

HIEROGLYPHS *IMIX* AND *KAN* AS NON-CALENDRIAL SYMBOLS FOR THE MAYA CREATOR COUPLE

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The mythico-theological approach to the Maya hieroglyphs continues to contribute workable factors that lead to the decipherment of non-calendrical text symbols. When such esoteric elements are properly assembled and applied, they often provide the researcher with the invaluable advantage of being able to visualize the particular glyph from the ancient Maya viewpoint. Thompson (1950:9) has stated, "A knowledge of Maya theology and myth is essential to the student of Maya epigraphy".

Mythico-theological factors are pertinent to the present consideration of hieroglyphs *Imix* and *Kan*, which are shown in Figs. 1 and 2, respectively. It should be stated that comments appearing in double parentheses ((thus)), have been supplied and are not a part of the original documentation.

Among the ancient deities worshiped by the pre-Conquest Maya, was a greatly venerated pair known as the "Creator Couple" (Recinos 1950:97³). They were believed to exist in the form of the sun and moon. Villa (1945:155) reports that the former was called "Father Sun (*Yum Kin*)", and the latter, "Mother Moon (*Colel Luna*)".

This Creator Couple is encountered in Maya mythico-theology under such titles as "Grandmother and Grandfather" (Recinos 1950:79), and "Old Father" and "Old Mother" (La Farge and Byers 1931:114). In the literature and folklore they are more familiarly called "The Old Man" and "The Old Woman" (Chilam Balam of Chumayel 1933:93). Recinos notes (1950:97³) that the Old Man and Old Woman represent the Creator Couple who, under different names, appear throughout

the first part of the Popol Vuh chronicles. The Old Woman is better known to researchers as the moon goddess Ixchel, and the Old Man as the sun-god Itzamna.

The Old Sun Father was the culture hero of the ancient Maya, and in this capacity was known as Kukulcan. Roys (1933:133¹²) notes, "Under the Maya name of Kukulcan, this culture hero is said to have come with the Itza in a Katun 4 Ahau." There is good reason to believe that Quetzalcoatl was an Aztec name for Kukulcan. Recinos (1950:189¹⁰) reports that the meaning of the name Quetzalcoatl, "...serpent covered with green feathers..." corresponds to the Maya name Kukulcan.

La Farge and Byers (1931:114) report that the Old Father and his wife Old Mother were considered to be the ancestors of the people. Thompson (1939:135) informs that the sun and moon were the first pair to copulate, and (1939:168) that the moon presided over generation and childbirth, and was the first woman to have sexual intercourse. As is known, the ancient Maya nobility considered themselves to be direct descendants of the sun and moon. Spinden writes (1957:302), "...Itzamna was regarded by the Mayas as the creator and father of all..." From the foregoing information, it appears that the ancient Maya believed that the Sun Father and Moon Mother originated the tribal lineage of Maya nobility by producing the first noble offspring. This concept made them the Creator Couple Ancestors of all Maya nobles, with the result that the Old Man and Old Woman are often encountered in the literature and folklore under the simple title of "The Ancestors".

Morley (1915:16) gives the characteristics of Itzamna as an aged face, a Roman nose, and a sunken toothless mouth. The Codical pictograph of the Old Man sun god is shown in Fig. 3, and the head glyph of the Old Woman moon goddess is depicted in Fig 4. The pictograph of the Old Woman may perhaps equate with "God O" of Schellhas' classification (1910:38), which he believed to have the features of an old woman.

La Farge and Byers (1931:114) obtained the information on the Old Father and Old Mother, that "their true names, which are not known to the laymen, are palun (9) Kana' and palun (9) Imuc, respectively, both of which are day names..."

On this basis, the Maya associated the old Creator Couple with hieroglyphs Kan and Imix ((sometimes spelled Imuc or Imox)). In this case, glyph Kan represents the male element of the pair, and glyph Imix the female element.

Hieroglyphic representations of Old Father 9-Kan and Old Mother 9-Imix occur in the Codex Dresden. In the text symbols of C. Dresden 60a, can be found the Kan glyph shown in Fig. 5. This Kan symbol has a prefix of four dots and a vertical 5-bar for a bar-and-dot count of "nine". Thus, the scribe has written "9-Kan". In the text of C. Dresden 35a, a modified Imix glyph with a similar nine count prefix is inscribed, as depicted in Fig. 6. The fact that the specified 9-Kan and 9-Imix occur in non-calendrical texts, indicates their use as non-calendrical elements.

