Flight of the Monarch: Interpreting the Enigmatic History of Piedras Negras Throne 1

La huida del monarca: interpretación de la enigmática historia del Trono 1 de Piedras Negras

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ABSTRACT: Reflexivity is a key feature of the development of all disciplines. Following the phonetic revolution, Maya epigraphy reached the point of incorporating this component. In this paper, we present the application of reflexivity through the interpretation of a difficult text, Piedras Negras Throne 1. We do this in addition to our philological approach. Starting from the grammatical elements, this approach then reveals not only the possible drivers of a series of historical events, but also the beliefs around the sacred bundle that were essential to the reign of the king in the Classic Period.

KEYWORDS: Classic Maya, Epigraphy, Reflexivity, Philological Interpretation, Sacred Bundle, Piedras Negras, Throne 1.

RESUMEN: La reflexividad es una característica clave del desarrollo de todas las disciplinas. Tras la revolución fonética, la epigrafía maya llegó al punto de incorporar este componente. En este trabajo, presentamos la aplicación de la reflexividad a través de la interpretación de un texto difícil, el Trono 1 de Piedras Negras. Hacemos esto además de nuestro enfoque filológico. Partiendo de los elementos gramaticales, este enfoque revela entonces no sólo los posibles impulsores de una serie de acontecimientos históricos, sino también las creencias en torno al bulto sagrado que eran esenciales para el reinado del rey en el Periodo Clásico.

PALABRAS CLAVE: maya clásico, epigrafía, reflexividad, interpretación filológica, bulto sagrado, Piedras Negras, Trono 1.

Maya epigraphy has in recent decades evolved from a fledgling discipline to a much more mature one. Scholarship has achieved a precise and reliable level using not only the basic approaches of sign identification, substitution, and correlation with iconography, but also the methods of linguistics and discourse analysis. Nowadays epigraphists have - apart from their knowledge of the Maya glyphs themselves - a solid familiarity with Mayan grammar and expertise in anthropological, historical and philological theory (see the development in Houston, 2000; Houston and Lacadena, 2003; Houston and Martin, 2016). In this essay we will feature another factor, namely the reflexivity within the discipline; this among other things includes the thought processes by which epigraphists construct meanings from Maya hieroglyphic texts.

The concept of reflexivity in this context means that the researcher directs his or her attention to the nuances of reconstructing and constructing the evidence, the meanings, and the interpretations. An epigraphist mostly deals with texts recorded in an ancient script and in a lost language, which augments the difficulty in reaching satisfying results, not just for oneself but also for fellow researchers pursuing the same issues. Therefore, when we propose our case, it is obligatory to present not only the core evidence but our supportive assumptions, and we must also give a voice to the counter-arguments, even though they may be detrimental to our proposal.

In the first part of this essay, we consider how we construct meaning and interpretation of a given text. In the second part, we analyse the difficult text of Piedras Negras Throne 1. Due to its difficulty, it has elusive meanings and an unspoken subtext which has led to a variety of interpretations.

To Construct the Meanings from a Maya Text

In this section we do not present the methodology of epigraphy; rather we want to consider the procedure in practice when an epigraphist constructs the meaning of the text.

Our using the verb "to construct" may seem to suggest that we will incorporate postmodern theory and the practice of deconstruction. But we use "construct" with basic common sense, and therefore it signifies the building of meaning from evidence both outside and inside; these derive from multiple contexts. When we construct the meaning of a word, we are building a *factual* meaning upon prior understanding. Nevertheless, within this evidence we are seeking empirical weight to prevent the creation of a fiction. While we indeed construct the meaning, someone else thereafter can correct it within the reasonable window of consensus. As Hirsch (1966, 254) proposed in his classic work about the validity of interpretation:

> The meaning of a text is that which the author meant by his use of particular linguistic symbols. Being linguistic, this meaning is communal, that is, self-identical and reproducible in more than one consciousness. Being reproducible, it is the same whenever and

wherever it is understood by another. However, each time this meaning is construed, its meaning to the construer (its significance) is different. Since his situation is different, so is the character of his relationship to the construed meaning. It is precisely because the meaning of text is always the same that its relationship to a different situation is a different relationship.

This means that the interpreter (in this case, the epigraphist) has the tools to construe the original meaning of a given text of the past.[1]

But because we are constructing meanings from outside and within a given text, the evidence derives from multiple and different contexts. Logically, this procedure can lead to contrasting interpretations.

A given text has internal evidence, which means that when we examine it we are looking only at the assigned text, even though we have a preliminary understanding from past experience. External evidence is compiled outside the text from several contexts. For this reason, we sequentially layer the elements of meaning; it is possible that we sometimes use one component located in one layer which feeds back to another layer, and so on.

In this project we do not deal with the documentation phase, wherein the epigraphist does pertinent photographs and drawings which s/he later examines to verify the ongoing process of interpretation. We assume that this preliminary and paramount phase is done, and the result lies on the desk or on the computer screen of the scholar. The known glyphs are quickly recognized as we first assess the text. During this process, we are using already-acquired knowledge to discern known from unknown signs. So although our attention is on the inside evidence, in fact we constantly utilize outside evidence —that is, the known glyphs— to read the text.

In the next phase, we ponder the unknown glyphs and/or the unusual syntax to clarify a text which we do not yet understand. Amid this hermeneutic process, we zoom out from the text to consider outside evidence. We are still in the phase of transliteration, wherein we want to create the "close version" of the original text. In this phase it is sometimes difficult to identify or disambiguate a sign due to its rarity or to the erosion of text. Furthermore, we might be obliged to give up and put a question mark to signal to other epigraphists that it is an unresolved query. Sometimes it happens that we have incorrectly transliterated a given sign, which offers an opportunity for other epigraphists to carry the decipherment forward.

We are always looking for other pertinent texts to check a problematic sign which eludes accurate transliteration. During this process we go outside of the text in question, but we stay within the corpus of known Maya inscriptions, inquiring

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[1] Umberto Eco (1991, 54) distinguished between semantic and critical interpretation of a given text: Semantic interpretation is the result of the process by which an addressee, facing a Linear Text Manifestation, fills it up with a given meaning. Critical interpretation is, on the contrary, a metalinguistic activity - a semiotic approach - which aims at describing and explaining the formal reasons for which a given text produces a given response (and in this sense it can also assume the form of an aesthetic analysis).

about the glyph in other contexts in order to discern its relationship with other signs in syllabic spellings or in grammatical sentences.

When we finish the transliteration and transcription, we have in front of us a text consisting of words and sentences in an ancient language. A correct grasp of the meanings of these words depends on our understanding their syntactic environment: that is, how a word interacts with the other words around it in a sentence, how that sentence operates in the entire text, and how this context may be clarified via other texts in the corpus. Contrary to the case of a living language, we must use dictionaries from different times and different languages, guided by knowledge of which languages are most pertinent. Maya epigraphists may have access to dictionaries made in the 16th century, or for some languages we may only have contemporary dictionaries. We endeavor to specify whether the form of the word and its meaning are found either in a direct descendant of the script language, in another language of another subfamily, or in a reconstructed proto-language. We assume that the languages we utilize will not have changed beyond recognition over a period of 1000-plus years so that we can —informed by morphology and sound correspondences— apply modern entries to a given ancient text. When we have a problematic item to identify amongst contradictory entries, or when we have slightly different semantic results, we must return to the outside contexts to triangulate on meaning. In this back-and-forth process ("the dialectic" or "the hermeneutical circle") amidst the layers, we are constantly weighing the evidence.

Our next task is to situate our construed meanings and interpretations within a wider context beyond linguistics, into a historical context where we may now explore the intentions of the original authors.

To summarize, the construction of the meaning of a given text and its interpretation always contains both inside and outside evidence or data. Furthermore, we always have some foreknowledge or assumptions about the text, its contexts and its previous interpretations.[2] When working with the text, we may want to position it in a wider context; in contrast, we may want to narrow its context and focus on just one part of it.

The reflexivity here is nothing other than to explicitly describe the pattern of thought that we follow in this and other works. In this way, we are not presenting a theory, but rather the praxis that we pursue in each case.

Piedras Negras Throne 1: The Text and Its Interpretations

Piedras Negras Throne 1 was one of the magnificent monuments sculpted during the reign of the last king of the city, K'inich Yat 'Ahk II (750-808). When archaeo-

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[2] Our most fundamental metaphysical and epistemological assumption is to believe that we can understand reasonably correctly a written monument formulated in another age, and the product of a different civilization. If this assumption is not true, then Maya epigraphy itself, as a discipline, is impossible.

logists unearthed the chamber in Structure J-6, they found the throne had been deliberately destroyed in ancient times, its pieces broken and scattered. It was later reconstructed (Satterthwaite [1935] 2005, 68-72). Today the throne is exhibited in the Museo Nacional de Arte Maya, Arqueología y Etnología, in Guatemala City.

There have been several recent articles dealing with the text of Throne 1 (Montgomery, 1995: 214-273; Stuart, 2004: 2006; Teufel, 2004: 197-234, 545-549; Bíró, 2004; 2011: 229-231; Beliaev and Safronov, 2013: 588-598; García Juárez, 2015: 224-287; Houston, n.d.: 38-42; Figure 1) which have led to somewhat different interpretations of its narrative. We acknowledge their contributions, as we stand on their shoulders amid our own interpretation and translation of the text. We agree in many respects with Beliaev and Safronov's transcription and discussion, though in several crucial ways we read the inscription differently, especially with respect to the sentences including the verbs *kajay*, *jatwi* and the "Star-War" glyph. Because our new interpretations alter the understanding of several parts of the text, we will discuss these separately.
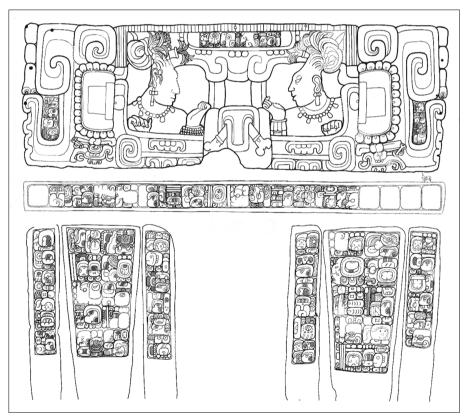

Figure 1. Piedras Negras Throne 1 (drawing by Alexander Safronov,
in Beliaev and Safronov 2013: 549, fig. 5).

A Brief Sketch of Regional Political Relations

Before we proceed to our analysis of the text of Throne 1, we will outline the geopolitical circumstances of Piedras Negras around the time the monument was commemorated by K'inich Yat 'Ahk II.

Piedras Negras had been occupied since the Preclassic Period, but it did not develop into a major city until the 4th and 5th centuries (see Houston *et al.,* 2003; Martin and Grube 2008; Bíró, 2011).[3] From the Early Classic onward its rulers were constantly at war with the kings of Yaxchilan, a major city located upstream to the south on the Usumacinta River. Other major polities in the broader region around Piedras Negras were Palenque, Pomona, Santa Elena, and Hix Witz to the north and northwest, La Florida to the east, Tonina in the Chiapas Highlands to the west-southwest, and in the south-southwest were located Sak Tz'i' and the territory of the Ak'e-Xukalnah dynasties along the Lacanjá River. Piedras Negras played a regional hegemonic role in the 6th and 7th centuries during the reigns of Rulers 1 to 4, sometimes alone, sometimes with the support of the Kanul dynasties. There were two centres, La Mar and El Cayo, which had close relationships with Piedras Negras during the Late Classic; the first one was an *'ajaw*-ship, the other a *sajal*-ship.

As a general observation, we note that after 770 there was a decline in the number of inscriptions found in the Western Region. This was especially true of Palenque and Piedras Negras, while at that time Yaxchilan had a high degree of monumental productivity (Bíró, 2011: 199; Scherer *et al.,* 2022: 17, fig. 14). It is also true —with the exception of the eroded Stela 9— that to the best of our present knowledge,

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[3] Within the epigraphic and archaeological records of Piedras Negras (see Houston *et al.,* 2003: 219-226), there is a discrepancy between the date of origin of the *'ajaw*-ship and that of the alleged founding of the city as proposed by Stuart (2007) on the bench text of Throne 1. Altar 1 (probably dedicated on 9.13.0.0.0, AD 692) first mentions a mythological event in 4691 BC, and then Era Day in 3114 BC (Martin and Grube, 2000: 140). The first historical event (AD 297) commemorated at S2-T2 was the celebration of the 8.13.0.0.0 Period Ending (Houston *et al.,* 2003: 225; Bíró, 2011: 54-55). At this time a certain Yo'nal 'Ahk died (*'ochb'ihaj*, at U2); this ancestor's burial was tended by 'Uh B'ahlam (*ch'ok*; W2-X2a) and a companion (following *y-itaj*; X2b-Z1), and it happened at Yokib' (**u-ti-ya-yo-ki-b'i**; Y2-Z2).

A century and a half later, two Yaxchilan lintels (49 and 37) in accession/captive narratives recorded wars against two early Piedras Negras kings (Ruler A and Ruler B), both of whom were named 'Itzam K'an 'Ahk. These lintels respectively reference Yaxchilan Ruler 7 (who was in power at some point before 454) and Ruler 8 (who acceded in 467).

Pertinent to an anomalous and doubtful form of the toponym Yokib', the first 'Itzam K'an 'Ahk was called Yokib' 'Ajaw (**yo-ki-b'i-AJAW)** and the second, *Yoykib' 'Ajaw* (spelled **yo-yo-ki-b'i-AJAW-wa** with two alternative **yo** allographs on Yaxchilan Lintel 37: B6). Simon Martin (2020, 130) suggests that *Yoykib'* would have been the full name of the city where the dynasty first emerged, and that "the lack of temporal overlap between the two toponyms (Yoykib' and Paw Stone) most likely distinguishes separate locations, with *Yoykib* as the origin and early seat of the dynasty and Paw Stone referring to the Piedras Negras we know today". He cautiously noted that "Paw Stone is the partially deciphered toponym … a question mark has hung over whether it constituted the whole or just part of the site" (*op.cit.*: 130). We will offer an alternative interpretation of the first *kajay* verb on Throne 1 as the 'settling' of a Late Classic ruler at Paw Stone, and not the earlier founding of the city by his namesake. We propose that *Yoykib'* is the artifact of an overzealous Yaxchilan scribe.

the last report of a war event at Piedras Negras was in 729; we would have to wait until 792 for another campaign under K'inich Yat 'Ahk II (Bíró, 2011: 176). As for Palenque, the last documented war event had occurred in 726. This may suggest that the two leading cities had lost military power by the last half of the 8th century (*id.:* 176; Scherer *et al.*, 2022: 18). Palenque had established a hegemonic role *vis-a-vis* Pomona in the 750s, thus still had Piedras Negras as an enemy.

From 750 onward, most wars the Western Region were recorded at Yaxchilan during the reigns of three kings. These texts were carved not only in the capital, but also in the satellite towns and in the vassal city of Bonampak. Indeed, there was a battle against Piedras Negras and its dynasty recorded on Yaxchilan HS 1 (Step 6, Glyphs 70-74) and on Lintel 1 of La Pasadita; the latter monument features the capture in 759 of the heir T'ul Chik on 9.16.4.12.11 9 Etz'nab 11 Yaxkin (14 June, 759). Unfortunately, we cannot reconstruct the cause and the process of this campaign of Yaxun B'ahlam IV because the steps of HS 1 are heavily eroded. We nonetheless know that the Yaxchilan inscriptions documented the ongoing 8th century border wars with their adversaries.

Sak Tz'i' was in an unusual, poorly-understood situation with Piedras Negras during the reigns of Yo'nal 'Ahk III and Ha' K'in Xok (Bíró, 2005: 20-24; 2011: 216-218). El Cayo Panel 1 —whereon the crucial part is unfortunately eroded— suggests a "divided" or "dual authority" relationship between Piedras Negras and Sak Tz'i'.[4] The monument details the birth and parentage of Chan Panak, then jumps to an opaque event, possibly a war in which the previous *sajal* died. After the burial, on April 22, 763 Chan Panak traveled to Paw Stone and the court of Yo'nal 'Ahk III (Piedras Negras Ruler 5); on June 5, his father was inaugurated under the supervision of Aj Sak Max of Sak Tz'i'. About nine years later, on 11 March 772, Chan Panak went again to Piedras Negras, this time to the court of Ha' K'in Xok (the critical glyphs are unfortunately eroded). On May 7, 772 Chan Panak was inaugurated into *sajal*-ship. The erection of the monument, perhaps in 776, was witnessed by Aj Sak Max of Sak Tz'i'.

One purpose of this rather short history of Piedras Negras is to summarize the evidence that during the reigns of Yo'nal 'Ahk III (Ruler 5) and Ha' K'in Xok (Ruler 6), the power of the city had diminished. Nonetheless, the masons of these two kings added new construction to a major pyramid, O-13; therefore construction had not ceased, and the city was growing. Another purpose of our synopsis is to position the unique events of Throne 1 within a framework of regional alliances and hostilities.

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[4] Martin and Grube (2008: 151) proposed that there was a formalized hierarchy between Piedras Negras and Sak Tz'i', while García Juárez (2015: 233) opined that Piedras Negras lost control of El Cayo to Sak Tz'i. Houston (n.d.: 67) offers another interpretation: "because of sour interaction between these two dynasties and Yaxchilan … they became political allies out of convenience, with a shared enemy poised on their borders."

The Text of Throne 1

Returning now to the subject of our inquiry, the reconstructed Throne 1 has three different sections of text: that of the backrest, the frame or seat text, and the long narrative on the supports. Apart from the first missing sign and four lost glyph blocks at the end of the frame section, the inscription has been almost completely restored by the piecemeal work of the archaeologists. However, there are unidentified fragments remaining which have not been put back. Thus parts of the story might change in the future, guided by developments in interpretation. The backrest section famously features two portraits in the eyes of the animate *Witz* mountain. Between them, in the upper part of the throne, is a four-glyph-block inscription, while to the left and right of the figures are two sculptors' signatures. In the frame text there were nineteen glyph blocks; however the final blocks of the inscription were not found by the excavators. The inscription on the two supports has 45 glyph blocks, although the last block had been cut during the destruction in ancient times.

