

## THE MISSING HEIR AT YAXCHILÁN: LITERARY ANALYSIS OF A MAYA HISTORICAL PUZZLE

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*The site of Yaxchilán (Chiapas, Mexico) is one of the best-known Classic Maya cities, despite relatively little stratigraphic excavation. The dynastic history of the site is recorded in numerous legible inscriptions and was worked out more than 30 years ago by Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1963, 1964) in her epoch-making historical interpretations. A historical puzzle left by Proskouriakoff and later investigators is a 10-year gap (A.D. 742–752) between the death of a Late Classic king, Shield Jaguar II, and the accession of his successor and son, Bird Jaguar IV. Various explanations have been offered for this interregnum, often suggesting a rival heir to the throne, as Bird Jaguar was the son of his father's late, secondary, foreign wife. Nevertheless, no evidence has been put forth concerning a child by the king and his earlier, primary wife, a woman known as Lady Xok. This paper reexamines the epigraphic evidence by applying what is now known about Classic Maya grammar and the canons of Classic Maya literature to an inscription on the house of Lady Xok. Viewed from this perspective, a well-known inscription yields the name of the missing heir, and other evidence suggests the nature of his fate and the reason he did not take the throne.*

*La historia del sitio maya clásico de Yaxchilán (Chiapas, México) se conoce más por sus numerosas inscripciones que por las pocas excavaciones que se han hecho. En los primeros estudios sobre historia basados en la epigrafía, Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1963, 1964) delineó la secuencia de gobernantes. Un enigma dejado por Proskouriakoff y otros investigadores posteriores es un período de diez años (742–752 d. C.) entre la muerte de un gobernante del Clásico Tardío, Escudo Jaguar II, y la entronización de su hijo y sucesor, Pájaro Jaguar IV. Se han propuesto varias explicaciones basadas en la hipótesis de un sucesor rival, ya que Pájaro Jaguar fue hijo de Escudo Jaguar y una esposa tardía, secundaria y extranjera. Sin embargo, tales hipótesis no han encontrado apoyo en evidencia concreta de un hijo de la esposa principal, la Señora Xok. Este trabajo vuelve a analizar la evidencia epigráfica, aplicando los modelos recientemente desarrollados sobre la gramática de la lengua clásica maya y los cánones de su literatura. Vista de esta perspectiva, una inscripción bien conocida rinde el nombre del sucesor perdido, mientras otra evidencia sugiere cuál fue su destino, y por qué no asumió al poder.*

Advances in the decipherment of Classic Maya writing have made it possible to reconstruct not only isolated words and phrases, but whole texts, some of which we can read almost verbatim. Even when there are still many uncertainties about individual words, the overall structure of a text may be clear from the remaining evidence. In earlier papers (Hopkins and Josserrand 1990; Josserrand 1991, 1995; Josserrand and Hopkins 1991), I have addressed the question of overall text structure, and pointed out many of the rhetorical devices and language manipulations utilized by Classic period scribes.

A standard methodology in Mayan epigraphy is the “structural method” implicit in the work of Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1960, 1963, 1964) and described in detail by David Kelley (1976). Glyphic

strings are compared and contrasted in order to identify their component parts. Substitution patterns within and between hieroglyphic inscriptions establish paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships between glyphic elements. Paradigmatic relationships are those that pertain between items of the same phonological, grammatical or lexical class that may substitute for each other in the same or similar contexts (e.g., the numbers that accompany day names form a paradigmatic class, as do the day names themselves). Syntagmatic relationships are those that govern the possible sequences in which paradigmatic sets may occur (e.g., the numbers precede the day names). The structural method is widely employed to identify sentence-level phenomena, and an early breakthrough in Maya epigraphy was the discovery that hieroglyphic texts

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displayed the same basic sentence word order as many modern Mayan languages: verb, object, subject (that is, predicates normally precede their arguments). The establishment of this unmarked order also permitted recognition of the unusual, marked, word orders that are used for rhetorical effect and that characterize peak events in Maya texts (e.g., the fronting of Pakal's parentage statement to a position before the Calendar Round date and verb in the last part of the Palenque Sarcophagus Lid inscription: "the child of Kan Bahlum Mo', the child of Lady Zac Kuk, on 8 Ahau 13 Pop was born"; Josserand 1997:119).

Discourse analysis extends the structural method beyond the sentence and seeks to identify the larger components of inscriptions (roughly, the equivalents of paragraphs and chapters) and determine the underlying rules of composition employed by Maya scribes (Josserand 1991). Thus, it can be shown that Classic inscriptions regularly employ formal openings and closings, break their content into sections, each with distinct syntactic patterns that correlate with chronological shifts and changes in topic, and mark peak events with special rhetorical devices (Josserand and Hopkins 1991:290–348). A characteristic of Maya composition within text sections (both modern and Classic), especially at peak events, is the use of paired lines or "couplets," two sequential sentences that differ in only one element: "it was the seating of Yaxkin; it was the seating of the king" (to paraphrase the last parts of the Leiden Plaque inscription; Josserand 1991:16–17). Among the canons of Maya literary style that have been discovered by discourse analysis is the chiasmic structure I have called "nested couplets" (ABBA, ABCCBA, etc., where the letters represent the parts of couplets). Examples of this form are found in the Creation text of Quiriguá Stela C, east side (Hopkins 1995; see alsoLooper 2003:159) and in the text of Yaxchilán Lintel 23 (below).

Besides characterizing the literary style of the Classic Maya, whole text analysis, or discourse analysis, has more practical applications. Knowing how scribes alter language patterns for dramatic effect enables us to understand some passages whose meanings have otherwise remained obscure, sometimes because they lack overt references to major protagonists or other critical sentence elements. In a previous paper (Josserand 1995), I

demonstrated "participant tracking" in hieroglyphic texts, the techniques for identifying protagonists whose names have been deleted from key passages for dramatic effect. This study of the text from Lintel 23 at Yaxchilán returns to the applications of discourse analysis to Classic texts, but this time with an eye to clarifying historical detail by reconstructing parts of a text that have been deleted for stylistic reasons. The specific historical problem to be confronted is the question of the "missing heir" at Yaxchilán, the heir whose existence would explain the 10-year interregnum between the death of Shield Jaguar (Shield Jaguar I, the first Yaxchilán ruler to bear this name) and the accession of his son Bird Jaguar (Bird Jaguar IV).

### Yaxchilán and its Dynastic History

The archaeological site of Yaxchilán (Chiapas, Mexico) is one of the best-known of the Classic Maya sites of the Western Lowlands, despite the fact that systematic excavation has been done there only very recently (García Moll 1975; 1984a, 1984b; García Moll and Juárez 1986; García Moll et al. 1990). The carved stone monuments provide good ethnohistorical records concerning Yaxchilán's elite, especially for the Late Classic period (A.D. 600–900), and this epigraphic record has been studied in detail, beginning in the late 1950s. Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1963, 1964) worked out the sequence of rulers in the second and third of her epoch-making articles on the historical content of Classic Maya inscriptions, after her initial study of the inscriptions of Piedras Negras (Proskouriakoff 1960). Students and followers of Proskouriakoff pursued this task (Mathews 1988; Schele and Freidel 1990; Tate 1992), and there are few gaps in the record of kings. For Early Classic kings, we have (on the lintels of Structure 12) an ordered list of the names of the first 10 rulers, along with the names and titles of foreign dignitaries associated with their reigns (either as witnesses to the accessions, as Schele and Freidel 1990:264 read the inscriptions, or as captives, as Martin and Grube 2000:118–119 interpret the text). Some additional information is provided by Hieroglyphic Stair 1 (Nahm 1997).

For most of these rulers, there is little information on their lives. From the beginning of the Late Classic, the epigraphic record is much more detailed, and includes more information about

prominent individuals, many of whom are mentioned on several monuments. For most Late Classic rulers we have records of their birth, accession, captures, and ceremonial activities, as well as information on their ancestors, descendants, and other kinsmen and companions. This information is complete enough in its presentation of names, relationships, and essential deeds that scholars have attempted detailed dramatic narrative reconstructions of critical moments in Yaxchilán's history (Martin and Grube 2000:116–137; Schele and Freidel 1990:262–305).

