

Text and image in the tablets of the Cross Group at Palenque

FLORA S. CLANCY

The Cross Group at the site of Palenque is an architectural assemblage consisting of three temples, each set upon pyramidal platforms. The three temples face into a shared courtyard: the Temple of the Cross is at the north end of the court, the Temple of the Sun at the west, and the Temple of the Foliated Cross at the east (fig. 1). For archaeological and epigraphic reasons (Schele 1974a), the Cross Group is considered to have been built at the turn of the eighth century during the reign of Chan Bahlum II of Palenque (A.D. 684–702).

Within each temple is an interior sanctuary. The three relief-carved tablets set into the back wall of these sanctuaries consist of scenes that have been laterally framed by large panels of glyphs (fig. 2). The scenes themselves are composed similarly and display similar icons: two profile figures standing on either side of a large emblematic icon (fig. 3). In the Temple of the Sun (hereafter TS), the emblematic icon consists of crossed spears resting upon a bar-shape, which in turn is held up by two grotesque human figures. Hung or suspended in front of the crossed spears, a large round shield commands the center of the composition (fig. 5). In the Temple of the Cross (TC) (fig. 4) and the Temple of the Foliated Cross (TFC) (fig. 6), the central icon is a cross or tree topped by a serpent-bird (Spinden 1913: 60–61).

Our purpose is to analyze the information contained in the tablets and to make a qualitative comparison of the scenic information with the information of the glyphic texts that surround each. Ten years ago this purpose could not have been accomplished; epigraphic studies had not yielded translations of entire glyphic texts. A text and image analysis of the Cross Group tablets became possible when its glyphic texts were translated and published.

Linda Schele (1976; 1979a) has presented a compelling interpretation of the iconographic content of the tablets in the Cross Group based on her knowledge of the epigraphy. From the small secondary texts placed near the tall figure, she identifies the major protagonist as Chan Bahlum II. The event of his accession to rulership is considered to be the major theme. Because of the iconographic differences that exist between the three tablets, Schele infers that they signal three aspects of rulership. Inferred as well is the identification of the short muffled figure as Pacal, the father of Chan Bahlum II, who was dead at the time of his son's accession. The

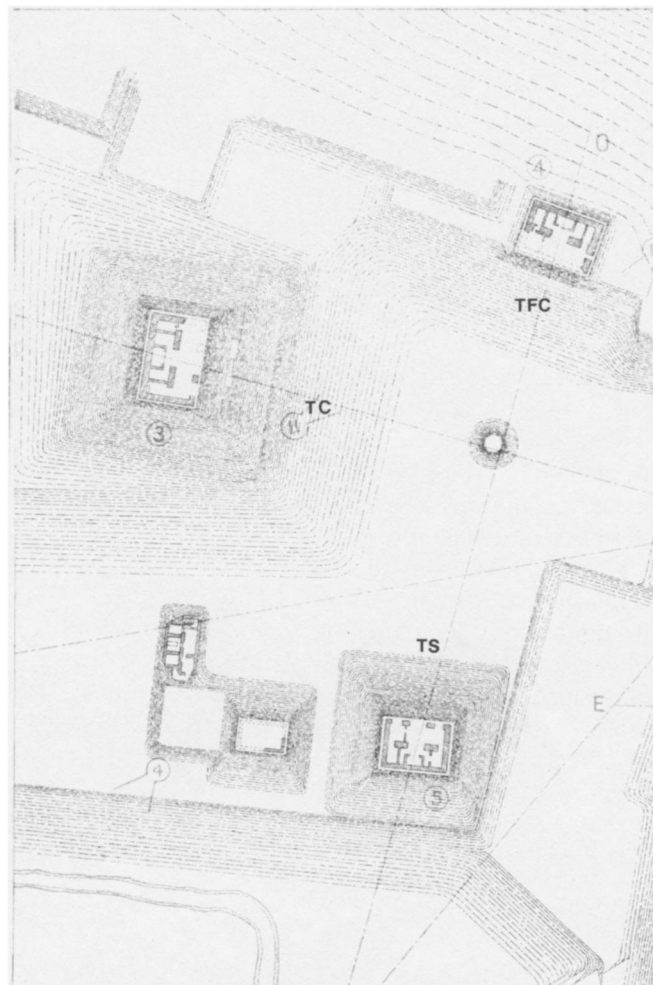


Figure 1. Site plan of Palenque: detail of the Cross Group (after Maudslay 1889–1902, vol. 4, pl. 1).

tablets of the Cross Group, therefore, are understood by Schele as commemorative: honoring the accession of Chan Bahlum II to rulership and possible deification. Pacal, now dead, offers to Chan Bahlum II three emblems of rulership, each associated with one of the central icons in the tablet scenes and with one of three patron-gods (to be identified shortly).

The tablet scenes as they are composed, however, do not readily conform to Schele's interpretation. Why is Chan Bahlum actually offering up an emblem in all three scenes if he is to be the recipient? And why do the

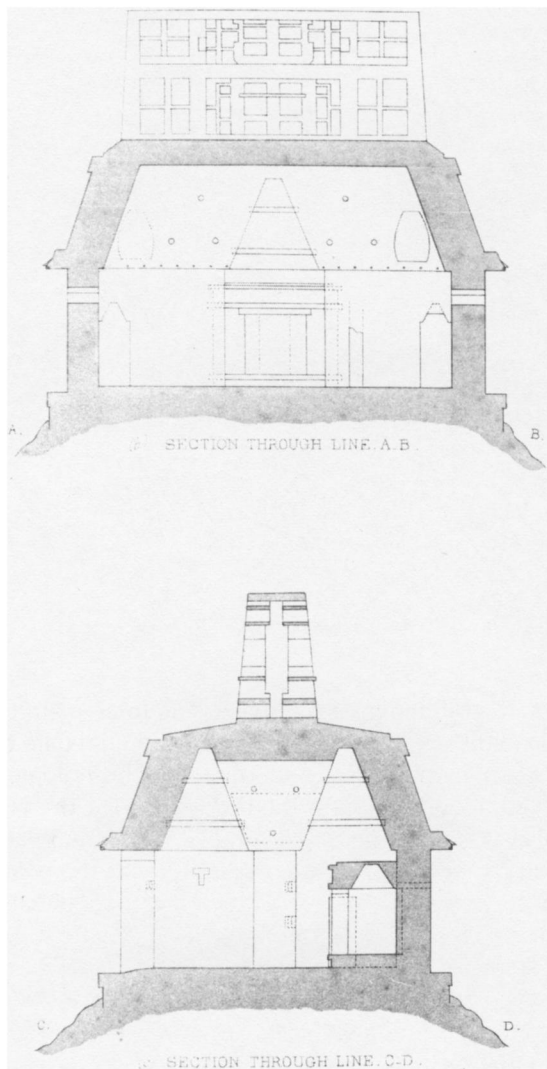


Figure 2. Temple of the Sun, Palenque: sections showing the interior sanctuary (after Maudslay 1889–1902, vol. 4, pl. 85).

