

REFORMED EGYPTIAN AND MAYAN GLYPHS

By Mark F. Cheney

© September 2014

Most epigraphers are familiar with the term 'head variants' used to describe many of the Mayan glyphs found on stelae, altars, walls and stairways in the excavated ruins of Maya cities. This term refers to the head-like forms of the glyphs which represent different sounds, words, numerals or ideas. The head shape is sometimes recognizable as a jaguar, a bat, a tapir, or a man, but is very often misshapen or grotesque, and is presumed to represent some monstrous deity or demon from the Maya pantheon. Head glyphs, however, are often only pictograms for parts of words or ideas, possibly because of representative sounds in the Mayan language, and they are referred to as variants because each different scribe drew variations of the head glyph in his own manner. Rather than letters, each symbol was found to represent syllables, or at least a morpheme, a unit which could not be divided into smaller meaningful parts. Also, many glyphs have both a prefix and a suffix as do English words.

In a 1936 edition of the book, Joseph Smith as a Translator, by R. C. Webb, on page 17 is copied the first line of Hieroglyphs from the Rosetta Stone, which the author indicates exhibit "the Egyptian method of "piling" characters into squares; a feature also found in Maya inscriptions."

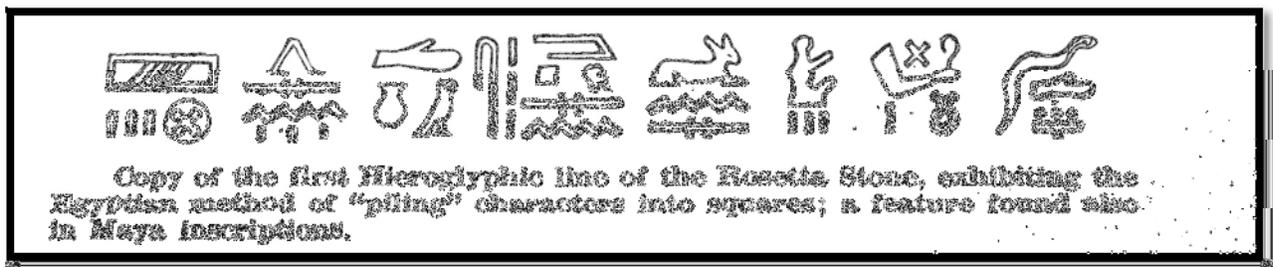


Fig. 1 - The first line of hieroglyphs from the Rosetta Stone, Webb, pg.17

On page 91 of Webb's book, we find the use of a head variant in an Egyptian sentence or phrase to mean the word "at":

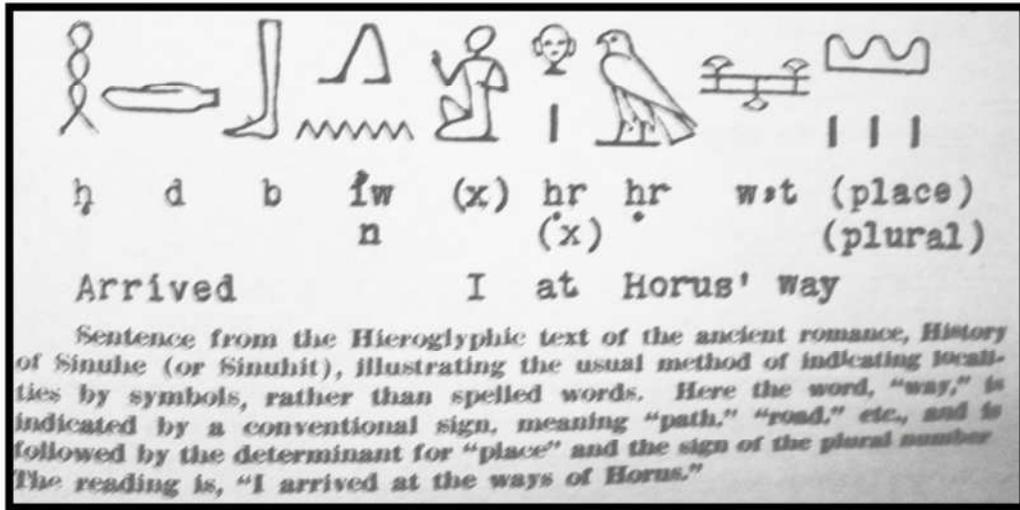


Fig. 2 – From Joseph Smith as a Translator, J. C. Webb, pg. 91

This is similar to the construction of Egyptian hieroglyphs. In Egyptian, when used by itself, the head of a calf stands for the word "joy," but it may be part of another word, adding only the sound from the Egyptian word for calf. The head of a certain bird when used alone meant "offering," and so forth.

