RESEARCH NOTE 10

The Signs 740 and 812 for SIH "Gift": Representation and Meaning in the Maya Codices

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In his sign catalog, Eric Thompson (1962:320–322) includes under sign no. 740 two graphs that are nearly identical. Their icon represents an upward-facing iguana head, but differ by a row of dots atop the mouth of one variant. The first variant of T740 lacking the dots represents the syllable **hu**[1] (Figure 1a); the second grapheme with the row of dots (Figure 1b) is read as **SIY**, **SIH**, or **SIJ**, depending on its respective context (Houston 1997:292; Stuart 2005:78). All these respective linguistic readings of the logogram are plausible interpretations that will be discussed below in further detail.
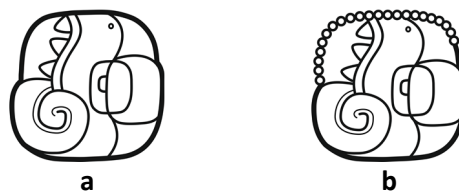

a   b

Figure 1. Grapheme (a) denotes the syllabic sign hu; and (b) represents the logogram SIH 'bestow' or 'be born', respectively (drawings by Christian Prager).

Hieroglyphs meaning 'birth', including *siyaj* 'be born', *sihyaj* or *sijyaj* 'be bestowed' (represented by the grapheme T740), and *pan kab* or *tal kab* 'touch the earth' (T217:526) (MacLeod 1991:2–3; Stuart 2005:79) are, with over 100 attestations, among the most frequently used verbs in texts from the Classic period (Gronemeyer 2014:617–621), because of the large number of biographical reports about Maya rulers and members of their courts (Proskouriakoff 1960; Schele 1982).

Linguistic references to 'birth' are numerous, but in contrast with illustrations of violence, military conquest, or abasement, there are hardly any portrayals of birth in Maya art that are true to reality (Houston et al. 2006:202–226). The so-called 'Birth Vase' (K5113) seems to illustrate one of the very

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[1] The decipherment **hu** has first been proposed independently by Nikolai Grube and Barbara MacLeod in 1990 (MacLeod 1990; Schele et al. 1992:2).

few exceptions, although it shows the woman preparing herself for giving birth, rather than the sequence of the birth itself (Taube 1994). Vessel K559 shows the Moon Goddess giving birth to the Moon Rabbit. Another painted ceramic vessel bears the representation of the newborn Sun God with the umbilicus and placenta still attached to his navel and God L cutting his umbilical cord with an obsidian knife (Fondation de l'Hermitage 2004:frontispiece). Symbolic images that are interpreted in the scholarly literature as representations of birth show anthropomorphic actors emerging from a split, anthropomorphic skull, an anthropomorphic blossom, turtle shells, or a cleft in the so-called earth band (Figure 2). All iconographic representations of birth have in common the depiction of a V-shaped break or fissure in an object out of which the relevant actor appears.

Figurations of birth are found in the name phrases of several Classic Maya rulers, in which the essential divine figures, including *K'awiil*, *Chahk*, or *K'inich*, are born out of a fissure or crack in the heavens, from of the sun, or from fire. Birth from a fissure or crack in a specific object is a symbolic representation of this life-beginning act and is widespread in Mesoamerica (Stuart and Houston 1996:294–295; Stuart et al. 1999:II-47; Houston et al. 2006:167).

Figure 2. The symbolic representation of the birth of the maize god on an unprovenanced ceramic vessel (Kerr 2723). The infant maize god is shown in a pose that is characteristic for representing infants in Maya art (e.g. the jaguar baby). He lies on the head variant of the grapheme T533, which may represent a personified blossom (Martin 2002) or a seed kernel. This grapheme has not been phonetically deciphered, but it belongs to the semantic field of 'seed, fruit; harvest; child'. The short caption above the lying figure contains an epiclesis that describes the figure as 'one who is born from the fluid' (*aj siy ich*) (Houston et al. 2006:167), the fluid indicated by the water-band in the background of this birth scene (copyrighted photograph by Justin Kerr [www.mayavase.com]).

The hieroglyph most commonly used to denote birth is the logogram T740 (see compilation in Schele 1982). Tatiana Proskouriakoff first associated this grapheme with an event in the initial years of an individual's life and semantically interpreted it as referring to birth, baptism, or an initiation rite (Proskouriakoff 1960:460,470). Its semantics was later narrowed even further and interpreted as a birth hieroglyph, because it is linked to the earliest date in an individual's life cycle (Kelley 1976:219; Justeson 1984:354).

Although the meaning is confirmed, its phonetic decipherment remains problematic due to the lack of full phonetic complementation. The preposed phonetic complement [157]**si**, attested on two stelae, Piedras Negras Stela 12 and Uxmal Stela 17, indicates that the logograph begins with the initial sequence **si**-. More recently, support for this decipherment may come from a shell inscription from the Palenque region which exhibits a possible phonetic spelling **si-ya-ja**, first identified by Yuriy

Polyukhovich (2012). Here, the scribe employs a rare variant of the syllable **si**, representing a rodent-like creature first discussed by Luis Lopes (2011).