short figure's gestures change from passive (TC) to active (TS) to passive (TFC) if he is the giver of the three emblems? Based on the meaning and content found in the compositions of the texts and images, a different iconographic interpretation results that envisions the themes of equivalence and transformation. While agreeing with the identification of Chan Bahlum II as the tall figure, the present iconography suggests that the short figure is the father of the patron-gods in the

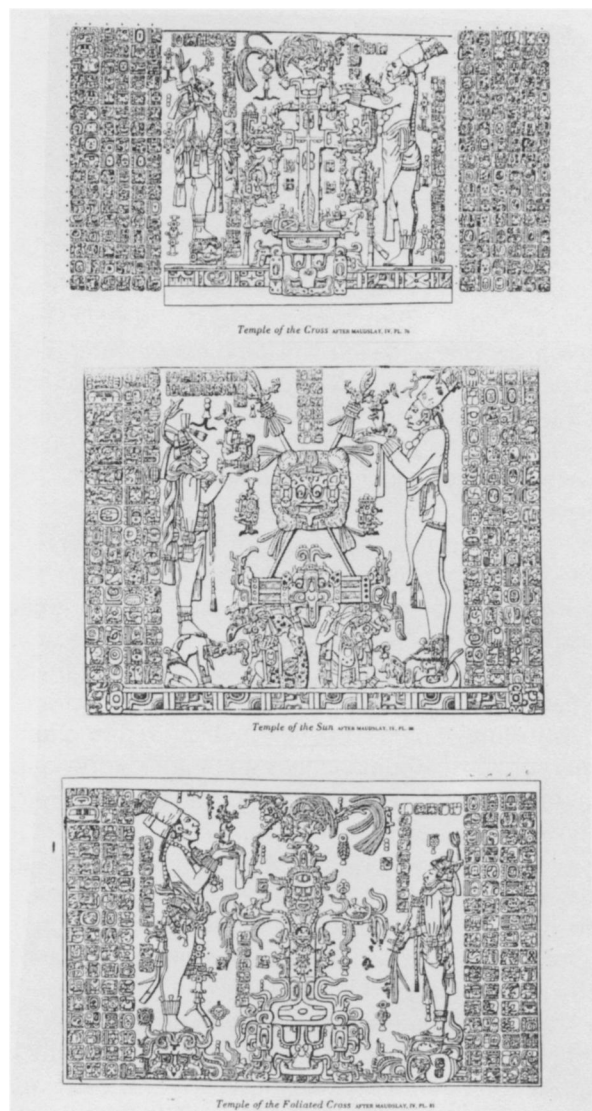


Figure 3. Cross Group tablets, Palenque: Temple of the Cross (top), Temple of the Sun (middle), and Temple of the Foliated Cross (bottom).

Palenque Triad, and an important celebration, an anniversary event, rather than accession, is a major inspiration for the imagery.

Whatever value the following interpretations might have, the main intention is to demonstrate that the physical, formal composition of the Palenque scenes contains (that is, limits and holds) the iconographic meaning of their images. The limits of meaning imposed by composition, however, are only partially restrictive,

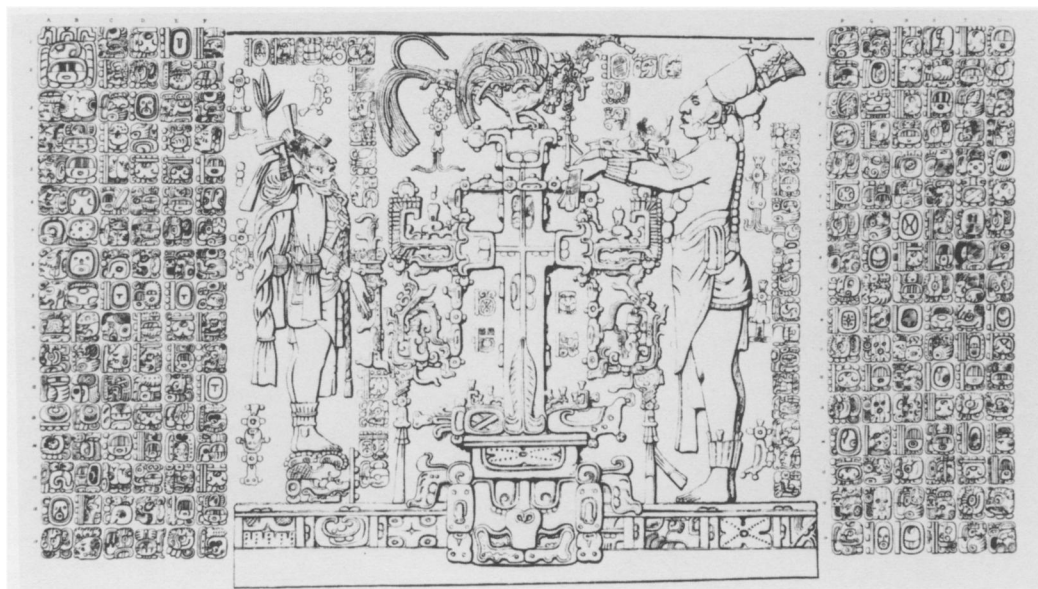


Figure 4. Temple of the Cross, Palenque: tablet (after Maudslay 1889–1902, vol. 4, pl. 76).

and one composition can express several iconographic themes, much in the same way that different stories can be structured by the same basic plot.

