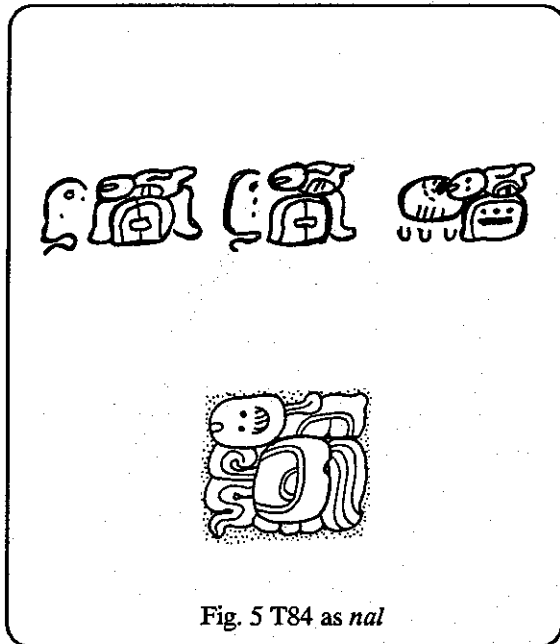


Fig. 4 The Tablet of the Cross Passage

Fig. 5 T84 as *nal*

chan, "raised up sky," but in past analysis Schele (1987) had taken the middle glyph to be "north." Now it is clear to me this glyph simply records *nal*, the suffix that goes so frequently with place names.

Nal also has several other forms, including the normal T86, which Knorosov (1967:83) first read as *nal*. Variations on this standard form include T84 (which Kelley [1976:197] also recognized as a

probable allograph) and the head of the Maize God. T84 can be seen as *nal* especially in the Dresden Codex in "impinged bone" expressions (see D41, D44b, D45b). In the 819-day Count in the Group of the Cross, this T84 glyph is conjoined with the normal leaves and silks that characterize the standard version (Fig. 5). I think the name *k'awil* is being specified as a locational noun in a reading something like *k'awinal*.

The value of the Maize God head as *nal* is confirmed in an example of the 7 Black-K'an location on the side of Copan Stela D (Fig. 6). There the standard T86 sign is replaced by the Maize God head, just as it sometimes is in earflare assemblages.

That *nal* should be associated with the Maize God can be explained simply by the meaning of *nal* as "ear of corn." But Lounsbury noticed the following entry in Aulie and Aulie (1978:85): "*na'al* (Tila) el dios de abundancia de plantas y animales (Se dice que aparece en forma concreta en maíz, frijol, pollos y puercos. Los ídolos antiguos de los choles fueron hechos para este dios.)" For the Chols, at least, the name of the Maize God was *na'al*.

This head is used as *nal* on the sarcophagus sides where the glyph for the sarcophagus itself is abstracted into a place by the addition of the *nal* suffix, which is spelled with the Maize God head and T178 *la* (Fig. 7).

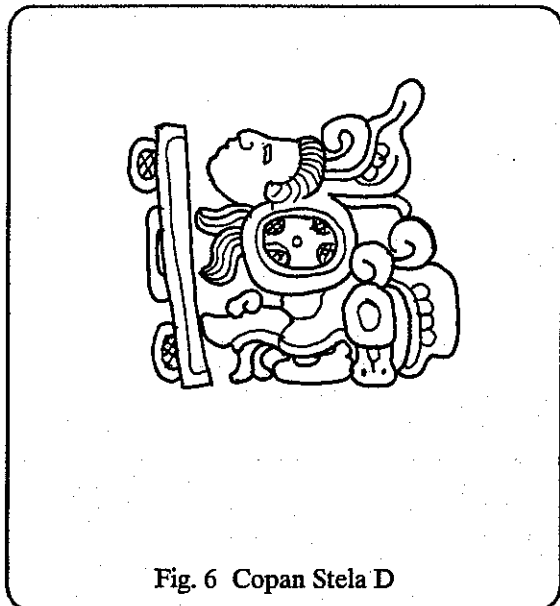


Fig. 6 Copan Stela D

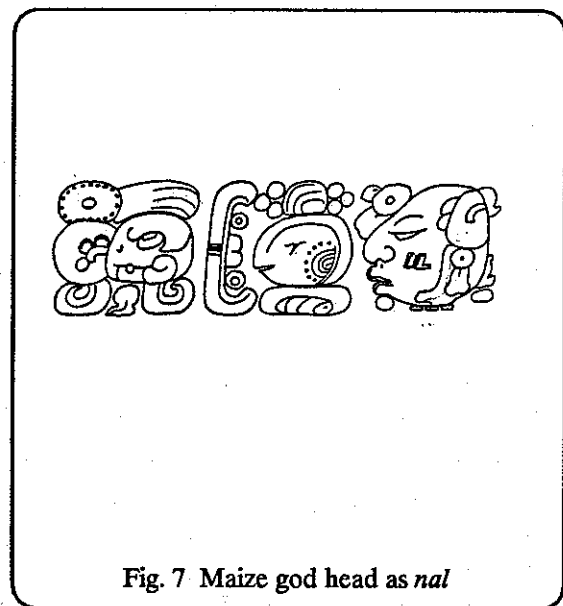
Fig. 7 Maize god head as *nal*



Fig. 8 Kerr 1882

The most interesting and telling use of the *nal* head is in the name of the Maize God itself as identified by Taube (1985:174 and Fig. 3c) is *Hun Nal*. More important is Taube's identification of

the Holmul Dancer, especially the scene in which he emerges from the cracked turtle shell, as the Maize God. The version of this god's name critical to our argument occurs on Kerr 1882 (Fig. 8)

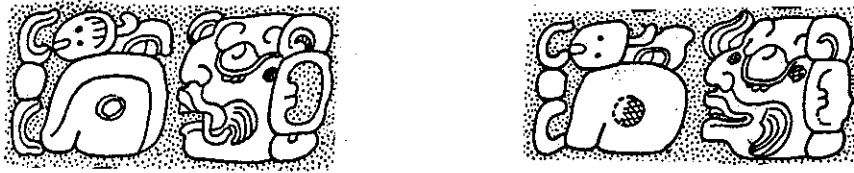


Fig. 9 GI's name at Palenque

with the glyphs *Hun Nal* followed by the winal frog, read *e*, over the sign *ya* to give something like *Hun Nal Ey*.

This brings us to the name of the first GI as it is recorded in the Tablet of the Cross (Fig. 9) as elsewhere at Palenque. Lounsbury had earlier suggested that it reads *Hun Ahpu*, but in our recent mini-conference¹ we realized that the suffix is T84, the alternative *nal* discussed above and that the main sign is the T512 substitute for *ye*. This *Hun Nal Ye* combination is almost exactly the same spelling as the maize god on Kerr 1882. We think these names are, in fact, close enough to suggest that the first GI named in the Tablet of the Cross shares the name of the maize god. We also suggest that the father of the Triad at Palenque is linked to if not the same as the Maize God.

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1. This miniconference was sponsored by fund from the John D. Murchison Regents Professorship, currently held by Linda Schele. It took place between August 9-16, 1990 and was held at the Anthropology Department of the University of Calgary.