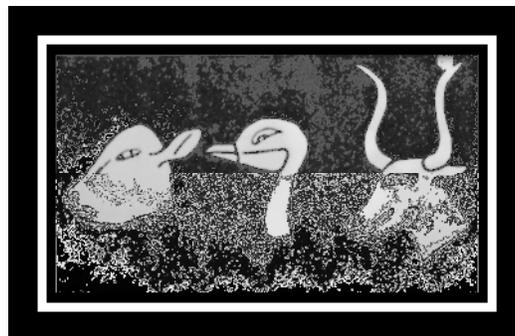


Fig. 3 Various animal head glyphs

Frontal and side views of a human head when together translate to the phrase, "on behalf of", to wit:



Fig. 4 (& 3 above) - Egyptian glyphs from EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHICS by Stephane Rossini

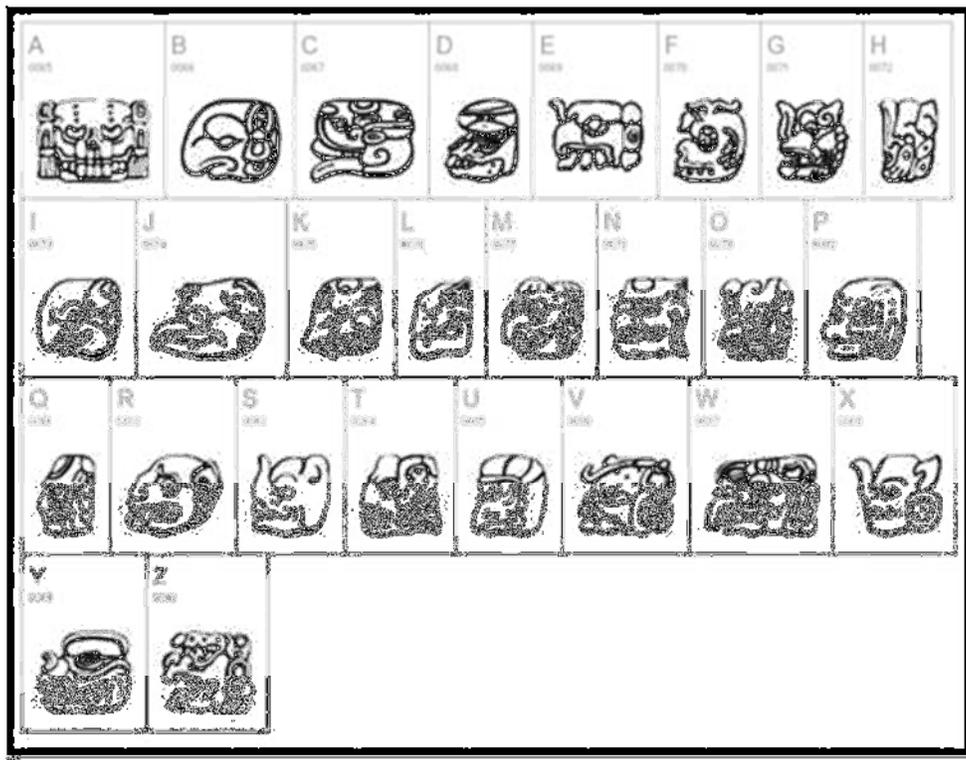


Fig. 5 - Some common Mayan head variants

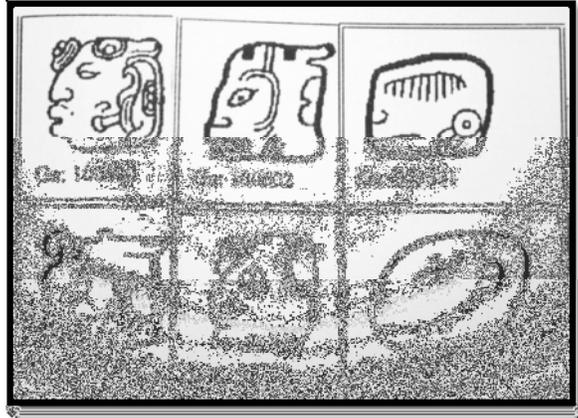


Fig. 6 - More head glyphs from the Epigraphic Database Project on the internet

<http://jefferson.village.EDU>

Further, it is just as relevant in a comparative analysis that full bodies of people, gods and animals are used in both Egyptian and Mayan glyphs.

As I discovered these things in my studies, I could not help but recall the words of Jacob in his brief contribution to the Book of Mormon:

"And if there were preaching which was sacred, or revelation which was great, or prophesying, that I should engraven the **heads** of them upon these plates..." Jacob 1:4 (bold print by author)

The footnote for this scripture indicates the word 'heads' used here means "the dominant important items." This is certainly correct; however, could this not inclusively refer to the actual symbols of importance which are "engraven...upon these plates"? These head-like symbols are one of the most predominant characteristics of written Mayan glyphs. (See Figs. 5 & 6.) Perhaps, like myself, you have pictured Jacob arduously engraving the "Reformed Egyptian" (Mormon 9:23) characters on the metal plates according to the "commandment" of his brother, Nephi, and explaining further that he "should write upon these plates a few of the things which (he) considered to be most precious." (Jacob 1:2) It is my suggestion that at least one or more of the

written languages of Mesoamerica could reasonably have evolved at least partially from the "Reformed Egyptian" of the Book of Mormon, which in turn came from the written language of the Middle East.

It would be easy to say this mention of "heads" is coincidental; if so, it is one of very many such coincidences which I indicate in other articles.