Composition of the tablet texts

In 1963 Heinrich Berlin noted the occurrence in the Palenque texts of three name glyphs and was able to determine that they were god names (fig. 7). He speculated that each was associated with one of the temples in the Cross Group: god I (referred to in the literature as GI) with the Temple of the Cross, GI1 with the Temple of the Foliated Cross, and GI11 with the Temple of the Sun. Berlin also noted that in the glyptic texts of Palenque these three name glyphs occasionally were mentioned together as a group, so he labeled the three gods the Palenque Triad. In 1965 David Kelley added to Berlin's observations by showing that three dates given in the texts of the tablets record the birth dates of the gods of the Triad. Later epigraphic studies, especially those of Floyd Lounsbury (1976; 1980) and Linda Schele (1976; 1978; 1981), have greatly added to our understanding of these texts. The following exegesis is based almost entirely on their readings.

Each panel presents two kinds of glyptic text. The main text frames the lateral sides of the scene, and a caption or secondary text made up of smaller glyphs is

included within the scenic space. The three main texts are a connected narrative. The earliest initial date begins the narrative on the TC, and following chronologically, the next initial date starts the text on the TS. The latest initial date is recorded on the TFC. This chronological sequence also fits the order of the births of the gods in the Triad and is the order in which historical events associated with Chan Bahlum II are related. First, his ancestors and namesake are recorded in the TC; his heir-apparenty rites conclude the main text of the TS; and his accession is recorded at the end of the TFC panel text.

Nine major events are listed in the main texts of the Cross panels. In narrative time or order, the story they tell starts with the mythical births of an ancestral pair, the Lady Palenque and the First Father, which in Maya reckoning took place just before the beginning of the present great time or world cycle.¹ The next major

1. Schele (1978) has nicknamed the female of this pair "Lady Beastie." Since this woman's name glyph (see TC, C1) is analogous to one of the emblem glyphs of Palenque (see TC, E15), the name "Lady Palenque" is used in this paper. The First Father's name glyphs (TC, C8 and D8) are almost the same as those used for GI, his son. It was Lounsbury (1980) who realized the familiar relationship between these two characters.

Using the Goodman, Martinez, Thompson correlation, the beginning of the present cycle was on August 11, 3114 B.C. It is due to close on December 21, A.D. 2012.

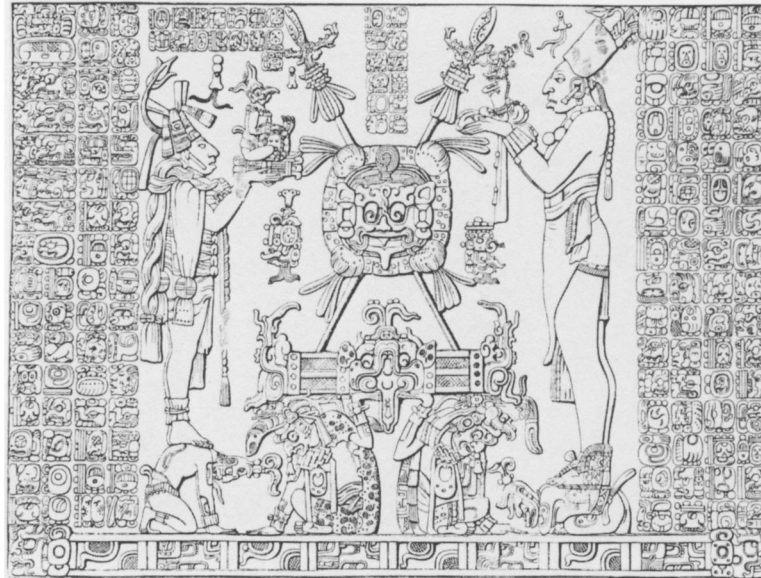


Figure 5. Temple of the Sun, Palenque: tablet (after Maudslay 1889–1902, vol. 4, pl. 88).

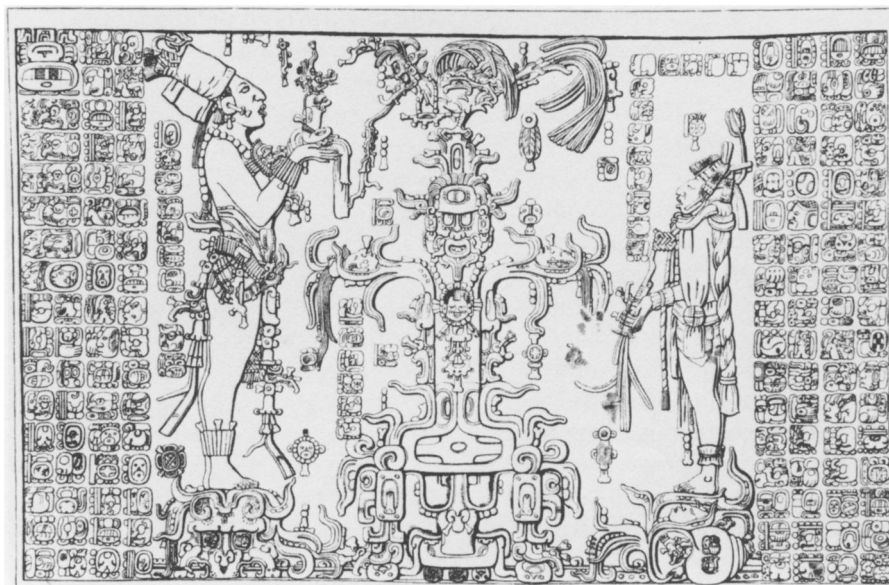


Figure 6. Temple of the Foliated Cross, Palenque: tablet (after Maudslay 1889–1902, vol. 4, pl. 81).

event, called the sky event by Linda Schele (1978), occurs one year and six lunar months after the turning of the cycle, when the First Father was nine years old. The narrative then tells of the births of the gods of the Triad, which is followed by a bloodletting ritual of

autosacrifice performed by their mother, the Lady Palenque. With the same glyphic phrase used for historical and mundane rulers, we are next told that when this Lady was 816 years old she became the (first?) ruler of Palenque. Following the accession of Lady