Other Codex Dresden texts show the close non-calendrical association of hieroglyphs Imix and Kan. Thompson (1950:72) reports, "The Imix glyph is used in a non-calendrical sense in many passages of the Codices and on the monuments. . . it is frequently compounded with a Kan symbol. . ." The compounding of day-signs Imix and Kan into a single glyph is delineated in Fig. 7. Some writers have believed that this compound symbol represented a food offering, but the mythico-theological evidence indicates that the united Imix and Kan elements in Fig. 7 were intended to be a hieroglyphic representation of the old Creator Couple.

Consider Núñez de la Vega's information (Thompson 1950: 71) that in one area, worship of the day Imox alludes to the ceiba, and that they hold it for very certain with regards to the roots of that ceiba that it was through them their lineage came. Here, is another association of the non-calendrical Imix element with the Maya lineage. The ceiba tree symbolized the ancient Maya esoteric "Tree of Life".

The profound tribal importance from the Maya viewpoint, of the first reproductive union of the Creator Couple, should not be overlooked by the researcher. They considered it to be one of the greatest events in their mythic history, for it was believed that the initial copulation of the Sun Father and Moon Mother produced the first offspring of the Maya noble lineage. Such a basic element of ancient Maya mythico-theology was almost certain to be expressed hieroglyphically by the scribes, and the compounding of day-signs Imix and Kan into a single

union as shown in Fig. 7, appears to allude to the origin of the Maya lineage that produced the first Maya nobles.

The non-calendrical association of day-signs Imix and Kan with the old Creator Couple appears to have been derived from the ancient Maya belief that the days were deities. Thompson reports (1954:232), "The twenty days which formed the Maya month were regarded as gods..." Each day deity had many names and titles, usually alluding to their influences or attributes, but the names given to the day-signs were the most common titles of the deities who ruled them. Since, in Maya concept, many male deities had female counterparts, a day symbol sometimes represented divinities of both sexes. In some cases, attributes common to more than one deity established traditional inter-relationships between rulers of different day-signs.

As is known, the twenty days of the Maya month followed one another in a rigidly established sequence, so that any specified day-sign invariably occupied the same sequence-position in the series of twenty days. Thus, Imix was day number one in the twenty day cycle; Ik was day number two; Akbal was day three; Kan, day four; and so on through the sequence to Ahau which was day number twenty, and the last day of the month.

On this basis, any specified day-sign was irrevocably locked to its sequence-position number. Thus, in the minds of the Maya, Imix and the number "one" were always related; Ik and the number "two"; Akbal and "three"; Kan and "four"; and similarly on through the series of twenty day-signs to Ahau and "twenty".

As a result of this relationship between the days and their sequence-position numbers, the Maya thought of the day-deities as "god one" or "the one-god"; "god two" or "the two-god"; "god three" or "the three-god"; continuing through the sequence to "god twenty". In an earlier report (Thurber and Thurber 1958:61) material was presented to show that the ancient Maya spoke of their day-gods by number, as well as by name. For example, there was "Ah Uuc Chek-nal ((Lord Seven Chek-nal))" (Chumayel 1933:101³) and "Ah Uuc Ti Cab, Lord Seven Earth" (Thompson 1939:148). Both of these names allude to the seventh day-deity in the twenty-day sequence.

Taking advantage of the foregoing factors, the ancient Maya combined the twenty sequence-position numbers of the day-

signs into a secret numerical code for the purpose of identifying their day-deities by number. For working purposes it will be spoken of as "god-code". The evidence indicates that the sequence-position numbers incorporated into the god-code were employed only in a strictly non-calendrical sense, and were never utilized for time-count or calendrical computations. The researcher should bear in mind that when a Maya employed a calendrical element, such as the twenty-day sequence-numbers, in a non-calendrical sense, such numbers immediately lost their calendrical values and became non-calendrical factors.

What has Maya god-code to do with the old Creator Couple? Consider the information supplied by Thompson (1950:231), "...the moon goddess, the deity of number one." To a Maya, this would be the equivalent of saying, "The moon goddess Imix," for Imix is the deity of god-code number "one". Since the Kan symbol was day-sign "four" in god-code, Sun Father Kan was the god of number "four".

Hieroglyphic evidence indicates that the Maya scribes could designate the Creator Couple, Imix and Kan, by god-code numerals alone. For example, since Imix was god-code number one, and Kan was god-code number four, the scribe united dot-counts "one" and "four" as shown in Fig. 8, where they were intended to designate the Old Father and Old Mother. In an earlier detailed report on god-code (Thurber and Thurber 1958: 62) material was presented to show that, where more than one god-code dot-count was to be inscribed contiguously, dots of different sizes distinguished the separate counts. For example, in Fig. 8, the scribe employed one large dot for his Imix god-code "one", and four smaller dots for his Kan god-code number "four". A Maya would probably have read the compound symbol as, "Deity 'one' and deity 'four'."