Despite the richness of the epigraphic texts, there remains an unsolved mystery in the dynastic records of Yaxchilán. Tatiana Proskouriakoff was the first to note the problem, in her initial description of the rulers of Yaxchilán:

[After the death of Shield Jaguar] *Bird Jaguar*, the next great ruler of Yaxchilán, did not accede to power until 11 years had passed, and there are no records that we can definitely ascribe to [t]his period. Perhaps, as often happens after a long and distinguished reign, it was a time of conflict, when various pretenders competed for the chief's office, and perhaps that is why *Bird Jaguar*, on his accession, seems to have taken great pains to prove and document his legitimacy [Proskouriakoff 1963:163, emphasis in original].

Subsequent work on the inscriptions filled out the details of the royal family. Peter Mathews (1988:216–217), in his dissertation on the sculpture of Yaxchilán, pointed out that Shield Jaguar's principal wife was a "Lady Fist-Fish." Linda Schele later popularized the name "Lady Xoc" in her hieroglyphic workshops at the University of Texas. *Xoc* was Thompson's [1944, 1960:162–163] reading of this "fish" head glyph, and the name appears in Roys' (1940) study of Maya personal names. Thompson believed the fish head to be a rebus for *xoc* "count" based on *xoc* "shark." (The Maya term may in fact be the origin of the English word "shark"; Jones 1985.) Here, I refer to the woman as "Lady Xok," and to her patronymic as "Xok," using a modernized spelling of her name, in accordance with the orthographic reforms suggested by the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala, now adopted in most epigraphic literature.<sup>1</sup>

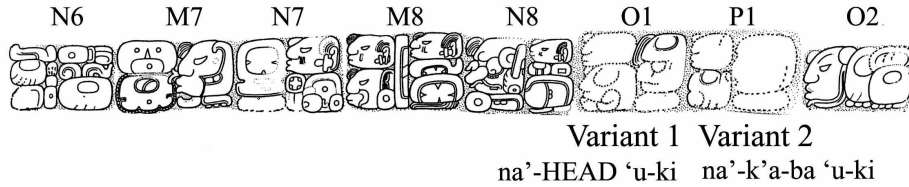
David Stuart (1987) has argued that the

Fish/Xok glyph is phonetic *u*; this syllable is followed by another syllable sign, *ki*, so that the lady's name contains two syllable signs that spell out *u-ki*. Thus this part of the woman's name (that of her patrilineal family) may actually have been pronounced *uk* or *uki*. This family name occurs in two different compounds in her name phrases. The variants of her personal name are given in Figure 1, and can be summarized as Variant 1, "Lady *Ch'akan Uki*," and Variant 2, "Lady *K'abal Uki*."<sup>2</sup> The use of one or both variants seems to be stylistic; that is, no differential meaning can be given to the preferential use of one versus the other. However, in the present analysis, the existence of two variants of this woman's name is crucial to understanding the structure of the hieroglyphic text in question. Outside the context of epigraphic argumentation, I have preferred to use the name "Lady Xok" rather than "Lady Uki," and on this point Tom Jones (1996) has presented new arguments for this collocation to be read as *xok* when it is used as a name glyph.

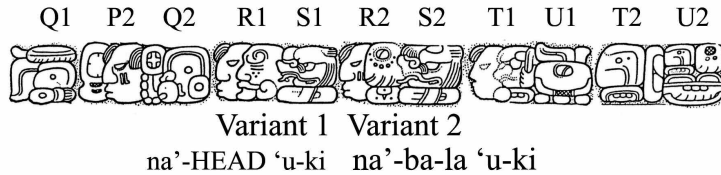
Lady Xok's prominence at Yaxchilán is revealed in the magnificent lintels of Structure 23, a building whose inscriptions identify it as "the house of Lady Xok" (see below for a discussion of Yaxchilán's "lady houses"). Here, Lady Xok is shown with her husband the king (Shield Jaguar II) in the famous "blood-letting" lintels (Lintels 24, 25, and 26 of Structure 23). Despite her prominent place in the ceremonial life of her husband, Lady Xok is not the mother of the successor. Bird Jaguar IV, who was Shield Jaguar's son and successor, names a woman other than Lady Xok as his mother, a foreign woman from Calakmul: Mathews' (1988) Lady *Ik'-Skull*, renamed Lady Eveningstar by Schele and Freidel (1990:262–305). As Schele and Freidel reconstruct the situation, Bird Jaguar, after his accession (at age 43), carried out a propaganda campaign to support his own legitimacy and that of his son, Chel Te, who later succeeded to the Yaxchilán throne, taking his grandfather's name, Shield Jaguar (III). To bolster his claim, Bird Jaguar presented his own mother in an exalted position; many of the monuments he erected show Lady Eveningstar in the company of Bird Jaguar's father Shield Jaguar II, in direct imitation of earlier monuments that featured Shield Jaguar II and Lady Xok.

Tate (1987:813, 1992:172–173) notes that on his

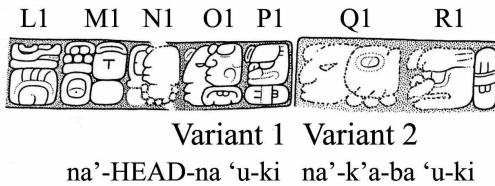
Lintel 23, face, N6-O2



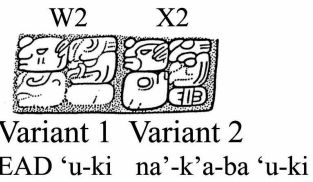
Lintel 25, edge, Q1-U2



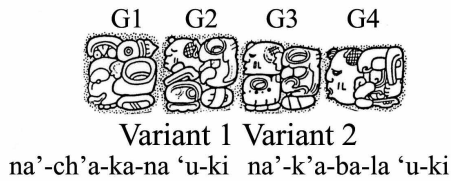
Lintel 59, edge, L1-P1; Lintel 28, edge, Q1-R1



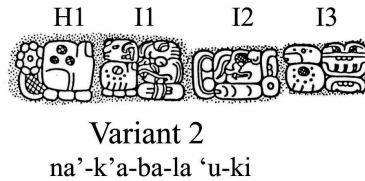
Lintel 28, edge, W2-X2



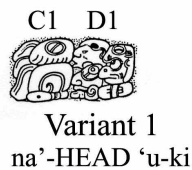
Lintel 24, face, G1-G4



Lintel 25, face, H1-I3



Lintel 23, edge, C1-D1



Lintel 23, edge, K2b-L2

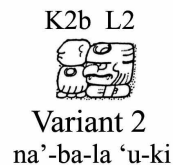


Figure 1. Variants of the name "Lady Xok." Two variants commonly occur together, in a fixed order. Variant 1 contains an undeciphered head, but appears from the substitution on Lintel 24 to read ch'a-ka-na or Ch'akan. Variant 2 is spelled phonetically (k'a)-b'a-(la) or K'ab'al. Both variants are followed by the patronymic u-ki or Uki, which is traditionally read "Xok." Other glyphs, including other names and titles for the same person, are included here to provide necessary epigraphic context. Drawings by Ian Graham (Graham 1982, Graham and von Euw 1977).

own monuments, the elder Shield Jaguar (II) never pictured himself in the company of his Calakmul wife, Lady Eveningstar. This statement is based on an extensive, detailed analysis of architecture, iconography, and epigraphy. For instance, Shield Jaguar and Lady Eveningstar do appear together on Lintel 32, the central lintel of a set of three lintels on Structure 13, but Tate, in her review of the construction history of the building, notes that the dated event on Lintel 32 occurs decades before the parallel events featuring Bird Jaguar on the other lintels, and that the costume, headdress, and ritual paraphernalia displayed by Shield Jaguar on Lintel 32 is anachronistic (characteristic of the reign of Bird Jaguar IV, not the earlier era). Tate (1992:172–173) concludes that “Bird Jaguar had this lintel carved to commemorate the real or fictitious presence of his mother at an important ceremony . . . in which Lady Xoc was the co-protagonist with Shield Jaguar” (Tate 1985). This is true propaganda—the manipulation of history—as alleged by Marcus (1992:xx), although, as Hopkins (1994) points out and Tate (1992) demonstrates, such revisionist history is not necessarily difficult to identify. Peter Mathews concluded that

the available evidence indicates that Bird-Jaguar IV was, at best, the son of a junior wife of Shield Jaguar I [sic]. As such he was likely but one of several claimants to the throne of Yaxchilán. Indeed, he may have been a very minor claimant, and we will never know how many rivals he probably eliminated [Mathews 1988:216–217].