These occurrences support the reading that John Justeson initially proposed, **SIH** 'to be born' (Justeson 1978:299). However, the conjugational pattern that Schele (1982:373) presents for this intransitive verb suggests that the logograph ends in either *-ij* or *-iy*, depending on the interpretation of the final syllabic sign as indicating inflection or a phonetic complement. Whereas Justeson and colleagues (1984:354) favor the Yukatekan-based reading **SIH**, Houston (Houston 1997:294) and Robert Wald (2000:130) use the phoneme **SIY**. Both proposals are plausible from an epigraphic perspective, because a series of occurrences end in **-ji-ya**, while other examples end only in -**ya** (Schele 1982:373).

Justeson's proposal concurs with the colonial-period Yukatek form *zihil* 'be born' (Michelon 1976). The lexeme is not attested in Ch'olan languages with this meaning, although the expressions *zii* 'offering' and *zihi* 'bestow' occur in Ch'olti' (Morán 1935). Both Robert Wald and Stephen Houston treat [126]**ya** as a phonetic indicator and argue that the lexeme must read **SIY** 'be born', based on the phonetic complement -**ya**. Wald thus interprets the ending **-ji-ya** as temporal deixis, analyzes the sign sequence T740-126-181 as *si[h]y-aj-ø*, and translates it as 'is born' (Wald 2000:130).

Yet several questions remain unanswered. For one, it is unclear whether the affixes serve as phonetic complements or grammatical morphemes. Furthermore, one must account for the possibility that the grapheme pattern T740-181 constitutes a *multigraph*, i.e. T181 is not interpreted as **ja**, but rather, as a component of a complex sign as a variant of T740, and thus it is not read individually. Moreover, the translations of the phonemes **SIY** and **SIH** are in no way certain. Both the Yukatek lexeme *sih* 'be born' and *zii* and *zih-i* 'bestow' attested in Ch'olti' (Morán 1935) would make sense in the context of the confirmed meaning ('he was born' and 'he was bestowed'), because in different hieroglyphic texts, the lexeme *sih* meaning 'gift, offering' comprises part of the three-part relational hieroglyphic phrase 'child of father': *u sih u chit*[2] *ch'ab* '(is) his gift, his co-creator/father' (Figure 3; Grube 1990:55; Stuart 1997; Stuart et al. 1999:II-56; Grube 2004:66; Boot 2009; Mathews and Bíró 2006).

Based on this reading, according to Classic Maya concepts and beliefs, newborns could be understood as the father's offering or gift. Modern Ch'ol Maya believe that in ejaculation, men loose part of their life essence, which adheres to bones, flesh, and blood. According to Helfrich's report on sexuality among modern Maya every ejaculation is associated with a dangerous weakening of the man, his gift to the new life (Helfrich 1972:150-151).The linguistic reading and interpretation of the birth hieroglyph as *sihyaj* 'was handed over, bestowed, created' seems plausible in the context of an entry in the colonial-era *Diccionario de San Francisco*, according to which the lemma *zihyah* means 'be born, created' (Michelon 1976), which corresponds most closely to the hieroglyphic spelling **SIH-ya-ja**. More recently, in the analysis of Tortuguero Monument 6, Barbara MacLeod argued that **ja** is "[t]he grammatical indicator for an inchoative, suffixed to the nominal root *sih* 'gift'. The resulting **sih-aj* became *siyaj* through reduction of the final [h] to zero", as attested by the frequent **ya** syllable attached to the **SIH** logograph (Gronemeyer and MacLeod 2010:46). Gronemeyer (2014: fn. 672) further elaborated this sound shift as "a lenition process [h,x] > [j] / __VC" that likely developed around 500 AD.

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[2] According to Barbara MacLeod, the lexeme *chit* in the hieroglyphic inscriptions is cognate with Yucatec *ket* 'same thing; similar; together' (Barrera Vásquez 1980:312) (email from Barbara MacLeod, November 2009). Peter Mathews and Peter Biro argue for a link with Yucatec *kit* 'father' and thus propose the translation 'father' for *chit* (Mathews and Bíró 2006).

