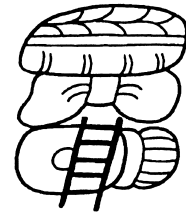


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Glyph Y and GII: The Mirror and the Child

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The following paper suggests a relationship between the name glyph of GII of the Palenque Triad, and Glyph Y from the Supplementary Series. Equivalent phonetic complements in both glyphs support a reading that relates to their depiction of an infantile form of Schellhas' God K.¹

Figure 1. PAL TFC GII. After Schele (Schele and Freidel 1990)

GII as both *Nehn-K'awil* and *Unen-K'awil*

Whether it is read as the phonetic complement **ne**, **unen** (Martin 2002:61–62) or **nen** (Grofe 2006), the 1S3 (T198)² prefix in the name of GII supports the reading of *nehn* for the apparent mirror 1M2 (T617a) on the head of GII as God K³ (Fig. 1). Following David Stuart's reading of God K as **k'awil** (Stuart (1987:15),⁴ Nikolai Grube suggested a reading of *Nen K'awil* for the name of GII (Schele and Matthews 1993). Similarly, based on the depiction of *K'awil* as an infant, *unen*, 'baby; child',⁵ Simon Martin has proposed that the name of GII reads *Unen K'awiil* (Martin 2002:62). This child image is appropriate both within the story of his birth in Palenque, and because he is the

¹ Justeson (1984): GII is recognized as God K from Schellhas (1904).

² Macri andLooper (2003: 171, 276–77) also include the singular T120 **ne** as 1S3. Codes from Macri andLooper are followed by the corresponding Thompson numbers.

³ Linda Schele and Jeffrey Miller (1983:3–20) first proposed *nen* or *lem* for T617a as the mirror attribute of God K, following its identification as a mirror by Michael Coe (1973).

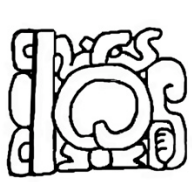
⁴ Transcribed *K'awiil* in Martin and Grube (2000), based on vowel length potentially indicated by syllable disharmony (see Houston, Robertson and Stuart 1998).

⁵ Ch'ol: *une'*; Ch'orti': *unen* 'baby' (Kaufman and Norman 1984:135).

youngest of the Palenque Triad, as Karen Bassie has noted (2002:44). Here, it seems likely that the infantile form of GII appears as a play on words for the *nehn* ‘mirror’ attribute of God K.

Glyph Y

One example of Glyph Y on the northwest side of Yaxchilan Stela 11 appears with the same 1S3 (T198) prefix found in the name of GII (Fig. 2a), where it seems to substitute freely for the usual **ne** tail suffix, 1S3 (T120), on the southeast side of the same stela (Fig. 2b). This brings into question the very meaning of Glyph Y itself, which is known to also include an image of God K, and to precede his name in the 819-day count. Here again may be a reference to both *Nehn K’awil* and *Unen K’awil*.



a



b

Figure 2. YAX St. 11 a) C’9, b) D’8
After Schele. (Schele and Freidel
1990:284, fig. 7:8)



Figure 3. CPN St. A A6
Looper (Macri and Looper 2003)



a



b

Figure 4. a) NAR St. 13 H4,
b) NAR St. 19 J2. After Graham 1978.

In most examples of Glyph Y, SSG (T739a, b), the recognizable mirrored head of God K appears at the top of the glyph (Fig. 3). Surrounding the round body of the main glyph can be seen small arms and legs. A close examination of the main sign or body of Glyph Y reveals that it could be a form of the jaguar tail **ne**, ATB (T834), as seen in “child of father” expressions (Fig. 4)⁶. This is clearly seen in examples of Glyph Y from Yaxchilán Lintels 29 and 30 (Fig. 5). As a possible confirmation of this reading, an early example of Glyph Y from the Brussels Panel reveals a substitution with a full form of the tail as the main sign (Fig. 6).



a



b

Figure 5. a) YAX Lnt. 29 B5, b) YAX Lnt. 30 F4.
After Graham 1979.

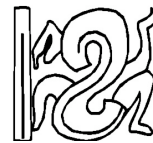
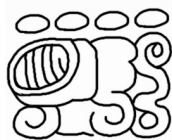


Figure 6. Brussels Panel.
After Mayer 1978.

