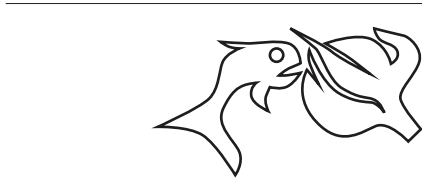


text

SOW



pictorial
signs



gesture

scattering
gesture



composition

Tz'ihb 'write/paint'

Multimodality in Maya glyphic texts

Agnieszka Hamann

In the times when Maya writing was an enigma, the analysis of Maya inscriptions necessarily focused on iconography and the purely visual aspect of an inscription. Once the writing system was satisfactorily deciphered, the main focus shifted to epigraphic analysis of glyphs and linguistic analysis of texts recorded by glyphs, frequently leaving out the accompanying image. Yet it seems that Maya scribes did not develop the concept of strict division between image and text: the same hands drew both, freely combining elements belonging to the visual and linguistic modalities. This project attempts to define and describe the multimodality of ancient Maya inscriptions, including identifying modalities utilized by ancient scribes. It analyses how the composition, gestures, pictorial signs, and text contribute to deliver the final message. On the example of three texts (Cancuen Panel 3, Laxtunich Panel 1 and Aguateca Stela 1) it attempts to develop methodology appropriate for the analysis of the genre of Maya glyphic inscriptions.

Keywords:

- Maya glyphs
- multimodality
- cognitive linguistics

If a language has one word for a concept that in other languages is expressed by two or more words, it indicates that its users understand this concept as one category – in Classic Mayan, *tz'ihb* 'write/paint' is one conceptual category which can be contrasted, for example, with *uxul* 'carve/sculpt'. Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions are, in fact, based on continuous interplay of what in English is differentiated into writing and painting, text and image, verbal and visual modality. In Classic Mayan, this is one and the same medium of communication - a text is usually accompanied by an image, and an image is very often accompanied by a text, with certain graphic elements repeated in the text and iconography. It is only the interaction of verbal and visual elements that conveys the final message.

To illustrate this interaction: because Classic Mayan is a theme-oriented language¹ (Hamann in press), the main text of the inscription is frequently a one-argument predicative, intransitive or intransitivized clause which focuses on events, objects and locations rather than on people doing things. However, even if the text does not mention him/her, the agent of the event is always provided by the image (see the case studies below for examples).

Importantly, Maya inscriptions show that metaphor and metonymy are not only linguistic but also conceptual phenomena. There are ample examples of metaphors and metonymies expressed both in the textual and visual modalities, and some of them will be discussed below.

This paper investigates the multimodality of Maya glyphic inscriptions. First, it attempts to define multimodality as it appears in Maya glyphic texts and identify modalities characteristic of this genre. Then, it discusses three case studies to illustrate how the modalities work together on the example of Cancuen Panel 3, Laxtunich Panel 1 and Aguateca Stela 1, which were chosen for their variety of approach to how to utilize different modalities. Finally, it summarizes the phenomenon of multimodality in Maya text outlining a spectrum of media used by ancient scribes to deliver the final message.

1. In agent-oriented languages, the default clause structure focuses on the agent as the source of energy that makes things happen, e.g. *Floyd broke the glass*, while in theme-oriented ones, the default is to focus on non-agentive participants of an event – patients, locations, etc., e.g. *The glass broke*, *The book lies on the table*. Of course, each language also provides means to talk about the non-default semantic roles, so in English it is common to use active voice, but the passive can be used if the speaker wishes to background agentivity and highlight another aspect of the situation (see Langacker 2008).

Multimodality

Based on Forceville's definition of multimodal metaphor (2009, 22–23), I would like to propose to define **multimodality** as communicating the message via more than one modality (or mode), where **modalities** are generally such channels of communication as: "(1) pictorial signs; (2) written signs; (3) spoken signs; (4) gestures; (5) sounds; (6) music (7) smells; (8) tastes; (9) touch". Forceville's approach was chosen here as the basis for developing methodology appropriate for the genre at hand because (1) Forceville operates within cognitive linguistics framework, which ensures consistency in terminology and assumptions about language and communication, (2) a lot

of his research concentrates on multimodality in genres reasonably similar to the genre analysed here, that is on multimodality in comic stories and advertisements, where the text and image cooperate to deliver the final message.