Bíró (2011: 230, fig. 223) had previously transcribed the backrest text as *umay O' Ahk Chahk Peptun Ajaw* '(it is) the gift of O' Ahk Chak, Peptun (La Mar) Lord'.[5] Beliaev and Safronov (2013: 597) corrected the transcription of the name to Jun May Mo' Chahk (**JUN ma-ya MO'-o MO'[CHAK]**).

The evidence for a re-analysis of the name has come from an external source: La Mar Stela 1 (Figure 2). In spite of significant effacement, in the appellative one notes the single dot of the number ONE as pointed out by Beliaev and Safronov (2013, 597); therefore the head variant in the text of the backrest is substituted for by the simple numerical sign. From this interpretation we infer that one of the two portraits sculpted on the throne is that of Jun May Mo' Mo' Chahk or One-Deer Hoof?-Macaw, Macaw-Rain God, a prominent captain of La Mar and ally of Yat Ahk II who is depicted on the front of Piedras Negras Stela 12. This famous warrior also appears as a prince on the retrospective Panel 3 commissioned by Yat Ahk II, as well as on La Mar Stelae 2 and 3. We therefore propose that the other of these exquisite portraits is the newly-inaugurated Yat Ahk II (Ruler 7). These portraits appear as generic representations of the Maize God (Montgomery, 1995: 216) infixed into the eyes of the animate mountain and representing lineage and vegetal fecundity.

The main text begins on the front of the throne and continues to its two supports. Below is our transliteration of the inscription, followed by our transcription and translation in segments. In some cases these are new, and our translation has elements which alter the interpretation in comparison with those of previous authors. We suggest solutions for several eroded or missing glyphs in the text.[6]

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[5] Montgomery (1995, 217-218) had previously proposed **NA/HUN-ma-ya MO'-o MO'/AK[CHAK]** while García Juárez (2015, 28) transliterated the text as **JUN-ma-ya MO'-o 'AK-CHAHK**. Stefanie Teufel (2004: 546) read it as **IXIK-ma-ya K'UK'-MOO-o MOO CHAHK**.

[6] In this paper we use the following rules of orthography, transliteration and transcription: when a given text is presented there will be a full broad transliteration and a broad transcription using the alphabet designed by the Guatemalan Academy of Mayan Languages. In transliteration, a single <?>

Figura 2. La Mar Stela 2 (photo by Nicholas Carter).

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directly following a grapheme indicates uncertain decipherment, and when it stands alone it indicates an unknown reading. Three periods … indicate erosion in a given monument. Transliteration will be given in **boldface** letters, with syllabograms in **lower case** and logographs in **UPPER CASE**, separated by hyphens. In the transliteration we do not employ the glottal stop with the initial vowel but we do put it in the transcription (i.e. **AJAW** ~ *'ajaw*). The pronominal clitics *u* and *a* are not in relevant Mayan languages preceded by a glottal stop, so we will not transcribe them.

In some cases in the transcription we distinguish morphemes with hyphens (i.e. *y-ajaw te'*, *u-we'-ij-iy*) Furthermore, we do not follow proposed disharmonic rules in the paper and we do not accept the existence of morphosyllables; therefore this category of signs will not be represented in our transliterations or in transcriptions.

[*1 K'AN] KAJ-ja-yi TAN-CH'EN-?-TUN-ni K'INICH-ya-YAT-AK K'UH-yo-ki-b'i-AJAW-wa [*18]-tu-TUN u-15-WINIK-HAB'-ya i–PAS 12-CHIJ 5-SUTZ' SIH-ya-ja AJ-JUN-K'AL-na-ku CH'OK-WAY-AJAW-wa ya-la ?-K'UH-IXIK IX-AJ-MAM … … … …

ta-YIK'IN-ni ja-ta-wi HA'-K'IN-XOK-ki K'UH-yo-ki-b'i-AJAW ya-ka-ta-ji a-AJAW-le-?-TUN-ni u-ku-chu-wa-i-ki-tzi T'AB'-LAM-ma-NAH

10-MIH-WINIK-ya-1-HAB'-ya i-PAS-3-IMIX 4-SUTZ'-HUL-[*li] i-ki-[*tzi]-LEM?-b'a-hi u-KAB'-ji-ya AJ-JUN-K'AL-na-ku CH'OK-ko-WAY-AJAW-wa ja-ta-wi-HA'-K'IN-XOK K'UH-yo-ki-b'i-AJAW u-ti-ya LAM-na-hi b'a-hi-li LEM?-b'a-hi tu-HAY-yi-la TAN-na-CH'EN-na ?-TUN-ni ta-YIK'IN-ni KAJ-ja-yi LEM?-b'a-hi TAN-CH'EN-?-TUN-ni

3-he-wa-3-WINIK-ji-ya i-PAS 1-K'AN 7-YAX-K'IN-ni JOY-ja-ti-AJAW-le-le AJ-JUN-K'AL-na-ku K'INICH-ya-YAT-AK K'UH-yo-ki-b'i-AJAW-wa

16-8-WINIK-ji-ya 4-HAB'-ya i-u-ti 5-AJAW 3-MUWAN-ni WIL-5-TUN-ni EL-NAH cha-hu-ku-NAH yo-OTOT-ti ya-YAT-AK

[Jun K'an] kajay ta[h]n ch'en "Paw" *Tun K'inich Yat 'A[h]k K'uh[ul] Yokib' 'Ajaw [18] tun uho' lajun winikhab' 'i-pas[aj] 12 Chij 5 Sutz' sihy[a]j 'Aj Junk'al Nak Ch'ok Way 'Ajaw yal ? K'uh[ul] 'Ixik 'Ix 'Aj Mam ... ...*

'[On 1 K'an] K'inich Yat 'A[h]k, the Divine Lord of Yokib' settled in Paw Stone Centre. 18 tuns into [the] [previous] 15th katun, then at dawn on 12 Chij, the fifth day of Sutz', He of Twenty Battles, Prince, *Way*-Lord was born[7]. He was the [mother's] son of the? Divine Lady, Lady of the Ancestors ... ...'

Transcription is in *italics*, and every independent lexeme will be written in lower case letters. Any reconstruction (historical, internal, and palaeographical) is in square brackets [ ]. The three periods … in transcription indicates unknown reading. Literal translations will be given between single quotation marks '…'.

[7] While Beliaev and Safronov (2013, 589) transliterated this name as **AJ-JUN-to-to-na-ku** we disagree with the *tot* proposal. The syllable **to** is a composite grapheme composed of an obligatory T44 super-fixed to T563b, whilst in this case the glyph consists of T29 and T563b. This grapheme substitutes for **JUN**-T683 **WINIK-ki** at Yaxchilan in the frequent 'count-of-captives' title, where it is '[one unit of] twenty'. Across relevant Mayan subfamilies, there are only *three* words for 'twenty': *winik, tab'*, and *k'al;* whichever one is represented by T29:563b in this name and in the count-of-captives title must explain the other contexts. On Cancuen Panel 1 T29:563b refers to a *structure* which was 'built' or 'formed' (**PAT-wa-ni**). The same logogram is a pedestal for Chahk on Dresden Codex page 68b, Frame 12 (Gabrielle Vail pers. comm. August 2023). We also recognize the placement of multiple examples of the nominal phrase **IX**-T29:563b-**9-TUN-ni** 'she of the 9-*tun* "structure"' on the facades of Chik Nahb Structure sub 1-4 at Calakmul (Martin, 2012). We therefore propose a **K'AL** reading for T29:563b, not only because it means 'twenty' across many Mayan languages, but because *k'al* 'enclosure, temple sanctuary' is the only syntactic and semantic fit in the Cancuen case, while it also explains the recurring reference to the owner of Chik Nahb Structure sub 1-4.

Na-ku/*nak* compares to Colonial Tzotzil **nak**, tv. 'battle, compete against, conquer, contend, fight in a contest, make an enemy of, oppose, repel, resist, wage war against'. (*1) batallar o conquistar algo, (2) conquistar, (3) contender como quiera, (4) enemistar o pelear..., (5) guerra hacer a otro. (6) lidiar asi. (1) oponerse en contra. (8) resistir* (Laughlin and Haviland 1988, 268); Colonial Tzeltal has **nacbal** *batalla, pelea;* **nacbag-hon** *batallar;* **nacomal, nacmal** *enemigo* (Fr. Domingo de Ara, 1986: 341)

> ta-yi[h]k'in jatwi Ha' K'in Xok K'uh[ul] Yokib' 'Ajaw y-aktaj 'ajawlel "Paw" Tun
> u-kuchuw 'i[h]kitz t'ab[ay] Lamnah

'At sundown Ha' K'in Xok (Ruler 6) the Divine Lord of Yokib' "split" (departed/broke away) and left (behind) the Paw Stone Lordship and carried the (sacred) bundle and went up to Lamnah.'[8]

> lajun-[hew] mih-winikiy jun-hab'iy 'i-pas[aj] 3 'Imix 4 Sutz' huli 'i[h]kitz lemb'ah 'u-chab'ijiy 'Aj
> Junk'al Nak Ch'ok Way 'Ajaw jatwi Ha' K'in Xok K'uh[ul] Yokib' 'Ajaw 'u[h]tiy Lamnah

'370 days after, then at dawn on 3 Imix, the fourth day of Sutz', the sacred bundle and the jade effigy arrived; he had tended/cared for [it] He of Twenty Battles, Prince, *Way*-Lord' (the youth name of Ruler 7*).* Ha' K'in Xok, Divine Lord of Yokib' broke away (restated). This happened at Lamnah.'

> b'ah hil u-lemb'ah tu-hayal ta[h]n-ch'en "Paw" Tun

'It [Lamnah] was the principal resting place of the jade effigy during the downfall of Paw Stone Centre.'

> ta-yi[h]k'in kajay lemb'ah ta[h]n-ch'en "Paw" Tun

' At sundown the jade effigy settled in Paw Stone Centre.'

> hux-hew hux-winikjiy 'i pas[aj] 1 K'an 7 Yaxk'in joy[a]j ti 'ajawlel 'Aj Junk'al Nak K'inich Yat 'A[h]
> k K'uh[ul] Yokib' 'Ajaw

'64 days after, then at dawn on 1 K'an, the seventh day of Yaxk'in, he made a procession in [his] status of authority, He of Twenty Battles, K'inich Yat 'Ahk, Divine Lord of Yokib'.[9]

> waklajun-[hew] waxak-winikjiy chan-hab'[i]y 'i-u[h]ti 5 'Ajaw 3 Muwan wil ho'tun 'elnah Chahuk
> Nah y-otot Yat 'A[h]k

'4 years and 156 days after, it happened on 5 'Ajaw, the third day of Muwan, on the last Five *Tun* (ceremony) that [in] Yat 'Ahk's house, Lightning House, was done the fire-house rite.'

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[8] The **u-chu[ku]-wa** sequence is ambiguous as written and could be either *uchukuw* 'he seized it' or *ukuchuw* 'he carried it'. We have chosen *ukuchuw* because the effigy is already in the possession of the king Ha' K'in Xok, who now takes it to a new location. The alternative *uchukuw* would imply that he seized something which did not belong to him - an inappropriate point of view at the moment of his departure from Paw Stone Center.

[9] There are in the published literature two proposals for *jo[h]y-aj*): one, *joy-aj,* is an intransitive verb meaning 'make a circle/circuit, circumambulate'; the other, a passive *johy-aj,* means 'be enveloped, wrapped, and by extension, 'ritually clothed'/invested'. We opt for the former here, from linguistic and text evidence presented by Sheseña (2015, 47-57), but there are "dressing" scenes associated with the sign where the latter seems a closer fit (Gronemeyer and MacLeod, 2010). Many contexts embed the verb in the sentence *u-b'ah ti jo[h]yaj* 'it is his image in/as while making a procession' (or 'being invested'), wherein the verb is nominalized with the meaning 'procession' (or 'investiture'). We translate the term *'ajawlel* as 'status of regnal authority' (*id*.: 60).

Riddles of Chronology and Place Names

At the very beginning of the text we confront differences of opinion which have given rise to significantly different interpretations. One is that of chronological assignment of the phrase … *tun uho'lajun winikhab'*. As a distance number, it has a highly unusual format which might refer back to the Early Classic Period, but imprecisely because the *tun* coefficient is missing. We propose instead that it be understood as a date format somewhat similar to the later Short Count, and that it refers to the contemporary era. Montgomery (1995: 233), David Stuart (2004: 3) and Beliaev and Safronov (2013: 592) all interpreted it as a distance number which refers to the Early Classic "foundation" of Paw Stone Centre and the initial settlement of Piedras Negras, with the agent being the founder king, the namesake of K'inich Yat 'Ahk. This "founding" is also the view put forth by Houston (n.d.: 23, citing Stuart [pers. comm. 2006]), who additionally suggests for T550 a tentative reading **K'OT** (Ch'orti' *k'otoy*: 'arrive recently'). In contrast, García Juárez (2015: 271-272), reads the phrase as a date format, reconstructing the eroded coefficient as 18 because it fits the birth date of Junk'al Nak (Kinich Yat 'Ahk II) on 9.15.18.16.07 12 Manik 5 Sutz' (11 April, 750).

We concur with García Juárez here because semantically, it is impossible to cons-true this expression as a distance number. Supporting this is the third person er-gative pronoun *u-* prefixed to the number 15 cueing an ordinal: '18 tuns into [the] 15th k'atun'. This - after the temporal focus expression '*i pasaj* - follows the Calendar Round 12 Chij, the fifth day of Sutz'. Thus the whole sentence refers to K'inich Yat 'Ahk II, and it was he who 'settled' (*kajay*) in Paw Stone Centre, not his Early Classic namesake. More will be said shortly about this verb.

We conclude that the eroded glyph block at the beginning of the text can be reconstructed as 1 K'an, the *tzolk'in* day of the accession of Yat Ahk II (9.17.10.9.4 1 K'an 7 Yaxk'in, 31 May 781). This conclusion proceeds from the foregoing, that this *kajay* event is also the *joyaj* (accession-and-procession) event of the new king inscribed later in the text on the supports. The verb *kajay,* based on the root *kaj* 'town', 'to reside', does not mean 'to found (a place)'; its subject is always a person —a human or rarely, a supernatural. We find further support in reflecting on Classic Maya referential practice within a text: if a date is given in abbreviated form, as in a single block, it is likely to repeat the *tzolk'in* position of a Calendar Round elsewhere in the text.[10]

It also follows that the Paw Stone does not refer to the entire Piedras Negras polity during either the Early Classic or the Late Classic, but rather to the name of

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[10] Amid reassembly of the throne fragments at the museum, Satterthwaite ([1935] 2005, 69) observed that a large piece of the seat had a polished edge, suggesting that only the front edge originally bore a text. Therefore the single missing block is best understood as a stand-alone *tzolk'in* date, one highly unlikely to represent a distant-past Calendar Round, which would be anchored to a Long Count date on the monument.

a district, as Bíró (2016: 137-141) has previously argued. Accordingly, Paw Stone Centre was the name of the area now termed the Eastern Group, where Altar 4 is located, and which object —a flat stone feline paw with claws retracted— David Stuart (2004) ingeniously identified as the material expression of the place name.

Bíró (*ibid*., 137) took pains to not entangle the two known, but morphemically elusive, Piedras Negras toponyms T5-**TUN-ni** and **mu-k'i/ch'i-TUN-ni**, assigning the first to Paw Stone (without a reading for the PAW) and the latter to the locus of the accession of K'ihnich Yo'nal Ahk I on Piedras Negras Stela 25 (Figure 3).

Nevertheless, Beliaev and Safronov (2013: 533) have proposed that the Paw Stone is named *Muk'ijtun.* Here the authors transcribe this without translation or explanation regarding their assignment of **mukij* to the PAW logogram. We find no evidence for this proposal. Nor do we see continuing benefit in arguing for a **ch'i** value for the T77 WING logogram here, in spite of a few contexts which may indicate **k'i/ch'i** bivalence instead of its widely-accepted value **k'i**.[11]

On Stela 25, the accession statement *joyaj ti ajaw[lel]* (A15)*, chumlaj ti ajaw[lel]* (B1) with the king's nominal phrase at C1-B2 is followed by *'uhtiy* and the spelling **mu-k'i-TUN-ni-ji** *muk'ijtun* (C2-D1). This was first interpreted by Bíró (2011: 112) as *Muk'tun*, an unknown toponym. The date of this accession is 9.8.10.6.16 (14 November, 603). This event occurs a century and a half before the first mention of Paw Stone at El Cayo in 763.