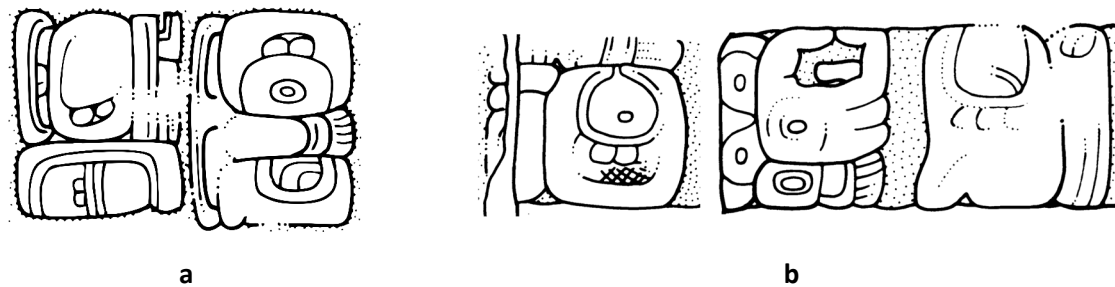<p align="center">a   b</p>

Figure 3. Occurrences of the relational hieroglyph 'child of father' (*u sih u chit ch'ab* [is] his gift, his co-creation'): a) Pusilha, Stela E (drawing by Christian Prager: Prager 2002); b) *sihaj u chit ch'ab* Tamarindito, Hieroglyphic Stairway 3 (copyrighted drawing by Stephen Houston: Houston 1993).

As a preliminary summary, **SIH** represents the most acceptable interpretation of the grapheme T740, connoting the meanings 'be born, created' and 'bestow, offer, give', respectively. Due to the fact that the lexeme *sih* is used in the familial term 'child of father' with the meaning 'give; offering', I prefer the phonetic decipherment *sihyaj* for the birth glyph, and thus the interpretation 'was bestowed'. However, no confirmation in the form of a phonetic substitution of **si-hi** for T740 has been found to date. Thus, only analysis of the context of all occurrences of T740 and the codical variant T812 (Figure 4) can determine the plausibility of this interpretation.
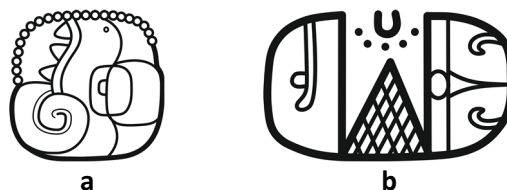

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Figure 4. a) The grapheme T740 and b) its probable codical variant T812 (drawings by Christian Prager, 2018).

In Classic period stone inscriptions from the Maya Lowlands, the grapheme with the logographic reading **SIH** 'bestow' or **SIY** '(be) born' refers in biographical texts to the birth of both historical and supernatural actors, in the latter case frequently as a verbal component of complex anthroponymic phrases (Colas 2004:120–124). Many anthroponyms from Classic era inscriptions represent so-called sentence names or *Satznamen* (Grube 2002:74–75), which use complex predicates to emphasize agentive aspects of preferably supernatural actors, such as *K'inich* associated with the sun, the rain god *Chahk*, or *K'awiil* as a manifestation of kingly power, who, in accordance with their personal name, were portrayed as having been born in the heavens, water, or the sun (Stuart and Houston 1996:295ff., Colas 2004:140–141).

With few exceptions, the personal names of kings were theonyms; in fact, they functioned to highlight the proximity of its bearer to the divine or supernatural world and to connect him with characteristics of supernatural actors or aspects of their actions (Grube 2002:77). According to Grube, rulers thus never referred to themselves using only the name of a supernatural actor; rather, they added adpositions to the nominal phrase that referred to specific characteristics or features of that actor's activities.

| a | b |

Figure 5. The hieroglyph for 'birth' as it appears a) on Yaxchilan, Lintel 30 (3D image by Text Database and Dictionary of Classic Mayan, 2017) and b) as the codical variant on page 83b of the Madrid Codex (drawing from Villacorta and Villacorta [1930]).

No occurrences of the grapheme T740 are known in monumental texts from the Classic period outside the context of birth references. Over 30 years ago, George Taack voiced his suspicion that the grapheme T812 in the Madrid Codex represented the codical variant of T740, and that both graphemes represented the value **ZIJ** (Taack 1976:33). This hypothesis must be confirmed based on the representation on page 83b of the Madrid Codex. This section features an almanac with an illustration of three divine figures (Gods C, H, and A) emerging with raised arms from the middle of a shell or from a split object. As mentioned previously, this motif is widespread in Mesoamerica and represents a visual metaphor for birth (Brinton 1894:75; Spinden 1913:83–84; Kelley 1976:150; Pohl 1983:78).

In the texts corresponding to these scenes (Figures 5, 6), the event is described using the hieroglyph T812-**ya-ja**, followed by the hieroglyph **K'UH**, then by the nominal phrase of the relevant actor. The grapheme sequence **ya-ja** is the suffix sequence that occurs most frequently with the birth hieroglyph T740 (Schele 1982). Based on the morphological and structural correspondences between **SIH-ya-ja** and T812-**ya-ja**, as well as the visual birth metaphor associated with them, it is reasonable to suppose that T812 is in fact the codical variant of T740. According to Gabrielle Vail, there are twelve occurrences of the grapheme T812 in the Madrid Codex (Vail and Hernández 2010).

