

TWO PARALLEL PASSAGES FROM THE LATE PRECLASSIC PERIOD: CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SAN BARTOLO AND AN UNPROVENANCED JADE PENDANT

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This note examines two possible parallel passages from the Late Preclassic period. The first passage (**Figure 1a**) is attested on the stone block from San Bartolo dated to ca. 300 B.C. described in Saturno et al. (2006), which appears to contain, as observed by Erik Boot in a *Maya News Alert* sent by email to 62 correspondents on January 9th, 2006, a possible instance of the **PA7:CHAN** 'split sky' placename (cf. Boot 2004; Martin 2004), shown in **Figure 1b**. As Boot notes in his *Alert*, the San Bartolo passage shows, at pA6a, the sign T299, **pa/PA7**, combined, in the form of a conflated collocation, with what appears to be a precursor to T561 **CHAN** 'sky', and he puts forth the possibility that this is a Split Sky-like placename such as that associated with Uaxactun and Yaxchilan several centuries later. Next, I provide evidence in support of the identification of pA6b as a precursor of T561, followed by a comparison of the pA5-pA7 passage from San Bartolo with a second passage from an unprovenanced jade pendant, #763 in Justin Kerr's Mesoamerican Portfolio.



Figure 1. a. Glyphs pA6-pA7 from San Bartolo stone block (Saturno et al. 2006). Drawing by David Stuart. b. Yaxchilan Emblem Glyph at Piedras Negras Panel 3, K1. Drawing by from Martin (2004:Fig. 1d).

The first task consists in providing support for Boot's (2006) recognition of pA6b as a SKY sign. There are sufficient similarities between pA6b and T561—the Classic examples of the SKY sign. However, an even clearer resemblance is found in Middle Preclassic Olmec-style art, including a sign from the Cascajal Block, #11.

FIGURE 2

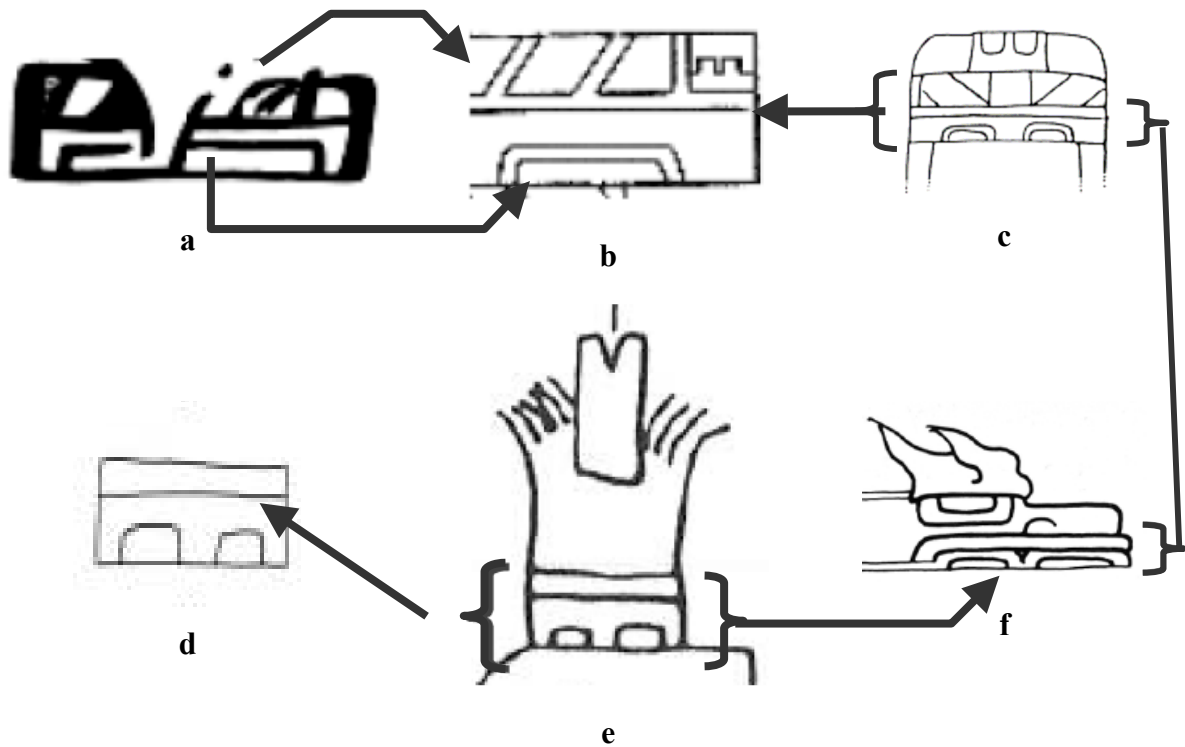


Figure 2. a. Glyph pA6b on stone block from San Bartolo. Drawing by David Stuart (Saturno et al. 2006). b. Detail of SKY.BAND motif from La Venta Altar 4. Drawing from Reilly (1990:Fig. 3). c. Detail of SKY.BAND motif from La Venta Stela 1. Drawing from Taube (1995:Fig. 11f). d. Cascajal Sign #11, from Cascajal Block. Drawing from Rodríguez et al. (2006). e. Detail of headdress from Olmec-style celt reportedly from Arroyo Pesquero. Drawing from Reilly (1990:Fig. 12). f. Zoomorphic SKY.BAND motif from Tlatilco showing identity between Cascajal Sign #11 and the SKY.BAND "gum brackets." Tlatilco motif from Taube (1995:Fig. 1a).