The presence of two women associated with one king should be interpreted in the context of the Classic Maya kinship system and Classic Maya elite marriage patterns, as we understand them from epigraphic and other evidence. Kinship terminology and kinship relations recorded in Classic period inscriptions (Jones 1977:41–44; Stuart 1997) are consistent with ethnographically recorded Maya communities where patrilineal lineages and/or clans dominate social organization, and where Omaha-type kinship terminology prevails (Hopkins 1969, 1988, 1991). Polygyny is well-attested in such communities, and involves alliance-building sibling exchange between adjacent patrilineal lines, often resulting in cross-cousin marriage.

The evidence for Classic period elite polygyny is particularly strong at Yaxchilán, where both Shield Jaguar and Bird Jaguar are associated in monumental art and inscriptions with multiple female ceremonial partners. These women engage in the same activities, and bear the same titles, as those who are ultimately identified as mothers of the royal heirs; it is reasonable to assume they also are wives of the ruler. Juxtaposed scenes of the ruler and his wife, the ruler and his heir, and the ruler and his wife’s brother engaged in warfare-related activities (e.g., the lintels of Structures 1, 33, and 54) imply that by marriage, the ruler gained the military support of his wife’s family (Josserand 2002). Mathews (1988:216) noted that Bird Jaguar did not take office until after a number of possibly related events: “Shield-Jaguar’s principal wife Lady Fist-Fish died, Bird Jaguar IV’s mother Lady *Ik’-Skull* died and Bird-Jaguar IV married (?), and (*just* prior to [his] accession) a male heir was born to him” [emphasis in the original].

The stage is thus set for intrigue. The old king dies, there is a long period without a known ruler, and then the throne is taken by a man from a junior line, a mature man who has already produced a son and can ensure that the dynasty passes on through another generation. A monument erected during Bird Jaguar IV’s reign, Stela 12, gives the dates of Shield Jaguar II’s death and Bird Jaguar’s accession, explicitly stating the time elapsed between the father’s death and the son’s accession. An interesting side question, in light of the assertion that the monumental inscriptions are simply propaganda, is why Bird Jaguar would even have mentioned the interregnum in his own political discourse.

The inscriptions at Yaxchilán thus present us with a historical puzzle: What happened during the 10 years between Shield Jaguar’s death and the accession of Bird Jaguar, his son by a secondary wife? Analysts of this sequence of events note that Shield Jaguar’s second wife was said to be from the powerful site of Calakmul. Tate (1987:813–818) suggests she held the throne as regent until her death, after which her son, by then some 40 years old, took the throne. Sotelo (1992:63) favors Lady Xoc as regent during this period. In two parallel cases of female regency at Palenque, the regents ceded to their sons when the sons came of age (Hopkins 1988:111–115; Josserand 2002).

Irrespective of the importance of Shield Jaguar’s



Calakmul wife, and of whether there was a female regent during the interregnum at Yaxchilán, a more important reason why Bird Jaguar did not take the throne earlier would be the existence of a competing heir from Shield Jaguar's primary marriage to Lady Xok. Schele and Freidel have speculated on the possible competitors of Bird Jaguar:

Bird Jaguar's rivals would have had as legitimate a claim on the throne as he; it is likely that he faced the sons and grandsons of Lady Xoc and Shield-Jaguar. We cannot, of course, prove that these rivals existed, for they did not secure the privilege of erecting monuments to tell their own stories. This is one of those situations in which we have only the winner's version of history. Nevertheless, we know that some set of circumstances kept the throne empty for ten long years, when a legitimate heir of sufficient age and proven competence was available. We surmise that Bird-Jaguar needed those ten years to defeat his would-be rivals. During this long interregnum no other accessions appear in the record. There was no official king, although there may have been a *de facto* ruler [Schele and Freidel 1990:271–272].

It is reasonable to argue that the 10-year lapse between Shield Jaguar's death and Bird Jaguar's accession implies a political conflict involving a rival heir, but no one has yet put forward any direct evidence that such an heir actually existed.<sup>3</sup> However, a close analysis of a lintel text from Yaxchilán, with attention to the discourse structure of the inscription, reveals a mention of this missing heir in the inscription, and this new evidence tells us just who the rival of Bird Jaguar was, although it does not tell us why he did not himself come to power.

### **The House of Lady Xok, Shield Jaguar's Principal Wife**

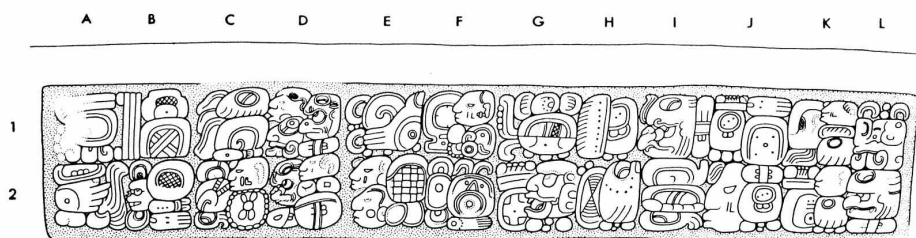
The resolution of the mystery of the missing heir requires a closer look at the texts dealing with Shield Jaguar II's principal wife, Lady Xok. Lady Xok is mentioned in several Yaxchilán inscriptions; in most of them her name appears in long clauses that include titles and usually two instances of the Xok (*uki*) patronymic (Figure 1). Structure 23, the building designated as "Lady Xok's house" by its

hieroglyphic inscriptions, sits above the main plaza, facing the river, near the foot of the broad stairway leading up to the "Little Acropolis" where Bird Jaguar IV later built the commanding Structure 33. Near Structure 23 are several other buildings associated with women. Structure 24, at the side of Structure 23, has three lintels with hieroglyphic texts: Lintels 27, 59, and 28 (Graham and von Euw 1977:59; Graham 1982:131; Graham and von Euw 1977:61, respectively). The texts record the death dates of Lady Pakal (the mother of Shield Jaguar II), of Shield Jaguar himself, of Lady Xok (Shield Jaguar's principal wife), and of Lady Ik' Skull (the wife from Calakmul who was the mother of Bird Jaguar). On the other side of the grand stairway to Structure 33 is Structure 21, where Stela 34, which features Bird Jaguar's mother, was discovered in the 1980s (Bassie-Sweet 1991:Figures 47–48). Across the main plaza from Structure 23, on an elevated mound that has its back to the river, is Structure 11. The inscription on its central lintel (Lintel 56; Graham 1979:121) reports a dedication event and names the house as that of another Lady, referencing Shield Jaguar as the authority at Yaxchilán under whose auspices the dedication took place. This woman may be yet another of Shield Jaguar's wives. These "lady houses" of Yaxchilán, perhaps dower houses, are prominently located on the downtown plaza, a reflection of the importance of these women to the rulers of the site.<sup>4</sup>

Structure 23 is the most intriguing and most important of the lady houses for unraveling the historical puzzle of the Yaxchilán interregnum. The text on one of its lintels, Lintel 23, is especially critical. Located above the door to one of the back rooms of Structure 23, this lintel was missed by Maudslay when he removed Lintels 24, 25, and 26 from the front doorways of the building in the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Lintel 23 was still unknown when Proskouriakoff (1963, 1964) did her historical analysis of the data from Yaxchilán. It was discovered by Mexican archaeologist Roberto García Moll in 1979, in the course of a project of reconstructive work on the building carried out by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (García Moll 1984a, 1984b). The hieroglyphic text from the front edge of Lintel 23 is reproduced in Figure 2, along with its structural layout. Figure 3 presents a transcription of the hieroglyphic inscription according to current understanding, a phrase-by-

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Yaxchilán Lintel 23

Drawing by Ian Graham (Graham 1982:135)

## STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

Line 1: Opening (A1-D1)

Calendar Round  
Date

Positional  
Verb

Possessive Phrase (= Subject of Verb)



10 Muluc 17 Uo



is dedicated



its-door



(of) her-house



(of) Lady Xok.