Given that we do not accept an Early Classic assignment to the *kajay* event on the bench of Throne 1, the known references to Paw Stone are restricted to the lifetimes and monuments of Rulers 5, 6 and 7 and El Cayo Panel 1 during the reigns of Rulers 5 and 6. Therefore it is associated with the last three kings of Piedras Negras, whose monuments, except for Throne 1 located within J-6 in the Western Group, are situated in the Eastern Group in front of O-12 and O-13. The latter is the biggest pyramid at the site. From this evidence, Paw Stone has a rather narrow domain which only

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[11] There are two script contexts - the 'cup' spelling **yu**-T77-**b'i** and the 'blood' spelling T77:628 - which have suggested **k'i/ch'i** bivalence for the T77 WING, and there is to date no other **ch'i** syllable in the syllabary. Bíró (2016: 139) has proposed that Structure R-9 (before which stood Stela 25) could be either *Muk' tun* 'big stone' or *Much' tun* 'piled-up stones', citing *muk* 'fuerzas, grande' in Greater Tzeltalan and Yucatecan (Kaufman & Justeson 2003, 1392) and *much'* 'pile up' in Cholan and Yucatecan (Kaufman & Norman 1984, 126). Both proposals ignore the -**ji** suffix which is likely to follow **k'i** here rather than represent the last syllable in the toponym. We thus agree with Beliaev and Safronov that the lexeme is *muk'-ij tun.* We think the *-ij* suffix may be the Ch'olan reflex of the archaic participial/nominalizing suffix *-ej* for transitive stems (Kaufman and Justeson 2003, 58; Kaufman 2015, 296) which follows a covert *-i* usative transitivizing suffix for nouns (MacLeod and Bíró in press), yielding participial **muk'-i-ej > muk'-ij* 'having been used for strength', with *muk'-ij-tun* being 'stone(s) used for/standing for strength'. This could be either a structure or a group of monuments. In any case, there is no reason to assume the PAW is **muk'-ij.* Further evidence that it is simply anatomical is found in a name PAW.HIX for one of the seated youths (Individual 13) on Piedras Negras Panel 3 (Montgomery, 1995: 227-228). This in turn prompts a reconsideration of Montgomery's original **MOL.TUN** proposal for the Paw Stone, given the entry *mo'ol* 'señal o huella, y la pata y pies y manos de gato y pies y manos del tigre' in Yucatec (Barrera Vásquez, 1980: 528) as well as the anatomical productivity of the reading **'ICH'AK** 'claw' for the related sign, a feline paw with claws extended.
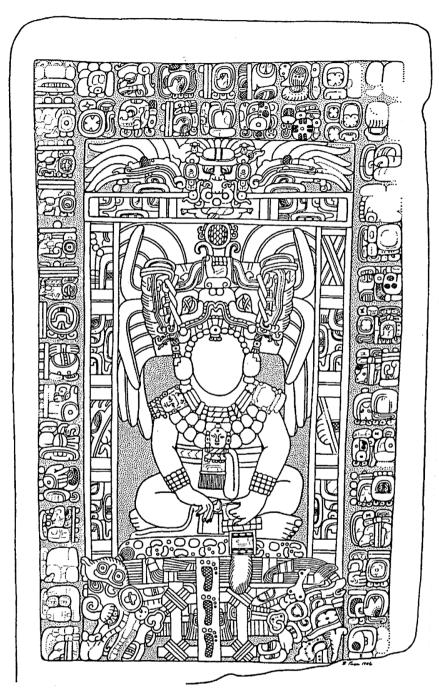
Figure 3. Piedras Negras Stela 25 (drawing by Barbara Page).

became prominent in the last 34 years of Piedras Negras history. The last phase of O-13 was of peculiar construction because it had the Palenque-style gallery using parallel corbels (Miller and O'Neil, 2014: 72); it was the paramount sacred edifice which commemorated Ruler 4 ('Itzam K'an 'Ahk II; see O'Neil, 2012: 153-182).

Protagonists, Brothers and Enemies

The main protagonist is K'inich Yat 'Ahk II (Ruler 7: b. 750, a. 781, d. 808?), a new king who commissioned Throne 1, with major events of his life memorialized in the monument's text. The other player is the previous ruler Ha' K'in Xok (Ruler 6: b. 758?, a. 767, d.? 780), the son of the revered 'Itzam K'an Ahk II (Ruler 4), whose tomb is in front of the O-13 pyramid. Some scholars (Escobedo, 2004: 279; Houston, 2004: 275; O'Neil, 2012: 147) believe that Rulers 6 and 7 were brothers with Yo'nal 'Ahk III (Ruler 5: a. 758); however, there is no firm textual evidence. It is probable that the claim to the throne of Rulers 6 and 7 derives from the parentage of Itzam K'an 'Ahk II, but only Ha' K'in Xok mentioned this explicitly on Stela 23.

There is a pattern in the inscriptions wherein a deceased king's son commemorated his visit to his father's tomb (Fitzsimmons, 1998); Ha' K'in Xok's *puluy tz'itil* rite in the tomb of his father, registered on Stela 23, conforms to this. In the case of Yo'nal 'Ahk III, we have no information about parentage or a ritual of this sort. But his name alone suggests that he was the son of 'Itzam K'an 'Ahk II, because it reflects another pattern: the repeating shift of royal names between Yo'nal 'Ahk and 'Itzam K'an 'Ahk.

In the final clause of Panel 3, Yat 'Ahk II enacts a fire ritual at the tomb of 'Itzam K'an 'Ahk II, carrying on the fire-ritual tradition noted above for son and father. This rite for his father is curiously also a one-*tun* anniversary of the second "breakaway" (*jatwi*) of Ha' K'in Xok, suggesting that at this time he too is deceased.[12]

Two of the three presumed brothers have in their coronation name the word *'ahk* 'turtle' which is an expected nominal component in the Piedras Negras dynasty, as either Yat 'Ahk, Yo'nal 'Ahk or 'Itzam K'an 'Ahk. When each of these acceded to the throne, their first monument depicted them with the turtle headdress. Ha' K'in Xok or 'Watery Sun Shark' did follow these patterns neither in name nor in representation (Clancy, 2009: 145). While the names Yo'nal 'Ahk III and Yat 'Ahk II belonged to the 'Turtle Dynasty', the name Ha' K'in Xok was an anomaly. Although Stela 23 records that he was the son of 'Itzam K'an 'Ahk II, one wonders whether it was not enough to be a direct paternal descendant. Sadly, his monuments are in bad shape —eroded or broken in pieces— which has led to speculation on the dates and events commemorated on three stelae (13, 18 and 23). While Teufel (2004, 206-212) could not reconstruct his birth date, García Juárez (2015: 355) proposed that he was born in 758. If so, he

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[12] The dates are: 9.17.10.6.1 3 Imix 4 Sutz' (2 April, 781) *jatwi Ha' K'in Xok*; 9.17.11.6.1 12 Imix 19 Zip (28 March, 782) *'i-'elnah? u-muknal/mukil…(Ruler 4)…ukab'ijiy 'Aj Junk'al Nak Yat 'Ahk K'uhul Yokib' 'Ajaw*.

was younger than Yat 'Ahk II, and when he acceded to the throne in 767 he was a child of 9 years. From this we can posit that he ruled under the tutelage of a regent; indeed, it is possible that his alleged older brother played this role. Nevertheless, Teufel (2004: 208-209) drew a clause of PN Stela 23 within which is included a war, of which the agent was the *ch'ok Ha' K'in Xok*. The problem is that she reconstructed the date as 770, which is an anomaly: this date is after his inauguration, whereas *ch'ok* is always a pre-accession title.

Yat 'Ahk II was born in 750; he used the youth name 'Aj Junk'al Nak Ch'ok Way 'Ajaw or 'He of 20 battles, Prince, Chamber/Well Lord'. In addition to *ch'ok* 'prince' he employed a toponymic title *Way 'Ajaw* which later functioned as a full emblem glyph: *K'uhul Way 'Ajaw* (Piedras Negras Stela 12:B13; Figure 4). Although it might refer to a location such as a hamlet, it could also be associated with an unknown building (*way:* 'chamber'); it could also allude to a mythological place or to the precinct of the city where a large sinkhole is located.[13] But this new emblem glyph hints at a new arrangement in the system of governance and within the royal family.
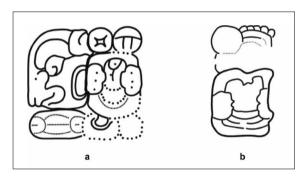

Figure 4. a. **CH'OK-ko-WAY-AJAW-wa**/*ch'ok way ajaw* (Piedras Negras Throne 1:Glyph 13, drawing by Péter Bíró based on the drawing by Alexander Safronov, in Beliaev and Safronov 2013: 549, fig. 5); b. **K'UH-WAY-AJAW**/*k'uhul way ajaw* (Piedras Negras Stela 12:A14 drawing by Péter Bíró based on the drawing by David Stuart, in Stuart and Graham 2004, 9: 62).

The mother of Yat 'Ahk II is mentioned in the first block of the parentage formula of Throne 1; unfortunately, the rest of the edge text (four glyph blocks) have been lost and thus we cannot recover the information, which could have offered more on the mother and would very likely have named his father. Apart from the "Inverted Vase" 'Divine Queen' title, her only other title is *Aj Mam* 'She of the Ancestors',

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[13] "The middle Usumacinta has cut itself a deep channel, despite its serpentine turns. In the dry season underground drainage appears as occasional springs in the rock walls of the channel. A small lake, known as Santa Clara, upstream from Piedras Negras, appears to be drained by an underground stream emerging just above El Chilé ruins, and there the dry-season flow is considerable. Occasional *dry sinkholes* in from the river also attest to underground drainage through the porous limestone." (Satterthwaite, [1943] 2005: 161)

which might have referenced a generational background supporting the legitimacy of her son.

Kaj as "settle (down)"

The meaning 'return' for T550-**yi** was originally proposed by Dmitri Beliaev (2001). David Stuart (2004: 3) later suggested that it means to "to set" or "to establish", and that in the Throne 1 case it refers to the Early Classic "foundation" of the city. But amid the consideration of all known examples, we conclude that only persons and animate beings may be the subjects of this intransitive verb of *CVC-Vy* morphology. Therefore K'inich Yat 'Ahk II - and not Paw Stone - is the subject. Beliaev and Davletshin later used the example on Throne 1 to suggest that the grapheme has the shape CV**j** (T550-**ja-yi**). After the discovery of Coba Panel 9, on which T550 has a pre-posed phonetic complement **ka-**, they proposed the reading **KAJ** with the meaning 'reside' (see Tokovinine 2013, 80-81 for the story of decipherment). This meaning for *kaj* derives from proto-Western Mayan "to put on top of" and from Yucatec *kah* 'reside' (Bricker *et al*. 1998, 120). Alexandre Tokovinine (*ibid*., 81) analyzed the script occurrences of the verb *kaj* (usually transcribed as *kajay*) and stated "probably with the sense of a new beginning or of *establishing oneself* (italics ours), be it in the context of a new royal court, a restored royal court, or even a victorious royal court. The emphasis is clearly on the ruler's person-not on the place." We consider **KAJ** the only viable reading for T550.

We recall that Houston (n.d.:23) suggested the root of T550 to be **K'OT** 'arrive', a view which has recently been echoed by David Mora-Marín to MacLeod (pers. comm. June 19, 2024). We do not accept this reading, finding yet more counter-evidence in the recent decipherment of a second **k'o** syllable (Stuart, 2020) with a **k'o-to-yi** spelling documented at La Corona. While the syllabic spelling is uncommon and T550 rather more common, no substitutions are known. See also footnote 38 later in this essay.

The context which best demonstrates the "reside" sense of *kaj* occurs on Bonampak Sculptured Stone 4 (Bíró, 2007: 2011, 115-125). In Sc. 4, 'Aj ? Nal, Xukalnah Lord (the new king of Bonampak after roughly 4 years of reign) left (*lok'oy*) the city and moved (*t'ab'ay*) to Yaxchilan, and he later resided again/re-settled (*kajay*) in Bonampak. From this evidence, and from the two examples of *kajay* on Throne 1 text itself, we understand that a jade effigy with its bundle may 'reside anew' or 'settle' and so may a newly-enthroned king. Thus the event on the front edge of the frame does not refer to the "foundation" of Paw Stone nor of the city in the Early Classic Period.[14]

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[14] Marc Zender (2019: 33) analyzed the newly discovered La Corona Element 56 and suggested that this sentence referred to the foundation of 'Ahktun. The original transcription is: *6 'Ik' 5 Yax Sihom kajay 'Ahktun hulsan 'Aj Sak Nikte'* or 'On 6 'Ik', the fifth day of Yax Sihom, he settled down in 'Ahktun and

Two Brothers, the Sacred Bundle and the Presentation of Events

The event which follows Yat 'Ahk II's parentage statement curiously begins with *ta yi[h]k'in* or 'at sundown', a formula which appears twice on the monument in contrast with '*i pasaj* 'then at dawn'. These seemingly neutral temporal deictics present a nuanced and deliberate pattern: the split and abdication of Ha' K'in Xok take place 'at sundown', while the birth, recovery of the effigy and accession of K'inich Yat 'Ahk II take place 'at dawn'. Thus discursively, the superseded-and-perhaps-dead previous ruler is associated with darkness and loss, while the new king is connected to light and renewal. Curiously, though, the jade effigy 're-settles' at Paw Stone Centre *at sundown*, marking a precarious liminal interregnum between the final breakaway of Ruler 6 and the accession of Ruler 7.

In normal Maya script discourse, one would expect a date to precede a deictic like *ta y-i[h]k'in*. The absence led John Montgomery (1995: 220) to ask whether the fragments found in the excavation and not utilized in reconstruction might have constituted the beginning of this sentence (around the edge corner following the parentage statement?). There are indeed remaining fragments, but as noted in Footnote 10, Satterthwaite ([1935] 2005: 69) decided that the two sides of the frame were uninscribed.

Ta y-i[h]k'in is followed by *four* episodes in a chain of events on the same date —one which, as noted above, is not inscribed but which must be reconstructed from the distance number which follows. This fact alone casts a shadow on the actions of Ha' K'in Xok, as if the author of the text refused to directly commemorate them. These concurrent actions have inspired varying interpretations among previous investigators. There are four verbs: (1) *jat-wi* 'he broke away'; (2) *y-akta-ij/y-akta-j* 'he took leave of it' (cf. proto-Cholan *äk-tä*); (3) *u-kuch-uw* 'he carried it' (proto-Cholan *kuch*); and *t'ab-ay* 'he went up (to another place)'. Verbs (3) and (4) are well-understood in other script contexts; (2) has long been glossed as 'abdicate' but is a rare verb, a derived transitive whose morphology invites further clarification. But the spelling **ja-ta-wi** *jat-wi* in event #1 has not hitherto been properly analyzed and its meaning has been elusive.

Jat as 'to split, to tear (fabric, wood)' and 'to flee, to escape'

The spelling **ja-ta-wi** has seen other interpretations, but we stand by it. The somewhat ambiguous **ja** has been interpreted as **HUL** by García Juárez (2020, 32),[15]

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brought those of Sak Nikte' there'. In our analysis, the subject of both *kajay* and *hulsan* (an incorporative AP) is the king; therefore the event is the 'settling down' of the king and companions and not the foundation of 'Ahktun.

[15] On the back of Throne 1 there are two sculptors' signatures: one is of K'in Lakam Chahk and the other of Patlaj K'awil (see Montgomery, 1995). K'in Lakam Chahk was a senior sculptor also mentioned on other monuments (the Cleveland Panel and Stela 12), while Patlaj K'awil only partially assisted with

while **wi** has been interpreted as **K'AK'** by that author (*ibid*.: 32), and also years ago by Bíró (2004: 94), who now fully accepts **wi** here. Since the idiosyncratic **wi** in the second example (C4a) cannot be 'fire', we are confident that we can transliterate and transcribe both examples of this word as **ja-ta-wi** *jat-wi*, an antipassive form meaning 'engage in an act of splitting, breaking away/taking away (with no patient), taking flight' (Figure 5a, b). Beliaev and Safronov (2013: 590) in their similar proposal *jataw* invoked the meaning 'to tear' in order to propose that Ha' K'in Xok destroyed the city and left the kingship in Paw Stone.

> *… на закате разрушил Ха-К'ин-Шок, божественный царь Йокиба, оставивший царственность в Мук'ихтуне.*

> ,… at dawn the divine Yokib' king, Ha'-K'in-Xook, destroyed it, having left Muk'ijtuun' (translation by Albert Davletshin).
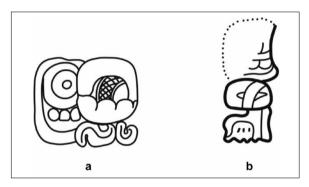

Figure 5. a. **ja-ta-wi (**Piedras Negras Throne 1:A2, drawing by Péter Bíró based on the drawing of Alexander Safronov, in Beliaev and Safronov 2013, 549, figure 5) with additional details from Morley 1937, V: Plate 140c; b. **ja-ta-wi** (Piedras Negras Throne 1:C5a, drawing by Péter Bíró based on the drawing by Alexander Safronov, in Beliaev and Safronov, 2013: 549, figure 5).

Thus Ha' K'in Xok's crime, by this interpretation, was to abandon the 300-year-old city of Paw Stone, which follows from Stuart's hypothesis that the frame text begins with an event in the Early Classic. We consider this to be incorrect for reasons offered previously.

When analyzed morphologically and syntactically, *jat-w-i* in the first example is clearly an absolutive antipassive, having no patient, while in the second case it might be an incorporative antipassive whose patient is the sacred bundle. The subtlety of syntax rests upon how the investigator fleshes the discursive skeleton

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Throne 1. In the **PAT-la-ja** component of his own signature, the **ja** is paleographically identical to the **ja** which occurs in the **ja-ta-wi** spellings. We conclude that Patlaj K'awil carved this portion of the inscription. For contrast, a proper **HUL** with the central "eye" motif indeed appears in the sentence *3 'Imix 4 Sutz' huli 'i[h]kitz lemb'ah*. Thus there remains no graphic support for **HUL ta K'AHK'** '[it was the] arrival with fire', a phrase which does not contribute to a coherent narrative.

of what must have been a dramatic, perhaps violent, confrontation. To wit: the first *jatwi* has no patient and is thus absolutive; the second one may have an incorporated patient (*'ikitz lemb'ah*) which is mentioned in the previous long sentence (see Lacadena, 2000; Law and Stuart, 2017: 151-152; Quizar, 2020), but it is more plausible that the second *jatwi* informs the reader that Ha' K'in Xok went into exile, disappeared, or died - and thus it has no patient either. Although Law and Stuart (*id.*, 152) have argued that a true absolutive antipassive is not found in the Classic Maya inscriptions, they did not take these particular cases into consideration. Significantly, the Maya Hieroglyphic Database (Looper *et al.,* 1991-2024) identifies these two spellings as **ja-ta-wi**, just as we have done.