Figure 6. Page 83 of the Madrid Codex: Illustration and description of the birth of three divine beings referred to in this almanac with the term *k'uh* (illustration from Villacorta and Villacorta [1930]).

The almanac on page 83b (Figure 6) features three *t'ol* with images of gods rising with raised arms from the icon of a shell or from a split or fissure in an unidentified object (Vail und Hernández 2010). The

accompanying text above the individual scenes is formulaic and explains that each image shows a *k'uh* being born or given (*siyaj k'uh / sihyaj k'uh*). This is then followed in the last two hieroglyphic blocks of the individual *t'ol* by the personal names of the actors: first, *Itzamnaaj* or God D with a modifier, then God H with his modifying hieroglyph, and finally the death god or God A, who emerges from a broken object with no diagnostic features resembling an eggshell, rather than from a shell.

The relationship between text and image permits conclusions to be drawn concerning conceptions and beliefs relating to *k'uh*. In the scene of the first *t'ol*, God C or *k'uh* is shown arising from a shell, but the text accompanying or explaining the scene mentions the birth of God D or *Itzamnaaj*: *sihyaj k'uh* 'a *k'uh* is born/bestowed'. This suggests overlap between portrayals of Gods D and C, which allow further inferences about the concept of *k'uh*, namely that God D likely represents a category of gods included under the classificatory term *k'uh*. Evidence for this can be found in both of the subsequent *t'ol* in this almanac, whose texts mention the birth of *k'uh* and in which Gods H and A are illustrated and named. A plausible interpretation of this case is that Gods D, H, and A are encompassed under a category of supernatural actors, which in the Madrid Codex is described as *k'uh*.

The function of the syllabic sign $_{181}$**ja** affixed to T1016 needs further explanation. It could be the absolute suffix *-aj*, which is affixed exclusively to lexical morphemes denoting personal objects, such as clothing, jewelry, or heirlooms (Zender 2004:199–200). If this interpretation is correct, the lexeme *k'uh* refers to a tangible object that thus was not born, but rather given as a gift or handed over (*sihyaj k'uhaj*). However, this interpretation remains tenuous, because only one occurrence of this construction is attested in all texts that were examined. Alternatively, T181 *-aj* could be interpreted as a suffix that is attested in other contexts as denoting 'person, entity' (Stuart 2005:76), whereby *sihyaj k'uhaj* would mean 'it was born, the *k'uh* being'. Another possibility is that T181 could be serving as a phonetic complement for the logogram $_{1016}$**K'UH**, or it could be interpreted as a scribal error, which would not be unusual for the Madrid Codex. In the latter two occurrences of the hieroglyph for *k'uh* on page 83c, the grapheme $_{181}$**ja** is missing; thus, it can be assumed that the $_{181}$**ja** suffixed to $_{1016}$**K'UH** on page 83b is indeed a scribal error.

A securely identifiable occurrence of the hieroglyphic compound *siy / sih + k'uh* with an accompanying pictorial representation is attested on a ceramic vessel of unknown provenience (Kerr 1184; Figure 7) that has been generally dated to the Late Classic (Wichmann 2004a:85). Additional contexts with representations of this sequence from the Post-Classic can be found in the almanacs on pages 83b and 111c of the Madrid Codex. However, because of the uncertain identification of T812 as a codical variant of $_{740}$**SIH / SIJ / SIY**, they remain problematic, and must therefore be discussed in the epigraphic section of this paper.

The iconographic representation of the birth of a god or a human from a shell is a cultural convention from the Post-Classic Maya that is also found in other areas of Mesoamerica. "As the snail emerges from its shell, so does man from the womb of his mother" Eduard Seler once wrote about this conception of birth, thus expressing the visual analogy that these images make between the birthing process of humans and the image of a snail crawling out from its shell (Seler 1902-1923:424). Mircea Eliade referred to the broad dissemination of this visual analogy in his ahistorical and reductionist phenomenology of religious symbolism and demonstrated that sea shells and sea snails represented visual metaphors for fertility, the womb, conception, pregnancy, and birth in the New World more broadly, not only in certain ancient cultural phases (Jackson 1917:55ff.; Eliade 1991:125ff.).

