

Maya Personal Name Glyphs: In Writing and Iconography

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Through the seminal 1960, 1963, and 1964 papers by Proskouriakoff it was proven that Classic Maya inscriptions recorded dynastic history and that the personal names of kings and queens and the events in which they participated were recorded. In 1968 it was David Kelley who deciphered the first personal name (Kakupacal) of a Maya king, now known as K'ahk'upakal K'inich K'awiil (Boot 2005), applying and extending upon the method of decipherment proposed by Yuriy Knorozov (Coe 1992). In subsequent research many of the Classic Maya dynasties and the personal names of its kings and queens have been decoded (Martin and Grube 2008), while others are on the brink of being deciphered. Many of these personal names can now fully be deciphered (although at times the meaning remains opaque), while others still resist full decipherment. The names of these kings and queens can be found in complete form (through which the grammar of Classic Maya personal names can be researched) or can be abbreviated to the essential parts of the name only (a full study that researches the possible principles that govern these abbreviations within the conventions of Classic Maya name giving is yet to be instigated, but some preliminary results will be presented). Of some royals their childhood or pre-accession name, their accession name, and in rare cases even their "death name" is now known.

In this presentation I will begin with a short overview of the history and the current state of Classic Maya anthroponymic research (e.g., Colas 2005). Based on Classic Maya syntax anthroponyms, ethnonyms, theonyms, toponyms, etc., are identified. This overview sets the stage for the subject of my presentation, how Maya personal name glyphs were integrated into visual narratives and how borders between writing and iconography were "crossed." Maya sculptors not only "integrated" the full or abbreviated glyphic names of kings and queens into royal portraiture, but on occasion transformed their hieroglyphic names into meters high full figure façade sculptures which stand in the tradition of iconography but conform to the parameters of Maya writing. The presentation will be illustrated with examples from the central Maya lowlands (e.g., Palenque, Cancuen, Naranjo) and includes objects fully sculpted in-the-round (e.g., Palenque, Piedras Negras) and full figure modeled and sculptured name glyphs from building façades at Copan.

References

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