Due to the specificity of the genre (Classic Period monumental inscriptions carved in stone), the list of modalities showing up in the analysed examples includes as a minimum: (1) the overall composition of the image and text, (2) gestures performed by the characters, (3) pictorial signs and (4) written signs. (5) Colour, whose traces can be seen on some monuments and which for the ancient Maya probably carried an additional layer of information, will not be included in the analysis, firstly, because it is mostly gone, and secondly, because our understanding of colour use by the ancient Maya is very limited (S. Houston et al. 2009)

The **composition** of the image and text is understood here as the spatial organization of the elements of the image in relation to each other and to the text, as well as details of imagery which are not recognizably pictorial in nature, such as clothes or interiors, though it is sometimes difficult to separate them, e.g. headdresses sometimes include glyphic signs which identify people (see Tuszyńska 2017). The **gestural** modality is amply manifested in Maya imagery, it is extremely conventionalized and it must have been highly meaningful, though just like in the case of colour, we do not fully comprehend the meaning of different gestures adopted by depicted figures (Ancona-Ha, Perez de Lara, and Stone 2000; Miller 1983). Thus, gestures will be described in the process of analysis, but alas not fully explicated. **Pictorial** signs are mainly what Stone and Zender (2011, 13–15) call 'property qualifiers', that is basically glyphic symbols or their diagnostic features embedded in the image to convey certain properties, such as material: *te'* 'wood'; *tun* 'stone'; colour: *ihk'* 'black', *k'an* 'yellow, ripe'; classification: *ak'ab* 'darkness, night, nocturnal'; sound: *ik'* 'wind, breath' on musical instruments, speech scrolls linking the mouth of the speaker with his words, etc. They are not meant to be read out as linguistic units but to clarify an image which is not fully realistic and is complemented with a sign which in other contexts may be linguistic. **Written** signs are understood as a string of glyphs recording spoken language with its whole complexity, that is word order, grammar, etc. The general rule adopted here is that "text" (or "written signs") includes strings of glyphs organized in square glyph blocks and in clearly delineated rows and/or columns, while "pictorial signs" are single signs embedded within the image. Though again, some fragments may be ambiguous, e.g. captions can be interpreted in two ways: as simple captions stating e.g. *ajaw* 'ruler' (which would qualify them to the pictorial modality as signs simply denoting a property or a position of a person) or as clauses *ajaw-ø* (ruler-3SA) 'he (is) the/a ruler'. Thus, the categories' boundaries tend to be fuzzy and at times image, gesture, pictorial signs and text morph into each other, which the following examples will illustrate.

material:

te'  wood

tun  stone

colour:

ihk'  black

k'an  yellow ripe

classification:

ak'ab  darkness, night, nocturnal

sound:

ik'  wind, breath



Figure 1

Cancuen Panel 3

(photo Authenticmaya / Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 license)

Caption 2

Clauses 1 & 2

Cancuen Panel 3

Composition

The panel depicts three figures and at first glance it is obvious who the most important person is. Firstly, the central figure is much bigger compared to the other two people. Secondly, the focal figure occupies the very centre of the image, while the other figures flank him. Thirdly, the focal figure is seated on an object, which in itself is the sign of a high rank, while the secondary figures are kneeling on both sides, facing the central figure, which underlines their lower status. Thus, the composition of the image is motivated by such conceptual metaphors as *IMPORTANT IS BIG*, *IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL*, *IMPORTANT IS UP* (and their counterparts *UNIMPORTANT IS SMALL*, *UNIMPORTANT IS PERIPHERAL*, *UNIMPORTANT IS DOWN*), and it immediately informs viewers of the social relations between depicted characters.

Moreover, the general composition of the inscription follows the Maya artistic conventions (Palka 2002; S. D. Houston and Stuart 1998; Loughmiller-Newman 2008). The ruler's body is depicted in frontal view, head in profile facing his right and the right hand is used to perform an action – 85% of focal figures are shown in this kind of position (Palka 2002, 423–24, 428). Secondary figures are generally shown “shown in the less-important profile view, where the front of the body is not seen” (Palka 2002, 428).

Gestural modality

All three people perform characteristic gestures, which is common in Maya art (see Ancona-Ha, Perez de Lara, and Stone 2000; Miller 1983). The secondary figures keep their arms folded across their chests, with one hand resting

on the opposite arm, which reminds Gesture 4 identified by Ancona-Ha et al. (2000), except that they are kneeling and not sitting here. This gesture is typically adopted by non-focal figures of secondary but nonetheless high rank (Ancona-Ha, Perez de Lara, and Stone 2000), so the two kneeling people may be high-ranking court officials/priests assisting someone of a higher rank.

