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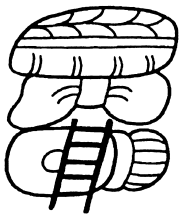

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A Possible Western Ch'olan Innovation Attested on Itzan Stela 17[1]

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This note discusses the possible attestation of the Modern Ch'ol relational noun *cha'an* 'belonging; cause; because of; for, in order to, so that' in Classic Lowland Mayan texts.[2] This relational noun can be used in possessed (1a-b) or unpossessed (1c) form in Ch'ol (Aulie and Aulie 1999:30)[3]:

(1) CH'OL
- *a*. 'para (for, in order to)': *Tsa' til-iy-on cha'an mic tsik-tesä-b'en-et* 'Vine para avisarte (I came (in order) to tell you)'.
- *b*. 'por (because of)': *Ma'an-ix tsa' til-i cha'an ja'al* 'Ya no vino por la lluvia (S/he didn't come because of the rain)'.
- *c*. 'of, belong(ing)': *k cha'an* 'mío (of mine)', *a cha'an* 'tuyo (of yours)', *i cha'an* 'suyo/a (of his/hers)'.

[1] This research has been made possible in part by funds provided by the University Research Council at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[2] This paper represents an elaboration of a very brief mention of this set of spellings from Itzan Stela 17 first made in Mora-Marín (2003), and of a somewhat more detailed account of the evidence made in Mora-Marín (n.d.)—both are available at http://www.unc.edu/~davidmm.

[3] In this sense it parallels the uses and meanings of *tya'al* in Yucatec Maya.

The following example from Ch'ol illustrates the usage of this particle as 'because of' in a sense of causation (Whittaker and Warkentin 1965:59, 102)[4]:

(2)	Mach	abi	an-ik	i	tas-il
	NEG	REP	EXIST-NEG.SCOPE	3sERG	cover-POSS
	jini	pan=chan	**i**	**cha'an-ob**	
	DET	sky	3sERG	cause-PL	

'There was not any covering for the sky **because of them**'.

(3)	Cha'an	y-om	i	k'el	
	For	3sERG-want	3sERG	see	
	chuki	tsa'	ujt-i	ti'	cholel
	what	TERM	happen-CMP	PREP	milpa
	cha'an	jini	ik'		
	because.of	DET	wind		

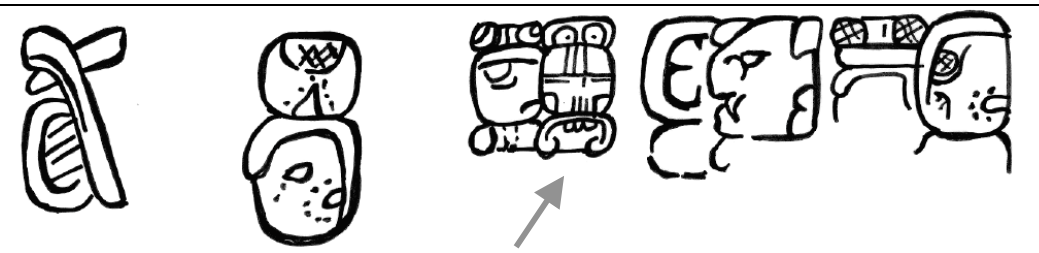
'For she wanted to see what happened to the cornfield **because of the wind**'.

The earliest glyphic examples of this innovation are found in the western lowlands, at sites like Palenque and Tortuguero, by ca. A.D. 669, as discussed by Justeson and Fox (n.d.). These use T206 SNAKE, based on Proto-Ch'olan **chan* 'snake', as a rebus for *cha'an* 'from, since; about, for, because of'. The same relational noun may be attested on Itza Stela 17, dated to ca. A.D. 751, and illustrated in **Fig. 1**.

Figure 1. T561 as *cha'an* 'because.of'.

Passage	Verb	Patient or Location or Instrument	**'u-CHAN-na**	Agent/Causer
a) F12-F13				
b) H3-H4				

[4] 3s = third person singular, ABS = absolutive, CMP = completive (status), DAT = dative (recipient, addressee, malefactive, benefactive), DET = determiner, ERG = ergative, EXIST = existential particle, IVZR = intransitivizer, MPASS = mediopassive, NEG = negativizer, NEG.SCOPE = negativizer scope, PASS = passive, PL = plural, POSS = possessive suffix, PREP = preposition, REP = reportative, TERM = terminative (aspect).

c) H10-H12	
d) K5-K7	
Drawings by this author based on preliminary drawing of Itzan Stela 17 by Ian Graham.	

The following clauses are present in this passage:

(4) Glyph Blocks: F12-F13

K'AL-ja	**ti-ko-?tz'o-?ma**			
k'al-aj-Ø-Ø	ti	?		
wrap-PASS-CMP-3sABS	PREP	[LOCATION/INSTRUMENT]		
'u-CHAN-na	**B'ALAM-ma**	**?[b'a]-TE'-'AJAW**		
u-cha'an	b'ahläm	te'	??	ajaw
3sERG-because	jaguar	tree	?	lord

'It was wrapped with/at ?. It was because of Jaguar Tree ? Lord.'