From the foregoing material it can be realized that the Maya, by means of their god-code, were able to extend the use of their twenty calendrical sequence-position numbers into the non-calendrical field, where the numbers became day-gods.

Additional mythico-theological factors indicate that the scribes created other hieroglyphic symbols identifying the old Creator Couple.

Much evidence points to the ancient "language of Zuyua" (Chumayel 1933:88), as a secret tongue of the priesthood, originated for the purposes of concealing esoteric mythico-

theological information from the uninitiated. Roys (1933:98¹) describes the language of Zuyua as "...mysterious words which were obscure to all but the ruling class." The structure of Zuyua speech has shown itself to be a form of metaphorical "double talk", in which the use of figurative terms conceals most of the context. Thompson has stated (1950:35) that a Maya when dealing with sacred matters never calls a spade a spade. Zuyua metaphorical thought expression has remained the greatest single barrier to a clear understanding of Maya literature and hieroglyphic writing.

The ancient Maya traditional test for aspirants to chieftainship was made up of a series of questions and answers, with the answers as well as the questions being phrased in mystifying Zuyua. Their metaphorical terminology has led some writers to believe that they were riddles or conundrums for the amusement of the participants, but new evidence reveals that the ingenious questions and their answers are replete with concealed basic elements of Maya mythico-theology. They do not make sense to the modern researcher until he has acquired a sufficient knowledge of ancient Maya mythico-theological elements.

For example, one of the test questions (Chumayel 1933:93) demands of the applicant, "...go and call your companions to me. These are an old man with nine sons and an old woman with nine children." The present material has already familiarized the reader with the Old Man 9-Kan and the Old Woman 9-Imix. Here, they are encountered in the Zuyua test for chiefs, where they are said to have nine offspring each.

The answer to the question is phrased in Zuyua, and gives the information that, "The old man with nine sons... it is his great toe. ...The old woman... it is his thumb." (Chumayel 1933:94).

And what does this mean to the researcher? It reveals that the Old Man of the Creator Couple was conceived to take, at times, the form of a great toe, and that the Old Woman occasionally assumed the form of a thumb, for esoteric purposes. Only a lack of knowledge of Maya mythico-theological concepts would lead a student to dismiss such an answer as ridiculous nonsense. From the Maya viewpoint, the question and its answer had considerable hieroglyphic significance.

For example, the Maya are known to have counted on their fingers and toes, and the thumb traditionally stood for a count

of "one". Recall that the moon goddess was the deity of the ((god-code)) number "one". On this basis, the metaphorical thumb referred to in the answer, alluded to god-code day-deity number one, who was Old Woman Imix.

For working purposes, the old Creator Couple will be called "Old-Man-Great-Toe" and "Old-Woman-Thumb". The fact that they were said to have "nine" offspring each, is not coincidence. Recall that the Old Father and the Old Mother were known as 9-Kan and 9-Imix. The evidence indicates that the "nine" associated with the old Creator Couple was a non-calendrical god-code "nine", relating to the Maya ninth day-deity.

What factors support such a conception?

The ancient Maya believed that the Sun Father and Moon Mother had the supernatural powers to descend to earth at will in the forms of a youth and a maiden. This youthful pair were believed to be the incarnate earthly forms of the Sun Father and Moon Mother. Consider the legend that speaks of "...the sun who was then a youth upon earth..." (Thompson 1932: 120). The esoteric existence of an old form and a young form of the moon goddess has been discussed in a previous report (Thurber and Thurber 1961:226).

In Roys' translation of the "Birth of the Spider" story, from the Ritual of the Bacabs (Thompson 1939:148) he gives, "Red Ixchel, White Ixchel." Texts of the Dresden Codex present hieroglyphic representations of the old moon goddess and her virgin form, which it identifies as "Red Ixchel" and "White Ixchel". Consider Fig. 9, taken from the text of C. Dresden 2b, in which the scribe has combined a prefix glyph for the color "red" with the head-glyph of the Old Woman, thus, inscribing "Red Ixchel". Similarly, in Fig. 10, the symbol for the "color" white has been used as the prefix in combination with the head-glyph of the virgin-form moon goddess, identifying her as "White Ixchel".