The focal figure keeps his both hands stretched slightly to the right. The right-hand's gesture is not clear because of damage to this part of the image, but the palm seems to be up with fingers bent and possibly the index finger pointing to something. The left-hand gesture is clearly visible – the palm is directed down, the thumb straight, the index finger partly bent as if pointing to the ground or to the face emerging from a floral element beneath his foot, while the other fingers are fully bent. Though obviously meaningful, the gesture is difficult to interpret, as it was probably a culturally determined symbol, whose meaning would have been clear for ancient Maya but is lost to us.

Thus, gestures in multifigural compositions seem to clarify the social status and relations between figures, though they might also convey all sorts of other denotations and connotations, whose meaning is not immediately clear for non-members of the cultural group.

Pictorial modality

ha  water

Apart from human figures and a glyphic text, the inscription also includes a number of pictorial elements. First of all, aquatic motifs are prominent. The focal figure sits on the head of the enigmatic Water Lily Monster (McDonald and Stross 2012) with a *ha* ‘water’ sign on its forehead. There are water lilies in the corners of the panel and stylized water drops (smaller, bigger, smaller again) all around it. The focal figure's headdress features a fish nibbling at a water lily sticking out from the snout of an amphibian. Unlike Laxtunich Panel 1 below which is a court scene, Cancuen Panel 3 seems to be immersed in water. “Because water was path to the Underworld, water lilies are often associated with death imagery” (Stone and Zender 2011, 173), so all the aquatic motifs might point to a death-related context, which is not signalled in other modalities.

ik'  wind breath

Another pictorial element is not so conspicuous, but at closer examination one might notice that secondary figures have a glyphic sign on their visible arms. The one on the left has the *ik'* ‘wind, breath’ sign, the concept related to life and vitality (Stone and Zender 2011, 175), the one on the right is partially eroded and difficult to classify. Nevertheless, these signs seem to identify the personages, possibly naming their functions in a way understandable even to illiterate audience.

Textual modality

2. Note on Maya epigraphy: The first line of the analysis (in bold) is the transliteration, that is glyph-by-glyph description of the original text: all-caps stand for logograms (word signs), small letters for syllabograms (syllabic signs). The second line (italics) is the transcription – how we think the ancient Maya would pronounce the words. The third line is the morphological analysis, where NUM is numeral, CAL – calendrics, 3E – 3rd person ergative pronoun, 3SA – 3rd person singular absolutive pronoun, MED – mediopassive, ADJ – adjective, AG – agentive, CAUS – causative.

The main text is in the right top corner, complemented by captions for secondary figures beneath and on the left, as well as a heavily eroded carver's signature on the left frame. The main text consists of two clauses (see example 1 below): an equative clause which says "it is a Period Ending" and a mediopassive clause which says that something which is the house of the ruler is dedicated. Both clauses are agentless, which is consistent with the language of Maya inscriptions being theme-oriented (see Hamann in press) – they focus on themes: events, objects and locations, while the agent is typically omitted. What the text is not telling us is that between the event described in clause 1 and the event described in clause 2, the ruler dies, which here is only clued by the pictorial modality. Thus, the ruler most likely is the agent of the first event, but he cannot be the agent of the second event, so this is why the secondary figures are depicted – they are the people responsible for the ruler's funerary ceremonies.

Example 1

Clause 1²:

4-AJAW 13-CHAK?-SIHOM
chan ajaw huxlajuun chak sihoom
 NUM-CAL NUM-CAL
 (on) 4 Ajaw 13 Keh

u-NAH-5-TUN-ni
u naah ho' tuun
 u-naah-5-tuun-ø
 3E-first-NUM-stone/year-3SA
 it (is) first 5-year (the date of of 9.18.5.0.0³)

Clause 2:

3. 9.18.5.0.0 is a date in the Maya 'Long Count' calendar – a count of days from its beginning on 13 August 3114 BCE and equals 1,427,400 days, which renders approximately 15 September 795 CE in the Gregorian calendar.