From a phenomenological perspective, the birth of divine beings illustrated and articulated in writing in the Madrid Codex belongs to the greater sum of intercultural evidence for this fertility and life symbolism, whose central elements represent water and its inhabitants, including shells, snails, etc. The discovery of a sacrificial cache in Copan datable to the Middle Classic, which features a three-

dimensional representation of a jade figure of the maize god rising from a shell (Sharer et al. 1991), proves that the motif was attested early on, cross-culturally widespread, and belonged to the cultural inventory of many Maya communities until the time of contact and beyond.
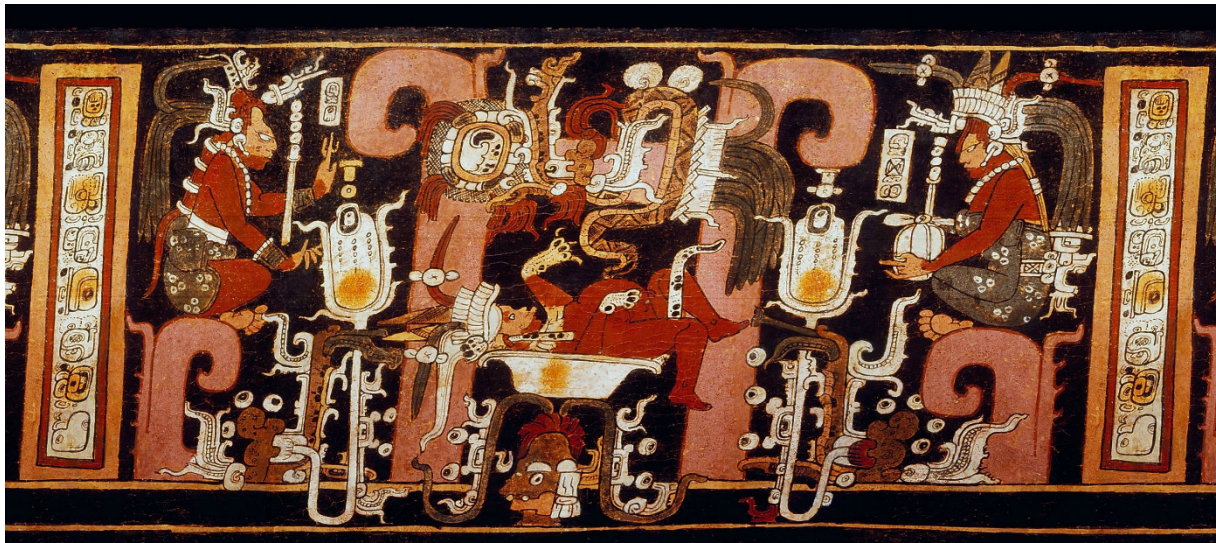

Figure 7. Roll-out photograph of the ceramic vase Kerr 1184 with a visual narrative and accompanying text about the so-called "skull birth" of a *k'uh* with the name *Huk Ye Tok'* at a place described as 'in/at/on the mountain' (*ti witz*). This occurs in the presence of a male (left) and (female) *k'uh* in front of a black background, which indicates a particular mythical landscape related to the creation of the cosmos (Boot 2006:16) (copyrighted photograph by Justin Kerr [www.mayavase.com]).

Among the contemporary Tz'utujiil, for instance, shells still represent cave entrances and portals to the watery underworld, where, according to Tz'utujiil cosmology, rainclouds were born and enter into the world through cave entrances (Christenson 2001:83). In the belief system of many Maya groups, snail shells and sea shells represented the underworld regions of the world and their inhabitants, which were associated in the cosmology with the earth, birth, and re-birth (Thompson 1950:133). Due to a lack of understanding of the causal relationship between these cultural representations, which are clearly distinct temporal and spatially, one must of course be cautious about interpreting this apparently widespread motif. What is comparable is not the motif as a cultural representation, but rather the manner in which people in Mesoamerica or beyond have conceived of or coded the birth of beings or supernatural actors (Paden 2001).

The study of the other contexts of T812 is still outstanding, after the discussion of the hieroglyph T812 as a variant of T740 **SIH** '(be) born; bestow'. Analysis of these contexts is necessary, because with respect to the reading of T812 as **SIH**, it remains open to debate whether the lexeme should be interpreted as '(be) born' or 'bestow'. A glimpse at the relevant sections of the Madrid Codex reveals that the translation of the lexeme *sih* as 'give, bestow' is plausible, and that T812 and T740 should be interpreted as the logogram **SIH** 'give; bestow'. Three attestations of this grapheme are attested in a predicative function in almanacs on page 20c, 83b, 92c, and 111c of the Madrid Codex (Zimmermann 1956:69).
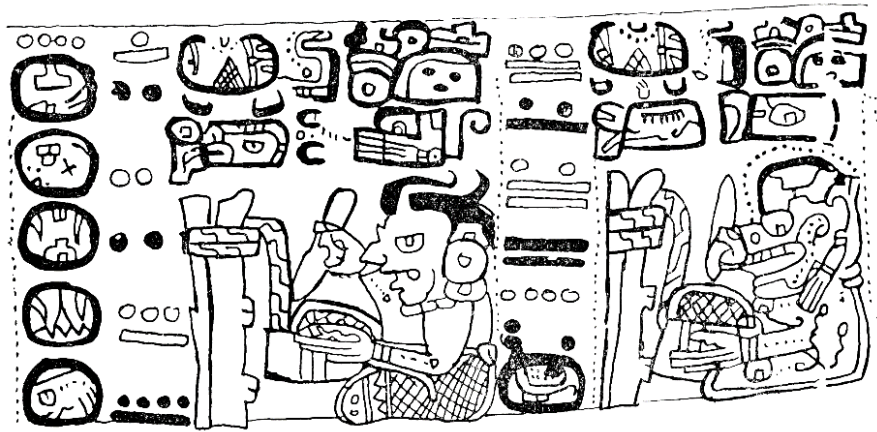
Figure 8. Page 102b of the Madrid Codex: the representation of two gods weaving a textile on a wooden loom that is described in the text with *sihyaj ti te'* 'it is created with a piece of wood' (illustration from Villacorta and Villacorta [1930]).