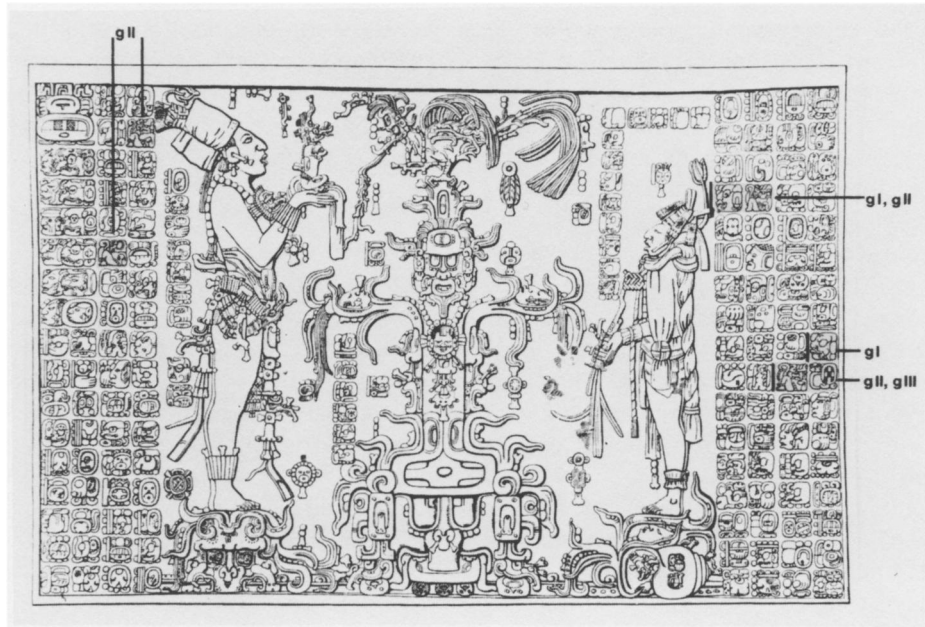


Figure 7. The Palenque Triad name glyphs as seen on the tablet from the Temple of the Foliated Cross.

Palenque, a royal, ancestral, and basically historical list mentions eight men who ruled at Palenque. This list ends with the accession in A.D. 572 of Chan Bahlum I, the namesake of the Cross Group's patron, Chan Bahlum II.

The texts now are concerned with three important ceremonial events in the life of Chan Bahlum II. This biography is introduced by telling of a celebration that takes place six years *after* Chan Bahlum II's accession to royal power: the celebration thought to be the main thematic climax of the texts. This literary device, the telling of the end of a story at the beginning of the narration, is referred to as telescoping and is common in present-day Mayan narration. It can be found as well in the historic text of the *Popol Vuh* (Tedlock and Tedlock 1985). The event, called the sky/anniversary event, lasted four days and lists three ritual episodes presided over by Chan Bahlum II. After the telling of this event, the texts describe Chan Bahlum II's heir-apparency rites during the summer solstice of A.D. 641, and then his accession to rulership at Palenque in 684, forty-three years later.

These events can be divided into two equal sets of mythical and historical happenings (table 1). Since Linda Schele (1979; Schele and Miller 1983) has shown that heir-apparency rites are often associated with acts of sacrifice and bloodletting (events 4 and 8 in table 1), the

pairing of all these events suggests that a systematic equivalence is being made between myth and history. That the births of the Triad are the central and unique event is in keeping with our present understanding of the Cross Group.

Table 1. Equivalent Sets of Mythical and Historical Events

Event	Myth	Event	History
1	Birth of ancestral pair	6	Ancestor list
2	Sky event	7	Sky/anniversary event
		3	Births of the Triad
4	Bloodletting, Lady Palenque	8	Heir apparency, Chan Bahlum II
5	Accession, Lady Palenque	9	Accession, Chan Bahlum II

The three historical facts of Chan Bahlum II's life that are stated as unique events on each of the panels — his ancestry (TC), his heir apparency (TS), and his accession (TFC) — are, along with the birth of the Triad, recalled metaphorically by the recorded ceremonies belonging to the sky/anniversary event. This event began on July 21, A.D. 690 (2 Cib 14 Mol) and was celebrated by Chan Bahlum II. The first day may have celebrated mythical and historical ancestors since the subjects of this event

are the gods of the Triad, each separately presented in order of their births. Schele (1981) reports that Floyd Lounsbury has noted that this date coincided with a significant sky phenomenon involving the planet Jupiter. Events of the following day (July 22) are described by the same verbal glyphs that tell of the mythical sky event. Both the mythical and the historical statements include a reference to a world direction and a locative glyph, which Schele (1981) translates “in the house” (fig. 8).

The span of days between the mythical event of 3112 B.C. celebrated by the First Father and the matching historical event of A.D. 690 celebrated by Chan Bahlum II is 1,388,455, or 3481 synodic Jupiter years ($3481 \times 398.867 = 1,388,456.027$).

The mythical event takes place when the First Father is supposedly nine years old, and we can suppose that it is related to heir-apparency rites (Lounsbury 1980: 108–109). The last day’s (July 24, or 5 Cauac 17 Mol) events are signaled by the “fish-in-hand” glyph usually associated with female auto-sacrifice (Proskouriakoff 1973: 171), and the accession event-glyph of a hand depicted holding a bundle (Schele and Mathews 1974). This, of course, can be related to the accession of Chan Bahlum II. (See L10 through M15 in the main text of the TFC.)

This metaphor of equivalence is a statement of personal heritage and power. The connection between the mythical event and the historical one is defined by whole synodic cycles of the planet Jupiter, enhanced by the fact that it was also the seventy-fifth anniversary of

the accession of Chan Bahlum II’s father, Pacal (Schele 1978) and marked by a visible, impressive, celestial phenomenon involving Jupiter. The historic event, then, celebrates the reifying and elegant conjunction of calendrical structures with the more random but living facts of history.

The sky events not only connect or equate mythical action with historical action; by their repetition within each separate table text, they provide a thematic connection within the overall narrative. The other major mythic action or event, the births of the gods of the Triad, similarly connects the three texts, but in this case acts to establish a sequence or movement through the narrative. The narrative plot is to be found in the historical subthemes of each panel: ancestral display on the TC, heir apparency on the TS, and accession on the TFC. Within this biography, the esoteric message of the text, equivalence, is its theme: that which was great is now great and has not been lost in time but sustained by time.

Composition of the scenes

The sequential order, TC, TS, TFC, predicated by the chronological framework of the narrative reveals a formal symmetry and conceptual unity for the compositions of the tablet scenes that is not evident in the sequential order by which they are usually considered — that of TC, TFC, TS (following Berlin) — or by the order suggested by Marvin Cohodas (1973) of TS, TC, TFC. Following the narrative and chronological

TC C9–C13				
TS N8–O10				
TFC L5–M8				
	Date	Name or title	Cardinal direction	Locative

Figure 8. Sky event, mythical (TC) and historical (TS, TFC). Illustration by Barbara C. Page.