9-AJAW 18-mo-lo **T'AB-yi?** [undeciphered]
balun ajaw waxaklajuun mol t'abaay ?
 t'ab-aay-ø
 NUM-CAL NUM-CAL dedicate-MED-3SA ?
 (on) 9 Ajaw 18 Mol gets dedicated ?

yo-OTOT-ti TAJ-[CHAN]AHK AJ-ma-xi?-? K'UH?-?-[K'IN]AHK-AJAW K'UH?-AJAW
yotoot taj chan ahk aj maax? k'uh[ul] k'in ahk ajaw k'uh[ul] ? ajaw
 y-otoot-ø taj chan ahk aj maax? k'uh-ul k'in ahk ajaw k'uh-ul ? ajaw
 E3-house-A3S taj chan ahk aj maax? god-ADJ k'in ahk ruler god-ADJ ? ruler
 the house of Taj Chan Ahk Aj Maax, Divine Lord of Cancuen, Divine Lord of Machaquila

Caption 1:

AJ-3?-?-na **sa-ja-la**
aj ux ? sajal
 aj-3-? sajal
 AG-3-? sajal
 He of 3 ... Sajal

Caption 2:

AJ-TZ'AK-bu? **AJ-K'UH-na**
aj tz'akbu aj k'uhun
 aj-tz'ak-bu aj-k'uh-hun
 AG-count-CAUS AG-god-paper
 One Who Puts Things in Order One Who Worships (Jackson and Stuart 2001)

To sum up, the different modalities work together to deliver the final message. Agentless clauses describe two events – the Period Ending celebration and the dedication of the house of the ruler, while the pictorial mode provides information about the death of the ruler, which complements the textual message. The composition of the image helps, firstly, to identify the protagonists – who is the focal figure, who is of secondary importance, and secondly, to assign agents to the events: from cultural context we understand that the ruler was the agent of the Period Ending celebration because it is part of his royal duties (Stuart 2011, 266), while his lords are agents of the dedication event as part of the ruler's funerary rites.

Table 1:

Events in Cancuen Panel 3

Long Count	Calendar Round	Gregorian date	Event	Modality
9.18.05.00.00	4 Ajaw 13 Keh	15/09/795	Period ending celebration	Written
		c. 799	Death of Taj Chan Ahk Aj Maax	Pictorial
9.19.00.00.00	9 Ajaw 18 Mol	28/06/810	Dedication of the house of Taj Chan Ahk Aj Maax, Divine Lord of Cancuen and Machaquila	Written



Figure 2:

Laxtunich Panel 1

(photo FA2010 / public domain)

Laxtunich Panel 1

Composition

The vertical composition of the monument is organized around the central axis created by the main text and the main protagonist of the text (the man sitting on the floor). The steps organizing the scene horizontally define the social hierarchy – the ruler is seated on an elevated throne, the secondary figure is half-kneeling half-standing on a platform in front of the ruler, and the least important figures are sitting or kneeling on the floor at their feet. All secondary figures are depicted in profile, while the ruler's body and upper part of the right-hand man's body are in frontal position. The elaborate curtains show it takes place indoors in a palace room (see also Martin and Grube 2008, 135).

The most prominent figure seems to be the person on the right who, because of his standing position, visually occupies the majority of

space of the whole image. He wears an elaborate headdress and clothes with ornaments, and, what is more, although it is a palace scene, he has something resembling a weapon (a club) in his hand, which is most likely another symbol of his status, though he carries it in his left or “weak” hand (Palka 2002, 419, 421, 428) away from the ruler as a likely sign of non-aggression. The upper part of his body (but not his legs) is presented in frontal view, his head – in profile facing right with his right hand performing an action – a setting usually reserved for the focal person (see Palka 2002). This emphasizes his agential role as the source of energy flow in the depicted and described event.

The ruler's position is emphasized by his elevated position, headdress and ornaments, but rather surprisingly he occupies the left side of the whole scene and faces left. However, it is likely that the fact that his name carved on the side of the throne is written from right to left instructs viewers to conceptualize this part of the scene as a mirror image. Maya texts are generally written left to right, while the reverse direction is rare and here doubly surprising because the main text and captions are written in the standard manner. This kind of anomaly immediately draws attention and makes one wonder on the reason for employing such a compositional trick. Palka (2002, 431) hypothesizes that “some reversed images in Maya and Mesoamerican art may represent either ritual reversals, events associated with the supernatural and the Otherworld, or scenes reflected in ceremonial mirrors”. Thus, at the very least, the ruler's reversed caption and image instructs the audience to create a mirror reflection space with a more canonical depiction of the ruler, where he is the most prominent figure. At most, it may emphasize the ruler's agential powers in rituals and ceremonies, where his presence is required to the ceremony to be valid.