The iconographic evidence therefore places the San Bartolo SKY sign squarely within the style of the Middle Preclassic Olmec-style forms of the SKY.BAND motifs, and the Cascajal sign which appears to be directly related to the same SKY.BAND motifs (**Figure 3**). The Classic graphic form is without a doubt part of the same line, but a more thorough investigation of the transition from the San Bartolo example to the Classic examples is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say for now that by ca. A.D. 100-200 neither the Epi-Olmec nor the Mayan scribes preserved the strong similarities of the SKY glyph to its iconographic Olmec SKY.BAND predecessor. Instead, the Epi-Olmec and Mayan SKY signs only preserved the upper part of the Olmec SKY.BAND motif, and they both exhibit an innovated graphic element resembling an animal's tail or a patch of hair.

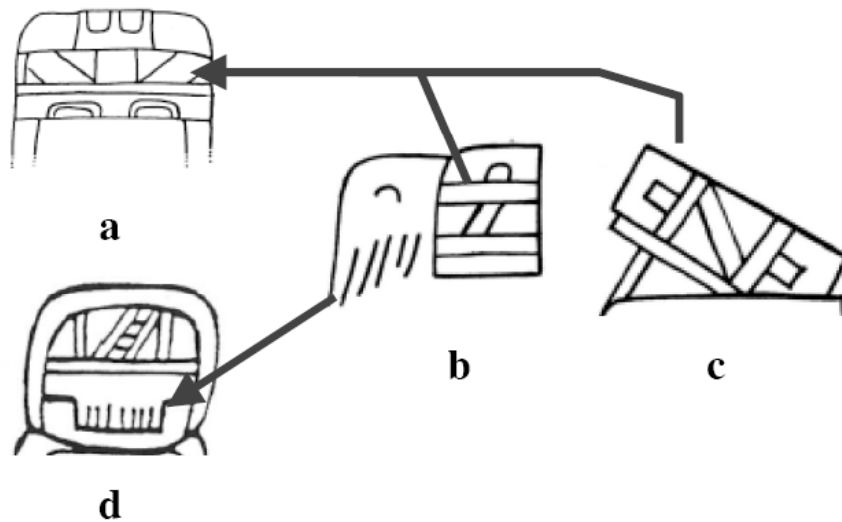


Figure 3. Comparison of iconographic elements and motifs relating the Epi-Olmec and Mayan SKY signs with Olmec-style SKY.BAND motifs. a. Detail of top part of La Venta Stela 1. Drawing from Taube (1995:Fig. 11f). b. Example of Epi-Olmec SKY logogram from O18 on La Mojarra Stela 1. c. The SKY.OVER.EARTH Epi-Olmec sign from S15a on La Mojarra Stela 1. d. Mayan T561 SKY logogram. All drawings by the present author.

It is time to compare the sequence of three glyph blocks from the San Bartolo pA5-pA7 with a similar sequence of three glyph blocks A4-A6 from an unprovenienced jade clamshell effigy pendant, as shown in **Figure 4**.



Figure 4. a. Glyphs pA5-pA6 on San Bartolo stone block. b. Glyphs A4-A6 on unprovenienced jade clamshell pendant, Justin Kerr's #763.

From the outset two sets of comparanda show themselves as clearly relatable: San Bartolo pA6a with K763 A5b, both examples of T299 **pa/PA7** (**Figures 5a-b**); San Bartolo pA7 with K763 A6, both examples of early **7AJAW** 'lord, ruler' glyphs (**Figures 5c-d**). The next sets of comparanda are not as obvious. First, on San Bartolo pA5 (**Figure 5e**) a one finds an EARFLARE sign, isolated, and therefore, seemingly unattached to an ear or head. This EARFLARE sign compares very favorably, in terms of style, to the EARFLARE sign component present on glyph A4 of K763, a sign that depicts the head of a monkey with an earflare. This is quite possibly an early precursor to the Classic-period MONKEY.HEAD allogram of **7u** (Stuart 1991), one of which is illustrated below in **Figure 5f**. What about

