

## The Painted Capstone at Sacnicte, Yucatan, and Two Others at Uxmal

La escena pintada en la piedra de cierre de bóveda de Sacnicte (Kutscher 1972:Lám.24), en la cual aparece un enano con joroba que amenaza con mano levantada al dignatario, se relaciona tal vez con esculturas de Santa Lucía Cotzumalhuapa, también de enanos amenazantes. Esos "hombrecitos" parecen jugar un papel importante en el culto de drogas alucinatorias. Otra piedra de cierre de bóveda, en Uxmal, lleva una fecha maya que corresponde a 906 D.C.; una muestra calada de una viga en el mismo edificio reveló, por el sistema radiocarbono, una fecha muy cercana: 885 D.C.  $\pm$  100 años.

The once extremely fine capstone from Sacnicte copied by Walter Lehmann and published in colour by Gerdt Kutscher (1972:91-93; pl.24) is, to the best of my knowledge a hitherto unrecorded find. Lehmann came upon it in the residence of Mr W.M. James, owner of a large hardware store in Merida, in March 1926, where he was told it had been found at the small unreported site of Sacnicte (Zacnicte is the name of the white plumeria) southeast of Labna. He mentions that Mrs James was reserving it for H. J. Spinden. Indeed, Spinden was in Yucatan in late March and early April of that year. I myself, like other members of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, frequently visited the James home (including a visit at Easter of 1926), but so far as I know, none of us was aware of this stone. It is unlisted in S. G. Morley's unpublished Check list of the "Corpus inscriptionum mayarum" of 1948, and its present location seems to be unknown.

Painted capstones are not uncommon in Yucatan and Campeche, but seem not to occur in the Central area. They fall in the Classic and post-Classic (Toltec) periods. The best known examples are at Chichen Itza - in a small chamber near the hacienda found by Edward H. Thompson (Beyer 1937:pl. 13a; Morley 1946:fig. 53); in the Temple of the Owls (Willard 1926:opposite p. 248; Morley 1946:fig. 52); in the north colonnade, Temple of the Warriors (Morris, Charlott and Morris 1931:431 and pl. 163) and another almost obliterated in the front room of the temple itself; at Uxmal - eight in the Monjas of which two only have been published (Blom 1934:pl. III figs. 3-4); at Xkichmook - in the Palace, the design in brown and blue apparently extending over more than one capstone and one, badly damaged on the central capstone of Room 4 of Structure 4 (E. H. Thompson 1898:fig. 34); at Dzibilnocac - two (Seler 1916:figs. 49, 50 after Maler; Pollock 1970:fig. 32 photographs also; Bolz-Augenstein and Disselhoff 1970:36-39); and at Santa Rosa Xtampak - many in the Palace, two of which are well-preserved and one in the

Southeast Quadrangle (Pollock 1970:57,59 and fig.74). Dr Christopher Jones will shortly publish a capstone in University Museum, Philadelphia, of unknown provenience. This appears to be in Chenes style and has dates in the Puuc style of dating. There are two facing figures, one on a throne, the other on a cushion with jaguar-skin covering. The latter, clearly the maize god or his impersonator holds in outstretched hands Glyph 144:17.281 which I have identified (Thompson 1972:58) as abundance of maize and, by extension food in general. One may also note a sculptured capstone at Kiuc.

Painted scenes are normally - probably invariably - on the central capstone. The small area imposed a treatment such as one associates with miniatures, and, as Ann Morris noted, is reminiscent of codex paintings. Because of the height of capstones above the floor, detail must have been very hard to make out, suggesting that the purpose of painted capstones was to honour or gratify a deity rather than to give aesthetic pleasure to mortals. Customarily a single deity or personage was displayed. Hieroglyphs are usually present, sometimes as bands at top and bottom of the main design. Often there are calendric signs. That is of particular interest in view of the comparative rarity of hieroglyph texts on stone in the area.

The damaged scene on the Sacnichte capstone (fig. 1), with bands of glyphs at top and bottom, conforms to the general pattern except that there may have been three persons delineated. The main figure, with perhaps a second figure behind him, faces a dwarf hunchback who clearly is by no means a subordinate for he has his left hand raised with fist clenched except for his forefinger which points, in a seemingly minatory gesture, at the main person. Between them is what might be a sack of merchandise and a pile of rectangular objects which also suggest bales.

In Maya folklore dwarf hunchbacks are the p'uz who, when the world-destroying flood came, were drowned because their boats were of stone (Thompson 1970:340-341). It is improbable that the little figure on the capstone can be one of these.