Line 2:  
(C2-D2)



her-'sister' (of) Lady Pakal Xok, Lady Ahaw



[is Lady Xok];

Line 3:  
(E1-E2)



her-daughter (of) Great Lady, Holy Lady Xibalba



[is Lady Xok];

Line 4:  
(F2-J1)



his-daughter (of) the 1 k'atun Kajal, Ah K'an...Xok...



[is Lady Xok];

Line 5:  
(I2-K1)



her-'sister' (of) Lady Tajal Tun, Lady Bakab



[is Lady Xok];

Line 6:  
(L1-L2)



his-mother (of) Lord Tzik



[is] Lady Xok.

Figure 2. Hieroglyphic text of Yaxchilán Lintel 23, front edge, with structural layout and English translation. For the corresponding Mayan text, see Figure 3. The two names of Lady Xok, the Topic of the text, are emphasized. Upper drawing by Ian Graham (Graham 1982:135); redrawn below for structural analysis by Kathryn Josserand.

## SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS: PHRASE, SENTENCE, AND DISCOURSE STRUCTURE

**(A1) Lajun Muluk, Wuklajun Wo, lik'wan u pasib yotot Na' (Ch'akan?) Uki.**

Tzolkin Haab + VPO-com-ø + pos-N-suf pos-N Title Name1a [TOPIC].

Temporal Phrase + Verbal Predicate (Positional Verb) + Subject (Possessive Noun Phrase).

(On) 10 Muluc 17 Uo + was dedicated + the doorway of the house of Lady (??) Uki [Lady Xok].

**(B1) Yitah Na' Pakal Uki, Na' Ajaw.**

Pos-N Title Name 2 Name 2 Title Title

Non-verbal Predicate (Possessive Noun Phrase) + [Unexpressed Subject = Topic].

(Lady Xok is) the sister of Lady Pakal Uki, Lady Ajaw.

**(C1) Yal Nuk Na', Ch'uj Na', Na' Xibalba.**

Pos-N Title Title Title Title Name 3

Non-verbal Predicate (Possessive Noun Phrase) + [Unexpressed Subject = Topic].

(Lady Xok is) the child of Great Lady, Holy Lady, Lady Xibalba.

**(C2) U nichil Wi' K'atun Kajal Aj K'an K'inal, Nun K'abal Uki, Aj Jamalib.**

Pos-N-suf quant-N N-suf Title Name 4 Name 4 Name 4 Name 4 Name 4 Title

Non-verbal Predicate (Possessive Noun Phrase) + [Unexpressed Subject = Topic].

(Lady Xok is) the child of 1 K'atun Chief Aj K'an K'inal, Nun K'abal Uki, Aj

Jamalib

**(B2) Yitah Na' Tajal Tun, Na' Bakab.**

Pos-N Title Name 5 Name 5 Title Title

Non-verbal Predicate (Possessive Noun Phrase) + [Unexpressed Subject = Topic].

(Lady Xok is) the sister of Lady Tajal Tun, Lady Bakab.

**(A2) Y(a??) Aj Tzik Na' Bal Uki.**

Pos-N Name 6 + Title Name1b

Non-verbal Predicate (Possessive Noun Phrase) + Subject [TOPIC].

Lady Bal Uki [Lady Xok] (is) the mother of Aj Tzik.

**Figure 3. Reading and syntactic analysis of the hieroglyphic text of Yaxchilán Lintel 23, front edge. Line 1, nested couplets (A1-A2, B1-B2, C1-C2) showing the chiasmic discourse structure of the text (ABCCBA); reconstructed Classical Cholan text in bold. Line 2, phrase structure, with phrase boundaries marked by "+". Line 3, sentence structure, with sentence component boundaries marked by "+". Line 4, English translation.**

phrase gloss of the language of the inscription, and a free translation of the text. Since its discovery, Lintel 23 has been discussed by many scholars, including archaeologists, epigraphers, and art historians (Mathews 1988:171; Schele and Freidel 1990:269–270; Tate 1992:276). It is argued here that everyone has somehow managed to miss the most important historical datum this inscription

contains. In support of this argument, a review of the interpretations of the lintels on this building is in order.

Structure 23 sits on the uphill side of the elongated river-front plaza around which most of Yaxchilán's buildings are located. Its three front doorways, looking out to the plaza, are capped by the three "bloodletting" lintels, Lintels 24, 25, and



26 (from the [viewer's] left, center, and right-hand doorways, respectively). On the front edges of the lintels of Structure 23, visible to someone about to enter the building from the plaza, are the inscriptions that record the dedications of the building and its parts. One such edge (Lintel 24) is missing (sawed off when Maudslay removed the lintels, it was later lost), but the surviving edges commemorate the dedication of the building itself (Lintel 26) and of its inscriptions (Lintel 25). In each text the building is referred to as "the house of Lady Xok," while the dedication is done "under the auspices of Shield Jaguar."<sup>6</sup> The dates for the events on these lintels cluster between A.D. 722 and A.D. 726, some 20 years before the end of Shield Jaguar's sixty-year reign (A.D. 681–742). Mathews (1988:171) notes that García Moll, the archaeologist who discovered Lintel 23, told him that the remains of a woman were found in Tomb 2 of Structure 23, along with a number of bloodletters bearing the name of Lady Xok.

Although the Calendar Round dates of Lintels 24–26 place the three events pictured at widely spaced moments in time, they seem to commemorate successive stages of three different instances of the same ritual, since they appear to have a narrative structure, reading from left to right. Lintel 24 shows Shield Jaguar holding a torch for Lady Xok, as Lady Xok draws a thorny cord through her tongue in a Classic Maya bloodletting ritual, catching the blood on papers arranged in a basket before her. Lintel 25 shows Lady Xok presenting the blood-soaked paper as an offering, and before her appears the "vision serpent" of Yaxchilán, from whose mouth emerges the head and torso of a figure interpreted as an ancestor of the king, dressed as a warrior. Lintel 26 ends the sequence, showing Shield Jaguar, wearing padded armor and holding a weapon, vested for warfare. Lady Xok hands him a jaguar helmet, which he is shown wearing in another Yaxchilán monument, Lintel 4 (Graham and von Euw 1977:19). Schele and Freidel (1990:266–271) interpret this three-lintel sequence as showing Lady Xok serving her lord as intercessor with the ancestors, in support of his activities in war. Such military support seems to have been an important part of the marriage alliance system; the sets of lintels from several Yaxchilán buildings suggest that by marriage the ruler gets not only a wife, but the support of her brothers and family in

military affairs (e.g., the lintels of Structures 1, 20, 33, and 54; Josserand 2002). The conjured warrior may thus be one of Lady Xok's ancestors rather than an ancestor of her husband (and because of the patterns of wife exchange between lineages, it may be an ancestor common to both of them).

Around the corner from the front of Structure 23, opening into the back section of the house, is another doorway, this one capped by Lintel 23 (Figure 2; Figure 3). Lintel 23 has no beautiful carved image but is all text, beginning with the edge and reading on to the flat under-surface, or face. The face text connects two building dedication events with an anniversary of Shield Jaguar's accession to the throne, and again expresses that Lady Xok is the "owner" of Structure 23. The edge text, which contains the critical historical information, relates a single event, the dedication of "*u pasib' yotot* Lady Xok," that is, "the doorway of (*u-pasib'*) the house of (*y-otot*) Lady Xok."<sup>7</sup> The beauty of the text lies in the structure of the statements that follow, which give a series of family relationships—that is, this is a presentation of Lady Xok's distinguished pedigree.