The other person whose name is written in the reversed order, which also makes him stand out, is the man in the left-hand bottom corner. At first sight, he seems to be part of the captive group at the bottom of the image (see e.g. Martin and Grube 2008, 135; Akers 2008, 4), but, firstly, his name is reversed unlike theirs, and, secondly, the lack of ropes on his neck and arms indicates that he might not be a captive like the other two figures sitting on the floor. Another possibility, which will be discussed below, might be suggested by the text.

The captives are tied but otherwise treated with respect, which is likely to be the mark of their high status (Coe 1998, 97), as captives are frequently depicted (almost) naked, lying on the floor, sometimes in awkward positions or trampled by the victorious king. Here there are no traces of violence or bad treatment.

On closer inspection of the surface of the monument, one might also notice traces of paint which once completed the image and probably carried additional information. From what we know, ancient Maya liked strong bright colours – red, green (green-blue), yellow, as well as white and

black (S. Houston et al. 2009) However, the symbolic dimension of colour use in the Classic Period is not clear nowadays and, as already mentioned, it is difficult to hypothesize about its input into the overall meaning of the inscription.

Gestural modality

The gestural modality is richly exemplified in this inscription. The ruler sits with his right palm rested on this right knee and his left elbow on his left knee, while the palm is stretched out in front of him. The man on the right very obviously hands something over – there is an object in his right hand stretched out towards the ruler. The captive on the right - sitting cross-legged with his head proudly up - has an object in his outstretched right hand and his left is palm up and a bit stretched out in front of him. The other captive with his head down touches his forehead with the top of his left hand while the other hand seems to be closed in a fist. The right hand of the man in the corner is also closed in a fist, while his left hand seems to be stretched out upright in front of his face as if obscuring it from sight. Alternatively, he may be at an early stage of the same gesture as the man in front of him.

All the gestures are no doubt meaningful. The ruler's gesture and posture possibly expresses his dominance over the scene and/or identifies him as the receiver of an action. The gesture of the man on the right seems to be a straightforward gesture of handing something over, which will be confirmed by the accompanying text, while the act of holding his weapon behind his back and away from the ruler might be a sign of peaceful intentions. From captives one might expect gestures of submission and indeed, the gesture performed by the captive on the left has been interpreted as such, with some reservations though. (Miller 1983).

Pictorial modality

The ruler has the characteristic horizontal bar pendant on his chest – a symbol of his power. The warrior has an *ik'* 'wind, breath' earring and a pendant with some markings which are difficult to identify. Also other elements of headdresses and ornaments might be potentially meaningful.

Textual modality

The main text (see example 2 below) consists of two clauses in the passive voice, which makes one of the captives, and not the warrior or ruler, the main protagonist of the text. It is Baah Wayaab who is caught by Aj Chak Maax and then presented to the ruler.

Example 2

Clause 1:

chu-ku-ja	ba-wa-WAY-bi	u-KAB-ji-ya	a-CHAK-ma-xi
<i>chuhkaj</i>	<i>baah wayaab</i>	<i>ukabjiy</i>	<i>aj chak maax</i>
chu<h->k-aj-ø	baah way-aab	ukabjiy	aj chak maax
catch-PASS-3SA	first way-NOM	REL	aj chak maax
caught is	First Wayaab	by	Aj Chak Maax

Clause 2:

3-la-ta	na-wa-ja	u-BAK-ki	ti-ya-AJAW
<i>ux lat</i>	<i>nahwaj</i>	<i>u baak</i>	<i>ti yajaw</i>
ux lat	na<h->w-aj-ø	u-baak	ti y-ajaw
3 days	present-PASS-3SA	3E-captive	PREP-3E-ruler
[after] 3 days	presented is	his captive	to his ruler

Caption 1 (mirror image):

che-le-we CHAN-na K'IN-ni-chi	u-cha-nu TAJ-MO'
<i>chelew chan k'inich</i>	<i>u cha'n taj mo'</i>
Chelew Chan K'inich	the Captor of Taj Mo'
K'UH-PA'CHAN- AJAW	K'UH-KAJ-AJAW
<i>k'uhul pa'chan ajaw</i>	<i>k'uhul kaaj ajaw</i>
Divine Ruler of Pa'chan & Kaaj (Yaxchilan)	

Caption 2:

ba-wa-WAY-bi	AJ-ch'o-ko	TE'-le-NAH
<i>baah wayaab</i>	<i>aj ch'ok</i>	<i>te'l naah</i>
First Wayaab	heir/the young one	wooden house(?)