The entries for *jat* in relevant Mayan languages are manifold, but they can be divided into two sets: in one set —largely transitive and passive constructions— the connotation is "tear, break, crack, split, open", while the other set, consisting of antipassives, mediopassives and participles, it is "flee, escape, separate". A very productive form **jat-av** (*jat-aw*) preserved in Colonial and Modern Tzotzil means 'to flee, to escape':

> *jat* (2) (Laughlin and Haviland, 1988: 206)
>
> *jatanel*, vn5. escape, flight. (1) *huida de esta manera, (2) huido.*
> ***jatav*, iv. escape, flee to the hills. (1)** *escabullirse,*
>   ***(2) huir.***
> *jatavel*, vn5. escape, flight, *huido.*
> *jatval*, n5. escape, fight, *huida de esta manera.*
> *xebat ta jatval*. I am fleeing to the hills. (1) *armentarse,*
>   (2) *huir.*
> *jatviltas*, tv. make flee to the hills. (1) *amontar a otro,*
>   (2) *hacer huir o ahuyentar*
> *jatviltay*, tv. escape from person, *huir de otro.*
> *jjatanel*, agn. fugitive, *huidor que huye muchas veces.*
> *jjatavel*, agn. fugitive, *huidor que huye muchas veces.*
> *jjatvil*, agn. fugitive, *hombre que anda huido*
> ***jat* (2)** (Laughlin, 1975: 147)
>
> ***jatav*, vi. escapar, fugar, huír.**
> *jatvil*, agn. el prófugo.
> *jatviltas*, vt. urgir que huya.
> *jatviltasvan*, vi. urgir a otro que huya.
> *jatviltasvanej*, agn. el que urge a otro que huya.

Both the Colonial and the Modern forms are antipassives (*jat-av*) which closely correspond to -*wi* antipassives in Ch'orti' (Quizar, 2020: 278-279), although the root *jat* in Ch'orti' is represented with its core transitive meanings 'open, divide (something)' and mediopassive meanings 'open up, crack open' (Hull, 2016: 163). In our context

we can better understand the clause when we use the Tzotzil examples but adding 'break away' to 'flee':

> At sundown Ha' K'in Xok, the Divine Lord of Yokib' broke away [and fled] and left (behind) the Paw Stone Centre lordship and he carried the (sacred) bundle and went up to Lamnah.

With the use of 'broke away' we have two semantic connotations possible: one is 'to divide' (as in "divide the kingdom") and the other is 'to break from' the current situation. We can say that Ha' K'in Xok split the kingdom in half when he took the *'ikitz* and *lembah* to another location, Lam Nah, but we do not know if this place was inside or outside the Yokib' polity —an uncertainty which explodes into hypothetical narratives and questions about how he pulled it off for 370 days. When he fled he also left the Paw Stone Centre of power. This was no doubt precipitated by a political crisis, and in turn it spawned other crises, because he took away the royal insignia and the most precious effigies.

'Akta-j "to leave"

When Ha' K'in Xok 'broke away', it can be speculated between the lines that he *separated the kingdom into two parts* —one being the physical centre, Paw Stone, and the other the metaphysical centre (the sacred bundle and effigy; see below). The clause *y-aktaj 'ajawlel* Paw Stone 'he left (behind) the lordship of Paw Stone', has prompted different interpretations among epigraphists (Figure 6a). Martin and Grube (2008: 151) and in agreement, Bíró (2011: 229), proposed (incorrectly) that this referred to the death of Ha' K'in Xok (with Yat 'Ahk II later carrying his bundle to Lam Nah), while Beliaev and Safronov (2013: 555-556) correctly understood that the only agent in this long sentence was Ha' K'in Xok himself, and that he carried (*u-kuchuw*) the objects (from Paw Stone).[16]

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[16] On Quirigua Zoomorph G (Figure 6b) we have a unique window onto several expressions about death rituals which refer to different actions over an interval of time. The first expression is '*ochbijiy u-sak b'ak [y-]'ik'il ti 'ahkul tunil* 'his vitality and breath entered the road into the turtle stone' on 9.17.14.13.2 11 Ik' 5 Yax Sihom (cf. MacLeod n.d.c for the reading **B'AK** for T533). Ten days later, on 9.17.14.13.12 8 Eb' 15 Yax Sihom, he was buried (*muhkaj*), and finally 5 days later he 'left the lordship' (y-*aktaj k'uhul 'ajaw*). From this example we infer that lordship is tenacious and continues for a time after death, and a change of status —or *'ajawil*— only occurs after this series of send-offs is complete. There is another issue at hand: the metaphorical meaning of the expression *'aktaj 'ajawlel*. At Quirigua it represents a physically-dead person's last phase of his journey to the Underworld. But when K'inich Yat 'Ahk II, the commissioner of Throne 1, utilized it he proclaimed that Ha' K'in Xok had figuratively become a dead person by breaking away. We will never be certain, but this signification may underlie the pragmatic statement 'he left the lordship'. We must also bear in mind that by the time Throne 1 was completed, Yat 'Ahk II had had the perspective of four-plus years as king to guide his version of history.
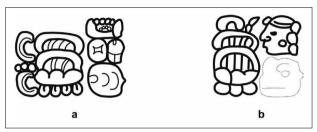
Figure 6. a. **ya-ka-ta-ji a-AJAW-le** (Piedras Negras Throne 1: A5, drawing by Péter Bíró based on the drawing by Alexander Safronov, in Beliaev and Safronov, 2013: 549, figure 5); b. **ya-ka-ta-ji AJAW-?** (Quirigua Zoomorph G:I2b-J2a, drawing by Péter Bíró based on the drawing by Matthew Looper).

The question arises whether the '*ajawlel* refers in this case to the neighbourhood only, to the city, or to the kingdom. Although '*ajawlel* in the 16th century had the connotation of 'kingship' (as in the line of rulers) and also 'kingdom' (as a territory; see Lacadena and Ciudad Ruiz, 1998; Ciudad Ruiz and Lacadena, 2001; Bíró, 2011: 268-270; Jackson, 2011), we cannot be certain that this 'binary identity' (kingship and kingdom) operated similarly in the Classic Period. On close inspection the inscriptions may be less transparent than we have assumed. With 'left (behind) the lordship of Paw Stone', we may propose that Ha' K'in Xok left the seat of power ('*ajawlel*) in the city, but went to a settlement within the kingdom. We are not told where Lam Nah was. But if we assume that '*ajawlel* is 'kingdom' we may imagine that he left the kingdom of Paw Stone —i.e. the entire territory of Piedras Negras— thus he went into exile within another kingdom. This option has obliged us to consider the regional geopolitics.

Lam Nah is a mysterious toponym; because we have no other known reference in Classic Maya texts, we must guess its whereabouts. One option is El Porvenir downstream, where archaeologists have found a fragment which mentions Ha' K'in Xok without detail.[17]

Houston (n.d., 40) observes that the 9.17.10.0.0 Period Ending (2 December, 780) would have fallen a short time after Ha' K'in Xok's *y-aktaj* act, and suggests that the name Lam Nah was related to the major calendar event. The interval is exactly 252 days, such that the *tahn lam* would have occurred during the time when Ruler 6 and the "shiner" were absent from Paw Stone Centre. This is reasonably explanatory given that two of Ha' K'in Xok's small inventory of monuments —stelae 13 and 18— had celebrated the 9.17.0.0.0 and 9.17.5.0.0 Period Endings, respectively.

García Juárez (2020: 31-35) proposes that Lam Nah may have been a building with steep stairs because the phrase *u-kuchuw 'ihkitz* in Tamarindito (cited in Houston *et al.,* 2005) is associated with a stairway. She suggests that Lam Nah might name the J-6 palace where Throne 1 was found, but also acknowledges that J-6 was more likely to have been Chahuk Nah (see below). We believe that her views about the location

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[17] The fragment is **K'IN-ni-XOK K'IN-ni-li** or [*Ha'] K'in Xok K'inil [*Ajaw].

of Lam Nah arise initially from a misunderstanding of Ha' K'in Xok's breakaway (*jat-wi*), because, citing a suggestion by Bernal Romero, she reads *jatwi* as the puzzling **HUL-ta-K'AK'** 'arrival with fire' (García Juárez, 2015: 251-252), then agrees with the Proyecto Arqueológico investigators that the king abandons the Paw Stone in favor of Lam Nah (J-6), carrying the bundle there as a gesture of abdication.

Beliaev and Safronov (2013: 551) argue on the basis of internal evidence that on Classic monuments the verb *t'ab'* 'to go up, to go' is always used in relation to a settlement and not to buildings. It is thus almost certain that Lam Nah was a town located within the polity of Yokib'.[18] They assumed that Lam Nah became the new capital, as occurred in other cases where the royal dynasty changed its seat. We cannot prove this as there are no other records, but there are cases in the Late Classic period, such as the relocation of the royal family of Tikal to Zacpetén or Ixlu in the 850s. The shift of the Dos Pilas dynasty to Aguateca is another example.

The Sacred Bundle and Jade Effigy

Apart from its human protagonists, other central elements of the text are *'ihkitz ('ihkatz)* and *lem-/winb'ah*, two words which form a sacral-religious-political conjunction, opening a window onto the fabric of the past. The first term refers to a wrapped bundle in various Mayan languages and is depicted as such in Classic iconography.[19] Amid animated discussion in both Maya and Mesoamerican studies, some clarity has been achieved about the image, its production, its contents and its use (Schele and Miller, 1983; Ayala, 2002; Guernsey and Reilly, 2006; Olivier, 2006; Stuart, 2006; Lejarazu, 2008; Bassett, 2015). The best examples are represented on Yaxchilan Lintels 1, 5, 7, 32, 53, and 54; when labeled, the spelling is **i-ka-tzi** *'ihkatz*. When the bundle is displayed at Yaxchilan, it is held by women, queens of the city who serve as helpers to kings who hold a K'awil scepter and dance in specific rituals.[20] We have learned more about the sacred bundle from early Colonial sources which offer details about its function and contents (Olivier, 2006; Bassett, 2015: 162-191).

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[18] Lam Nah occurs in the name of a Tikal lord, Lam Nah K'awil, whose *tok' pakal* ‚fell' (*jub'uy-i*) because of B'ajlaj Chan K'awil of Dos Pilas. The spelling is **la-ma na-hi K'AWIL-la** (HS 4:G1-G2).

[19] "CM *7ihq.atz

    EpM <7i-ka-tzi, 7e-ka-tzi> /7ihkatz/ bundle; cargo

    TZO ikatz s carga // load [tk]

    TZE ihkatz s carga // load [tk]

    TOJ ijkatz s carga // load

    MAM* iiqtz s carga // load

    AWA eqtz s carga // load" (Kaufman, 2003: 893)

    The spellings **i-ki-tzi, i-ka-tzi** or **e-ka-tzi** could be either dialectal or diachronic variations; thus far there has been no thorough investigation of the three different forms.

[20] David Stuart (2006) has divided the bundle icons as *'ihkatz* vs. *pik* —the former a wrapped jade object and the latter a tied bundle containing cacao beans.

In the Mexican Highland tradition, the *tlaquimilolli* was an object wrapped in cloth containing —as the kings believed— the physical remains of the gods, as well as objects precious to the gods and to the kings' own ancestors: human bones, jade stones, emeralds, turquoise, animal material, and mirrors). These objects held innate power and life force and were used magically to communicate directly with the gods, and to prognosticate the future. The bundle arose coevally with the foundation of the city and resided in the temple in the centre of the settlement. It was required in the coronations of kings, and in the further acquisition of power (Olivier, 2006: 206-208). Without the sacred bundle there was no city, no polity. It was a material representation of the alliance between kings and gods and a prerequisite for governance (Bassett, 2015: 191).

The polities of the Mexican Basin considered sacred bundles to be symbols of state; therefore they sought to acquire the most prestigious bundles. When a state conquered another polity, the winner received the sacred bundle of the loser. The kings sometimes warred to acquire the sacred bundle of the enemy; it also happened that when one ruler's sacred bundle was stolen by the enemy, the legendary Toltec king Mixcoatl interrupted his campaign.

From this rather brief treatment of sacred bundle traditions, we may better understand the deed of Ha' K'in Xok when he left the royal precinct of Paw Stone Centre in the last quarter of the 8th century, carrying with him the sacred *'ihkitz*, and from the later narrative, also the *lem-/winb'ah*, the more opaque expression of the two. The latter object has two components: one is a logogram, in form a CELT (T121, with a theomorphic allograph T1017), and is tentatively read as **LEM** or **WIN** (David Stuart, 2010; Mora-Marín, 2012) or perhaps both, as we entertain, depending on the object. It has either a 'shining' (*lem*) or 'eye, face' (*win*) meaning, and has long borne Stuart's nickname "the shiner". It is assumed to have been crafted of polished green jade. Bernal Romero (2011) reads the T121 CELT as '**ICH** throughout his commentaries on the texts of Palenque where gods and sacred objects thus marked are mentioned. *'Ich* in Yucatecan languages is 'eye, face', and 'fruit', but the proposal has not been widely accepted.[21]

The other component is *b'ah* 'person, self, image'. Although we have no unequivocal substitution for either **LEM**[22] or **WIN**, *winb'ah* occurs in the inscriptions

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[21] A number of Classic Maya ceramics depict trees with globular, shiny fruit similar to the CELT sign, often with a stem attached. A **ch'u** proposal (from *ch'uy* 'to hang') for this sign having no T-number was circulated among epigraphers by Yuriy Polykhovych (n.d.) in 2009, and is supported by a dozen or more syllabic contexts. We consider the reading persuasive but unrelated to the "shiner", which was likely made of jade.

[22] The Michol Celt (Stuart, April 1, 2007) has two name-tag representations in a curious chevron-shaped incised text. The first stands alone as the T1017 allograph of T121 and has a -**ma** suffix, and the second, as a possessed noun, ends the broken-off text. In a comment following Stuart's post, Yuriy Polyukhovych asks whether a **le** syllabogram (in a sequence **u**- **le**-) may be present in a fully syllabic spelling, as appears to be the case.

We speculate that the T121/T1017 sign is bivalent for both **LEM** and **WIN** depending on whether the object is a celt (a hand-axe or axe-head representing *lem* 'lightning' in Chontal and Yucatec, and iconic

(PAL Temple XVIII, twice as **u-wi-ni-BAH)**,[23] and it appears in the Colonial Yucatec dictionaries as *uinbah or uinbail* 'image, figure, portrait in general'. There is a curious entry *Cruçifixo uinbail Chr[ist]o* or crucifix (Vienna Spanish-Maya, cited in David Bolles' online combined dictionary). *Uinbail* or *winbah* in Colonial times therefore referred to an object, or rather an effigy. The best representation in Maya iconography is Copan Stela 4, whose text states *'i-tz'ahpaj u-*T121-*b'ahil K'uy B'ak 'Ajaw Waxaklajun U-b'ah K'awil* or 'it was planted the **WIN/LEM** image/person of K'uy B'ak Lord Waxaklajun U-B'ah K'awil. The iconography shows Ruler 13 in the guise of one of the patron deities of Copan, which demonstrates that the stela itself was *u-*T121-*b'ahil* (Houston, Stuart and Taube, 2006: 67).

The shining object later retrieved by the Piedras Negras prince from Lam Nah could have been a small figurine, an axe head, or a diminutive stela, but the sacred bundle and the effigy together symbolized in material form the power of the dynasty and the polity of Piedras Negras. Thus *'ihkitz* was not just a sacred bundle of various objects, but it obligatorily protected a single polished jade celt or stone (T121-*bah*) on which had likely been carved the image of a god, a king, or the core sign for the object itself.

The best example of equivalence between *'ihkatz and lem-/winb'ah* is a greenstone image discovered in Palenque Temple 12, an empty tomb having jewellery offerings. The text is short and simple (Miller and Martin, 2004: 234; Houston, 2014: 93-94); following the date 9.13.5.0.0 1 Ajaw 3 Pop is written *t'ab'ay Yax* T121 *u-k'ab'a' y-ihkatz 'Sunraiser' B'ahlam Pakb'ul 'Ajaw* or 'it got raised/it arose (in dedication) the Green "Shiner"; it is the name of the bundle of Sunraiser B'ahlam, Divine King of Pakb'ul'. On the front of the stone appears the glyphic portrait of Yax-T121. This could have been either a rare gift or tribute item from Pomona (Miller and Martin, 2004: 234); either way, it had been a potent power object in the bundle of a deceased Pomona king. [24]

Apart from the parallel between *'ihkatz* and *tlaquimilolli,* there was another concept among the Mexican Highland Nahua: the *teixiptla/teixiptlahuan* or the local (anthromorphic) embodiment of a given god (Bassett, 2015: 131-161). The root of the expression is *ixtlí* 'eye, face, surface', which seems tantalizingly analogous to *winb'ah* 'face-image'. The *teixiptla* was the material form of a god - usually made of wood, jade, stone, or even corn dough; it was also a human who during rituals 'impersonated' the god's essence. In the Classic Maya inscriptions there is a phrase

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for both *Chahk and K'awil*) or an anthropomorphic "face" (*winbah*) of a god or king taking a non-celt like form (a head or a stela).

[23] Apart from the two *winb'ah* collocations cited, we note the presence of **i-ka-tzi**, CELT-**B'AH**, and CELT-**B'AH-te-che-le**. *Tehch-el* would be the participial derivation of *tech* 'raise', cf. *tejchel* 'to be raised' in Chol (Hopkins, Josserand, and Cruz Guzmán, 2011: 219). This text, which survives only as randomly-sorted stucco glyphs, apparently featured rites of the *,ihkatz* and its *winb'ah* wherein *winb'ah tehchel* may have been 'precious face/eye to be raised'.