In parts of southern Mexico dwarfs appear to persons under hallucinatory drugs and give them messages of a divinatory nature. There is evidence that similar ideas were current in Yucatan and scenes in Dresden codex (p.8c) as well as reliefs at Santa Lucia Cotzumalhuapa may deal with the same subject. In Yucatan and elsewhere the dwarfs were thought to be bright red and on one sculpture at Santa Lucia Cotzumalhuapa the dwarf points a minatory finger, as on this capstone, at the human figure, who on the relief is in a reclining position presumably indicating that he is under the influence of the drug (Thompson 1972:42-43).

The Sacnichte hunchback is red all over and so is his clothing; the main figure is painted red but his face is unpainted. Persons with bodies painted red are common enough in Maya art, but usually the face is only partly red; subsidiary figures are usually unpainted. That the hunchback is entirely red is not therefore decisive evidence that he is one who appears in halucinatory

contexts - he might be an entertainer for Aztec rulers kept dwarfs and hunchbacks at court. Nevertheless, one may bear in mind a hallucinatory explanation of the scene in the hope that more will be learned on that subject.

The text opens with the day Chicchan in codical style but uniquely facing to the right. The coefficient appears as ten, but there is space to the left which might have held numerical dots now obliterated. To its right is a tailed kin sign which often follows the day sign in texts of the northern area and redundantly states that the preceding glyph is a day. Glyph 3 should, by position be Glyph G, one of the signs of the lords of the nights. It does not closely resemble any known Glyph G, but is reminiscent of one form of G7 (Thompson 1950:fig. 34). Glyph 4 is the month sign with coefficient of twelve and the te affix which functions with numbers as a numerical classifier. The sign itself appears to be the head of a frog with Postfix 102. This is very similar to Affix 103 (there are some grounds for supposing the two were interchangeable) which at times is postfixed to glyphs of the months Uo and Zip and sometimes to the frog head which is the personified form of the uinal. A frog can personify the month Pax but it must be modified by Prefix 299, here absent. Uo, in fact is the Maya term for a variety of frog, but beyond doubt that is a regional name for this month. The Manche Chol calendar of Lanquin conserved the old name, for Ik Kat, "black transverse", corresponds to the black prefix and the crossed bands which characterize this month sign.

There is a personified form of Uo at Edzna (Thompson 1950:fig. 35 no. 10), but this is a human face and has infixed the black element essential for its identification. That Glyph 4 does represent 12 te Uo is a possibility that cannot be rejected, especially in view of Postfix 102, although I am reluctant to believe that local names for days or months led to the introduction of new glyphic forms which gave them expression.

With so many uncertainties the date cannot be reconstructed. It does however witness to the Puuc style of dating at yet another Puuc site (in the standard system Chicchan requires a month coefficient of 13, not 12 as here given); and it provides a new personification of a month sign; and new examples of kin following the day sign; and probably of the insertion between day and month signs of Glyph G. This would fix the Calendar Round date in a cycle of 468 years were the text better preserved.

The lower line of glyphs opens with the sacrificial sign (568), a conventionalized picture of a heart.

In closing, I would like to repeat a discussion of the calendric part of the capstone of the northwest chamber of the east building of the Monjas, Uxmal, which I published over thirty years ago (Thompson 1941:106-108) because it serves to fix the date of the building of the Monjas, but is buried in a paper, the title of which gives no indication of covering such a matter. Morley (1920:511) drew the glyphs only; Blom (1934:pl. III fig. 3) published the whole design, his drawing of the glyphs differing from Morley's in a vital matter - that of the coefficient with the last glyph.

Morley read this date: 5 Imix 18[19] Kankin falling in tun 18 of a katun 13, to which he assigned the long-count position 11.12.17.11.1 5 Imix 19 Kankin. Beyer (1941:337) objected to the reading katun 13, pointing out that the outline of the somewhat damaged glyph Morley read as 13 katuns was identical with that of a form of Ahau. Observing that a katun glyph with postfix would be unique, he proposed reading the glyph as 13 Ahau. In fact, the affixes appear to be precisely those attached to a day Ahau when it marks the end of a katun. These are the Ben-Ich (168) prefix and bil (130) postfix which together almost certainly mean Lord or Owner (ah...nal). The coefficient of this Ahau sign is given by Morley as 12 or 13; by Blom as 12. Accordingly, I proposed that the whole be read in the Yucatec system of short dating as 5 Imix 18 Kankin falling in a tun 18 of a katun (10.4.0.0.0) ending on 12 Ahau. That is to say 10.3.17.12.1 5 Imix 18 Kankin (Puuc style), corresponding to A.D. 906.

The other capstone illustrated by Blom (1934:pl.III fig.4) carries a Calendar Round date (strangely, in standard style) of 4 Eb 5 Ceh or 4 Eb 15 Ceh, with the former more probable. The long count dates might be respectively 10.3.18.9.12 4 Eb 5 Ceh or 10.3.8.7.12 4 Eb 15 Ceh. The first is less than a year before the date already discussed.