Two additional occurrences of the sign sequence ₈₁₂**SIH-**₁₂₆**ya-**₁₈₁**ja** (Figure 8) serve as a predicate in the text accompanying two images of an almanac dedicated to weaving textiles (Thomas 1882:118; Förstemann 1902:144; Ciaramella 1999). On the left, the image shows the so-called Goddess O, and in the second *t'ol*, the death god, or God A. Both actors sit in front of an abstract image of a tree or post, to which a weaving frame with a textile is fixed with a cord, and she is working on the textile with a shuttle. The illustration is described in the texts accompanying both scenes with the verb *sihyaj* and the adposition *ti te'* 'on the tree, with wood'. In Colonial era Yukatek Maya, the lexeme *sihyaj* means not only 'be born', but also 'make, create' (Pérez 1866). Thus, 'it was created on the tree/with wood' presents itself as a plausible translation for the text accompanying the weaving scene. Goddess O in the first scene, and God A in the second *t'ol*, weave a textile with the aid of a weaving instrument and are thus active as the actors. According to this reading of the passage, the creator of the codex compares weaving to a creative act or birth.

Figure 9. Both sections in the almanac on page 111c of the Madrid Codex show God D and God A in front of incense burners, in which copal (left) and bones (right) are being burned. In the text, the action is described as *sihyaj k'uh* 'k'uh is created/born', or alternatively, *u sih k'uh* 'he offers *k'uh*' (illustration from Villacorta and Villacorta [1930]).

There is a short almanac in the bottom section of page 111 of the Madrid Codex (Figure 9) whose imagery shows two gods in front of smoking incense burners, with copal burning in the left and bones in the right (Förstemann 1902:159). The almanac constitutes part of the so-called bee chapter, which is dedicated to raising and caring for bees, as well as gathering honey (Ciaramella 2004). The almanac immediately preceding this section deals with the incense burners, honey gathering, and cleaning the bee hives, whereas the following almanac concerns the destruction of the hives. Both actors in this almanac are located in front of smoking incense burners and reach their hands toward them. Hieroglyphs that are employed as icons help indicate that copal and bones are being burned.

The accompanying hieroglyphic text in the first two blocks of each text consists of the sign sequence $_{812}$**SIH**-$_1$**u** $_{1016}$**K'UH**. It can be interpreted as either *u sih k'uh* or *sih[y]aj k'uh*, because the grapheme $_1$**u** that follows the sign T812 represents either an ergative pronoun that should actually have been placed in front of T812, or it is a scribal error instead of the sign $_{181}$**ja** that could indicate the reading *sihyaj* for $_{812}$**SIH**-$_1$**u**. The representation of the incense burner scene and the interpretation as a sacrificial event could indicate that the associated text should be reconstructed as *u sih k'uh* and translated as 'it is the gifting/giving/sacrificing of the *k'uh*', given that the root *zii* means 'offering, gift' in Ch'olti' (Morán 1935). In any case, there is no iconographic evidence from the sacrificial scene that would allow an interpretation of the hieroglyphic sequence as 'birth'. Morphologically, it could be a possessed null nominalization, in which the nominalization is expressed by a null morpheme, and the expression can thus be paraphrased as 'his *k'uh*-giving/his *k'uh*-offering' (Wichmann 2004b:331). In this case, *k'uh* would be the grammatical object, and the portrayed actors, Gods D and A, respectively, would serve as the subject.
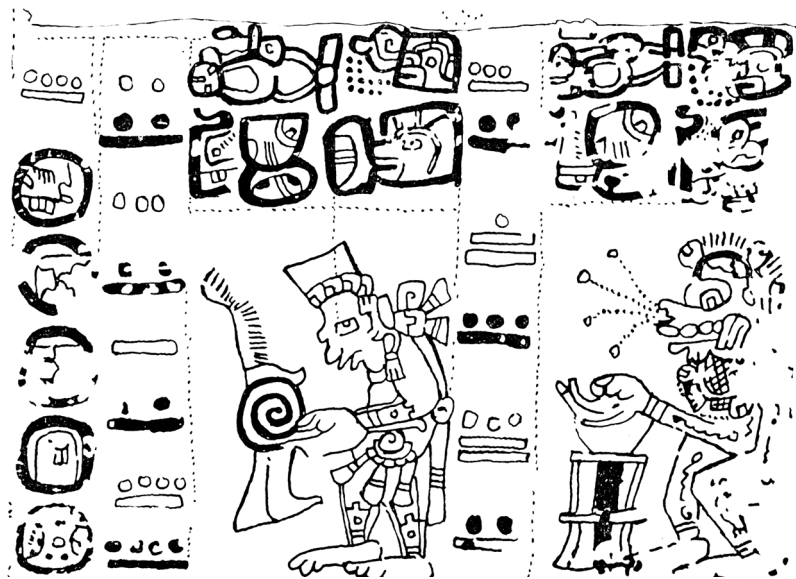