[24] It serves to consider that because this jade object from Pomona had been removed from its bundle when gifted to Palenque, the former equivalency of bundle and "shiner" no longer held true.

u-b'ahil 'an or '(it is) his image in existence as (the god)'; we know that in these contexts the king or a noble performs the rite as a living image of the god. The CELT-*b'ahil* is a deity in material form and the most precious object that the sacred bundle contains.

From the foregoing evidence we propose that two objects were carried by Ha' K'in Xok to Lam Nah, one within the other, with only the 'bundle' term *'ihkitz* mentioned amid his breakaway. It is certain that these together constituted the symbolic core of power and authority without which the polity of Piedras Negras would have been functionally adrift.

K'inich Yat 'Ahk II and his Tending of the Sacred Bundle

The next episode is the peak event of the text. It features two main protagonists: the prince Aj Junk'al Nak and the precious, animate "shiner". Following a distance number of 370 days, we are told matter-of-factly that the *lemb'ah* / *winb'ah* - qualified by '*ihkatz*, now an adjective, 'arrived' (*huli*) at dawn (to Paw Stone by implication) and that the prince (who is not yet K'inich Yat 'Ahk II) 'tended' (*ukab'ijiy*) its arrival. The text now reiterates that Ha' K'in Xok, the Divine Yokib' Lord, 'broke away' (*jatwi*); this is followed by *'uhtiy* 'it happened at' Lam Nah', *b'ah hil u-lem-/win-b'ah* 'the principal resting-place of the "shiner" belonging to...'

In the next section, as we pause the written narrative to reflect on the relationship between the king and the prince, we will see that within this parsimonious record of volatile events it is carefully specified that the "shiner" had safely resided at Lam Nah before its return.

Without the correct identification of a partly-eroded second **ja-ta-wi** spelling (*jataaw* in their transcription) first noted by Beliaev and Safronov (2013)*,* we would not have been able to discern that the 'breakaway' happened because of a conflict between these brothers, as we take them to be. Alternatively, García Juárez proposes that the prince and Ha' K'in Xok are together consecrating Lam Nah (Structure J-6) on this date, which she interprets as a brilliant manifestation of Venus as the war god 'Itzam over the city:

> El de los 20 (hombres) tirados?/sacrificados?, joven (Señor) del Abismo, (¿en compañía de?) Ha' K'in Xook, Sagrado Gobernante de Yokib', y esto ocurrió (en la) Casa de Lam, (ésta es la) imagen del primer (dios) Itzam de la estrella de la guerra (Venus), en medio de la cueva (ciudad) (de la) Piedra de la Garra (Piedras Negras) (García Juárez, 2015: 257).

In a later section we will give due consideration to the foreign-attack scenario, although we think it unlikely. This will be followed by our argument that the events of Throne 1 were precipitated by a smoldering fraternal conflict.

The Star-War Clause

This clause begins with the partly-effaced **ma/ba hi-li**; it refers back to Lam Nah in a stative relationship, as in 'Lam Nah was (or *was not*) the X of the "shiner" of (Paw Stone Centre). Because the first (T501) glyph block is ambiguous, it obscures the relationship of Lam Nah to the "shiner", which in turn belongs to Paw Stone Centre, at the end of the clause. In between is the pivotal **tu-** "Star War" **-yi-la** statement. To date —in spite of many proposals— there has been no consensus about the reading of the "Star-Over-Earth/**yi**" sign, although its general meaning from many text examples is widely understood as 'to go down, collapse, fall' under a foreign attack. We will argue that a reading **HAY/HAY.KAH** offered by Erik Boot (n.d.) in 1995 was very close, essentially a correct decipherment lacking the caveats needed to explain all the variants and their syntax. We here offer both a summary of prior attempts and a detailed morphological argument, but let us first consider other colleagues' views of this section of the Throne 1 text.

Stefanie Teufel (2004: 548) transliterates this part as **ma?-hi-li chum-? li-? tu-**Star-War-**la**[25] followed by "Paw Stone Centre". She endeavors in various ways to argue that the preceding *y-aktaj* statement was about the death of Ha' K'in Xok and that "Paw Stone Centre" has funerary associations. She admits not understanding the clause in question but does acknowledge the 'arrival', citing Stuart (1998: 390, note 10), who proposed *hul-i ikats k'ohbah(?)* to be 'the bundle's image arrives'. She refers to the "shiner" as **IL-BAH** and suggests it to be the "figurative" head of an ancestor.[26] She acknowledges the 'guidance' (**u-KAB-ji-ya**) of the prince amid "the hitherto untranslatable expression **ja-ta-NAL** (C´5)" [which] is followed by the name of the ruler **HA' K´IN XOK K´UHUL yo-KIB AJAW** (D´5-E´1). She considers the "Star War" expression to also refer to death. Perhaps part of her struggle with this section —apart from its intrinsic difficulty— is that she seems not to trust her sources (Stuart, Houston, Martin and Grube). The rare *jatwi* verb, which she transliterates as **ja-ta-NAL**, here makes its debut as an impediment to the meaningful reading of this text.

According to Stephen Houston (n. d., 41), the "lustrous object was then carried around, to "head-rest" or "image-rest" (*bahili*) at the "jaguar-paw-stone" place within Piedras Negras, where, at night, it eventually came to rest". Houston does not discuss either *jatwi* or the "Star War" expression. We agree with him that the effaced sign should be **ba** and not **ma** and that the concept of 'resting' is present here. These data are pivotal to the story.

García Juárez (2015: 257) proposes that Ha' Kin Xok and K'inich Yat 'Ahk II jointly supervised the arrival of the object at Lam Nah, and that it was none other than the

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[25] *ut-iy T173-nah ma? hi-TUN li ma?-hi-li CHUM-? hi-T? chum-? hi-? t-u-"Sternenkrieg"-la tan ?ch'en ich'aktun*
[26] "…possibly even the head of an ancestor which… usually hangs on a belt (Houston *et al.,* 2000: 107; cf. Houston and Stuart, 1998: 85f)."

image of "Star War Venus Itzam".[27] She elaborates with sky maps this astronomical interpretation in a later publication (2020: 32-34), identifying the "Star-War" collocation as the planet Venus. Apart from this problematic identification, we perceive that she has interpreted this as a sequence of events shared by both protagonists due to her identification of the second *jatwi* as *yi[h]taaj*, followed by Ha' K'in Xok. We do not agree with her interpretation of this entire episode, including the relevance of a Venus event here, regardless of astronomy.

Beliaev and Safronov (2013: 556) depart from the foregoing analyses, proposing that although Ha' K'in Xok went to Lam Nah with the "shiner" it did not remain there (*ma' hili*) "after the fall (*jubu'l*) of Paw Stone Centre" —which they term *Muk'ijtuun* (an assignment we do not accept). What is puzzling, as we work with AI-assisted translation of the original Russian, is that there is an unequivocal interval of 370 days between (1) Ha' K'in Xok's carrying (*u-kuchuw*) of the "shiner" to Lam Nah and (2) its 'arrival' (*huliy*) at sunrise to —following an intentional multi-sentence break in the narrative— Paw Stone Centre, where at sunset it 'settles' (*kajay*). These 370 days are also the interval between the first *jatwi* (which the above authors transcribe as *jataaw*) and the second one. This interval is acknowledged in the Russians' discussion but, in order to accommodate the negative 'it did not rest', it is not applied to the return of the object to Paw Stone Centre. They say:

> **ma' hili le'mbaah tu-jubu'l** *tahn-ch'ee'n Muk'ijtuun* 'The statue did not rest after the fall of the city of Muk'ijtuun; le'mbaah (or the deity he represented) was dissatisfied with this action: and behold, in the evening the statue settled in the city of Muk'ijtuun' (D'3-E'6: **ma' hili le'mbaah tu-jubu'l** *tahn-ch'ee'n Muk'ijtuun ta-yihk'in kajaay le'mbaah tahn-ch'ee'n Muk'ijtuun*) (Beliaev and Safronov, 2013: 556).

Given this interpretation, we must ask: *where was it during that time?* - because surely *it did not return* on the same day it was carried away. The Distance Number 10.0.1. makes clear that the 'arrival' of the shiner and the settling of it in Paw Stone Centre took place at sunrise and sunset, respectively, *of the same day,* but the *u-kuchuw* 'he carried it' had taken place 370 days earlier. The parenthetical insertion of the phrase *jatwi-Ha' K'in Xok K'uhul Yokib' Ajaw*, followed by *'uhtiy Lam Nah* is not a little disruptive; it is followed by yet another statement off the main narrative line whose purpose, as previously suggested, was to assure the reader that the "shiner" was never profaned - i.e. never out of divine hands. Our transcription is:

> *b'ah hil lem/winb'ah tu hayal tahn ch'e'n* "Paw Stone" 'It [Lam Nah] was the principal resting place of the jade effigy during the downfall of Paw Stone Centre.'

[27] *[hul[iiy]?] i… ich? b'aah u kab'[i]jiiy aj ju'n [winaak] [na'ak] ch'ok wayal [ajaw] [yi[h]taaj?] ha' k'in xook k'uh[ul] yokib' ajaw u[h]tiiy lam naah [b'a]hil [naah] itzam tu* "estrella-guerra" *tahn ch'e'en ich'aak tuun.*
'la imagen brillante? porque así lo mandó El de los 20 (hombres) tirados?/sacrificados?, joven (Señor) del Abismo, (¿en compañía de?) Ha' K'in Xook, Sagrado Gobernante de Yokib', **y esto ocurrió (en la) Casa de Lam, (ésta es la) imagen del primer (dios) Itzam de la estrella de la guerra (Venus)**, en medio de la cueva (ciudad) (de la) Piedra de la Garra (Piedras Negras)'

From the text alone one cannot discern the exact meaning of the second *jatwi*; for that matter it has been a challenge to make sense of the first one. We will expand our argument in a following discussion.

The Star War Glyph

A full exposition of the history of interpretation of the "Star-Over-Earth" sign is beyond the scope of this essay. The early account has been well-achieved by Aldana (2005), particularly with regard to the alleged Venus associations. He proposes a reading whose semantics we support, but for grammatical reasons we disagree with his preference. The sign has a complicated history. There have been many proposals over four decades[28] for the reading of a collocation which looks like a verb-noun compound, but which functions syntactically as an intransitive verb in most contexts but which is in rare cases a noun in a stative expression. Various arguments have been made based on semantic substitution and on allowable vs. prohibitive morphology, seeking a common denominator of meaning which accounts not only for all the war contexts but also the occasional exception, such as the canoe scenes from Burial 116 at Tikal.

An influential trend early in the sign's investigative history was based on its alleged astronomical implications. We've noted above that García Juárez (2020) has associated the events of Throne 1 with a specific manifestation of Venus, motivated by a prevailing view of earlier decades (Aldana cites: Kelley, 1977; Closs, 1978, 1994; Lounsbury, 1982; Schele and Freidel, 1990; we add Freidel *et al.,* 1993 and many of Schele's workbooks for the Austin Maya Meetings) wherein the STAR-with-drops component was taken literally as Venus (Chak 'Ek' 'great star'). The sign's appearance in a text was presumed to correlate with celestial positions of that planet (maximum elongation, first appearance after conjunction, etc.) which in turn choreographed military actions against enemy states. Aldana has effectively dismantled these arguments as statistically invalid, but he still reads the STAR component as

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[28] Markianos-Daniolos (2021: Table 1) provides a list of the better-known proposals, whether published or not; some are no longer supported by their originators:

    Closs (1979) *kab ek', ek' box* 'earth star', 'black star'
    Kremer & Voss (1993) *bul* 'to sink, submerge'
    Lacadena (1995) *ts'ay/ts'oy* "to come down"
    Boot (1995) *hay/haykah* 'to destroy/destroy towns'
    Stuart (1995) *jub* 'to topple, go down'
    Velásquez García (2002) *chek/tek* 'to step on, to kick, to humiliate'
    Zender (2005) *ch'ay* 'to be defeated, go down'
    Aldana (2005) *ek'emey* 'to descend, go down'
    Kremer (2006) *t'ub* 'to sink'
    Chinchilla Mazariegos (2006) *uk'* 'to cry, to weep, to lament'
    Prager (2009) *nay* 'to lean over, fall down, smash'
    Prager (2018) *lub* 'to fall, sink, fall flat on the earth'

'EK' in a proposal *'ek'emey* 'to descend' in Ch'orti'.[29] He highlights a key semantic substitution, first published by Stuart (1995), from the Hieroglyphic Stair of Naranjo (*id*.: 313; Figure 7):

> Stuart found a statement recording 'EK'-*yi u tok u pakal* —a much more direct substitution of the EK'-X verb for *jubuy* since the standard phrase for defeat in battle was *jubuy u tok u pakal* ('went down his flint and shield').
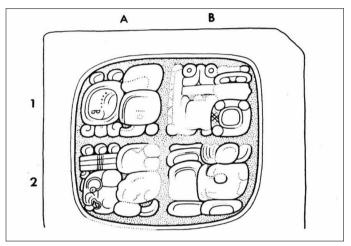

Figure 7. Naranjo Hieroglyphic Stairway 1: A1-A4 (drawing by Ian Graham, in Ian Graham and Eric von Euw 1975, 2: 107).

In a note circulated in 1995 titled *The Star Over Shell/Earth as Haykah 'Destroy Villages',* Erik Boot (n.d.) independently observed this substitution and doubted that the reading was <hubuy> (*jub'uy*), for reasons made clear in his discussion. This seminal contribution —in fact, his decipherment of the sign— will be considered in paragraphs to follow.

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[29] In the 2016 Ch'orti' dictionary of Hull (p. 34) the entry is *ekmay* 'bajarse, go down, descend'. The root /ekm/ is an allomorph of the ubiquitous Mayan root *'ehm* 'to descend', for which the RACCOON (**'EHM**) logograph is now recognized in the script (Zender, 2005). In accordance with Aldana's extensive study of Venus events (heliacal rise, greatest elongation, and other manifestations alleged to be referenced by "Star-Over-Earth"), we affirm that there is no statistical validity in the presumption that this hieroglyph associates with Venus. As Aldana also argues, that planet's name requires a **CHAK** 'great, red' prefix to the **EK'** 'star' sign, wherein the "drops" and the **-yi** suffix are absent. We also point out the error in the claim by García Juarez (2020: 34-35; Figs. 6-7) that the "shiner" —the collocation we spell as **LEM/WIN i-ki-tzi** 'shining bundle'— identifies the brilliant planet Venus over Piedras Negras on March 29, 781, several days prior to Ha' K'in Xok's likely death, per our analysis. While we don't question the astronomy for this date, we restate that it has no statistical validity. Furthermore, and more importantly, the 'shining bundle' in its various spellings has an extensive pedigree in the Classic script across many inscriptions as a precious physical object, as we have considered in a previous section.

Syntax and other text components demonstrate that the sign means 'to go down' in the sense of defeat, loss, or collapse in battle, in contrast with a willful descent down the stairway of a temple. There is an element of violence which is affirmed by the history between enemy states whose texts employ this verb in association with other acts of destruction such as 'head-chopping'. This 'go down/collapse' meaning - but not necessarily the lexemes *jub'uy* or *'ek'emey/ekmay* - is productive in all known contexts, the majority of which are major military campaigns. On carved bones from Tikal Burial 116, the "Star Over Earth" sign accompanies dugout canoes filled with unhappy gods whose conveyances are obviously sinking or poised to sink (Figure 8). In the era before this substitution came to light, Freidel *et al* (1993: 90) offered a creative astronomical vignette based on celestial rotation of the Milky Way —a "crocodile canoe"— which "sinks" over several hours on the night of that date (and on myriad others).
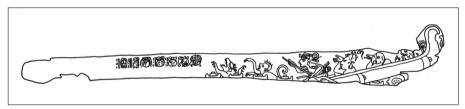

Figure 8. Tikal Burial 116, Inscribed Bone (4P-113(59)/2, MT. 38D; drawing by Linda Schele, <http://research.famsi.org/uploads/schele/hires/04/IMG0096.jpg>; 24.11.2023).

A complete account of our reasoning for our support of Boot's 1995 decipherment is outside the range of this study due to the many text examples required with morphological and syntactic analysis for each, but we will give a distillation in lieu of a future project solely focused on the sign. For the grammatical argument, we rely upon a detailed unpublished note by MacLeod shared with colleagues in 2009 as a response to Prager's (2009) **NAY** 'fall down' proposal; her note supported and built upon Boot's prior ideas. We will then summarize two recent publications which treat the "Star-Over-Earth" sign by Marc Zender (2020) and Dimitrios Markianos-Daniolos (2021).

In his 1995 unpublished note Erik Boot proposed the following: there are two verbs spelled **HAY-yi** (**-ya**) 'destroy(ed)' and **HAY-(yi) KAH** 'destroy(ed) the village of' —each with incomplete and completive inflection. He cited Colonial Yucatec entries <hayah> 'destroy' and <hay kah> 'destroy villages', entries which are now understood to be nominalizations.

Boot read the T526 **KAB'** sign as **KAH** in this context due to a common interpretation at that time of T526 as *kah* in the agency expression <u-kahi>, which is now read as a derived transitive perfect/completive *u-kab'-ij-iy* 'he tended/oversaw it'. His translation of "Star-Over-Earth" as the transitive verb 'destroy', with neither pronoun nor voice, was casual relative to more accurate current practice, as was his

understanding of aspect in the script, but such analyses were the norm thirty years ago. Boot also noted that some examples of the collocation had the same "water stacks" seen on the surface of the watery underworld in the iconography. From this he recognized that the more common flanking "drops" were water, and that given the water iconography of the Dresden Codex, he proposed that this was a phonetic complement **HA'** for **HAY**. He closed his commentary (p. 6) with:

> The destructive nature of Maya warfare has become clear in recent years. With the reading of the Star-Over-Shell as *hay* 'destroy' and Star-Over-Earth as *haykah* 'destroy villages', this now can be attested in Maya writing.