A carbon-14 reading of a lintel in the Monjas (Gro 613) of A.D. 885 plus or minus 100 years fits very closely the above datings (Andrews 1965:61 and Table V. Andrews notes that Suess-effect correction has been made to this date).

Probably Uxmal was abandoned not long after the Monjas was completed.

## REFERENCES

- Andrews, Edward Wyllys  
1965 Progress report on the 1960-64 Field Seasons National Geographic Society - Tulane University. "Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University", Publ. 31:23-67. New Orleans.
- Beyer, Hermann  
1937 Studies on the inscriptions of Chichen Itza. "Carnegie Institution of Washington", Publ. 483, Contribution 21. Washington.  
1941 A discussion of J. Eric Thompson's interpretations of Chichen Itza hieroglyphs. In: "American Antiquity", vol. 6:327-338. Menasha.
- Blom, Frans  
1934 Short summary of recent explorations in the ruins of Uxmal, Yucatan. In: "Proceedings 24th International Congress of Americanists, Hamburg 1930":55-59. Hamburg.
- Bolz-Augenstein, Ingeborg - Hans D. Disselhoff  
1970 Sammlung Ludwig, Aachen. Werke präkolumbischer Kunst. Me-

soamerika und Peru. "Monumenta Americana", herausgegeben vom Ibero-Amerikanischen Institut, Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, vol.VI. Berlin.

Kutscher, Gerdt

1972 Wandmalereien des vorkolumbischen Mexiko in Kopien Walter Lehmanns. In: "Jahrbuch Preussischer Kulturbesitz", vol.IX (1971):71-120. Berlin.

Morley, Sylvanus Griswold

1920 The inscriptions at Copan. "Carnegie Institution of Washington", Publ.215. Washington.

1946 The ancient Maya. Stanford.

Morris, Earl H. - Jean Charlot - Ann A. Morris

1931 The temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itza, Yucatan. "Carnegie Institution of Washington", Publ.406. 2 vols. Washington.

Pollock, Harry E.D.

1970 Architectural notes on some Chenes ruins. "Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University", vol.61:1-87. Cambridge, Mass.

Seler, Eduard

1916 Die Quetzalcouatl-Fassaden yukatekischer Bauten. "Abhandlungen der Königl. Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften", Jahrgang 1916. Phil.-Hist. Klasse. Nr.2. Berlin.

Thompson, Edward H.

1898 Ruins of Xkichmook, Yucatan. "Field Museum of Natural History, Anthropological Series", vol.2, no.3. Chicago.

Thompson, J. Eric S.

1941 A coordination of the history of Chichen Itza with ceramic sequences in central Mexico. In: "Revista Mexicana de Estudios Antropológicos", vol.5:97-111. Mexico.

1950 Maya hieroglyphic writing: an introduction. "Carnegie Institution of Washington", Publ.589. Washington. Also University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla., 1960 and 1971.

1970 Maya history and religion. University of Oklahoma Press. Norman, Okla.

1972 A commentary on the Dresden codex, a Maya hieroglyphic book. With reproduction of the codex. "American Philosophical Society", Memoir 93. Philadelphia.

Willard, Theodore Arthur

1926 The city of the sacred well. New York.

## FIGURES

- Fig.1 : Painted capstone at Sacnicte, Yucatan. After Kutscher 1972:pl.24.
- Fig.2 : Painted capstone in the northwest chamber of the east building of the Monjas, Uxmal. After Blom 1934:pl.III fig.3.
- Fig.3 : Painted capstone in building Y, Monjas Quadrangle, Uxmal. After Blom 1934:pl.III fig.4.