Figure 10. The almanac on page 83c of the Madrid Codex shows God E and God A with ritual paraphernalia like that typically used in ritual blood sacrifices. The event is described in the text as *sihVl k'uh aj ch'abVil* 'k'uh is the gift of the sacrificer' (illustration from Villacorta and Villacorta [1930]).

Another image with comparable content is found on page 83c of the Madrid Codex (Figure 10). The illustration shows God E and God A as actors carrying objects in a slightly hunched position. The left-hand image represents a ball of copal covered in stingray spines and strips of paper, and on the right, God A stands in front of an incense burner to deposit something in it (compare Vail and Hernández 2010). The hieroglyphic text associated with both *t'ol* is, with the exception of the nominal phrases,

identical, and contains the sign sequence $_{57}$**si**-$_{186}$**hi**-$_{568}$**lu** $_{1016}$**K'UH** $_{181}$**ja**-$_{668}$**CH'AB**-$_{24}$**li** + name of god / modifier. The identification of the individual signs in the first glyph block and the reading order are problematic, and thus require further discussion. The identification of the graphemes $_{57}$**si** and $_{186}$**hi** is secure, but it remains unclear whether the middle grapheme is $_{82}$**li,** $_{568}$**lu** or $_{188}$**le**, as Gabrielle Vail suggests in her commentary on the codex (Vail and Hernández 2010). She reads the glyph block as *sileh*, but does not provide a translation.

However, given the sign morphology, it can be assumed that it is a variant of the grapheme $_{568}$**lu** or $_{82}$**li** and that the first block should be transcribed as **si-hi-li** or **si-hi-lu.** There are alternative interpretations for the transliteration, morphological segmentation, and analysis, because of the interpretative approaches to disharmonic and harmonic spellings in Maya writing. According to Lacadena and Wichmann's (2004) model, the sign sequence **si-hi-lu** should be interpreted as *sihi'l*, and according to Houston, Stuart, and Robertson (2004) should be transliterated as *sihl*. Finally, **si-hi-lu** could also be interpreted as a defective spelling of the lemma *sihul*. The affix *-i'l* is attested in neither Classic Mayan nor in modern Mayan languages, but the lemma *sihl* could represent a nominalized form of 'gift (verb)' and thus mean 'gift (noun)',[3] and the phrase *sihl k'uh* on page 83c could be translated with '*k'uh* is a gift'. The following sign sequence, **ja-CH'AB-li**, contains the root *ch'ab*, which translates as 'create; harvest; fast, restrict oneself' and describes the ritual preparation for blood sacrifice (David Stuart, cited in Schele 1992:42; Mathews and Bíró 2006). It is possible that the scribe intended **ja** to represent the agentive classifier *-aj*. If this is the case, this block should be read as *aj ch'abil* 'he of the creation'. It may possibly be a title or an event that was realized over the course of a sacrificial ritual.

Thus, the almanac on page 83c may thematize a sacrificial presentation in which, according to the text, *k'uh* must be presented as an offering. The ritual paraphernalia of this event that are portrayed in the image (stingray spines, paper, copal, and the vessel) are indications that this scene illustrates a blood sacrifice, which is described in the text as '*k'uh* is the offering [of the] sacrificer'. The scene on page 83 of the Madrid Codex is thus comparable in content with that on page 111c, which also illustrates these ritual paraphernalia.
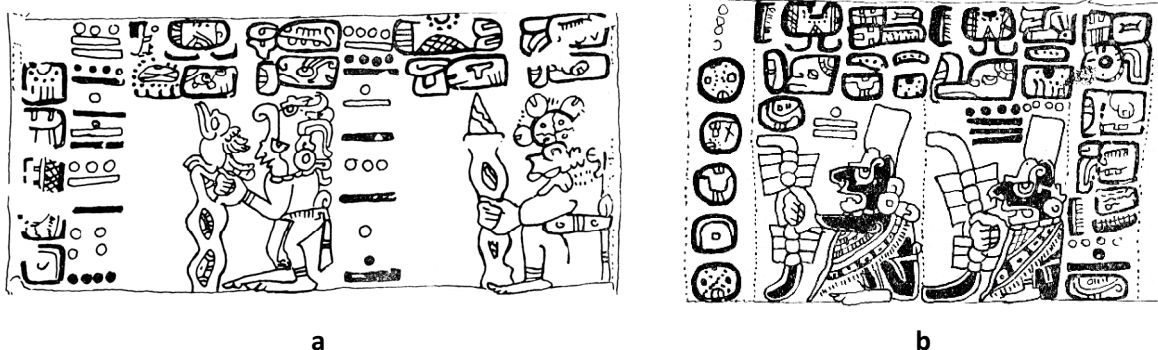