MacLeod's unpublished 2009 draft (n.d.b.) originated as a reply to a note by Christian Prager in which he had proposed a reading **NA(A)Y** 'fall down, tilt'. In the midst, Prager generated many questions and observations critical to an accurate morphological analysis and decipherment. The grammatical points arising from MacLeod's replies to these questions constituted a widely-circulated note in support of Boot's **HAY** proposal, in which she evaluated other known *CVy* proposals as well as *CVC-Vy* mediopassive/root intransitive options such as *jub'uy,* first proposed by Houston and preferred by several colleagues currently (cf. Houston, *op.cit.;* Beliaev *et al., op.cit.*). Her points and amendments to Boot's proposal included the following:

(1) The T526 sign is **KAB'** and not **KAH**;
(2) This sign is likely not lexical;
(3) the "shell"/-**yi** syllabogram is a portmanteau marking the final consonant of a *CVy* root plus the *-i* suffix for root intransitives;
(4) In rare cases the verb root may be nominalized, as on Aguateca St. 2 (Figure 9a);
(5) The Tortuguero Mon. 6 example (with "Star Over Earth"-**yi-ya**) is syntactically an intransitive verb; it cannot be a noun; therefore **KAB** is a part of the sign and not lexical here (Figure 9b);
(6) Whatever **KAB** and -**yi** are doing in a given example, they are doing in every example; therefore the default solution is an intransitive *hay-i* 'collapsed' (under an attack).
(7) The Piedras Negras Throne 1 example (with **tu**-STAR-**yi-la**) is the "smoking gun" for a *CVY* root because a *CVC-Vy* intransitive cannot be nominalized with an additional *-Vl* suffix (Figure 9c);
8) Erik Boot's proposal is correct that the flanking "water drops" are a phonetic complement **HA'** to **HAY**;
(9) No other *CVy* proposal had the appropriate level of devastation and catastrophe noted in Yucatec *hay* entries.

In his article in the September, 2020 issue of *The Mayanist*, Zender reviews a fascinating, lesser-known polychrome vase in the Kislak Collection which depicts a mythically rich version of the Tikal canoe scenes (Zender, 2020). A great star above, surrounded by violent, cascading water imagery, holds gods of wrath and destruction, while the canoe below, laden with the woe-beset Maize God and retinue of the Tikal bones, is awash in storm and great waves. The "Star-Over-Earth" sign appears

in the text - intriguingly, without the usual flanking "water droplets". Zender transliterates and transcribes it as (Figure 10):

> 6-AHK'AB-K'IN 16-SAK-SIJOOM-ma CVY-KAB u-KAB-?ba u-CH'EEN-na 6-IXIIM-AJAW u-KAB- i-ya 9-yo-?OOK-?TE'-K'UH
> *wak ahk'ab k'in waklajuun saksijoom CVy kab ukab uch'een wak ixiim ajaw ukabjiiy baluun yookte' k'uh*
> '(On the) day 6 Akbal 16 Zac, there was a (?)deluge (on) the lands/realm of Wak Ixiim Ajaw by Baluun Yookte' K'uh'

The 'deluge' concept pervades not only this mythic scene wherein Balun Yokte' K'uh —the consummate god of war— is the agent, but it pervades, at least metaphorically, the Classic war events referenced by the "Star-Over-Earth" sign as no short-term skirmish nor a single battle, but a physical devastation of the enemy city. We know this degree of destruction to characterize the events of many Classic-period war texts, but the "flood" must be a metaphorical one. Zender's transcription *CVy kab u-kab* indicates that he believes the EARTH component to be lexically present, wherein this is a compound noun in a stative relationship to the date and not an intransitive verb. The same would be true of the Tikal bone text examples. We disagree with this analysis because it disconnects the subject (the place or person "destroyed") from its predicate.

Our view is that **KAB'** is a non-lexical component which likely reflects a graphic origin based on a compound lexeme such as *haykah and haykabil* in Colonial Yucatec. But in all but rare cases[30]; the whole logogram **HA'-HAY-[KAB/yi]** functions as a *CV[h] y-i* root intransitive 'went (violently) down, collapsed, 'got destroyed, leveled'. **KAB'** may be visually absent, as in the Throne 1 case.

When a city or dynastic name or a toponym is either superimposed upon **KAB** or **yi** or follows the whole sign, that nominal is the the subject of a *CV[h]y-i* intransitive verb, or it follows a nominalization in a prepositional phrase. In a key "Star-Over-**yi**" example on Aguateca Stela 2, the **-yi** is simply a phonetic complement and the collocation is a nominalization *hay* or nominalized antipassive CVVC *haay* equated with the date. **KAB'** is absent, as are the "drops", and the Emblem Glyph of Ceibal follows a preposition **ti** (Figure 9a).

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[30] There is one example (Tikal Temple IV L2: B8) wherein the sign below the STAR is the "earflare" allograph of **KAJ** 'town' with a **-ji** suffix beneath, suggesting that *kaj* may here be a lexical component of the collocation (Figure 9d). This example was also illustrated by Boot (n.d.). The whole is: **1-PAS 7 B'EN 1 K'AN-JAL-wa HAY[KAJ]-ji 6-KAB'-NAL tu-CH'EN-na K'UH-mi-?** *jun pas[aj] 7 B'en 1 K'anjal[a]w hay[kaj]-ij Wak Kab'nal tu ch'e'n k'uh[ul]* **mi**-?(Square-Nosed Beast) 'One day later (on) 7 B'en 1 Pop got destroyed (town-flattened) Wak Kab'nal in the city centre of the Divine Square-Nosed-Beast (Naranjo)'. Earlier in this text (B4), the king descends ('**EM-ye** *'ehmey*) from a sanctuary, which further indicates that **EM** is unlikely to be the root in "Star-Over-Earth". The *-ij s*uffix is an intransitivizer for a compound noun rather than a **-ji** phonetic complement to **KAJ**.
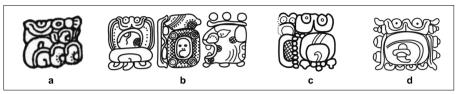
Figure 9. a. Aguatela Stela 2: A2 (drawing by Ian Graham, in Graham, 1967: figure 5); b. Tortuguero Monument 6:C4-C5 (drawing by Péter Bíró based on the drawing by Berthold Riese, 1983); c. Piedras Negras Throne 1:D5 (drawing by Péter Bíró based on the drawing by Alexander Safronov, in Beliaev and Safronov, 2013: 549, figure 5); d. Tikal Temple IV L2:B8 (drawing by Péter Bíró based on the drawing by William Coe, in Jones and Satterthwaite, 1982: figure 73).

Figure 10. a. Rollout image of the Star War Vase. Photographs by the author, orthorectification and composition by Simon Martin (in Zender, 2020: 61, figure 2); b. detail of date with verb.

It is rare for both **KAB'** and **-yi** to co-occur, but one example appears at C4 on Tortuguero Mon. 6 with an *-iy* anterior deictic; therefore, the whole (as **HAY[KAB]-yi-ya**) is syntactically an intransitive verb *ha[h]y-iy* and not a compound noun. It is followed by *u-tok'[u]-pakal* 'the flints-and-shields /army of [the king of Comalcalco; Figure 9b]'.

Zender also addresses our example from Piedras Negras Throne 1, making clear that he analyses it as MacLeod in 2009 (*op. cit.*) had done: the root is consonant-initial, the often-present **-yi** suffix must be a phonetic complement, and the root is *CVy*. Zender does not venture a reading for the gloss 'deluge'; while he had previously considered *ch'ay*, as noted by Markianos Daniolos, he currently refrains from a proposal:

> …phonetic complementation provides the only explanation for a unique but telling form of the 'star war' compound on Piedras Negras Throne 1 (Figure 9c).
> **tu-CVY-yi-la TAHN-na-CH'EEN-na ?-TUUN-ni**
> *t-u-CVy-iil tahn ch'een … tuun*
> 'in the (?)deluge of the centre of Piedras Negras'.
> The **tu** prefix clearly indicates that the 'star war' logogram is consonant initial, and the following **yi** just as securely indicates that it was CVY in shape.

As argued by MacLeod in 2009, it is this very example which demonstrates the root to be *CVy (or CVhy)*; there can be no mediopassive or versive *-Vy* suffix present.[31] A lexeme of the form *CVC-Vy* cannot be nominalized simply by adding *-Vl*. In the Eastern Ch'olan languages which have this *-Vy* intransitive suffix (cf. Ch'orti *lok'oy* 'go out', *k'otoy* 'to arrive'), the nominalization (as in Colonial Ch'olti' [Robertson *et al.,* 2010k: 329, 347]) would be <loquel> (*lok'el*) and <cotel> (*k'otel*) and not *lok'oyel* or **k'otoyel*.

This rule of Ch'olan morphosyntax in the Throne 1 context eliminates all candidates which are not *CVy*; among those remaining (*ts'ay, ch'ay, nay* and *hay* in note 28 above), only *hay* of Yucatec *hay kab'* carries the requisite force together with sources meaning 'destroy/destruction, flatten/leveling'. In the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel (Roys, 1967: 32) <u chicul hay cabal> is translated as 'the sign of the destruction of the world'.

We note that in Conquest-period Yucatec (the one available repository for *hay* and *hay kah/kab'*), the entries (located under "H simple") are almost all nominalizations of the compound form <hay cab(a/il)> or the antipassive <haayah> (Arzápalo Marín, 1995: 1757).[32] If the original *hay kah* identification of Erik Boot (n.d.) is correct, given these entries and his epigraphic sleuthing (and in consideration of *kah* in the Tikal case), then an intransitive root *hay* 'go down violently' or a mediopassive *hahy* 'get flattened' was productive in Classic Ch'olan, and it presumably existed in other branches of Ch'olan and Yucatecan before the Spanish Conquest. It is vital to acknowledge the prescient work of our departed Nederlander friend and colleague who came so close as to have effectively deciphered the sign long before other scholars tackled it (MacLeod n.d.b.). Erik —an exacting scholar— nonetheless hesitated to be certain and did not include the reading in his (2008) comprehensive digital hieroglyphic lexicon.

Markianos-Daniolos (2021), in an essay published with the *Textdatenbank und Wörterbuch des Klassischen Maya* database project of the University of Bonn, carefully and cogently reviews and summarizes most of the prior work on "Star-Over-Earth", although he was unaware of MacLeod's 2009 (*op. cit*.) support of Boot's **HAY KAH**, including her evidence that the sign must be *CVy*. He provides a bounty of images and statistical data on the occurrences and variants of the sign. He proposes a reading **JOM** 'to sink',[33] and while noting that there have been *CVy* proponents (Boot 1995, Lacadena 1995, Prager 2009 and 2018, Zender, 2020), he nonetheless sets

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[31] As appears with script **ju-b'u-yi** *jub'uy* 'he/it went down', **lo-k'o-yi** *lok'oy* 'he went out' or **T'AB'-yi** *t'ab'ay* 'he went up'.

[32] The entry <hayez> is noted, demonstrating an intransitive root transitivized as a causative; also noted is a passive or mediopassive incompletive <haayal> 'ser assi destruido' , as well as the question <balx u hayal chhoo> 'con que mueren los ratones?'*(op. cit).* This last appears to be an incompletive mediopassive now meaning 'to die (by violence)'. The transitive stem <hayez> indicates that **hahy* had come to be reanalyzed as a root intransitive meaning 'go down violently, die'.

[33] We note the very recent publication (2023) by Lopes, MacLeod and Sheseña in which T650 is deciphered as **JOM**, with its full semantic range and function in all script occurrences taken into account. This competes with Markianos-Daniolos' reading, which he admits is not secure.

aside the *CVy* proposition without otherwise opposing it, promoting instead the *-Vy* mediopassive. We have refuted this in the Throne 1 case (thus in all cases) above, even though (as the author notes below) the script regularly represents known *CVC-Vy* intransitives as **CVC-yi** or **CV-CV-yi**. But as a fallback, he suggests the **-yi** to be a non-functioning graphic incorporation:

> The *–yi* syllable consistently acts as a spelling for the mediopassive suffix, something also seen in other verbs recording motion. Following that, an alternative explanation may be that we are looking at an example of "fossilised spelling" where the *–yi* has become an incorporated visual component of the glyph. Since the *–yi* syllable is extremely common in Star War spellings (with at least 23 occurrences, all of which work as mediopassive suffixes), it may have ended up as a visual component of the Star War glyph (Markianos-Daniolos, 2021: 4).

The author's approach to the Piedras Negras Throne 1 case is a radical one, in that he considers the flat terrain of the Paw Stone Centre (East Group Plaza) as a rationale for his **JOM** proposal, noting that this plaza is 'sunken' relative to the surrounding natural topography of the city. What he apparently does not consider is the volatility of relations within the dynasty, which in our view offer a logical explanation, albeit one with some covert history. He is well aware of Boot's 1995 proposal, citing the latter's <haycabal> 'destrucción del mundo' examples in Yucatec. He also says (p. 12) that "the idea of *kab* acting as an incorporated noun seems unlikely" —a point with which we agree (but see Note 30).

At this point we consider our distillation sufficient for the purposes of this essay. We now restate this proposal of Erik Boot: that the "water drops" flanking the **STAR** sign in most occurrences (noting their absence in the dramatic case of the "Star War" vase discussed by Zender) are simply the logogram **HA'** 'water' being used for its phonetic value (as a CVC syllabogram) as a preposed complement to **HAY**. This does not negate the destructive and stormy imagery on the vase, nor the participation of *Balun Yokte' K'uh* in those events, but it is rather a case of the sign doing phonetic and mythic double duty.

The Downfall of Paw Stone Centre: Physical or Metaphorical or Both?

Altar 4, The "Paw Stone", was found intact in 1895 by Maler (1901: 65) in the Eastern group, though worse for the wear of many centuries. Years later (1930s), archaeologists from the University of Pennsylvania Museum removed the carved stone supports and left the "paw" table on the ground (Stuart, 2004). Had an enemy army entered this plaza in 780 to destroy the physical and symbolic *tahn ch'en*, this altar would not have survived. It survived even the well-documented attack on the city by Yaxchilan in 808. So its "downfall", no less decisive and destructive, was metaphorical, or rather political, religious, and metaphysical.

But a foreign attack is a natural assumption, due to the violence implied in nearly all contexts for the "Star-War" or "Star-Over-Earth" sign, which we now transliterate as **HA'-HAY-yi**. Even the Tikal canoe scenes are not exempt, taking Zender's analysis of the "Star War" vase into account. If we are correct in matching the spelling variants to the proposed cognate variants noted in Colonial Yucatec —some of which are not imbued with absolute shock and awe— then the term had a range within a spectrum of destruction.[34] But no known text from either Piedras Negras or its reliable, record-keeping enemy Yaxchilan (nor anywhere else) indicates an attack in 780-781. But in fairness to that possibility, we will explore some indirect arguments for a foreign invasion.

Indirect evidence for a foreign attack, in contrast with a war between brothers, might be found in the fact that during the entire 370-day interval, K'inich Yat 'Ahk referred to Ha' K'in Xok as *K'uhul Yokib' 'Ajaw*. Even though the latter had fled to Lam Nah, he was recognized as the legitimate king. Nor did K'inich Yat 'Ahk II destroy his monuments; in fact, he did a burning rite in the tomb of Ruler 4 precisely one *tun* after the second *jatwi* (the "breakaway" or perhaps now actual death) of his predecessor, as if to honor both his father and his brother.[35] Five years after the events of Throne 1, Ha' K'in Xok was still considered a member of the dynasty. From this argumentation, one might propose that Ha' K'in Xok and the prince 'Aj Junk'al Nak went together to Lam Nah, but only the prince survived a foreign assault. A scenario of this sort is proposed by García Juárez.

We may infer from written history at other sites and obvious omissions within it, that when there was some internal conflict within the kingly house, either the winner *destroyed his rival-turned-enemy's monuments* or *he did not recognize the other as 'divine ruler'*. Therefore, it is curious that Ha' K'in Xok was still recognized as 'divine'. Perhaps his successor's solidarity meant that a foreign enemy attacked Piedras Negras?

As we've mentioned, the foremost reason not to accept the foreign-attack scenario is that we have no record of such an event from another city (Yaxchilan being the prime candidate). Another reason to doubt this lies in the information omitted amid the departure of Ha' K'in Xok: *its date is not given*. We are told only that it happened 'at sunset' in an odd and deliberate discontinuity in the text. The date must

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[34] The war against Ceibal, documented on Stela 2 of both Aguateca and Dos Pilas, took 'a pair of days' (*jun chit lat*). On the first day, *hay/haay* "Ceibal" (a nominalized antipassive in one case, an intransitive with hidden **-yi** in the other) was registered. On the second, *ch'ak-u-bah* 'chopping of heads' and *tz'ib'al-pat k'awil* 'written-on backs of effigies)' (more nominalizations) and the display of prisoners took place. Thus the "Star-War" was not a total obliteration, for there was still mayhem to be done the next day. We should assume some poetic license across the Maya area in the use of the terms *hay* and *hay-kab'*, remembering that we have only the accounts of the winners.

[35] We have previously mentioned the pattern of these "burning rites" by the successor in his predecessor's tomb. This one by Yat Ahk II is registered in the last clause of Panel 3 as taking place in the *muknal* of Ruler 4, but the verb itself is eroded, and only a fragmentary **K'AK** can be seen. '*El-nah* is expected, but it could be the case that this sign includes 'fire' (**K'AK**') or perhaps 'burning' (**PUL**) with the whole as *'i-'elnah/puhl-iy u-muknal/mukil*.

be calculated from the distance number which follows, as if these actions of the king now lie in shadow. Yet another reason, considering that Throne 1 represents the coda of Ha' K'in Xok's rule, is that there is no death monument known for him. After the second *jatwi*, he vanishes from history, although we note the oblique one-*tun* anniversary of this departure in Yat 'Ahk's 782 burning rite for his deceased father. All of this points to a fraternal conflict, the details of which also lie in shadow.