Caption 3:

YAX-SUTZ'	to-k'a
<i>yax suutz'</i>	<i>to'k'</i>
First/Grue Bat	Flint

Caption 4 (mirror image):

4-JINAJ?-ji	ba-BAK-ki
<i>chan jinaaj?</i>	<i>baak or baah baak</i>
Four Sprouts?	captive or Master of Captives (see below)

The other figures are not mentioned in the main text but identified by captions: the king's name is on the side of his throne – two of his titles are mentioned: the Captor of Taj Mo' and the double emblem glyph of Yaxchilan. Baah Wayaab's caption is carved on the step to the right of him and his titles include *baah wayaab* 'first dreamer/kind of priest' (Beliaev 2004) and *aj ch'ok* 'heir/junior'. The second captive's name is visible between his hands. Finally, the 4-block text in the middle is the carver's signature.

The reversed caption of the man in the left bottom corner is somewhat hanging in the air left of the ruler's right knee. It identifies the man either as simply *baak* 'captive' with the initial syllable **ba** being a phonetic complement or as *baah baak* – literary – 'head captive', though from the main text we know that it is Baah Wayaab who is the main captive. The phonetic complementation hypothesis is quite plausible, though having two phonetic complements (**ba** and **ki**) on one word is not very common and it does not explain the reversed reading order. On the other hand, *baah* + noun is a well attested pattern for title designation: *baah cheb* 'first of the brush/ head brush/ brush master', *baah pakal* 'first of the shield', *baah poom* 'first of the incense', *baah tuun* 'first of the stone', etc. (Boot 2009, 28–29; Johnson 2014, 247), so *baah baak* could, actually, be 'the master of captives/ captives' master', an official who oversees prisoners. This would explain why his caption is written right-to-left, just like the king's, which draws our attention to his actual identity and prompts us to investigate it. The weak point of this hypothesis is that this series of titles is usually spelled with the logographic **BAH** sign, except for the *baah kab* 'first of the earth' title which is routinely spelled with syllabic **ba**, like Caption 4.

Thus, Laxtunich Panel 1 describes two events: the capture and presentation of captives to the ruler. It presents (both visually and verbally) the captor as the agent of the clauses, the ruler as the receiver of the action, captives as the object of the transaction and possibly the captives' master as an additional participant of the event. The most intriguing aspect of the inscription is why part of the text is a mirror reflection of the canonical word order, which – I would like to argue – was done to focus readers' attention on certain aspects of the situation. The mirror reflection, so to speak, projects the ruler's image onto the right hand side of the panel, which is significant, since in numerous visually bipartite inscriptions the more important participant of the event tends to be depicted on the right (compare Bonampak Sculpted Stone 1 and 4, La Pasadita Lintel 3, Palenque Central Tablet from Temple XIV, Palenque Palace House E Oval Tablet, Piedras Negras Panel 2, Site R Lintel 1 and 4, Yaxchilan Lintel 2, 3, 8, 9, 16, etc.). Here Aj Chak Maax is the main actor, so he occupies the most prominent spot on the right, but nevertheless the ruler's status is unquestionable, so the reversed order might be an instruction for the audience to conceptualize the ruler's position as equally important. Similarly, the reversed order of Baah Baak's caption might extricate him from the captives' group and place him in the VIP space. This would give us the following hierarchy: Aj Maax is the most important because he occupies the most prominent spot and is mentioned in the main text as the agent of the capturing event. The ruler is equally important because he is depicted in a frontal and seated position on an elevated throne plus his caption is a mirror image. Then possibly comes the captives' master because his caption is also a mirror image, although in the iconography itself he occupies a humble position. Finally, there is Baah Wayaab who is the main protagonist of the text and occupies a position on the axis of the whole panel, and at the very end there is the second captive identified as such only by ropes on his arms and his caption. Alternatively, the third men of the bottom group might be just another captive.

Table 2:
Events described in
Laxtunich Panel 1.