the San Bartolo EARFLARE sign? A few scholars have previously remarked on the fact that several of the signs that represent the syllable **7u** in Mayan script appear to be representations of earrings or some other type of bead assemblage (Bricker 1986; Justeson 1989; Mora-Marín 2001:180, Fig. 6.49). Consequently, San Bartolo pA5a could be used in this case as **7u**, a possibility intimated by its detachment from other signs (e.g. a human or animal head). If so, then this sign would compare favorably with K763 A4 in both the style of the EARFLARE sign, and the possible **7u** value. San Bartolo pA5b, the next sign, shows a very close resemblance to Classic Mayan T116 **ni**. If we now look at K763 A5a, we can surmise from its form a possible iconic motivation as a NOSE sign. Since the term for 'nose/tip' is **ni7* in Proto-Ch'olan (Kaufman and Norman 1984), it is possible that this nose sign could be read **ni/NI7**, a possibility strengthened by the fact that the sign from San Bartolo that would correspond in position of this NOSE sign, pA5b, is a sign that closely resembles T116 **ni**. The possible correspondences continue. San Bartolo pA6b is a SKY sign, probably a Ch'olan(-Tzeltalan) or Yucatecan reflex of Proto-Mayan **ka7N* 'sky', thus, either **chan* or **ká7an*, respectively. Interestingly, when we turn to K763 A5c we find a sign that appears to show two fingers, and thus, possibly read 'two', whether as Ch'olan(-Tzeltalan) **cha7* or Yucatecan **ka7*. The next sign at K763 A5d is an early form of T23 **na**. Together, K763 A5c-A5d could spell **cha-na** or **ka-na**, in either case resulting in a spelling of the term for 'sky', whether in Ch'olan(-Tzeltalan) or Yucatecan.

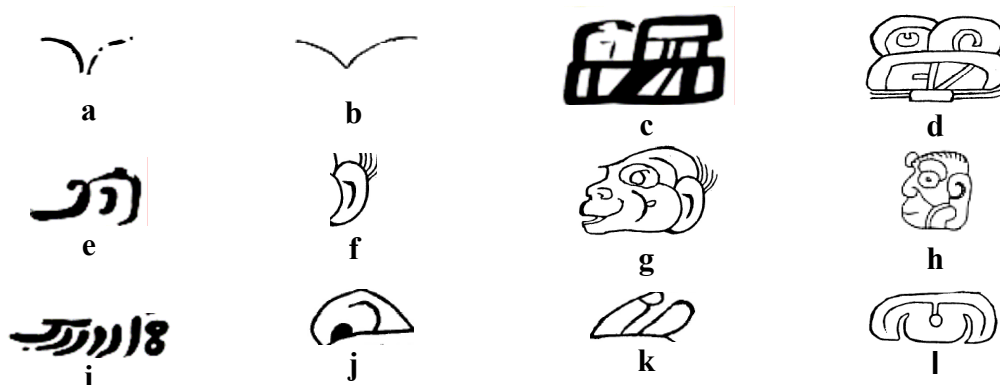


Figure 5. a. T299 **pa/PA'** from pA6a on San Bartolo stone block. b. T299 **pa/PA'** on unprovenienced jade clamshell pendant. c. Early form of **7AJAW** 'lord, ruler' sign from San Bartolo pA7. d. Early form of **7AJAW** 'lord, ruler' sign from unprovenienced jade clamshell pendant. e. EARFLARE element from MONKEY.HEAD sign on unprovenienced jade clamshell pendant. f. EARFLARE sign from pA5a on San Bartolo stone block. g. MONKEY.HEAD sign on unprovenienced jade clamshell pendant. h. Glyph AME in Macri and Looper (2003), used as a syllabogram **7u**. i. T116 **ni** syllabogram from pA5b on San Bartolo stone block. j. NOSE sign from unprovenienced jade clamshell pendant. k. TWO.FINGERS sign on unprovenienced jade clamshell pendant. l. Early form of T23 **na** on unprovenienced jade clamshell pendant. All signs from unprovenienced jade clamshell pendant drawn by this author. All signs from San Bartolo stone block drawn by David Stuart (Saturno et al. 2006).

So, what happens when we put these components together into a phrase? We obtain the following two expressions: **7u-ni PA7:CHAN 7AJAW**, for the San Bartolo block, and **7u-NI7:PA7:cha-na 7AJAW**, for the jade clamshell pendant. The two would be equivalent, and could be analyzed as follows: *u-ni' pa'(al)=chan ajaw* 'the nose(/tip/peak) of the Split Sky lord'.

For now this is a good stopping point, rather than to attempt an analysis of the rest of the glyphs on these two Late Preclassic texts. The present analysis is preliminary enough. It is a proposal waiting to be tested against more data. However, should it stand further tests, it would imply that the same title is attested on two Late Preclassic texts, and quite possibly, if these titles are Emblem Glyphs or toponyms more generally, that they could refer to the same polity, possibly San Bartolo, or one related to San Bartolo. In the Classic period 'Split Sky' was associated with Uaxactun and Yaxchilan, but it is possible that this placename was used by other sites, at different times.

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