The ancient Maya believed that it was the incarnate youthful forms of the Creator Couple who produced the initial offspring for the Maya lineage of nobles. Thus, it was the youthful form of the sun god and the virgin moon goddess who mated for the generation of the nobility.

In an earlier report (Thurber and Thurber 1961:228) material was presented to show that day-sign Muluc, of the Maya

ninth day, was associated with the virgin moon goddess. Day-sign Muluc, shown in Figs. 11 and 12, is a feminine symbol related to the incarnate virgin-form of the old moon goddess of the Creator Couple. Due to these various factors, virgin Muluc was regarded as the real source of noble offspring for the tribal lineage. Producing noble offspring was considered to be the principal power of virgin moon goddess Muluc, deity of day-sign nine, and resulted in god-code "nine" symbolizing the idea of "noble offspring", in addition to identifying virgin Muluc. On this basis both hieroglyph Muluc, and god-code "nine", may bear the simple meaning of "noble".

From the foregoing mythico-theological information, it can be realized that the "nine" of Old Father 9-Kan and Old Mother 9-Imix is god-code nine, which removes 9-Kan and 9-Imix from the field of calendrical count, and relates them to the non-calendrical text idea of the Creator Couple who produced "nobles". Consider their "nine" offspring in the Zuyua test question. Here, again, the "nine" is non-calendrical god-code "nine" which alerts the researcher to the fact that the "nine sons" should be read "noble sons", and that "nine children" should be recognized as "noble children". The "nine" is used metaphorically, and does not represent nine individual offspring.

Additional evidence on the Muluc-nine-noble concept is to be found in the hieroglyphic text representation of Old-Woman-Thumb. Consider the pictograph of the thumb shown in Fig. 13. It can be seen that this thumb has a single infixed circle-dot intended for a dot-count of "one". This thumb, then, should represent Old-Woman-Thumb, for the single dot would be god-code, and represent the moon goddess who was "deity of the number one".

Before accepting this conclusion, it should be remembered that a thumb also stood for a mathematical count of "one". Then, why is the infixed dot not a mathematical "one"? On the basis that the thumb traditionally stood for a mathematical count of "one" to all Maya throughout their lifetime, it was unnecessary to infix the additional designation of its mathematical value. There is good reason to believe that the infixed dot in the thumb of Fig. 13, was intended to prompt the reader of the text that this thumb is not to be read as a mathematical count, but should be read, "Old Mother Imix, moon goddess

of the ((god-code)) number one." Recall the one large dot designating the Old Woman in Fig. 8.

The esoteric relationship of virgin Muluc's "noble-lineage nine" to Old-Woman-Thumb ((Old Mother 9-Imix)), is evident in the thumb hieroglyph depicted in Fig. 14. In this case, an infixed Muluc symbol has replaced the "one" dot infix shown in Fig. 13. From the Maya scribe's point of view, infixing a Muluc symbol is equivalent to writing god-code number "nine", since Muluc is day-deity "nine". The thumb hieroglyph in Fig. 14 is equivalent to inscribing "9-thumb"; "9-Old-Woman-Thumb"; or "9-Old Mother-Thumb-Imix". It was intended to be read, "Noble-lineage thumb"; "Noble-lineage Old Woman"; or "Noble-lineage moon goddess Imix", all designating the Old Woman of the Creator Couple. In Fig. 15, the thumb has an infixed Muluc symbol with a double frame as delineated in Fig. 12.

In Codex Madrid, Old-Woman-Thumb is sometimes designated by a compound double thumb hieroglyph as shown in Fig. 16. Here, the use of two thumbs was employed to remind the reader that she existed in two forms, the old moon goddess and the virgin moon goddess. Since, a single thumb represented the Old Woman, the additional thumb would be the virgin moon goddess who equates with virgin Muluc. On this basis, the extra thumb is equivalent to adding a Muluc symbol to the Old Woman's thumb-glyph, as in Fig. 14. In actual practice, a Muluc element; the virgin moon goddess; god-code "nine"; and an extra thumb; all equate.

Maya scribes often utilized several different combinations of glyphic elements to express the same specific concept. For example, Old-Woman-Thumb could be designated by simply inscribing an oversize thumb on an otherwise normally proportioned hand, as in Fig. 17. In this case, the disproportionate thumb alerts the reader to the fact that this is the hand of Old-Woman-Thumb. Note the infixed Muluc element at the wrist, to designate god-code "nine", and to supply the additional identification that this is a "nine thumb".