| a | b |

Figure 11. Two almanacs on pages a) 20c and b) 92c of the Madrid Codex: Gods hold spears (left) and blood letters (right) in their hands. In the accompanying text, the event is represented with the hieroglyphs T812:126 SIH-ya, and the text on page 20c reads *u sihya* T736 'his gifting of "death". The associated text on page 92c correspondingly reads as *u sihya* 'its gifting of [object]' (illustrations from Villacorta and Villacorta [1930]).

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[3] "ITZ *sil* regalo [OKMA]; MOP *sijil* regalo; EpM <7u-si-li> /*u-siih.iil*/ offering, gift; CHJ *silab'* regalo; YUK #*si-* [Gates] v regalar; MOP *usija* regalo; pCh *sih-i* vt to give a gift; CHJ *ix si7ej* regalo; PQMp *xisiij* regalo; PQMj *ihrusihej* regalo; PCH *xisiij* regalo; QEQ *xsi* regalo" (Kaufman 2003:786).

The semantic productivity of the interpretation of *sih* as 'give, gift' increases with two further occurrences of the hieroglyph T812 in the Madrid Codex. In two almanacs on pages 20c and 92c (Figure 11), the depicted actors hold in their hands ornamented spears, in the case of page 20c, or objects decorated with triple knots, which may represent sacrificial knives. The blue-colored spear with snail shell ornamentation on page 20c ends with a bird that is hunted by God A with a spearhead in the second *t'ol* of the almanac (Förstemann 1902:40). The texts associated with both almanacs include the predicate ₁**u** ₈₁₂**SIH-**₁₂₆**ya > *u sihya***, whereby *ya* serves as a nominalizing suffix for transitive verbs, and the predicate can thus be translated as 'his gifting, giving' (Stuart et al. 1999:II-36).

The object on page 92c presumably represents an instrument for ritual bloodletting, on whose upper end feathers were attached, and whose bottom featured a sharp point for cutting into the body. One feature of this implement is the triple knots, known from illustrations of bloodletting instruments from the Classic period (Figure 12; Joralemon 1974; Schele and Miller 1986; Vail and Hernández 2010). Given the identification of the bloodletting instrument and the spear point, it can be assumed that both almanacs are dedicated to ritual bloodletting, which is described in the adjacent text as *u sihya* 'his gift, offering'.
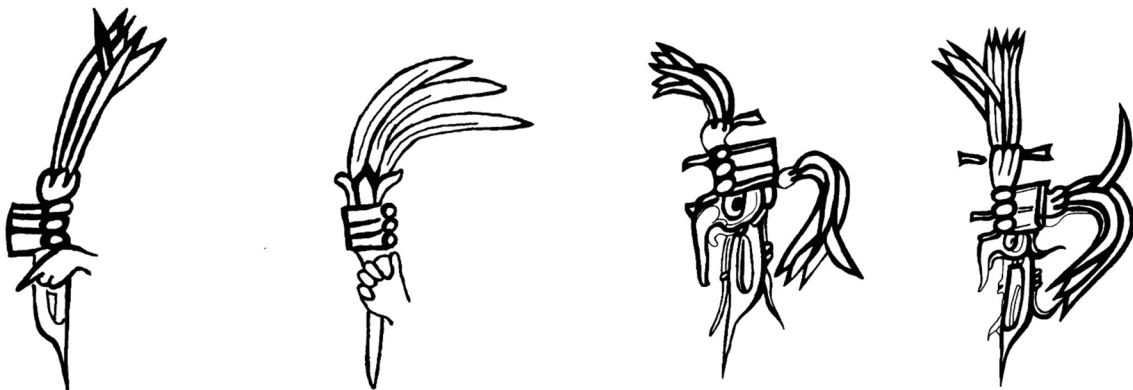

Figure 12. Representations of bloodletting implements from the Late Classic (copyrighted drawing by Peter Joralemon [1974:70–71]).

Summary

Analysis of all occurrences of the grapheme T740 and its codical variant T812, which have been identified as the 'birth' hieroglyph, indicate that the grapheme denotes the lexeme **SIH** with the meaning 'gift (verb), give' and metaphorically connotes the semantic field of 'birth'. The text-image contexts in the Madrid Codex that are discussed above extend the alternative interpretation of the verb *sih* as 'sacrifice, gift'.

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