Long Count	Calendar Round	Gregorian date	Event	Modality
9.17.12.13.14	5 Hix 8 Sak	23.08.783	Baah Wayaab is caught by Aj Chak Maax n	Written
9.17.12.13.17	8 Kaban 10 Sak	6.08.783	captive is presented to Chelew Chan Kinich / Itzamnaaj Bahlam IV	Written

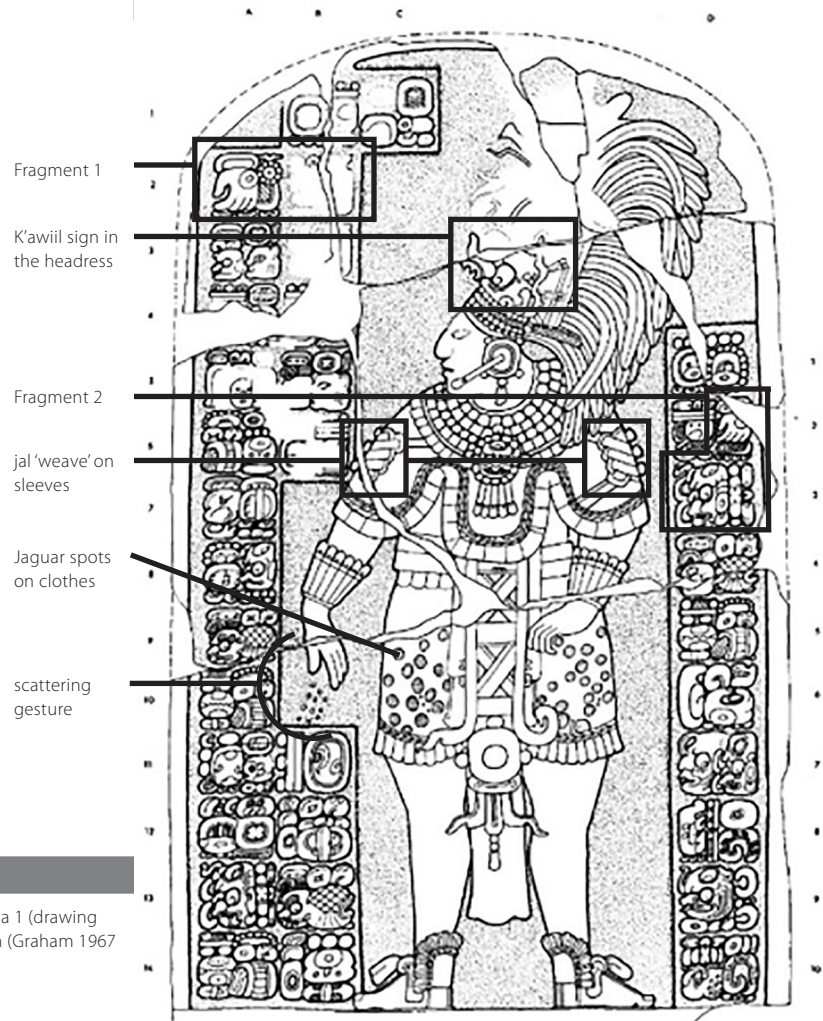


Figure 3: Aguateca Stela 1 (drawing Ian Graham in (Graham 1967 Figure 3))

Aguateca Stela 1

Composition

The composition of Aguateca Stela 1 is very simple with one figure occupying the central position and longer stretches of text on both sides. The body is in frontal position, the head in profile facing his right. The headdress, clothes, sandals and ornaments inform of high social position of the person.

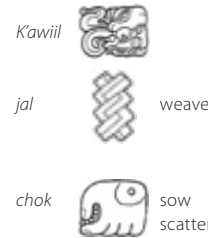
Gestural modality

The person performs so called “scattering” gesture – in Maya art a highly conventionalized way of representing a ritual action nowadays interpreted as a sacrificial ceremony in which the ruler scatters incense, blood, maize

or another precious material to communicate with the other world (Stone and Zender 2011, 69). It was performed at Period Endings and most likely was part of a tradition of calendar ritualism still observed today by the Maya (Stuart 2011, 265).

Understanding this kind of image actually requires quite complex processing including a double conceptual mapping: first the gesture is interpreted metonymically as STAGE OF ACTION FOR WHOLE ACTION OF PART FOR WHOLE, then its meaning is interpreted metaphorically (Mittelberg and Waugh 2009, 339, 349). Thus, though we only can see a fragment of the ceremony, we nevertheless understand that the whole event is meant – the gesture is the metonymic vehicle for the whole event. Then, the metonymic vehicle becomes the metaphoric source for a metaphoric mapping, and via the *KINGS ARE FARMERS* conceptual metaphor (Hamann 2014, 33), we deduce that the sowing gesture denotes, in fact, a ritual scattering of incense and not a simple agricultural activity.