Figure 9. Secondary Ballcourt Markers, Copan (after Morley 1938–1939, vols. 2, 3, 4, endpieces).

order, the great icon of the shield and spears in the TS is flanked by the two crosses, and the greater compositional program reiterates the three-part composition of each individual panel where the central and frontal image is flanked by two attendant figures (fig. 3).

As a compositional type, attendant figures flanking a central and frontal image is a rare choice for the Classic Maya and occurs elsewhere only at Tikal (Stelae 31, 25, and 23) and on the Secondary Ballcourt Markers of Copan (fig. 9). All these Maya examples display this three-part composition by using either three separate planes of one monument, as on the Tikal stelae, or three separate monuments, as at Palenque and Copan.² The flanking figures are always shown as one tall and one short, and are usually represented as reversed images of each other.

At Palenque, the composition of each panel displays the flanking attendants of markedly different heights, but not as reversed images. The reverse imagery is to be found in the overall compositional program where the flanking panels of the TC and the TFC are reversed images of one another. All the main profiled figures have been reversed in the TFC from their position in the TC panel. Furthermore, the qualities of the outline or delineation of the crosses and the basal bands also are reversed in that they are rendered in direct graphic contrast with one another. In the TC these icons are

2. Attendant figures flanking a central, frontal image are not uncommon for Mexican highland compositions, occurring with frequency at Teotihuacan (Kubler 1967; A. Miller 1973) and at Monte Alban (Clancy 1980).

made with straight lines, repeated modules abutted to one another, and simple, blunt shapes. Reversing these formal qualities, the icons in the TFC are made by curved lines, forms flowing or fusing into one another, and complex outlines.³

The reverse imaging of profiles and the contrast in delineation provide a dichotomy within which we must understand the similarities and differences of the icons as they are represented from one tablet to the other. The meaning of the prone manikin lying in the arms of the tall figure in the TC, for example, is enriched when we become aware that this manikin also sits upright with a straight back in the TFC.⁴ His proneness becomes a poignant state or condition dependent on its context. The compositional dichotomies between these two panels lead the viewer to realize that the meaning of this manikin is derived as much from its relationship to context as from its own iconic identity.

The Secondary Ballcourt Markers from Copan

The scenes on the ballcourt markers from the Secondary Ballcourt at Copan (ca. A.D. 652) present the closest analogy in their compositional program to that of the Cross Group (fig. 9). A comparison between the Copan markers and the Palenque panels is helpful for establishing what kinds of meaning would be served by

3. Contrasting an organically rendered shape to the same shape rendered in a more geometric and tighter fashion has been noted by George A. Kubler for Teotihuacan (1967) and Tikal (1976).

4. This manikin with the strange head shape is commonly referred to as the “jester god” (Schele 1974b).

the rather unique compositional structure they both share.

The scenes on the north and south markers show two figures flanking a large ball that is tied by a rope and suspended from a crossbar at the top of the scene. The two figures wear costumes appropriate for the ball game and are either anthropomorphized spirits or spirit impersonators. One of the figures is depicted in the dynamic kneeling pose of a ball player. The other figure is standing upright and is in complete profile. Since their eyes meet over the ball, the standing figure is actually shorter in height than the kneeling figure. Behind the standing figures on the north and south markers, a tree or bush is depicted with a trunk enlarged to encompass a glyph with a numerical prefix. These two figural scenes take place on a ground line placed just above the lower indentations of the quatrefoil frame that surrounds the scene. A glyph, called the tripartite sign (Kubler 1969) or quadripartite sign (M. Greene Robertson 1974), fills the exergue space below the ground line.

In the upper scene, the north and south markers are compositionally related to each other by the use of reverse imagery. Even the tethered ball, which appears to sway gently to the right on the north marker, has swung to the left on the south marker. Nonetheless, the interior details of the spirit faces and their costumes are different, and within the trees, the glyphs' numerical values also differ: number 9 on the north marker and number 7 on the south.

The tripartite signs in the exergues, however, do not participate in the reverse imagery of the upper scenes, but the two tripartite signs occupying the exergue of the central marker are shown in mirror symmetry. The scene above the exergue of the central marker again shows two ball players flanking an enlarged ball, but this time both players appear to be human, and both kneel in the active postures of ball players. The untethered ball is in play. Because of its iconographic contrasts to the north and south markers, the scene on the central marker seems to be more mundane in content. This place of worldly action is qualified in the exergue below it by the mirror-imaged tripartite signs that repeat the compositional relationship between the north and south markers.

The conceptual context for the central image is quite clearly illustrated by its central or pivotal position within the compositional program of reversed imagery. The central event, which may be historical, is enacted between the mythical events depicted in the north and south markers, and it mediates between the

transformation displayed in these two markers where the content (a mythic ball game) has not changed, but the context, signaled by mirror imagery and iconography, has.

At the same time, however, the similarities within the scenes of all three markers — the quatrefoil frames, the ball game costumes and paraphernalia, the exergues, and the ball — urge us to acknowledge that they present three equivalent or analogous scenes. Are we to look at the three ballcourt markers sequentially from north to south (or vice versa), or are we to understand them as illustrating simultaneous and similar events? By stressing simultaneity, the basic message would be equivalence: as above and below, so in between. From a sequential reading, transformative change would be the understanding, the transformation from north to south being the effects of a cause — most likely the action shown in the central scene.

The Cross Group tablets

The three panels in the Cross Group present the same problem. That equivalence is an important message is signaled by the overt repetition of icons and composition (fig. 3). That transformation takes place is signaled by the use of the reverse imagery between the TC and the TFC panels and by their contrasting details of line quality and iconography.

The tall figure's costume provides a good example for expressing both equivalence and transformation (fig. 10).

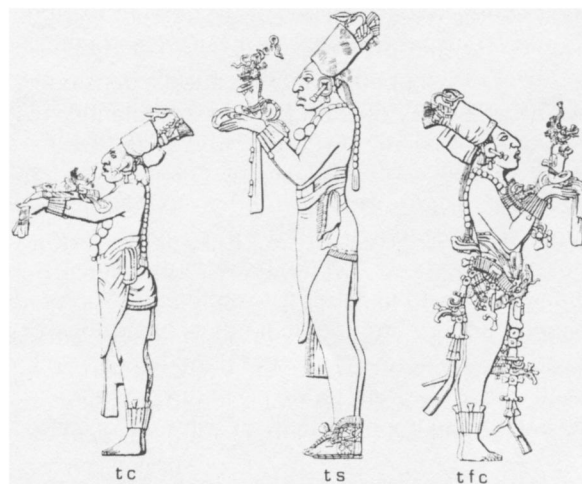


Figure 10. Comparison of Chan Bahlum II's costume on the three Cross Group tablets.



