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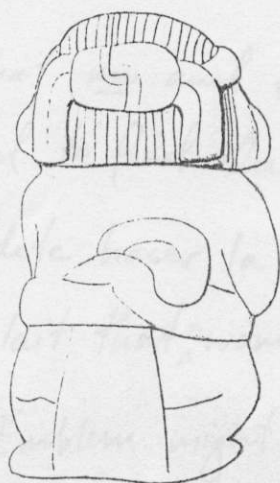
A DECIPHERMENT OF THE TIKAL EMBLEM GLYPH

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Thus far, four variants of the Tikal Emblem Glyph have been identified. These are:



While graphically dissimilar in some respects, it can be seen that all four are visually related. Indeed, one might see these as variations on a single sign, with (c) and (d) as head variants of (a) and (b). Moreover, we can be certain that (a) and (b) represent tied hair, with (c) simply adding a head for visual clarification. The conventional form of the Emblem simply shows the back of a head with a headband tie, as revealed by a jade figurine excavated in the stairway cache of Str. 10L-26 at Copan:



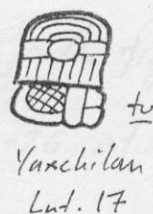
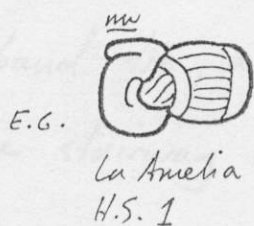
Copan
Str. 10L-26
cache
(back view)




Tikal
Stela 5, B6

The head variant in ④ is somewhat enigmatic, for two reasons. First, the tied hair is shown differently, perhaps only at the back of the head. Most strange, however, is the head itself, which is identical to the portrait head on stela 31, and which at Palenque seems to function as a sign for way. Way is certainly not the reading of the Tikal E.G., however, for otherwise ③ and ④ are mutually exclusive.

As it happens, certain phonetic complements point to a decipherment of the Tikal main sign. In the Petenbatun region, where the Emblem was also in use, we occasionally find the prefix nu-. At Yaxchilan, where the sign functions in a different context altogether, we find the suffix -tu.



Speculating that nu and tu might be phonetic complements, I was pleased to find the following entry for mut in Yucatec:
"mut pol: rodete hacer la mujer de sus cabellos" (Cordemex)
(plait that woman makes of her hair)

The Tikal Emblem might therefore read mut or mutul, the latter when accompanied by .