Consider the giant thumb in Fig. 18. Here, the Old Woman's hand holds an inverted Ahau glyph. Ahau was day-deity of the twentieth day, and Thompson (1950:88) states, "Ahau, then, was the day of the sun god." On this basis, the Ahau sun

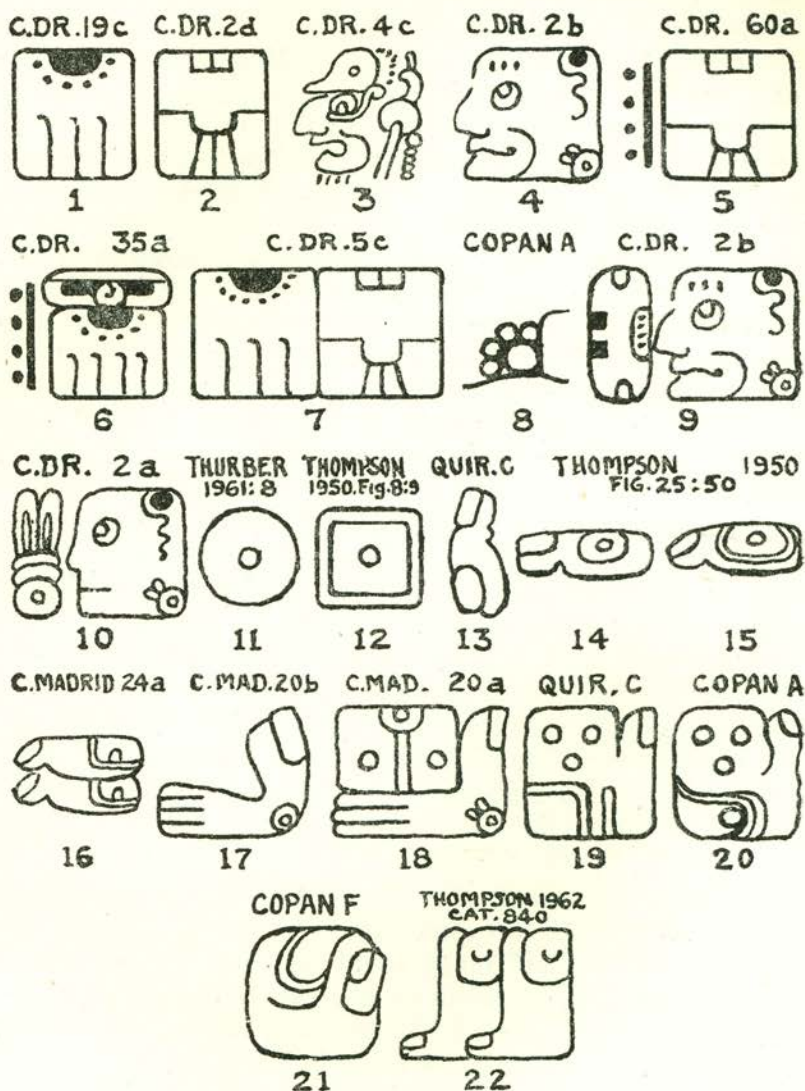


FIG. A. Hieroglyphs referred to in the consideration of Imix and Kan.

god element joined with the Old Woman's hand to form the compound hieroglyph shown in Fig. 18, is a metaphorical rephrasing of the concept of the first reproductive union of the sun and moon Creator Couple.

The ancient scribes had additional glyphic forms for designating the Old Woman's thumb. In Figs. 19, 20, and 21, the scribe does not rely on an oversize thumb to identify the hand of the Old Woman. In these three glyphs, her hand is represented by the more subtle means of depicting a hand that bears no delineation of fingers, but presents a well detailed thumb. This was sufficient to focus the initiated reader's attention on the thumb, thus prompting him to recognize this glyph as the hand of the Old Woman.

In Fig. 20, a single dot intended for a non-calendrical god-code count of "one", can be seen infixed near the base of the hand. The god-code "one" relates this hand to Old Mother Imix. Recall the single god-code dot representing the Old Woman in Fig. 8.

Old-Man-Great-Toe was hieroglyphically represented by the compound symbol shown in Fig. 22. In this case, two symbolic feet are combined in the single glyph. It can be seen that these particular feet have no small toes, but each is supplied with a well detailed great toe, only. Like the two thumbs of the Old-Woman-Thumb in Fig. 16, these two great toes allude to the factor that Old-Man-Great-Toe existed in both an aged form and an incarnate youthful form.

The factors presented in this study of the Creator Couple give good reason to believe that the ancient Maya scribes employed the calendrical days-signs Imix and Kan in a non-calendrical sense to designate the day-deities who ruled these two days.

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