Non-standard Conventions and Terms

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Because the CMGG (and all my other notes and documents) started out in life as private notes for myself, you may see a number of non-standard conventions and terms, which I would like to outline here.

1. The sorting of Maya words and phrases – a.k.a. "naïve/ASCII sorting"

In contrast to the other points below, this is less a deliberate choice and more a limitation resulting from using a naïve approach to modern technology.

The "traditional" sort order for Maya in the academic world is for glottalized consonants to sort *after* their non-glottalized counterparts. However, in ASCII, the apostrophe sorts *before* any other alphabetical character. This means that when working with a list of Maya words in Word (as a table or bullet-point list) or in Excel, sorting the list will result in all words beginning with *ch'*- sorting before *ch*- (and correspondingly, *k'*- before *k*-; *t'*- before *t*-; *tz'*- before *tz*-; etc).

Using computer-based tools and media, it's hence difficult to display sorted lists in the "traditional" Maya order, unless one is prepared to do a lot of additional programming work behind the scenes. For this reason, the CMGG1 words are sorted in the "technologically modern", naïve/ASCII order, with glottalized consonants before their non-glottalized counterparts.

2. Private terminology when reading glyphs ("nicknames")

In the early days of decipherment, terms like the "toothache glyph" (for **JOY**), the "beetle glyph" (for **SIM**) were coined to refer to their respective logograms. This had the advantage of providing a sort of "handle" on the glyph in question. Epigraphers could use these terms in discussions and papers, and everyone would know what was meant, rather than having to use descriptive phrases or circumlocutions.

I have extended this idea and made it into a "working principle". For this reason, I use the term "UHMAN" for the undeciphered glyph of the god with no lower jaw, and with blood scrolls descending from his upper jaw (the reading *uhman* was, for a very brief period, proposed but rejected). I'm quite aware of its incorrectness, and but nevertheless deliberately use "UHMAN" in quotes, for ease of reference. Particularly with the advent of computers and electronic documents, being able to search on "UHMAN" – for example in the CMGG (and in my translations and any other documents) – is a real advantage. The same reasoning applies to a whole list of these nicknames in quotes. I have "descriptive ones", like "HERON", "KIB"; abbreviations like "BBT" (Banded Bird Title), "IO" (Inverted Olla), "JP" (Jaguar Paddler), "SSP" (Stingray Spine Paddler), "TKWF" (Two Kawaks with Filaments); known unaccepted readings like "UHMAN", "TOL".

In this last case, I find that it's actually easier to use a pseudo-Maya word than an English word or phrase or abbreviation. For some reason, when reading an inscription, I find it easier to say in my head: *ukabjiiy Te' Kuy Sip, Chan "Uhman"*, than *sihyaj "Dotted-Casper"* or *ucha'an "Jewelled-Skull"*.

The "Uhman" sort of allows me to "remain in Maya mode", whereas "Dotted-Casper" or "Jewelled-Skull" forces me to have a brief flip into English (and then back again into Maya).

I've extended this idea even to words spelled solely in syllabograms, like the well-known "bat-head glyph relationship term" for "mother of", which I write as *"yanax"*. It's probably wrong, as we don't know the correct reading for the bat-head glyph in this context, but until we do, reading *"yanax"* is very convenient, whenever I come across it – there's no break in the flow of thought when I read inscriptions where the term occurs: *yitaaj Ix Tajal Kaban, "yanax" Ix K'abal Xook* = "(she was) accompanied by Ix Tajal Kaban, the mother of Ix K'abal Xook" reads so much more smoothly than *yitaaj Ix Tajal Kaban 'oh, it's that bat-head relationship term for "mother of" again' Ix K'abal Xook*.

3. Terms for describing glyphs (GDV)

I found a need to describe glyphs – for example, to talk about differences between similar-looking logograms or syllabograms, or in discussing unusual-looking variants of a logogram or syllabogram. This is frequently needed in the bullet-point notes.

To this end, I developed my own set of descriptive terms – a "Glyph Description Vocabulary" (GDV), as it were. This includes terms like: blades of grass, bolding, bowtie/butterfly, cave, comb, feeler, lipped-u, protected feeler, reinforcement, spine, tick, washer, etc.

While I hope that many of them are obvious *in context*, they are listed – with illustrative examples – in a separate document.

4. Calendar Round (CR) dates

The accepted convention in citing Long Count (LC) and Calendar Round (CR) dates is (for example):

   9.11.6.2.1 3 Imix 19 Keh

I find it hard to see where the LC ends and the CR begins, so I write this instead:

   9.11.6.2.1 3-Imix 19-Keh

This is not a convention used by any other epigrapher, though an unpublished paper by Mora-Marín as an undergraduate (uploaded to www.academia.edu) did use it *once*.