Figure 11. The cloth kilt of accession and captivity: Tablet of the Slaves, Group 4, showing accession (left), and Tablet of the Scribe, Palace, showing the costume of a captive (right) (photographs by Reed Estabrook).

On the TC, the tall figure's costume is simple and elegant. He wears a single strand of large beads balanced by a long string of smaller beads down his back. His kilt clearly is made of cloth wrapped around his middle by a complex method of folding and overlapping the material. He is barefoot and wears anklets and wristlets of long beads. His headdress is a tall cylinder of wrapped cloth with a top extension consisting of a spray of short feathers and plantlike forms. On the TS tablet this costume is unchanged except that the tall figure is wearing beautifully wrought sandals rather than beaded anklets. As depicted in the TFC, the figure is once again barefoot, but his costume has changed from soft cloth to beads. His belt is made by beadwork, and his short kilt and loincloth are made by a network of beads. Attached to the belt are complex beaded pendants, front and back. The front pendant drops from the open mouth of a monstrous saurian or fish head whose lower jaw is replaced by the spondylus shell shown in profile. Clothing made from beaded netting is commonly associated with the portrayal of women (Proskouriakoff 1961; Schele 1979: 46), and Jeffrey Miller (1974: 154) has pointed out that this

particular front belt pendant is also a feminine costume feature.

The cloth kilt worn on the TC and TS tablets is similar to the kilt worn by the new rulers of Palenque during the accession ceremony (Schele 1976) and to the kilts worn by kneeling figures from Palenque and other Maya sites who may be captives about to be sacrificed (Schele 1984) (fig. 11).⁵ Thus the iconographic contexts of this kilt, as it is used at Palenque, show it to be worn either after a humiliating divestment in captive scenes or before investiture into the highest honor of rulership. An equivalence has been made between the act of sacrifice and the act of accession, and the status of prisoner and the status of royalty. Transformation occurs by changing a male costume into a female one.

By analogy to the Copan markers, one could

5. The panels depicting accession at Palenque are the Oval Tablet, the Palace Tablet, and the Tablet of the Slaves. The Tablets of the Orator and the Scribe, and the Tablet from Temple XXI, show the captives. I agree with Schele (1984), who argues that these latter figures are rulers performing auto-penance in the purposeful but humiliating guise of captives. Claude Baudez and Peter Mathews (1979), however, see them as true victims.

understand the two reversed images with trees as allegorical or, perhaps, mythical places, and the central image, the TS, as having more references to mundane activity. The allegorical trees and birds of the TC and TFC are replaced in the TS by enlarged objects of worldly use. These objects — the ceremonial bar, shield, and spears — are known from other Maya monuments as the regalia of leadership. It is perhaps notable that the sun and earth glyphs inscribed on the ball of the central marker at Copan are repeated as the basal motifs of the TS panel.

Both sets of monuments, rendered by the same unique compositional structure, contrast the two temporal orders of simultaneity and sequence so as to present the themes of equivalence and transformation. Both themes may be illustrated by the iconography of the ball game or by the iconography for presentation, much like two different stories utilizing the same plot structure.⁶

Content and theme in text and image

The information given in both the texts and the images of the Cross Group tablets can be understood on two general levels of meaning: content and theme. Content is the more specific meaning and is expressed through the textual narrative and the iconic images. Theme expresses the more generalized and metaphoric meaning and is more apparent in the composition of both the texts and the images.

The narrative content of the tablet texts is a biographical mytho-history where places, times, and characters are explicitly counted and named. The iconographic content of the scenes displays the process of transformation. This transformation takes place around a solemn presentation of emblems and is revealed by the sequence of changing contexts. It should be realized that any sequence of events does not necessarily signal transformation. However, in a sequence where the contexts are so composed that the first and last visual events are reversed or mirrored images of one another, transformation is visually represented.

It is not at all clear that the sequential order of the scenes specifically matches any one particular sequence of events narrated in the text. The sequential order of the scenes has been structured to represent transformation

6. There is shared iconography in both sets of monuments that might signal the sharing of more specific content: trees, the tripartite signs, and the numbers 7 and 9.

from one state to another and could serve equally well as illustrations of rituals for birth, heir apparenacy, accession, and death. Indeed, there can be seen in these images strong iconographic references to death, or more precisely, to the tomb. The cross and serpent-bird icon, especially as it is rendered in the TC, is analogous to the great cross depicted on the sarcophagus lid found in the tomb of the Temple of the Inscriptions (Schele 1976) (fig. 12). The discrete glyphs placed in the background of the tablet scenes of the TC and the TFC are unusual elements in Maya composition, but they are similar in form and context to the discrete glyphs painted on the walls of Burial 48 at Tikal and to the glyphs painted on the jambs of the entrance into Tomb 104 at Monte Alban, Oaxaca (Coggins 1975: 191–192; Clancy 1980a). Furthermore, the composition of the mural in Tomb 104 can be directly compared to the composition of the Cross Group tablets (Clancy 1983). All of these traits — the cross, the discrete glyphs, and even the composition — are associated with tombs. The cross, especially for the ancient Palenqueños, is a direct and compelling icon associated with death and burial. Less obvious, perhaps, are the very background and composition of the scenes that are analogous to a tomb wall.

In the texts of the Cross Group, however, nobody dies. Birth, accession, and ritual celebration are discussed, but never death and burial. It is clear, then, that the narrative content of the texts does not dictate the iconographic content of the scenes. The scenes extend and, as Roland Barthes (1964) would say, relay information beyond that of the text. The celebrations discussed in the texts are not only illustrated, but also *shown* to be rites of transformation, along with the unstated transformation of death.

The theme of the text is the metaphoric equivalence of mythic times and acts with historical times and acts, and similarly, the composition of the three tablets, taken as a whole, displays simultaneity and equivalence. Therefore the meanings of the texts and the scenes meet like caption to illustration, on the level of thematic meaning, that of simultaneity and equivalence, but not on the level of content.