There is little controversy over the interpretation of most of the individual glyphic pieces of this text, except for the final passage. The different pieces of the text have been put together in radically different ways, however, with great differences in the historical interpretation of the information recorded. Peter Mathews (1988:171) noted only that Lintel 23 records a "house event" that "seems to concern Shield Jaguar I's mother, Lady Pakal (C2b), whose parentage is given, and Lady Fist-Fish (K2-L2)." A more detailed interpretation of the edge text was made by Schele and Freidel (1990:269–270), who reconstruct from the data an extensive genealogy for Lady Xok. Their reading of the text leads them to conclude that "Lady Xok was the daughter of Shield Jaguar's mother's father's sister...the maternal first cousin of his mother, and his own maternal first cousin once removed" (Schele and Freidel 1990:270). Schele and Freidel's interpretation has gone without challenge, and later authors have followed their lead. Carolyn Tate, in her discussion of Lintel 23, repeats the Schele-Freidel interpretation, although she adds: "The genealogy recorded on this lintel is very convoluted and not well understood" (Tate 1992:276).

I disagree with the interpretation of the inscription that led to Schele and Freidel's statement of Lady Xok's genealogy.<sup>8</sup> Since a correct reading of the Lintel 23 edge text is essential to unraveling the mystery of the missing heir, an explanation of why my interpretation differs from that of Schele and Freidel (and from that of Mathews as well) is in order.

### Previous Analyses of the Lintel 23 Edge Text

The text of Lintel 23 (edge) opens, as is typical of Yaxchilán lintels, with only a Calendar Round date, 10 Muluc 17 Uo (9.14.12.8.9, or March 20, A.D. 714).<sup>9</sup> The only event in the text (at A2) is a known dedication expression (marked as a positional verb with the verbal suffix *-wan*). Similar dedication phrases for the building itself and for its individual lintels are found on the other lintels of the building. On Lintel 23, the subject of this verb is the doorway itself, *u pasib' yotot na' uki*, "the doorway of the house of Lady Xok," so the sentence reads: "On 10 Muluc 17 Uo, the doorway of the house of Lady Xok was dedicated."

Following the opening dedication statement (Figures 2 and 3, A1-D1), there are five phrases (C2-D2, E1-E2, F2-J1, I2-K1, and L1-L2). The reading of the first four of these phrases is non-controversial (the long name and title phrases are simplified here for clarity's sake):

- the "sibling" of Lady Pakal Xok (C2-D2)
- the child of Lady Xibalba (E1-E2)
- the child of Lord Aj K'an Xok (F2-J1)
- the "sibling" of Lady Tajal Tun, Lady Bakab (I2-K1).

Each of these phrases is a "possessed noun phrase" where the possessed nouns (the kin terms given here) are preceded by the third person pronoun (*u-* or, before vowels, *y-*), and followed by the name of the possessor (the equivalent of "Lady Pakal Xok's sibling," etc.). The full sentence, a possessive clause, would normally include a preceding or following name representing the subject of the clause, the person who holds the relationship mentioned in the first phrase, e.g., "Lady Xok / (is) Lady Pakal Xok's sibling" or, in normal Maya word order, "(is) Lady Pakal Xok's sibling / Lady Xok." But in the context of extended discourse, it is not unusual to omit the subject if it is the current topic of discussion (that is, if the topic has been clearly

stated in a preceding clause).

The hieroglyphic terms for the relationships stated in the Lintel 23 edge text include (1) *y-itaj*, the possessed form of *itaj*, which is glossed "sibling" (Stuart 1997), and (2) the usual terms for children: *al* "child (of woman)" and *ajaw* or *nich* "child (of male)." The "sibling" term appears to refer to same-generation members of the same clan, i.e., classificatory siblings, including siblings and patrilineal parallel cousins.<sup>10</sup> Ethnographic support for this interpretation is found in Wisdom (1940), the only source to discuss a clearly cognate term (although modern Chol has the suggestive *ijti'an* "sister"; Aulie and Aulie 1978:59). The kinship system and terminology are treated here as Omaha, as analyzed by Hopkins (1988, 1991). I believe the ethnographic and ethnohistorical evidence for corporate, nonlocalized, unilineal descent groups in the Maya Lowlands (Eggan 1934; Haviland 1968; Nutini 1961; Villa Rojas 1947) motivates a model of Classic period patrilineal clans, and I find such a model to have considerable explanatory power when applied to Classic period elite affairs, as reported in the hieroglyphic corpus. Using an Omaha kinship terminology, Lady Xok might refer to all the women of her father's clan as her *itaj* "siblings" or "clan sisters," regardless of their generation. Thus the Lady Pakal Xok who was the wife of Lady Xok's father-in-law (the old king Bird Jaguar III) and who was the mother of Lady Xok's husband (Shield Jaguar II) does not have to be Lady Xok's own full sister, but she is, as her full name phrase indicates, a member of the Xok clan. For father and son to marry women from the same clan would be consistent with the attested marriage patterns of Maya societies employing Omaha kinship terminology (Hopkins 1969, 1988:102).

The last phrase of the Lintel 23 text is subject to differing interpretations, but it is critical. Mathews (1988:171) noted that it seemed to name Lady Xok (his Lady Fist-Fish), and Schele and Freidel (1990:269–270) agree. Since the decipherment of the glyph at L1 is "mother of" (Mathews 1980), it is clear that the phrase begins with "mother of" and ends with Lady Xok's name.<sup>11</sup> What is in between, the glyph at K2a, is the controversial part. Schele and Freidel take this glyph to be part of Lady Xok's titles, and treat the phrase in effect as "mother of Aj-TITLE Lady Xok."<sup>12</sup> Tate (1992:276) simply skips over the glyph at K2a and likewise reads this

phrase “the mother of Na K’abal Xoc.” An alternative to these readings is presented below.

A second point of contention is over how these phrases are strung together to make sense. Schele and Freidel (1990: Figure 7:4) take them to be a long chain of relationships that fit together as follows (filling in the implied but deleted subjects in brackets):

The doorway of the house of Lady (Te-) Xok was dedicated;

- [Lady Te-Xok is] the sibling of Lady Pakal;
- [Lady Pakal is] the child of Lady Xibalba;
- [Lady Pakal is] the child of Lord Aj K’an Xok;
- [Lord Aj K’an Xok is] the sibling of Lady Tajal Tun;
- [Lady Tajal Tun is] the mother of (Aj-TITLE) Lady Xok.

With this interpretation, Schele and Freidel were forced to posit two different Lady Xoks, one mentioned at the first of the text (whose name they read as Lady Te-Xok), the other at the end (Aj-TITLE Lady Xok). Furthermore, they argue that it is the *last*-mentioned Lady Xok who is the wife of Shield Jaguar (1990: Figure 7:4). If that were the case, the lintel text would state that this is the house of the *other* Lady Xok, their Lady Te-Xok, who in their analysis is Shield Jaguar’s mother’s cousin. So whose house is this, anyway? Is Shield Jaguar shown with a cousin, or with his wife? Schele and Freidel’s interpretation is clearly problematic. Tate’s glossing of the lintel text reflects Schele and Freidel’s analysis, although she is ambiguous about whose parentage statement is being recorded:

On 10 Muluc 17 Uo (A1-B1) was dedicated U Pasil (A2-B2), House of Lady Xoc (C1-D1), the sibling of Lady Pacal [Xoc?] (C2-D2). She was child of the mother Lady Xibalba (E1-E2) and child of the father the 1 Katun, the Secondary Lord Aj K’an Nun K’abal Xoc (F2-J1), who was the sibling of Lady Ta Hal Tun Bacab (I-K1), who was the mother of Na K’abal Xoc (L1-L2) [Tate 1992:276].