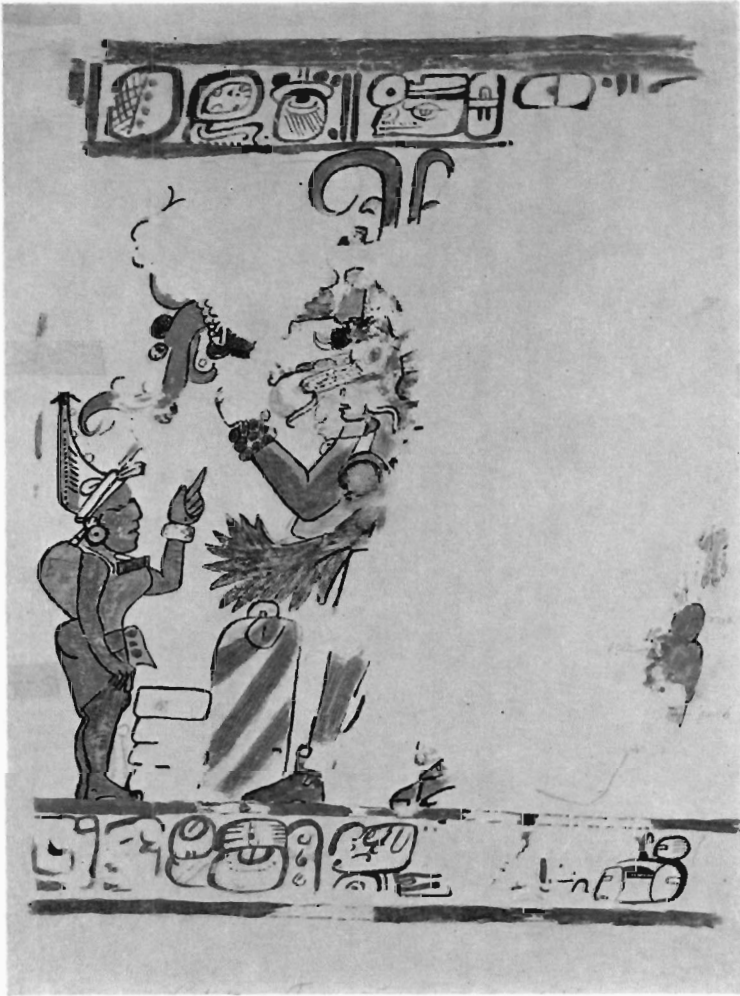


Fig.1





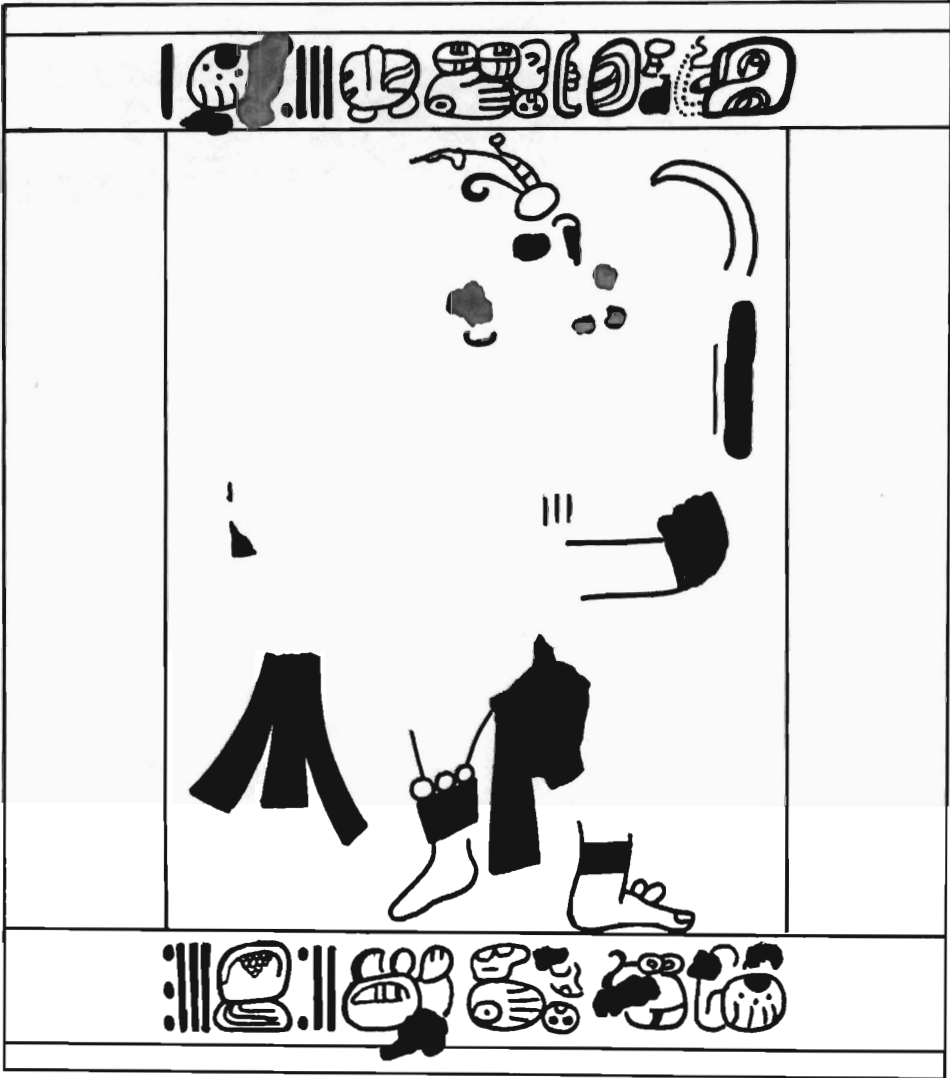


Fig.2



Fig. 3