For both text and image, it is the compositional structure that is the most telling signal for thematic meaning. The theme of equivalence — all things and times are one — is vivified by the iconography of transformation and narrative biography. Chan Bahlum II is the hero of the textual biography, which is placed in a meaningful context by the scenes of transformation and



Figure 12. Sarcophagus Lid, Ruz Tomb, Temple of the Inscriptions, Palenque (photograph by M. Greene Robertson and Lee Hooker in M. Greene Robertson, *The Sculpture of Palenque*, vol. 1, figure 98 (detail). Princeton University Press, 1983).

compositions of equivalence. Put simply, Chan Bahlum II acts within time and is transformed by acts through time into a status equivalent to divinity.

Iconography of characters and events

There are several compelling reasons for suggesting that Chan Bahlum II's celebration of the sky/anniversary event six years and some days after his accession was an ultimate act that precipitated his transformation into divine status. It has been shown that the sky/anniversary event refers to the contents of personal biography as well as to the thematic meaning of equivalence. This four-day celebratory event may be uniquely associated with Chan Bahlum II; no other ruler is known to initiate or partake in such a series of events. Furthermore, since the second day's ritual is described in exactly the same way as the mythical sky event, it equates the subjects of these events: Chan Bahlum II plays or enacts the same role as the First Father, the father/ancestor of the Triad. Linda Schele's (1981) observation that the Palenqueño rulers were considered the parents and nurturers of the gods is directly related to this equivalence and suggests that Chan Bahlum II's transformation was from a human, albeit exalted, status to a divine status as parent of the Triad. Another compelling reason is found in the fourth day's ritual that lists two events, auto-sacrifice and accession. The two contrasting acts of humiliation and honor are equated by the same cloth kilt worn by the tall figure as he is depicted in the TC and the TS.

The caption texts repeat the three biographical acts or events in Chan Bahlum II's life that are summarized by the sky/anniversary event. These textual events, placed within the pictorial-image context of transformation and equivalence, allow us to suggest the identity of the two profile figures as Chan Bahlum II, the tall figure, illustrating transformation, and the short figure as the First Father, the icon of equivalence.

The short muffled figure wears a costume that is practically unique in Maya iconography, so there is little with which to compare its use on these panels.⁷ It is significant, however, that the costume of this figure does not change from one panel to the next and is virtually

7. George A. Kubler (1972) compares the costume of this figure to one worn by a certain class of profile figures depicted in the art of highland Mexico. If the connection he draws is correct, the short figure of the Palenque tablets would be iconographically related to the Mexicanized profile figures depicted on the famed Stela 31 of Tikal. The closest Maya costume and role that might be associated with this figure would be the cloth garments of a ball player.

equivalent and the same. Only the objects held in the short figure's hands change, and these objects appear to be miniature versions of the central emblems.⁸ The short figure may be equated with the First Father as described by Martin Pickands (1980); the first but false sun recorded in the *Popol Vuh* (see Edmonson 1971); or the "elder brother" of the Sun, the planet Jupiter (Dutting 1979). Static himself, he holds in his hands the powers of transformation.

That the central emblems are symbols of the gods of the Triad does not conflict with any of the previous theories concerning the meaning of the tablets in the Cross Group. Held in the hands of the First Father, they are indeed like his children, but they become powerfully large as the central images. If the First Father is the transformer, they, the Triad, are his agents.

The iconographic identification of the three gods of the Triad is problematic because although they play roles in the textual narrative, they are not its subject. Their identifying stories are implied, not stated. The following iconography is therefore tentative. Whatever their identification may in fact be, however, their iconography must be compatible with the compositional structure of the panels. That is, GI (TC) and GII (TFC) must be transforms — dualistic opposites — of one another, and GIII (TS) must somehow mediate between them.

If GI is Venus, as is his usual identification (Berlin 1963; Kelley 1965; Schele 1976), he may be understood as emulating his father's (or Jupiter's) role as morning and evening star. GI and the First Father operate in those subtle marginal realms that define the transition of one state of being into its opposite, as dusk and dawn mediate between the opposites of night and day, light and dark. This is seen in the TC where the tree growing from a monstrous head mediates between the sky signs on the basal band that are associated with the night on the left side and the day on the right.

GII is the patron of the TFC and by his tree is shown to be equivalent in some way to GI. It may be an equivalence made between opposites, since as Marvin Cohodas (1976) has pointed out, the monstrous head at the base of the cross on the TFC is the front head of a double-headed monster whose rear head is on the TC. Front and back are opposites, but compositionally they are shown to function in the same way. This suggests a

8. Although the analogy between the short figure's handheld object and the central emblem of the TFC may be questioned, this analogy is certainly true for the TC and the TS.

planetary identification for GII. Which planet this might be is in question. Since both GII and the First Father were born on the day 1 Ahau, GII could be Jupiter as the reincarnation of the First Father. Dieter Dutting's (1979) association of Jupiter with the heads depicted on the foliated tree (TFC) is interesting in this respect. There is another condition to consider. The span of days between the births of the First Father and GII is 278,460, and this can be factored by many numbers important to Maya calendrical calculations.⁹ One factor, 780, is especially interesting. Besides being three rounds of the sacred 260-day count, it is also the synodic year of Mars (779.94 days). It could be that the "opposite" or reversed image of Venus (GI) was considered to be Mars (GII). Regardless of which planetary identification is attributed to GII, it must be one that can be understood as the dualistic transformation of GI/Venus and the rear head of the double-headed monster.

GIII, the twin brother of GI/Venus and son of the First Father/Jupiter, may be understood as the Sun of the present era or world. He is light, and his absence is dark. Light and dark, indicated by the glyphs on the basal band of the TS, are absolute conditions that are defined by the Sun. His powers are extreme, not subtle like those of GI. The usual iconographic emphasis on the Sun's nocturnal state (Pasztory 1973; Kelley 1965; Schele 1976; Dutting 1979) is not really justified, because the power of the Sun resides in a direct contrast between light and dark or day and night. It is a good example of the epistemological fact that only by contrast can things be differentiated and known: a figure without a field does not exist, and night without day has no meaning.