We might speculate on the causes of such a conflict, putting ourselves on uncertain ground. We have noted a potential "red flag" in the name Ha' K'in Xok, which marks him as an outsider in the otherwise consistent 'Turtle' lineage. Perhaps this engendered distrust among the other members of the court, or perhaps it even raised suspicion among foreign powers such as Yaxchilan and Sak Tz'i', who might have perceived this king as weak, and who fomented a revolt within a faction of the dynasty. For insight, we may turn to other internal conflicts of the Classic Period which propagated a split within a Classic Maya dynasty.

Two prominent internal conflicts, among others, come to mind: (1) the relations between Tikal and Dos Pilas, and (2) those between Dzibanche and Calakmul. In both cases, as far as we know, the crisis in the dynasty was precipitated by the relocation of the royal house to another place by member of the dynasty. The story of Tikal and Dos Pilas is only available from the latter's point of view, since Tikal left no record about this conflict. B'ajlaj Chan K'awil of Dos Pilas successfully built another centre for himself and retained the use of the adjective *k'uhul* 'divine', ruling from his new location. But the original branch of the dynasty remained at Tikal. Perhaps the impetus for the move was to establish a second settlement with strong ties to the first for political and economic reasons, but then Bajlaj Chan K'awil rebelled against the state. We must assume that the Tikal king did not at this point consider him 'divine'; he rather chose not to consider him at all.

The other internal conflict took place between the kings Waxaklajun Ub'ah Chan and his successor Yuhknom 'Head', and concerned the transfer of the Kanul dynasty from Dzibanche to Calakmul (Helmke and Awe, 2016a: b; Martin and Velásquez García, 2016: 29-30; Martin, 2020: 128-130). Two recently-discovered monuments from Xunantunich (Panels 3 and 4) describe the end of an apparent civil war, possibly between brothers, though we presently have no proof. Although these two monuments came to light in Xunantunich, they were originally part of the rather convoluted history of a stairway whose other parts were found at Naranjo and Ucanal, but the original location was Caracol (for details, see the summary by Helmke and Awe, 2016a: 2). Tutum Yohl K'inich Tz'uutz II of Caracol (born in 588, and who reigned from 618 to 658) raised this stairway to boast of his achievements in a battle to destroy Naranjo and also to proclaim the deeds of his overlord Yuknom "Head" on the winning side of a civil war among the Kanul kings.[36] The details of when and why

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[36] The stairway was constructed for the 9.10.10.0.0 *katun* celebration in 642, and as with other hieroglyphic stairways in the Maya Lowlands, featured war campaigns. The dates and the events are the following:

Yuknom "Head" moved out from Dzibanche (see Martin and Velasquez García, 2016), are beyond our purview, but as Helmke and Awe (2016b: 19) pointed out, he never claimed the title Divine King of Kanul. But the defeated Waxaklajun Ub'ah Chan had done so, meaning that the latter was the rightful king of Dzibanche. Moreover, it has been argued (Martin 2020: 139) that Yuknom Ch'en II was the coronation name of the erstwhile Yuknom "Head", and after he had destroyed the army of Waxaklajun Ub'ah Chan on March 1, 636, he gained access to the throne roughly two months after his victory, on April 28, 636. Before his accession as Yuknom Ch'en II (Martin, 2020: 139), Yuknom "Head" had perhaps already moved to Calakmul in 631 (Toko-vinine, 2007), and he erected two stelae in 633 (Martin and Grube, 2008: 106). The crucial event of his early life as the king Yuknom Ch'en II was to assassinate (*ti y-eh tun* 'by the edge of a blade') Waxaklajun Ub'ah Chan in 640.

If our hypothesis is valid, then from the death of Tajom Ub'ah K'ahk' forward to the death of Waxaklajun Ub'ah Chan there were ongoing fractional wars between Yuknom "Head"/Yuknom Ch'en II and Waxaklajun Ub'ah Chan. We haven't much detail on these conflicts, but the stairway of Tutum Yohl K'inich Tz'uutz II indicates that Caracol was a loyal vassal of Yuknom "Head"/Yuknom Ch'en II, while the Naranjo king K'uxaj was the ally of Waxaklajun Ub'ah Chan. Xunantunich Panel 4 poetically describes the completion of the transfer not only from one city to another, but also of authority (*k'awilil*) from one branch of the dynasty to another (Helmke and Awe, 2016b: 13):

ma-cha-ja	K'AWIL-li TAN-na CH'EN	ka-KAN-la
PAT-li	K'AWIL	3-TE'-TUN-ni
machaj	*k'awil[i]l*	*ta[h]n ch'en kan[u]l*
pa[h]t[a]l	*k'awil[il]*	*[ta] uxte'tuun*

'no more authority in Kanul;
was formed the authority in 'Uxte' Tun'

9.9.13.4.4 (May 26, 626) attack on the *Ko*-place by Tutum Yohl K'inich Tz'uutz II (Divine King of Caracol; Helmke and Vepretskii 2023)

9.9.14.3.5 (May 4, 627) Tajom Uk'ab' K'ahk' (Kanul king) played ball at 'Ux 'Ahal 'Eb'

9.9.17.11.14 (October 1, 630) death of Tajom Uk'ab' K'ahk' (of Kanul)

9.8.18.16.3 (December 24, 631) Yuknom "Head" (Kanul king) destroyed Naranjo

9.10.0.0.0 (January 27, 633) Celebration of the *katun* ending

9.10.3.2.12 (March 1, 636) Yuknom "Head", agent of destruction of the army (*hay-i utok' [u]pakal*) of Waxaklajun Ub'ah Chan (Kanul king)

9.10.4.16.2 (November 1, 637) 1-*katun* anniversary of reign of Tutum Yohl K'inich Tz'uutz II (Divine King of Caracol)

9.10.5.13.4 (23 September, 639) death of Ix Tiwol Ek' Lem (mother of K'an Tutum Yohl K'inich Tz'uutz II)

9.10.9.7.17 (7 July, 640) death of Waxaklajun Ub'ah Chan (Divine King of Kanul) by *y-eh tun*

9.10.10.0.0 (December 2, 642) celebration of the *lahuntun* period-ending and official proclamation of transfer of Kanul house from Dzibanche to 'Uxte' Tun (Calakmul)

From these two fractional wars one crucial fact is retrieved, namely that in both circumstances the older cities' rulers were rightful kings before the cadet branch moved out to another location. Another certainty is that even though the cadet branch relocated to another —and distant— settlement, the legitimate rulers did everything they could to stop the escape. The reason is that if the move were successful, members of the new dynastic branch might then turn and claim the old territory from which they had separated. A case in point: the king of Dos Pilas, B'ajlaj Chan K'awil, once conquered Tikal with the help of the king of Calakmul. Therefore, the plot had to be terminated in the egg, before it hatched. In the Tikal-Dos Pilas conflict, both branches eventually retained their territory, but in the case of Dzibanche and Calakmul, the old seat fell. Yet another fact is that amid these conflicts other city-states on both sides were involved, and they fell or rose in the ranks of hegemony together with the two main protagonists. But in the case of Piedras Negras and Lam Nah —i.e. that of K'inich Yat 'Ahk II and Ha' K'in Xok— the legitimate king moved for reasons unspecified, and at the end of the war the former king was probably dead and the prince became the hero who acceded to the '*ajaw*-ship of the old city and the long-lived regime.

On Piedras Negras Throne 1, the surface cause of the conflict between Ha' K'in Xok and K'inich Yat 'Ahk was the transfer of the dynastic centre of power to Lam Nah. The actual causes have been deliberately obfuscated. All we know is that Ha' K'in Xok took the bundle and "shiner" and 'broke away', leaving behind the lordship (*y-ajawlel*) of Paw Stone Centre —a location hitherto fundamental to both his own rule and that of his predecessor, Ruler 5. But he did not abdicate the kingship; *he took it elsewhere*. If he fled from a brewing rebellion perpetrated by the prince and his followers —which seems reasonable - the details have been erased by the perpetrator. It is hard to imagine that Ha' K'in Xok just wanted a change of scenery.

We can speculate that Ha' K'in Xok was a member of a lower- ranking branch (of sharks rather than turtles?) of the dynasty, and —facing an impending crisis— elected to augment his power outside of the city of Piedras Negras. The "turtle" branch led by the prince, rooted by centuries of tradition and control, did not want change; they challenged the king, who did not have the power and support to suppress a rebellion.

The paramount importance of the '*ihkitz* and *lem/ winb'ah* meant that when these objects were taken, Paw Stone Centre was devoid of sacred —thus royal— power and the ritual life of that centre came to an end. We know from the detailed ritual narrative of the Palenque Temple of the Inscriptions (Middle Panel B6-A8) that the 'sky bundle, earth bundle' (*chanal 'ihkatz kab'al 'ihkatz*) was critical not only to coronation, or to the waging of war, but was needed for all Period Ending celebrations.

Lam Nah was surely located within the territory of Piedras Negras, which distinguishes this dynastic split from those of Dos Pilas and Calakmul. We may assume Ha' K'in Xok and his supporters, plus a number of his warriors, intended to build a new capital within the polity and not in a far-flung geographic region. The pre-coronation name of K'inich Yat 'Ahk II, 'He of Twenty Battles', signals that he was a formidable

warrior himself, and with the material support of Mo' Chahk, the later king of La Mar, they together commanded the other military faction of Piedras Negras. To rebel against the king required considerable power; since they won the conflict, it is their version of the story which we are permitted to know.

Lam Nah —as we are explicitly told— for 370 days became the new 'principal residence' of royal power, a concession by the victor to the loser in the interests of dynastic and community stability. Granting Ha' K'in Xok divine status was necessary to assure the uninterrupted divine status of the bundle and "shiner".

The role of Mo' Chahk cannot be overestimated. He was portrayed much as a king, though he was always a subordinate noble; he later became king of La Mar. Although he had to wait almost two years after the accession of K'inich Yat 'Ahk II to the throne of Piedras Negras to take his own deserved throne (on 9.17.12.4.9 2 Muluk 2 Wo: 19 February, 783), he was undoubtedly a powerful supporter of the prince Aj Junk'al Nak before the latter's accession. This is why Mo' Chahk was represented as a youth on Panel 3.[37] He was likely given the rulership of La Mar because his support, and that of his warriors, made possible his overlord's recovery of the stolen sacred bundle and the jade effigy belonging to Paw Stone Centre. This explains the presence of Mo' Chahk's full name on the back of Throne 1. As Stephen Houston (n.d., 42) observes: "This warrior was literally the power behind the throne, his name glyphs inscribed on the back of Throne 1 facing out to the ruler's spine".

In contrast with the reigns of the previous two rulers of Piedras Negras, the new alliance between K'inich Yat 'Ahk II and Mo' Chahk of La Mar was one of formidable warriors in text and in representation, and their military campaigns of the late eighth century were devastating and legendary.

The 'Settling' of the Jade Effigy in Paw Stone Centre

We may now recall the series of events which followed the 370-day Distance Number, all taking place on the same day. The first, with the Calendar Round, was:

> 'i-pas[aj] 3 'Imix 4 Sutz' huli 'i[h]kitz lemb'ah 'u-chab'ijiy 'Aj Junk'al Nak Ch'ok Way 'Ajaw.
> 'then at dawn on 3 Imix, the fourth day of Sutz', the sacred bundle and the jade effigy arrived; he had tended/cared for [it] He of Twenty Battles, Prince, *Way*-Lord'.

This was followed by the second 'breakaway' of Ha' K'in Xok (likely his death) and by the statement 'it happened at Lam Nah', which was the 'principal resting place of the jade effigy during the 'downfall' of Paw Stone Centre'. The last event of this long day was:

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[37] In the text of his monument (La Mar Stela 1) he had the war captain's title of **t'i-sa-a**, related to the Colonial Yucatec root *t'is* 'poner en fila' and the antipassive *t'isah* 'poner en fila, ordenarlos en fila como soldados' (Barrera-Vásquez, 1980: 837). The sign T501[544] has been productively read as a **t'i** syllabogram by Yuriy Polyukhovych (pers. comm. fall 2019).

ta-yi[h]k'in kajay lemb'ah ta[h]n-ch'en "Paw" *Tun*
'At sundown the jade effigy settled in Paw Stone Centre.'

The narrative makes clear that this day began at sunrise and ended at sunset with the final 'settling' of the effigy back where it properly belonged. There is closure and the resolution of a crisis, although the prince Junk'al Nak Ch'ok is not yet king. Nor are we told of the negative social repercussions ensuing from the death of the king without a formal burial, nor what reconciliation between factions was required for the prince to take the throne at dawn 64 days later. This information is intentionally subducted beneath surface formalities.

The play between *yihk'in* and *pasaj* which divides the entire narrative into light vs. shadow is a symbolic, affective subnarrative. The 'dawn' events are:

(1) the birth of the prince who will become K'inich Yat Ahk II;
(2) the arrival of the effigy after a year-plus absence due to the efforts of the prince and his supporters;
(3) the accession (procession in *'ajaw*-ship) of the prince, now king.

These together form a "bright" heroic timeline for the prince.
The darker 'sunset' events are:

(1) the "breakaway" of Ha' K'in Xok and his carrying the effigy away from Paw Stone Centre;
(2) The return and 'settling' of the effigy back in Paw Stone Centre.

The negative quality in Ha' K'in Xok's actions is apparent without explanation. What is not so apparent is the certain social disruption within the kingdom following the effigy's return, during the interval before Yat 'Ahk II took the throne, itself a 'dawn' event.

Kajay, discussed previously, is not a common verb, and its interpretation as 'foundation' prior to its decipherment as 'to settle' was undoubtedly shaped by its one substitution into the 819-Day Count.[38] On Throne 1 we have two examples of *kajay;* the first appears on the edge of the bench following an effaced block which we take to be the *tzolk'in* date of the accession of the current king. *[Jun K'an] kajay ta[h]n ch'en* "Paw Stone" *K'inich Yat 'A[h]k K'uh[ul] Yokib' 'Ajaw*. The second appears in the sentence under discussion:

[Jun K'an] kajay ta[h]n ch'en "Paw Stone" *K'inich Yat 'A[h]k K'uh[ul] Yokib' 'Ajaw ta-yi[h]k'in kajay lemb'ah ta[h]n-ch'en* "Paw Stone"

[38] On the Palenque Palace Tablet *kajay* substitutes for the more common verb *wa'-ej-iy* 'was placed standing' in the 819-Day Count phrase. This action refers to the placing of the foot of *k'awil(nal)* (an animate effigy) at stations in a quadripartite system as part of a ritual cycle enacted by deities. This is not a foundational event, but rather the arrival of an entity to an existing place.

While the order of constituents varies between the first and the second, the location *tahn ch'en* appears in both and the subject in both is the person (king or animate object) which 'settles' there. The location already exists; it is not "founded".

A curiosity (and unique example) is the infixation of T533 **B'AK** (MacLeod n.d.c) 'maize, young child' into the first *kajay* on the bench; this is surely not lexical but rather symbolic of the succession, cueing Yat 'Ahk II as the "child" of the lineage. The retrospective reference to his birth follows, followed in turn by the names of his parents, with only the mother's name readable. We may assume these two *kajay* statements to be like-in-kind: the jade effigy is to the integrity of the kingdom as is the divine king likewise, and now both have 'settled' into their proper positions.

Accession and Commemoration of Lightning House

This inscription, as with other Classic Maya monumental discourse, reaches resolution and closure in its final section: the accession of K'inich Yat 'Ahk II and the fire-house rite (*'el-nah[aj]*) of Chahuk Nah, which was the house (*'otot*) of Yat 'Ahk. Here are the original transcriptions and translations of the final two clauses:

> hux-hew hux-winikjiy 'i pas[aj] 1 K'an 7 Yaxk'in joy[a]j ti 'ajawlel 'Aj Junk'al Nak K'inich Yat 'A[h]k K'uh[ul] Yokib' 'Ajaw '63 days after, then at dawn on 1 K'an, the seventh day of Yaxk'in, he made a procession in [his] status of authority, He of Twenty Battles, K'inich Yat 'Ahk, Divine Lord of Yokib'.

> waklajun-[hew] waxak-winikjiy chan-hab'[i]y 'i-u[h]ti 5 'Ajaw 3 Muwan wil ho'tun 'elnah Chahuk Nah y-otot Yat 'A[h]k '4 years and 156 days after, it happened on 5 'Ajaw, the third day of Muwan, on the last Five *Tun* (ceremony) that [in] Yat 'Ahk's house, Lightning House, was done the fire-house rite.'

Amid the foregoing effort to extract meaning from opaque syntax, rare words and purposefully understated intrigue, we have gained insight and perspective on the evolution of Maya epigraphy. In contrast with the dense analysis of the preceding part of the text, we greet the final part with a sense of relief because it is well-understood by us and by all prior investigators. From a storyteller's perspective, the fog of disagreement and tension of incompatible options has abated. The familiar nature of what follows offers reassurance that the earlier passages with which we and colleagues have struggled are indeed written in the same language: these difficult sentences were as clear to their Classic native speakers as are the forms we now easily recognize due to our own progress in recent decades.

By the 1990s, epigraphers had many texts to rely on which featured royal accessions and house-dedications. Their syntactic and lexical variations were being recognized and sorted, although there was relatively less linguistic precision with regard to expressions like *joyaj ti 'ajawlel or 'elnah[aj]*.

A remaining uncertainty arises regarding the absence of *K'inich* with Yat 'Ahk's name in this last sentence, which cracks the door on the possibility that this was the house of his sixth-century namesake Yat 'Ahk I. We note that the last part of the text was badly damaged and that there are nominal-phrase components missing, although the most likely of these would have been *K'uhul Yokib' Ajaw*. Does the absence of *K'inich* signal that Chahuk Nah was first dedicated by his ancestor? We think it unlikely, in part due to our argument that Yat 'Ahk I is not cited in the bench text; for that matter, *K'inich* appears with Yat 'Ahk II's name in that text. We note that he employs *K'inich* in his full accession statement, but that in his fire-ritual on Panel 3, when he has been king for ten months, he does not use *K'inich*. The title is therefore not diagnostic with this king.