Pictorial modality



The pictorial modality includes the headdress spelling out the protagonists name (at least partially) – the face of *K'awil* is quite well visible in spite of some damage (compare Tuszyńska 2017), as well as *jal* 'weave' sign on the sleeve (Stone and Zender 2011, 81; Macri andLooper 2003, 228) and jaguar spots on the skirt – a symbol of wealth and royal status (Stone and Zender 2011, 195). However, the scattering gesture itself resembles the *chok* 'sow, scatter' sign so closely that it might actually be listed in this category as well. This shows how difficult it might be to separate the gestural and pictorial modalities because they work together, alongside the text.

Textual modality

The scattering event is mentioned twice in the text (see example 3): at the very beginning (A2-B2) and in the second part of the text (D2b-D3), so there are two candidates to be portrayed and we need to turn to the headdress to tell us who is actually depicted in the image – it is the second of the rulers, *K'awil K'inich*.

Example 3

Fragment 1:

u-CHOK-wa-ch'a-ji	[name eroded]
<i>u chokow ch'aaj</i>	?
<i>u-chok-ow-ø ch'aaj</i>	?
<i>3E-scatter/sow-ACT-3SA droplets</i>	?
<i>s/he (Ruler 3) scatters incense/blood</i>	

Fragment 2:

u-CHOK-ch'a-ji*u chok ch'aaj*

u-chok

3E-scatter/sow droplets

it [is] the incense-scattering of K'awiil K'inich

K'AWIL-K'INICH*K'awiil k'inich*

ch'aaj k'awiil k'inich

K'awiil K'inich

_____ Aguateca Stela 1 is an example of a heavily textual inscription which mentions several events, while the image only illustrates one of them. It is extremely interesting, though, because it illustrates how the modalities are closely intertwined to an extent that it is difficult to separate them: the scattering gesture and name-tag headdress repeat and illustrate part of the textual information.

Conclusions

It is evident that Maya inscriptions are highly multimodal, as was foretold by the polysemy of the word *tzihb* 'write/paint'. It is the interaction of all modalities that delivers the whole message: the composition indicates hierarchy and relations between people, gestures refine this message and possibly also carry all sorts of other information, pictorial signs show properties of objects and people (e.g. their ranks), the main text describes the event(s), captions precisely identify people giving their names and titles, and the carver's signature identifies authorship. While the language is theme-oriented and mostly focuses on events, very often ignoring agent(s), they are always provided by the image and can be safely identified based on the situational context and cultural knowledge (see Cancuen Panel 3).

_____ The various modalities present in Maya texts are not always so easily delineated and differentiated. They seem to form a certain kind of continuum with areas of overlap and a certain degree of fuzziness in category boundaries. On one end of the spectrum, there is the pure image – depictions of people and objects – fairly realistic in style, though conventionalized to a large extent. On its other end, there is pure text – written signs recording language, though taking into consideration the visual realism of many glyphs (see the *chok* 'scatter' glyph and the scattering gesture) there are often significant parallels between the visual and textual modality. In-between, there is a spectrum of other means of communication, such as pictorial signs which are close to the textual end of the spectrum in their form and meaning but are embedded physically in the imagery (e.g. water droplets – a diagnostic feature of all aquatic signs to depict watery landscape). On the other hand, gestures generally belong to the image, but because they are highly conventionalized and meaningful, they deliver an

Figure 4

The multimodality of Maya glyphic texts: a spectrum of media that deliver the message

important part of the message. Figure 4 visualizes the idea.

_____ Finally, the ancient Maya scribes seem to have employed different strategies for the organization of an inscription with different levels of utilization of multimodality. In some cases, such as Cancuen Panel 3, the image and text complement each other delivering different parts of the message. In others, such as Aguateca Stela 1, the image and text tell the same story with various degrees of detail. This makes part of the message available even to illiterate or foreign audiences, while what was encoded in the glyphic text itself was accessible only to those in the know, which may also have been purposeful. Thus, the manipulation of text and image may hide and highlight different parts of the message targeted at different audiences. Finally, Laxtunich Panel 1 seems to sit somewhere in-between with a more balanced approach to how to exploit different modalities, though it is extremely interesting for its use of the changing reading order to manipulate the spatial layout.

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