### A New Analysis of Lintel 23

What is missing from the preceding interpretations of the Lintel 23 edge text is an understanding of how the Classic Maya structured their texts. If we take into account the basic rules of composition that

can be discerned from the discourse analysis of texts across the Maya region and throughout the Classic period (Hopkins and Josserand 1990; Josserand 1991, 1995; Josserand and Hopkins 1991), we can make a quite different analysis of what is being said on this lintel. The statements made in the four phrases that occupy glyph blocks C2-K1 concern the kinship relations of an unnamed subject. The possessed noun phrases (“the sibling of Lady Pakal,” etc.) play the role of sentence predicate, the equivalent of a verb phrase, and imply a sentence subject or argument, a noun phrase (here, understood but unstated). Thus C2-D2 “the sibling of Lady Pakal” implies an unstated subject: “the sibling of Lady Pakal *is So-and-so*” (or, in normal English word order, “*So-and-so is the sibling of Lady Pakal*”).

By the rules of Classic Mayan discourse, the opening sentence of Lintel 23 establishes Lady Xok—the first person named and the possessor of the house whose doorway is being dedicated—as the protagonist of the text. As the understood topical subject of the text, the name of Lady Xok can be deleted (not mentioned) in following clauses, leaving sentences with a grammatical subject *implied* by the structure of the phrases, but not overtly stated (Josserand 1995). Therefore, statements made in the Lintel 23 text that do not have an expressed subject are understood to have Lady Xok as their subject. Given the deletion rules of Classic Maya grammar and the discourse conventions of Classic Maya texts, the unstated subject of this series of relationship statements has to be Lady Xok, the topical subject, i.e., the protagonist of the text, introduced in the first sentence. What we have here, then, is a series of parallel statements that are being made *about the same person, not about a series of people*.

By the same rules of Maya discourse, the protagonist’s name should be stated again at or near the peak event of the text, and/or in a closing statement. In the last segment of the text, L1-L2, the subject of the sentence is not deleted, and the protagonist’s name, Lady Xok, appears as the stated subject of the last possessive phrase. The relationship glyph at L1 has the meaning “the mother of”; as in other occurrences, this relationship glyph is followed by the name of the child.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it is consistent with the reading of other inscriptions, and consistent with the evidence internal to this text,

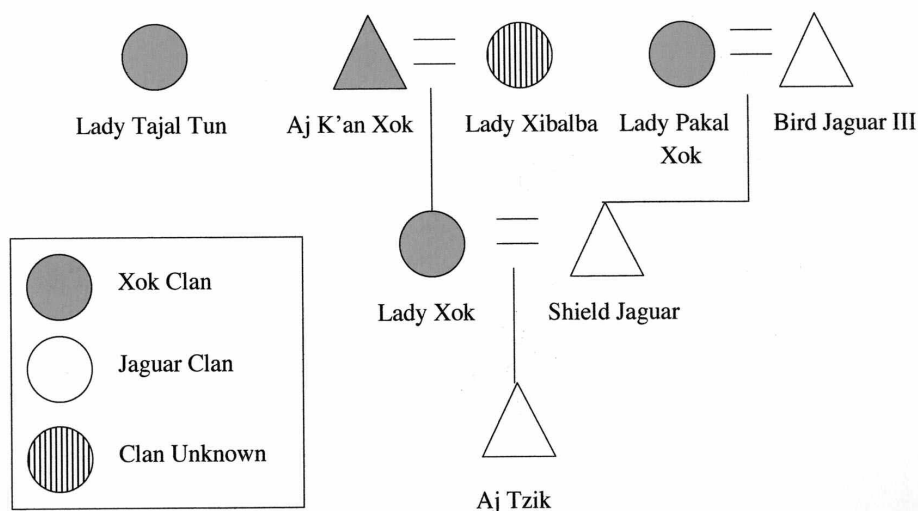


Figure 4. Genealogy of Lady Xok according to the text of Yaxchilán Lintel 23 and other texts (the relationship of the Jaguar men to the Xok women is not stated on the edge text of Lintel 23, but is known from other monuments).

to read the final statement of Lintel 23 as, “the mother of So-and-so is Lady Xok,” that is, “Lady Xok is the mother of So-and-so.” The glyph at K2a is to be read as another person’s name (the “So-and-so” in question), and not as part of Lady Xok’s titles. I have suggested for this previously unsuspected person the nickname “Aj Tzik” (“Lord Count”), because of the superfix Aj “Lord” and the bar-dot numbers in the cartouche that constitutes his name (Chol *tzik* “number”).

With this new information, we can give a more complete glossing of Lintel 23, presenting the text in a format that reflects its literary structure (with unexpressed but understood elements in brackets):

On 10 Muluc 17 Uo was dedicated the doorway of the house of Lady Xok:

- the sibling of Lady Pakal Xok [was Lady Xok];
- the child of Great Lady Xibalba [was Lady Xok];
- the child of Lord Aj K'an Xok [was Lady Xok];
- the sibling of Lady Tajal Tun, Bakab [was Lady Xok];
- the mother of Aj Tzik [was] Lady Xok.

If the term *yitaj*, glossed “sibling,” is interpreted as “clan sister,” i.e., female member of the same patrilineal clan, as seems to be indicated by the cognates of the Classic Maya term used in the text, a more reasonable genealogy can now be reconstructed (Figure 4). Lady Xok was the classifica-

tory/clan “sister” of Lady Pakal Xok, whom we know from other sources to be the wife of the preceding king, Bird Jaguar III, Shield Jaguar II’s father (Schele and Freidel 1990:269). Lady Xok’s own parents were Lady Xibalba and Lord Aj K'an Xok. Lady Xok had another important “sister,” Lady Tajal Tun, who held the title of Bakab. And, finally, *Lady Xok was the mother of the person whose name appears at K2a*, here nicknamed Aj Tzik. This interpretation has at least two advantages over that of Schele and Freidel:

1. It reduces the genealogy to a reasonable statement; Lady Xok is just pointing out that the women of her family marry well. She is wife to the current king, Shield Jaguar; one of her “sisters” was wife to the preceding king, Bird Jaguar III; another “sister” is married to an unnamed Bakab. Indirectly, it also gives her son a distinguished pedigree.

2. It reveals the elegant structure of nested couplets that is the hallmark of the well-formed Classic Maya text. If we consider the opening and closing statements to be Type A, statements about siblings to be Type B, and statements about children to be Type C, then the lines of the text form the chiasmic pattern ABCCBA: opening, sibling, child, child, sibling, closing. The four central genealogical statements are nested between the initial and final statements about the protagonist: “[this is] the house of Lady Xok” and “Lady Xok is the

mother of Aj Tzik,” confirming that the entire text has a single protagonist, Lady Xok.

Thus, a proper analysis of the Lintel 23 edge text reveals solid, direct evidence of the missing heir. Lady Xok, the principal and favored wife of Shield Jaguar, had a son, who would have been a leading contender for the throne. His existence is a reasonable explanation for the 10-year lapse between Shield Jaguar II’s death and the accession of Bird Jaguar IV, a son by a secondary wife. At the time of the dedication of Lintel 23, near the middle of Shield Jaguar’s reign, Lady Xok’s son was probably the heir apparent, and as such was worthy of the teknonymic reference to Lady Xok as “mother of Aj Tzik.”

### The Missing Heir

Now that the existence of a rival to Bird Jaguar has been established, the question becomes: What happened to the rightful heir of Shield Jaguar, his son by his principal wife? Why did “Aj Tzik” not follow Shield Jaguar on the throne of Yaxchilán? While there is still no definitive solution to this part of the puzzle, a possible explanation is suggested by internal evidence from Yaxchilán, and by evidence from other sites.

Battle scenes and depictions of the taking of captives are common motifs in Classic Maya art, especially in the Western Lowlands, around the Usumacinta River and its tributaries, the Lacanjá, the Lacantún, the Jataté, and the Pasión (including the Petexbatún region). This area encompasses the sites of Piedras Negras, Yaxchilán, Bonampak, Toniná, and Dos Pilas, all of which prominently display images of captives in their monumental art. It was the practice at Yaxchilán for the rulers to take titles based on captures made early in their careers. The older Bird Jaguar (III) took the title “Captor of Chak-la-te, Aj 8-Tun” (e.g., Stela 8, C7-C8). His son Shield Jaguar (II) styled himself “Captor of Aj Nik” (e.g., Step III, Hieroglyphic Stairway 3, C5). Bird Jaguar (IV) took the title “Captor of Aj Uk” (e.g., Stela 12, C4). It is reasonable to speculate that Lady Xok’s son, in order to consolidate his position as successor at Yaxchilán, was expected to go out and secure for himself a distinguished captive.