Discussion

In reaching the end of our translation and interpretation, we have not only completed these operations, but we have also written historical narrative. Amid thinking about what happened, and about how and why it happened, we confronted general questions of historiography. Historiography is made by people, using the traces left by the past, but we write the narrative in the present. Since historical representations of the past are based on the eyes and ears of others' experiences (the agents) and are usually left behind in texts, history is thus the historian's own construction (Gyáni, 2020: 26). Paul Veyne (1984: x), in citing Aristotle, said: "the historians tell of true events in which man is the actor; the history is a true novel". Because of postmodern critical considerations, we now distinguish between event and historical fact: an event is something that happened in the past, and a historical fact is the human construction of that event (Brown, 2005: 27).

When constructing contemporary historical narratives after interpreting the text, we must operate from the premise that the Classic inscriptions were not an ensemble of contemporary historiographical prose, but had a function quite different from the historiography of current scholars. That these texts have specific and conceptually unified forms entitles researchers to talk about the discourse of Classic inscriptions. These specificities are grammatical and thematic, linked by a common context and intention, i.e. authorial intent. We call this *monumental text discourse*.

Most of the inscriptions are public in the sense that something was announced or published within them. The term "public inscription" here means only that the recorded discourse was intended for commemoration on behalf of groups, be they human or supernatural. The intention of the common discourse operated from the fact and/or practice of animation; that is, that these public inscriptions were always tied to the animacy of a particular building or object. The animation of various human creations was an integral part of Classic Maya religious practice, wherein a previously inanimate object was brought to life by both divine and human intervention. This was the fundamental bedrock of Mesoamerican cults, since it was believed

that the birth of humans, as well as of time and space, occurred through the shaping and animation by the gods of similarly inanimate things.

When we analyze a Maya text we learn the expressions created by the people of the time, which are also related to the beliefs they hold. When we write 'battle' in a history book about the Maya past, we are transforming the narrative of a past event in two ways: on the one hand, the Classic Maya had already interpreted the event using their own concepts (*hay*, *chuk*, *pul* etc.), and we are doing so using the same concepts of today. There is currently no Maya inscription that contains the word 'battle'.[39]

Classic Maya texts list the actions of individuals (humans and gods), and only occasionally mention groups. Here, as elsewhere in Classic Maya narratives, the monumental discourse never explicitly informs the reader about material causes for disruption such as disputes over taxation, land, or populations ("thinness of the discourse", as Simon Martin [2000: 92] put it well). From this textual basis we have reached the historical agency issue and the structure (Giddens, 1976; Barnes, 2000). The structure is the social reality of a given culture which constrains it, but it can also motivate other social actions. The agent can claim a certain status, which allows her/him to behave rationally. Rational behaviour arises from the cognitive faculties and intellectual insights which the person has at his disposal; these correspond to the desires of the prevailing order, within the grip of which he lives his life.

The Classic Maya texts record implicit and explicit modes of political behaviour, and their diversity points to a multiplicity of identities. The Classic Maya polity was precisely a practice of power based on symbolic values which gradually developed a system of actors who accepted the legitimacy that was also expressed in inscriptions. The discourse of the inscriptions is a system of roles or dispositions representing the literary cloak of all actions considered important by the ideal elite. This is not to say that the inscriptions are ordinary propaganda tools, since they do not express opposition to an existing system or discourse, but rather are the codification of a set of norms which the elite have created for themselves as a model to follow. Without such adhererence, those at the top of society would not be able to fulfil the roles they had been assigned. The Classic inscriptions are thus political in the sense that they were the basic social communication of a group who derived their status from domination.[40]

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[39] We have suggested in a submitted monograph (MacLeod and Bíró, in press) that *'eht te'* 'battle trial' may sometimes refer to an individual battle, other times to a campaign or a life-task.

[40] The local, regional and pan-regional discourses made up the totality of Classic literacy as we know it today. These inscriptions were written by the elite for the elite. Although it is widely assumed that the inscriptions were intended as a means of persuasion to convince the productive sector of the population of the correctness of the rule, i.e. to legitimize the status of the ruling classes, it is more likely that the information was mainly aimed at the elite themselves. The elite displayed a culture of behaviour that had to be constantly maintained with respect to both the commoners and their own social class. The figure of the ideal Classic Maya king and the ideal nobleman thus appeared in different forms from state to state within the constraints of a given institutional system, but nevertheless always remained within the framework of dedicatory rites and political discourse.

When we analyze Maya texts, we have to look at them as repositories of ideal attitudes which usually list the duties (as actions) of divine kings. It is within this framework that we must determine, when an inscription was erected, whether it could have been seen by many people or whether only a few people had access to the text and to the images —i.e. the concept of 'unseen' art (see Brittenham, 2023)—. A common feature of all Maya inscriptions of the Classic Period therefore is their elite-centredness; it is an extreme form which is rarely found in the public inscriptions of other high cultures.

In most pre-industrial societies, the elite played a major role in communication and memory. While this was accompanied by exclusion, in many other ancient cultures' monumental inscriptions there was always written discourse that represented non-elite social figures, if only as subordinate groups or persons. Even the Egyptian civilization depicted and wrote about the masses of the peasantry through administration and taxation. This was also typical of Mesopotamian inscriptions, on which ethno-names and group designations were regularly recorded.[41]

In contrast, Classic Maya inscriptions documented specific life events of individuals without mentioning any group of non-elites. These two features were presumably related. Person-centredness or pre-modern individuality did not allow for the emergence of the masses in recorded history. Whoever had a name, whoever was a person, became the object of discourse. Inscriptions were made by persons who had at least one title, i.e. their political status was expressed. In opposition to individuality, the self of discourse was in most cases in the singular third person and accordingly, there was always a narrator in the background. The power-holder rarely spoke in his own voice. From this narrative pattern emerged the 'officialism' of Classic Maya texts; it is identical to certain narrative strategies of legal and other state texts that exist today.

The historical agent had emotions and goals, and we assume that he followed the reasoning of the time when he did this or that. If one looks at the stories recorded by Sahagún —although they were written after the invasion of Central Mexico and within a large framework imposed by the European chronicle genre— emotions

[41] Mesopotamian historiography, which did not develop into prose historiography, can be put into three sets according to the function it served for the kings who were the patrons of this genre (Liverani, 2011: 29). First, events that took place in the immediate past had to be selected with the function of educating kings and disseminating the information among the people, so this was 'contemporary' history. Second, they made collectively-remembered historical narratives, which served to turn a mythological series of events into a narrative or a memory of a social crisis which was seen fit to preserve. Finally, they made predictions of the future based on perceived regularities found in the past, or signs that needed to be interpreted. These three types of story-telling are found in the written culture of the Maya civilization, although not at the same time; in the Classic Period, recent events were recorded together with mythical episodes in the monumental discourse. 'Prophetic' narratives are only preserved in writing in the Postclassic and Colonial periods, although they surely existed in the previous periods, since the *katun* series of the *Paris Codex* was likely written in the 8th century. The early Colonial *Popol Vuh*, like many other indigenous documents of the Maya Highlands, is a hybrid narrative (oral and written, European and Mesoamerican), a mixture of the first and second types of historical writing. It must therefore be approached with caution in that it reveals not only continuities but discontinuities.

were everywhere. They describe the state of mind of Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin, *huey tlatoani*, his fear and anxiety. He thought and acted rationally, following the common sense of the time, as in when he sent magicians, wizards, and sorcerers to cast spells on the Spaniards (see *Florentine Codex*, Book XII, chapters 8 and 9 [Anderson and Dibble, 1975]).

These kinds of relationships are virtually absent in Maya inscriptions, which are instead framed in the specific forms of the Classic Period conception of time.[42] This followed from the idea of the "future as the past", which meant that events that happened in the past —whether performed by gods or humans— had happened again with different individuals, but in a similar or exactly the same way. Thus the whole political discourse is nothing but a formal repetition of past actions, a textual representation of a particular ritual coherence.

In most Classic Maya texts, therefore, only the actions of the elite were communicated, but without the why: the agent's direct purpose was missing. From the episodes of which the text is composed one can deduce possible reasons for the events recorded. For this reason, not only the text in question but also other Maya texts must be examined. Other Mesoamerican texts may be addressed in the midst of one's interpretations, and finally, the gaps that always remain must be covered by analogy and the historian's experiences. The Classic Maya texts are thus annals rather than chronicles, and are therefore not historical narratives but sequences of episodes. Given this property of Classic Maya inscriptions, if we want to create a historical narrative, we must use "*retrodiction*", the historian's solution to the unstated explanations. This requires a blunt use of theories and hypotheses (Veyne, 1984: 144-145):

> The problem of retrodiction is, on the other hand, are problems of the probability of causes – or, to put it better, the probability of hypotheses: an event having occurred, how can it be properly explained? Does the king drink because he is thirsty or because etiquette demands that he drink? … So all retrodiction calls into play a causal explanation (thirst makes the king drink) and perhaps (at least, so it is said) even a true law (whoever is thirsty will drink, if he can).

In analyzing the text of Piedras Negras Throne 1, we started from the framework of the genre; then we referred to archaeological and epigraphic commentary written by others, and then we interpreted the language found in the text itself, incorporating the relevant content of other Maya inscriptions together with data about the region to create a more complete picture.

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[42] The West Panel of Temple of Inscription of Palenque mentions the expression of emotion: **u-ti-mi-wa yo-Ol-la/i-chi na-i-ki u ti-mi je-la a-OL-la/i-chi-ki u-ti-mi a-OL-la** or *utimiw yohl/'ich naik utimjel 'awohl/'ichik utim 'awohl* which concerns the satisfaction of the heart (or soul) of the gods ('may it pour, the appeasement of your hearts') (MacLeod n.d.a). This formula occurs in the *Florentine Codex* too (*pachiui noyollo* in Book 12, Chapter 8 see Anderson and Dibble, 1975: 20).

To better understand fraternal (sometimes fratricidal) warfare, we reviewed studies of other polities where such conflicts took place. To contextualize the sacred bundle and the effigy featured in the original text we turned to early colonial Nahuatl sources, but we also reviewed data from the immediate area in Guatemala or Mexico in the same time period.

Our narrative is simple: a feud between two brothers. At the end of it, one won and became the new king. Apart from a damaged parentage statement, the text never explicitly mentions the family and the dynasty; we have constructed kin relations from other texts. Furthermore, this text presents the traditional discourse of the Classic Maya monuments in an idiosyncratic way. Under this superficial account of a schism in the court there is another, deeper level: the tradition of the sacred bundle and the effigy and its relationship to coronation.

This text does not convey beliefs about the sacred bundle, but we have made use of texts preserved from another era. The colonial Nahuatl documents contain an abundance of information about the object through the beliefs preserved there. In incorporating this information into our understanding, we rely upon an informed presumption based on prior knowledge that although five hundred years and long distances separate the two eras and two different civilizations, the beliefs are identical or nearly so. This hypothesis of the direct approach —a heuristic method— is famous in anthropology. It has its advantages and disadvantages, but analogy and retrodiction rely upon the fact that religious beliefs and practices often persist within a given culture area.

The sacred bundle appears in a key mythological episode on the vases K2796 and 7750. The event is the first day of the current era in 3114 BC; on the throne seat behind the newly —inaugurated Old God L rests a prominent bundle labeled '*ihkatz*. Commentary on the other ("Star-Over-Earth") bundles which rest before the rows of seated gods in these scenes is beyond the scope of this essay, but we suspect that they represent *closure* of prior epochs in contrast with the advent of the current one and its bundle on the throne.

The best contemporaneous references for the sacred bundle in Classic Maya iconography are the Yaxchilan representations. Most (Lintels 1, 5, 7, 53 and 54) are associated with Kok Mut B'ahlam IV, although two examples (Lintels 32 and 53) depict his father. The scenes, reiterated by the texts, always show the king formally dancing and holding the K'awil scepter opposite one of his wives, who holds the sacred bundle. On Lintel 5, the king holds the bird staff rather than the K'awil scepter. The inscriptions do not link the K'awil scepter and bundle to a particular ritual such as accession, but on the very date Kok Mut B'ahlam IV ascended into *ajaw*-ship, (*joyaj ti 'ajawlel*: Stela 11) he was also depicted on Lintel 1 dancing with this scepter as his wife stood behind him with the sacred bundle.

K'awil is a deity associated with both lightning and fertility. The scepter —or the ceremonial bar from which this god emerges— was closely linked to rulership, with kings wielding its power to promote the birth of vegetal and lineage abundance in their dominions (see Rivera, 2022 for a comprehensive study of the deity). In

Yaxchilan depictions, the K'awil scepter and the sacred bundle together symbolize control over fertility, the rains, and the harvest, with the understanding that this all rests upon a contract with the Earth Lord (the polymorphic Old God who is himself a manifestation of K'awil). The presence of both king and queen in these Yaxchilan scenes is symbolic of fertility in the bloodline.

When royal authority was formally removed from Dzibanche and established in Calakmul, the term used was *k'awilil*. Perhaps this referred to the metaphysical properties of the bundle as well as to the permission from the Old God to reside in a place. The inscription on Throne 1 of Piedras Negras employs the words '*ihkitz* and *lemb'ah* or *winb'ah* for obviously physical objects whose metaphysical aspect was fundamental to the *right to rule (in) a place.* The return of these objects —or one within another— might have inspired the new king and his sculptors to depict the throne back as the epitome of *k'awil*: an animate mountain of fertile abundance giving rebirth to the still-living king and his war captain as gods.

Call it religion, or cult, or a threatened loss of connection to the gods, the Throne 1 text makes paramount the sacred bundle and its *theft* from the viewpoint of the prince who stayed behind in Paw Stone Centre. The would-be king took several years to craft and cast in stone the explanation for his actions: he became ruler via the "stealing back" of the sacred bundle after 370 days. This deed was necessary for his inauguration. This status was achieved not via conquest of people, but rather by his "tending" the arrival (i.e. the return) of the effigy. There is silence on the cause of Ha' K'in Xok's flight from the city of his birth, while K'inich Yat 'Ahk II, who claimed to be Lord of *Way*-Place, eventually got the headband.

K'inich Yat 'Ahk II's overt message was about restoring order in the kingdom. While he never explained the breakaway of Ha' K'in Xok, he continued to refer to the king as *K'uhul Yokib' 'Ajaw* throughout this rupture. Apparently to do otherwise would either reveal too much about his personal motives or —more importantly— risk the perception (or actuality) that the sacred bundle had fallen into profane hands. We must assume he had to appease factions of the court and the army who had supported his predecessor, and that Throne 1 was one path among several to this purpose. As in the case of the conflict between Dzibanche and Calakmul, the winner was the usurper against the legitimate king. But the Caracol scribes did not hide this fact: the authors at Caracol found it necessary to reveal even the manner of that king's assassination. We have no idea what the usurper-now-successor far away thought about this disclosure. We can only guess at the social dynamics which prompted the public account. In the Throne 1 case, other dynamics necessitated silence. Or there is a lost monument which lays it all bare.

Our attempt to explain the schism did not succeed as we had hoped at the beginning, because even though there are multiple accounts of Classic Maya fractional wars, we could not find another text which might from a different context help us directly discern the possible causes of this one. But we believe we have made progress, both generally and specifically, in interpreting the Classic Maya text that we now present in this article. As in other more advanced disciplines, in interpre-

ting this text it is essential to understand the *linguistic data*, because without it, we will either make incorrect guesses or fail to grasp the political nuance of rare and specialized terms, thus missing the meaning of the text and the purpose for which it was written.

We offer this from the perspective of several decades of participation in Maya epigraphy. One might say that the experiments in Maya historiography carried out in the early 1990s were hindered on the one hand by the absence of fully-deciphered passages and on the other hand by the paucity of Classic Ch'olan linguistic reconstruction, though these two impediments have diminished over time and will eventually recede. Concomitantly, the number and depth of accurate text analyses will increase.

The last task before us is to reflexively witness the differences between then and now vis-à-vis our mastery of the Classic language. The current leap forward lies not so much in recognizing verb morphology —as was dramatically true of the 1990s versus the 1980s— but in advancements in semantics coupled with syntax, i.e. syntax-driven interpretations which build upon an integral Classic Ch'olan grammatical system now comparable in documentation to those of modern Mayan languages. It is this level of linguistic appreciation which gives access to elusive semantics dictated by rare antipassives, one of which appears twice in this text as a key.

This upward curve in linguistic interpretation —and thus historical interpretation— leads us to propose that we are now in the phase of philological enterprise: that we have reached the stage of true historical textual scholarship (Gumbrecht, 2003: 2).[43] That said, there are still signs which are undeciphered or whose meanings are only half-understood which may eventually yield to the persistence of future epigraphist-historians.

Historical textual scholarship has five basic practices: identifying texts or fragments; editing texts; writing commentary; historicizing; and finally, teaching. In our essay we have identified Piedras Negras Throne 1 to be worthy of revisiting for the purposes of new and hopefully more precise commentary and placement in a historical context, one both wider and more narrow. Our method is twofold, as both a linguistic and a historical interpretation. Behind all knowledge in the humanities and social sciences there is empirical research with its placement in a conceptual framework, within which it is associated with reflexivity.

We wanted to demonstrate this reflexivity through the interpretation of a Classic Maya text, first through a deep linguistic analysis and then by placement of it in its historical context, which constitutes a philological interpretation. We hope to have succeeded in demonstrating this process, and thus to have contributed to the further development of Maya Studies. At the same time we offer a contribution to the historiography of the Maya civilization, which may yet be in infancy, but we trust that it will continue to develop as a field in its own right.

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[43] According to Gumbrecht (2003: 2) philology is "historical text curatorship that refers exclusively to written texts".

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