(5) Glyph Blocks: H3-H4

'u-jo-ch'o-wa	**?**T122**-?-'IK'(NAL)-na-li**		
u-joch'-ow-Ø	?-?-wind		
3sERG-drill-CMP-3sABS	??		
'u-CHAN-na	**lo-?-?**	**B'ALAM-?ma**	**LAKAM-TUN-ni-'AJAW**
u-cha'an	?-?	b'ahläm	lakam=tun-ajaw
3sERG-because	?	jaguar	great=stone-lord

'He drilled the ? wind. It was because of ? Jaguar Great Stone Lord.'

(6) Glyph Blocks: H10-H12

ju-b'u-yi	**?'a-?'IK'(NAL)**		**?-?B'AK-ki**		
jub'-uy-i-Ø	?-?		?-?		
fall-IVZR-CMP-3sABS	??		??		
'u-CHAN-na	**?-B'ALAM-ma**	**'aj-K'AL-B'AK**	**?[b'a]-TE'-'AJAW**		
u-cha'an	? b'ahläm	aj+k'al-b'ak	?-te'	ajaw	
3sERG-because	?jaguar	MALE+twenty-prisoner	?-tree	lord	

'The ? ? Prisoner descended. It was because of ? Jaguar, He of Twenty Prisoners, ? Tree Lord.'

(7) Glyph Blocks: K5-K7

CH'AK-ka	**?-?TUN**
ch'a[h]k-a(j)-Ø-Ø	?-tun
chop[MPASS]-IVZR-CMP-3sABS	?-stone

'u-CHAB'-ya	**'u-CHAN-na**
u-chab'-ijiy-Ø	u-cha'an
3sERG-take.care.of-PERF-3sABS	3sERG-because

K'IN-ni/chi-B'ALAM-ma ?'aj-?-LAKAM-ma ?TUN-?'AJAW-?wa
k'in(ich) b'ahläm ?aj+lakam=tun ?ajaw
sun(ny) jaguar ?MALE+great=stone ?lord
'The ? Stone was/got chopped. Sunny Jaguar, He (who is) a Great Stone Lord, did it, it was because of him.'

In these examples, especially (4), the T1.561 expression, **'u-CHAN-na**, is normally preceded by an argument in underlying PATIENT role—functioning as an intransitive subject—of an intransitive predicate *jub'-uy-i-Ø* (fall-IVZR-CMP-3sABS) 'it fell' in (6), and *ch'a[h]k-a(j)-Ø-Ø* (chop[(M)PASS]-IVZR-CMP-3sABS) 'it was/got chopped' in (7). At the same time, in both cases, **'u-CHAN-na** is also followed by the argument in underlying AGENT role, expressed as a possessor of the noun spelled **CHAN-na**. Glyph block L5 shows **'u-**T526**-ya** and **'u-CHAN-na** in succession. The first glyph, **'u-**T526**-ya** (e.g. **'u-**T526 ~ **'u-**T526**-ya** ~ **'u-**T526**-ji-ya** ~ **'u-**T526**-ji**), is commonly used to express the agent or overseer of an action or event. I believe this is meant either as a lexico-semantic couplet, or as a clarification by the scribe, who made it clear that **'u-**T526**-**ya, possibly **'u-CHAB'-ya** based on the term *chab'i* 'to watch over someone' attested in Tzeltalan, as several epigraphers have proposed, and **'u-CHAN-na** are equivalent at least in this context. This strongly suggests that **'u-CHAN-na** represents Ch'ol *cha'an* 'por, a causa de (by, because of, on account of)'.

This does not mean that I am prepared to suggest that this is an exclusive Ch'ol innovation, necessarily, for I have yet to check thoroughly for possible cognates elsewhere. As I understand it, Chontal and Ch'orti' use the cognate forms *tub'a* and *twa'* (Pérez Martínez 1994; Keller and Luciano 1997), respectively, analyzable as *t-u-b'a* PREP-3sERG-head/self/dative, to mean 'for; in order to', while Chontal also uses *u-k'a* for 'because of, so that' (3sERG-cause) (Keller and Luciano 1997), a reflex of the form attested as Acalan (Classic Chontal) *k'al* 'cause' (Bricker 1986), while Ch'orti' uses *u-men* 'because of' (3sERG-do(ing)) (Pérez Martínez 1994). For now, and pending a more thorough review of the Mayan languages for possible cognates of *cha'an*, it seems that Chontal and Ch'orti' use different expressions, unrelated ones, and therefore, that the expression on Itzan Stela 17 is more likely an innovation of a community ancestral to the Ch'ol speakers.

In conclusion, I propose that **'u-CHAN-na** is at least equivalent to **'u-?CHAB'-ya** in the reviewed context on Itzan Stela 17; any possibility of an actual etymological relationship between the terms represented by these two glyphic expressions awaits further comparative lexical analysis. It is likely that this expression represents the form *u cha'an*, which would be equivalent to Ch'ol *i cha'an* 'of hers/his; his/her doing'. This relational noun *cha'an* is uniquely attested in Ch'ol, and thus the Itzan Stela 17 instances could suggest that the scribe who composed it was a member of a speech community that would eventually give rise to the Ch'ol speech community.

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