In the dynastic history of the site of Dos Pilas (Houston 1993; Houston and Mathews 1985), Ruler 4 of Dos Pilas records a number of impor-

tant captives taken from other sites, in what may have been a single campaign, “in which a raiding party systematically worried the area north of the Pasión River” (Houston 1993:117). The captives mentioned include a person from Yaxchilán (Fig. 5, Hieroglyphic Stairway 3, Step II; from Houston 1993:117, 119, Fig. 4-23). As Houston notes (1993:117), “this lord may have been taken during or perhaps slightly before the interregnum between the death of Shield Jaguar and the accession of Bird Jaguar IV (Mathews and Willey 1991:62–63). Possibly, the capture occasioned the interregnum.”

The step depicting the capture of the Yaxchilán lord also records the event in hieroglyphics (Figure 5, A1-B3). The date (B1b-A2) is eroded; Houston places the event in time by reference to the surrounding inscriptions. The “capture” event glyph (B2) is clear; it is followed by a name (A3), and this in turn is followed by a title “Yaxchilán *ajaw*” (B3; the prefixed “God C” or *ch’uh* “holy” that marks the Emblem Glyph of a sitting king is missing). The name, however, has not been identified with the name of any lord of Yaxchilán, and consequently, while Houston suggests this capture might be related to the interregnum, no specific personal identification has been made. The drawing of Step II published by Houston (1993, Figure 4-23) allows an interesting speculation. The name of the captive (at A3), mostly destroyed but partially visible, includes an Imix glyph or phonetic *b’a* (A3a, lower element), and an animal head with subfixed *ki*. Both of these glyphic elements occur in variants of Lady Xok’s name—e.g., the *b’a* in *na’ b’a-l(a)* and the *ki* in *u-ki*.

Roys’ (1940) study of Maya personal names (summarized by Tozzer 1941:99) showed that children—daughters as well as sons—inherited their fathers’ names (e.g., Lady Xok, the daughter of Aj K’an Xok). A person also had a number of other names; besides the patronymic, inherited in the male line, there was a *naal* or maternal name coming through the mother, a *paal-k’aba* or boy-name preceding the family name, a *koko-k’aba*, a jesting name or nickname, and often a title to indicate rank. Prisoners may have been denied their patronymic, even when they are shown with their titles. Tozzer notes (1941:63) that the slave class of Maya society “was made up usually of persons taken captive in war, those seized for theft, and orphans.” Roys (1940) discusses the names given



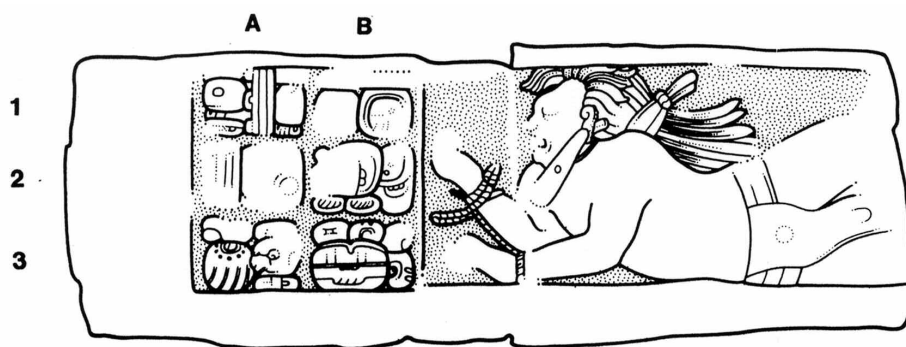


Figure 5. A possible portrait of Aj Tzik: Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Stair 3, Step II. B2, "was captured;" A3, name of the prisoner; B3, Emblem Glyph, "Yaxchilán ajaw." Drawing by Stephen D. Houston (Houston 1993:119, Fig. 4-23).

to male slaves, and remarks that they corresponded either to the boy-names or the *naal* names of freemen.

If slaves, including war captives, were often known by their *naal* names, i.e., the mother's family name, then the son of Lady Xok, taken captive by Dos Pilas, might bear the *naal* name of Xok, as well as the royal emblem glyph of Yaxchilán. This would be interesting support for the proposal that the captive portrayed on the Dos Pilas step could be our missing heir from Yaxchilán. Unfortunately, it is impossible to confirm this hypothesis. Stephen Houston and Ian Graham have made available to the author the best drawings and photographs of the step in question, and in these, although the animal head has a *ki* suffix, the damaged upper parts of the head variant do not clearly display the diagnostic features of the XOK head (see especially features of the forehead and the back of the lower jaw). Houston, who has drawn the monument, believes the glyph may be a version of Chak (CHAKki) (personal communication, June, 1996). Given the variability of representation of personal name glyphs, the identification of this damaged glyph as XOK is not absolutely out of the question, but the step has now been looted from the site and is no longer available for study (although the right half of the step was found by Arthur Demarest in 1981; Stephen Houston, personal communication, June, 1996).

Thus, it may not be possible to resolve completely the puzzle of the missing heir at Yaxchilán, in part because of the ambiguous name glyph of the prisoner at Dos Pilas. But it is possible to give a better answer to the question raised by the 10-

year interregnum between Shield Jaguar II and his successor Bird Jaguar IV. Empirical evidence indicates that Shield Jaguar, ruler of Yaxchilán, had a son by his principal wife, Lady Xok. An inscription on one of her buildings, executed during Shield Jaguar's reign, records the fact that she was the mother of such a child. This son, here nicknamed Aj Tzik, should have been the leading contender for the throne. Whatever happened to him, his mere existence is enough to help explain the 10-year interregnum that separates his father's reign from that of his half-brother. He may or may not be the prisoner depicted on the Dos Pilas hieroglyphic stair. If not, we may well find that his name shows up somewhere else along the Usumacinta, where excavations are continuing to add to the historical record of the western Maya realm.

Apart from the specific issue of the history of Yaxchilán rulers, this study has broader implications for the interpretation of inscriptional data on the Classic Maya. The Maya did not record their history in tabular form, simply listing rulers or events in chronological order. Their history is narrated in literary forms whose interpretation requires an appreciation of the canons of Classic Maya literature (Josserand and Hopkins 1991). Fortunately, the corpus of inscriptions is large enough, and varied enough, so that such canons can be identified (Hopkins and Josserand 1990; Josserand 1991, 1995).

Operating with an understanding of literary norms, we can extract the historical evidence from texts with greater confidence. Since the rhetorical devices utilized signal which events of a text are the principal ones, to which events and persons

attention is to be called, and to which aspects of those persons and events we are asked to attend, we can make more effective use of the information provided—when we understand these literary canons.

The lesson for those who would interpret these monuments should be clear: historical statements, like other cultural artifacts, must first be understood in the contexts in which they occur, and they must be interpreted with reference to the cultural institutions that shape them. The medium is part of the message, and the message must be interpreted in terms of the literary tradition within which it was composed.

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### Notes

1. For these conventions, see England and Elliott (1990). Other names such as Pakal (formerly Pacal) and titles like Bakab (formerly Bacab) follow the same norms. Because epigraphers regularly change the details of their readings of personal names, I have continued to use the names by which the protagonists first became known to the epigraphic public rather than choosing between the most recent revisions. Since these personal names and titles are in common use in epigraphic literature, I have not treated them as foreign terms requiring italics. Otherwise in hieroglyphic inscriptions, phonetic and logographic readings generally follow current norms (Montgomery 2002; Macri and Looper 2003). Martin and Grube (2000) list alternative readings of royal names along with their most recent interpretations; at Yaxchilán, the Bird Jaguars (I–IV) continue under that name; the Shield Jaguars are now Itzamnaaj B'alam (I–III); Bird Jaguar IV's wife and the mother of Shield Jaguar II, Lady Pakal, is still Lady Pakal (although some epigraphers would call her Lady Janab'); Lady Xok is Lady K'ab'al Xook. Epigraphers will note that I do not employ some commonly accepted readings, e.g., the title *Sajal*, a lesser lord, a term for which I find no support in Mayan languages, and prefer to read *Kajal*, based on *kaj* "village," i.e., "village chieftain," an interpretation supported by some head variants utilizing a personified CABAN (phonetic *ka*) glyph.