I extend this by often explicitly writing "LC = " (for the sake of brevity I don't write "CR =", even though this would help to separate the LC from the CR):

   LC = 9.11.6.2.1 3-Imix 19-Keh

While some epigraphers (e.g. the Bonn calendar calculations webpage) use the "old" Yucatec spelling for the day and month names (e.g. Cimi, Muluc, Chuen, Cauac, Ahau; Uo, Zec, Ceh), I follow the convention of most epigraphers in using the modern Yucatec spelling (e.g. Kimi, Muluk, Chuwen, Kawak, Ajaw; Wo, Sek, Keh).

5. Additional text, more hyphens, and the use of subscripted numbers

For GI, GII, GIII of the Palenque Triad, I prefer to write God-GI, God-GII, God-GIII. I find these easier to spot when scanning visually, and easier to find electronically (though searching for God-GI still gives hits for God-GII and God-GIII, unfortunately).

For G1, G2, G3, etc., I prefer to write Glyph-G_1, Glyph-G_2, Glyph-G_3, etc., for similar reasons (and also to maximally distinguish GI from G1).

6. Transliteration, Transcription, and Translation (TTT)

TTT is my abbreviation for "Transliteration, Transcription, Translation". These are the three fundamental steps from going from a text written in glyphs (strictly speaking from the *drawing* of a text written in glyphs) to the translation (e.g. in English or Spanish).

It's unfortunate that there's a bit of confusion in English in the use of the terms *transliteration* and *transcription*. I follow the Spanish convention of *transliteration* (Spanish: *transliteración*) being the rendering of which *glyphs* (logograms/rebuses and syllabograms) are present in the inscription vs. *transcription* being the rendering of which Classic Maya *words* are being written by those glyphs.

I follow the generally accepted convention of transliterations being in bold (uppercase for logograms and lowercase for syllabograms), transcriptions being in italics, and translations being in non-italics, enclosed in double quotes. These are the well-known step-1, step-2, and step-3 in reading an inscription ("first-T", "second-T", "third-T", in terms of the TTT terminology).

However, I extend that convention slightly in that I often write an "➔" and an "=" between the respective steps:

a-**wi**-**na** **ke**-**na** ➔ *a-winak-en* = "I am your man"

Also, I use bold for syllabograms and logograms when they are part of continuous English text (and where it's very useful to be able to immediately see that these are transliterations of syllabograms and logograms) but I don't use bold for them when they are directly under the glyph-examples, transliterating the said examples.

This is because it's quite clear from context that these are transliterations using logograms and syllabograms. There are many blocks of them, and I feel that bolding them all would make the text look very "heavy" and "dense". I do of course retain the distinction of full uppercase for logograms vs. full lowercase for syllabograms (even in this context of transliterating the examples) as I think this distinction is very useful.

7. Classic Maya ruler names

When I first encountered the concept of "extended names/titles" of Classic Maya rulers (as well as other nobles, and deities), I found them quite overwhelming. I didn't know what to make of *Te' Kuy Sip, Chan "Uhman", Mix Winkil, Aj Winik Baak, Ucha'an Aj Ukul, Ucha'an "Jewelled-Skull", Yaxuun Bahlam* (one of the later rulers of Yaxchilan), or of *K'inich Tajal Wayaab, K'in Tahn K'ewel, Tz'atz' Naah, Sak Baak Naah Chapaat, Atin K'ahk' T'i Miin, K'inich "Chequerboard" Ajaw* (God GIII of the Palenque Triad).

To get a better handle on them, I started writing commas between the sub-parts (the runs of words which could be swapped in or out as whole entities, i.e. the actual *phrases* in the name).

This is a convention which I've retained to this day, even though the length of the names no longer intimidates me. I find the commas helpful in thinking about (and remembering) the name. Of course, for many of the more obscure names, I might even put the commas in at the wrong spot: what I take to be two independent phrases might actually be one phrase, or vice versa. This is particularly so when I have no idea of the meaning of most of the words in the phrase (which is unfortunately often the case). In such situations, I can only go on "rhythm" or "this is the commonly found length of a name-phrase".

I realize that writing commas in this way is at odds with normal practice for Maya epigraphy. Nevertheless, I continue to do this, and the above is my explanation of why.

What I also often do is to *translate* the name. I realize that this is – in almost every other context – not only not necessary, but actually not even desirable (logically, linguistically, and philosophically speaking). For example, Giuseppe Verdi in an Italian text doesn't become Joseph Green in the English translation; Johann Sebastian Bach in a German text doesn't become John Sebastian Stream. Doing that would be ridiculous. For the very same reason, Classic Maya names should just be rendered as what they are in the normal Maya transcription (perhaps with initial capitals, as a nod to English orthographic rules): Chelew Chan K'inich, Ix Kabal Xook, K'inich Janaab Pakal, etc. This is indeed what is often done in Maya epigraphy. Nevertheless, Classic Maya culture is so far removed from our own – the naming convention for rulers is so different – that I feel that it not only doesn't do any *harm* for me to try to render these names into "English translation", but that it actually *helps* me to learn the language and to better understand the culture. So, for example, I think it's helpful for me to be aware that Bajlaj Chan K'awiil 'means' "The Lightning God Hammers in the Sky" (or perhaps, as a compromise solution, "K'awiil Hammers in the Sky").