Combined with the final T120 tail, ATB in Glyph Y appears to read **ne-n(e)**, and this makes a strong case for its reference to God K as *Nehn K’awil*. In fact, the earliest examples of Glyph Y found in the Houston Panel (Fig. 7a) and the Kansas Panel (Fig. 7b) appear with a mirror (1M4), and a duplicated T120, indicating a reading of *nehn*. The third earliest example from the Phoenix “Po” Panel shows a similar mirror possibly conflated with a ZUG (T568) **lu**, followed by a singular T120 (Fig. 7c). Each of these examples also seems to have a form of 32M (T126) **y-** or **ya**, which may be explained below.



a



b



c

Figure 7. Early examples of Glyph Y: a) Houston Panel, b) Kansas Panel c) Po Panel. After Mayer 1984 (a, b) and Miller 1986 (c).

⁶ See Stuart (1985) the child-father relationship glyph. Hopkins (1991:263) reads ATB as **ne**.

In the majority of examples of Glyph Y, just as in GII, there appears to be a reference to the infantile K'awil as *unen*, with the diminutive flexed arms and legs of Glyph Y resembling those of a similarly reclining baby as seen from above. Other examples of the main sign in Glyph Y seem to be a conflation of ATB with XH4 (T774, T506) **o(I)**, or **wa**, as in Yaxchilan Lintel 46 (Fig. 8), as well as in Yaxchilan Lintels 21 and 56. Karl Taube suggested that this represents K'awil as a *waj*, 'tamale', given the known association between God K and maize (Taube 1992:78).



Figure 8. YAX Lnt. 46 C1
After Graham 1979.

Phonetically, the conflation of **ne** (ATB) and **o(I)** or **wa** (XH4) may simply indicate the rounding initial vowel⁷ of **u-ne-n(e)**, *unen*, as 'baby, child', while another possibility would be **o-ne-n(e)**, *onen*, attested in Ch'orti' as 'child of father'.⁸ While *ol* is a known word for 'heart', *ol* is also a term for 'child of mother' in Tz'otzil, with a corresponding term *al* in Chol⁹. Possessed, this is the familiar expression *yal*, which may be indicated by the **ya** (32M) and the **lu** (ZUG) in the early examples (Fig. 7). Combined together with the mirror and final **-ne**, either singular or duplicated, these early graphemes would appear to read **ya-lu-NEHN-ne-(ne)** or *Yal Une(h)n* 'Her child, baby [his child] (mirror)'. Similarly, this could read *Yol Unehn* 'His heart, his mirror', perhaps in reference to a specialized, central mirror of God K. Combined with the name of K'awil, we have some variation of *Yol/Yal Une(h)n K'awil*. Thus, there may be a related reading for the later examples of Glyph Y as well. Indeed, between the lower legs of later forms of Glyph Y, or in place of K'awil's head, infixes of 32M **ya**, HE6 (T13) **u**, or possibly AMB (T178) **la**, may be present (Figs. 3, 5, and 8), further reinforcing several of the above readings.

Conclusion

As infantile aspects of God K, GII and Glyph Y simultaneously suggest both *Nehn K'awil* and *Unen K'awil*. These translations may be useful for determining the interrelated functions of the 819-day count, the possible seven-day cycle of Glyph Y¹⁰, and the function of GII in Palenque, and God K in the wider Maya region. Yaxchilán is known as the primary site in which Glyph Y is found in abundance, and the close proximity of Yaxchilán to Palenque along the Usumacinta River may explain the highly localized expression of both GII and Glyph Y, along with the 819-day count, as a closely shared tradition.

Both the name glyph of GII and the common forms of Glyph Y share an infantile form of God K, and a phonetic form of **ne**. In the name of GII, this **ne** is invariably a specialized compound, 1S3 (T198), which may indicate **nen** (Grofe 2006) or an underspelling of **unen** (Martin 2002:62). In the case of Glyph Y, the **ne** as 1S3 (T120) appears to follow an initial **ne** represented by the variant ATB (T834), which may be conflated with **ol** or **wa**, suggesting *ol*, 'heart,' *al* as 'child of mother', or possibly **u-** as the rounding sound needed to complete the spelling of *unen* as 'baby', further indicated by the infantile form. In both GII and Glyph Y, this infantile form appears to be a double meaning of the *nehn* 'mirror' on the head of K'awil. This penchant for wordplay is well known among the Maya.

⁷.XH4 "probably represents rounding used for both /wa/ and /óo/" Macri andLooper (2003:191).

⁸ *onen* 'father's son' (Sapper 1897 in Dienhart 1997).

⁹ *ol* 'child of mother' in Tzotz'il (S.I.L 1949 in Dienhart 1997); **al* 'woman's offspring' in proto-Cholan (Kaufman and Norman 1984:115).

¹⁰ See Yasugi and Saito (1991) for a discussion of the seven day cycle represented by Glyph Y.

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