2. Although there is great variation in the other elements that occur in these name phrases, these two names occur in a fixed order, and I have labeled them Variant 1 and Variant 2 to reflect that order. Variant 1 includes a head variant associated with sacrifice, or an axe over CABAN (this day-sign glyph, outside its cartouche, reads *ka*) and *na*. This compound might be read *ch'ak* or *ch'akan*. Variant 2 begins with a *b'a* syllable sign, sometimes conflated with the *k'a* fist and another suffix, to give *b'al* or *k'ab'al*. Both variants are followed immediately by *u-ki* (Xok). However these compounds are read, Lady Xok's inscriptions regularly use a long name phrase with two Xok (*u-ki*) components.

3. Martin and Grube (2000:127), interpreting an admittedly difficult passage of quoted speech inscribed on Piedras Negras Panel 3, note that in the speech an otherwise unknown person (Yoat B'alam II, the namesake of the earliest known Yaxchilán ruler) is identified as a Yaxchilán king in a time frame that fits into the interregnum. However, the event pictured took place some 50 years before the panel was created, and the historical accuracy of the quotation may be questioned.

4. Similar "lady houses" are known from other sites (e.g., at Tikal; Haviland 1981). Almost all major sites include at least some references to women in their inscriptions and in

the accompanying images, on stelae and wall panels as well as on house lintels (Josserand 2002). The prominence of women's houses at Yaxchilán may simply reflect the high proportion of Yaxchilán's inscriptions that occur on stone lintels as opposed to perishable media, e.g., wooden lintels.

5. Two of these lintels, Lintels 24 and 25, went to the British Museum. They have recently been put on public display in the new Mexican Gallery. The other of the front lintels, Lintel 26, is on display in the Maya room of the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City. Lintel 23 has been removed from Structure 23 at Yaxchilán for later display in a new site museum, but an excellent copy has been reset over the back doorway of the building.

6. Both glyphic phrases are possessive constructions. The first reads *yotot na' uki*, literally "the house of Na' Uki [Lady Xok]." Compare modern Chol *yotot Mateo* "the house of Mateo." The second phrase, *u-kaj* [Shield Jaguar], is "the affair or responsibility of [Shield Jaguar]," often glossed "under the auspices of [Shield Jaguar]." Compare modern Chol *ti kaj a mul* "because of [ti kaj] your misdeed [a mul]" (Aulie and Aulie 1978:36). However this phrase *u kaj* is translated, its implication is that the dedication of the doorway (as well as the other monuments) of Lady Xok's house was done by, for, or under the authority of the ruler, Shield Jaguar.

7. Epigraphers have generally read the latter term as *pasil* "doorway" (Schele and Freidel 1990:269–270). I know of no attestation of this term, but *pasib'* is a well-formed instrumental noun derived from the intransitive verb root *pas* "to exit, to come out," i.e., "place where one comes out" or "doorway." Aulie and Aulie 1978:92 note *pasel* "(for the sun) to come out", and *pasib' k'in* "east," literally, "place where the sun comes out." I suspect the suffix on B2 is *b'(a)* rather than *l(i)*.

8. I disagree as well with their interpretation of what maternal cousins are. If Lady Xok is "the daughter of Shield Jaguar's mother's father's sister" (Shield Jaguar's MoFaSiDa), she is not the "maternal first cousin of his mother," but the *paternal* first cousin of his mother (Shield Jaguar's mother's FaSiDa).

9. Gregorian equivalents of Maya dates used here were calculated by the program Maya Calendrics (Harris and Harris 1990), version 2.01.01, using Julian day number 584285 as the equivalent of the Classic Long Count date of 13.0.0.0.0, August 13, 3114 B.C.

10. The Classic term *itaj* may in fact have a more extended range of meaning outside strict kinship, as it is occasionally used to express a relationship between humans and nonhumans or supernaturals.

11. No phonetic reading has been proposed for the glyph at L1. Mathews (1980:61) proposed it be glossed "mother of" but was unable to prove this meaning in the context of the Bonampak stelae, since he had no independent evidence that the persons whose relationship was described with this glyph were in fact mother and son. But other data confirm the translation "mother," since the term is the reciprocal for "child of female." On Yaxchilán Stela 34 (Bassie-Sweet 1991: Figure 48), for instance, the description of Lady Eveningstar as mother of Bird Jaguar uses this glyph, and on Stela 11 (Schele and Freidel 1990: Figure 7:8), Bird Jaguar is described as the child of Lady Eveningstar.

12. In a personal communication (1994), Linda Schele argued (unconvincingly, in my opinion) that there are other instances of *aj* in female names and titles; she was unable to produce examples. There are, however, female title phrases that have sequences of *na'* "Lady" followed by *aj* as part of a specific title. One such is the title read *na' aj k'uhun*, "Lady Aj-k'uhun," taken by Lady Eveningstar on Yaxchilán Stela 34, front (Bassie-Sweet 1991: Figure 47, last glyph). We interpret this title as "wife of the *aj k'uhun*," parallel to phrases like "Lady Bakab." Incidentally, Lady Eveningstar's title appears to include the *aj-k'uhun* title discussed by Jackson and Stuart (2001), who suggest it might mean "caretaker." A corresponding term in modern Tila Chol, *aj ch'ujwañaj*, refers to the principal cargo holders, the caretakers of the saints, and was translated into Colonial Spanish as *may-ordomo*, a military term meaning "quartermaster" (Josserand and Hopkins 2005:411–412).

13. In most if not all Mayan languages, grammatical possession is indicated by prefixed possessive pronouns, e.g., Chol *k-* ~ *j-* "my," *a(w)-* "your," *i-* ~ *y-* "his, her, its; their," *lak-* "our," *la'* "y'all's" (with context-sensitive variants): *k-na'* "my mother," *a-tat* "your father," *i-nichim* "its flower," *y-otot* "his/her/its house." The specification of the possessor follows: *i-nichim jini te'* "the flower of the tree," *y-otot jini winik* "the house of the man" (parallel to *yotot Na' Uki* "the

house of Lady Xok"). As noun phrases, these possessive phrases may serve as the subjects of sentences or as non-verbal predicates (predicate nominatives). The normal order of phrases in a sentence in Cholan and most Mayan languages is Predicate-Subject, or Verb-(Object)-Subject: Chol *mi' ch'äch' / ja' / jini lum* "the earth absorbs the water," literally "absorbs / water / the earth" (VOS order). Rhetorical focus or emphasis is expressed by fronting a sentence element, usually the subject: *jini lum, mi' ch'äch' ja'* "that earth, it absorbs water." Non-verbal predicates (such as predicate nominatives and predicate adjectives) have similar syntax: *i'ik'ax panumil* "very dark (is) the Earth," *motolob' i-yotot* "joined (are) their houses." Thus, the equivalent of the English sentence "Lady Xok is the mother of Aj Tzik" would be *i-na' Aj Tzik / Na' Uki*, Predicate / Subject, "(is) the mother of Aj Tzik / Lady Xok."

14. Kathryn Josserand was struck down by a fatal cerebral hemorrhage as she was finishing up a field season in Palenque, Chiapas, on July 18, 2006. At that time this manuscript had been accepted for publication but was awaiting final corrections. As her research partner and coauthor for nearly 40 years, I undertook the task of making those final changes with confidence that she would not have objected—in fact she probably would have asked me to do this anyway. Nicholas A. Hopkins.