The TS panel is the central scene in the Cross panels and recalls the more mundane content attributed to the central marker in Copan's Secondary Ballcourt. Both attendants to the symbols of GIII actively raise their emblems or offerings. The tall figure, Chan Bahlum II, is wearing shoes, which, in contrast to his barefoot state on the TC and the TFC, suggests worldly activity. The emblematic representation of GIII/Sun is made up by instruments commonly associated with Maya displays of worldly and regal power. The ceremonial bar, spears,

9. The number of days can be factored by 260 (260×1071), 780 (780×357), 364 (364×765), 819 (819×340), 1,820 ($1,820 \times 153$), 2,340 ($2,340 \times 119$), 3,276 ($3,276 \times 85$), and 16,380 ($16,380 \times 17$). Basically, the span of days expresses in whole numbers the 260 days of the sacred count, the calculating year of 364 days, and the count of 819 days. All the larger numbers are factors of these three numbers.

and shield most likely represent Chan Bahlum II's accession into worldly power.

Since the TS is the central tablet in a sequence of transformation, we may identify the scene on TC as referring to an event occurring *before* accession, probably the heir apparenacy. The TFC scene should represent an event *after* accession, and this would be the sky/anniversary celebration.¹⁰ Chan Bahlum II is shown celebrating his heir apparenacy (TC) and accession (TS) in the presence of the First Father. The First Father also presides over Chan Bahlum II's celebration of the sky/anniversary event represented on the TFC. The First Father is the transformer in all three scenes of transformation.

The feminine costume worn by the tall figure of Chan Bahlum II in the TFC recalls the hand-fish glyph signaling the auto-sacrificial event associated with female rites (Proskouriakoff 1973: 171), mentioned for the last day's celebration of the sky/anniversary event. It also echoes the same hand-fish event enacted by the Lady Palenque that is mentioned in the text of the TC. This suggests that Chan Bahlum II's transformation into divinity was also as the feminine, nurturing parent of the gods; that is, the Lady Palenque. The TFC, therefore, can also be read as an allegorical representation of the ancestral couple with Chan Bahlum II as Lady Palenque accompanying the First Father.¹¹

The relationship between the iconographical and the biographical contents of the texts and images may now be understood as a specific kind of relay. On each panel, the text can be read as the cause of its accompanying scene. The text does not identify the scene, but it does rationalize or explain it. The heir apparenacy shown in the TC scene takes place in the textual context of an ancestor list; accession is shown within the textual context of the heir-apparenacy statement in the main text of the TS; and the sky/anniversary event is shown within the textual context of an accession statement. The scene on the TFC, representing the sky/anniversary event, and possibly the

10. Birth (before) and death (after) must also be considered as proper iconographic contents for the TC and TFC scenes. It should be noted that an interesting symmetry is operating here: the heir-apparenacy event is six years and twenty-seven days after Chan Bahlum II's birth, and the sky/anniversary event is six years and one hundred and ninety-six days after Chan Bahlum II's accession.

11. There is the interesting fact that although the ancestress, Lady Palenque, accedes to power, it is the First Father, the ancestor male, who celebrates the rites of heir apparenacy. It is probably misleading to see these two as completely separate entities.

ancestral couple, now predicts the beginning of the TC text where the births of the ancestral pair are recorded, and the cycle is complete (see fig. 13).

The meaningful relationships that exist between the texts and images of the Cross Group are complex and elegant, and certainly not limited to analogical duplication. Image and text are analogous only at the thematic level of meaning: that of equivalence. The

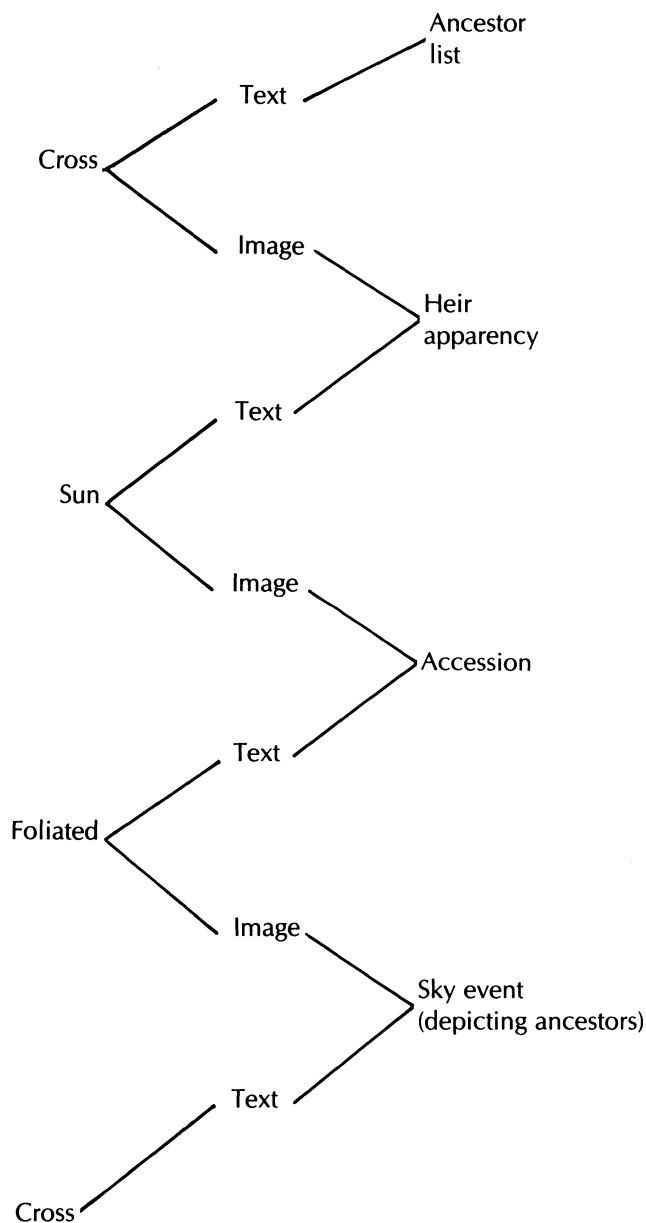


Figure 13. Relationships between texts and images. Illustration by Barbara C. Page.

relationship between the biographical content of the texts and the iconic images is disjunctive but not randomly so. The images, rationalized or explained by their accompanying texts, telescope the content of their identifying texts, which follow on the next panel of the sequence.

The fact that the thematic meanings of simultaneity and equivalence are found most readily in the compositional structures of the text and images, and are related to the narrative and iconographic contents by a meaningful structure, leads to the following hypothesis: that there is a structured relationship between a composition and its images whereby the composition represents a thematic model within which the iconography of the images or scenes must operate. This theory requires further testing.

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