

Mention of Spearthrower Owl in the Caractors Document

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January 16, 378 AD was one of the most significant historical dates in the Maya city of Tikal located in the Maya heartland of the Petén (modern Guatemala). On that day arrived a warlord named Sihyaj K'ahk'. Records at Tikal indicate his title as "West K'awil." The primary source for the information discussing Sihyaj K'ahk' at this location is Mayanist David Stuart (Stuart 2000). This date also appears in records at Uaxactún, a Maya city 15 miles north of Tikal, along with Sihyaj K'ahk's name glyph. The day after his arrival, the king of Tikal, Jaguar Paw, is dead. Less than a year later a new king assumes power named Nun Yax Ayin. Nun Yax Ayin is depicted on Stela 31 of Tikal as a Teotihuacan warrior. Nun Yax Ayin has been called a foreign king or at least "one who consorted with highland people." Nun Yax Ayin was the son of an individual known as "Spear-Thrower Owl," who was not the king prior to Nun Yax Ayin, which king was Jaguar Paw as just mentioned. The clear conclusion is that Jaguar Paw's death was a direct result of the arrival of Sihyaj K'ahk', likely by execution, perhaps as part of a military action or coup, followed by the installation of a new king that was not Jaguar Paw's son. Other inscriptions at Tikal indicate that this new king was lesser in power and subject to Sihyaj K'ahk'.

In the small site of Bejucal, approximately 12 miles northwest of Tikal, on a monument corresponding to 393 AD, reference is made of a date 12 years earlier in 381 AD of the accession of a lord named Jaguar's Tail. The monument refers to Sihyaj K'ahk' as an overlord to Jaguar's Tail and refers to Sihyaj K'ahk' with the title Kalomte'. This title is also found with Sihyaj K'ahk' on Tikal Stela 4, 31, and on a Teotihuacan styled stone at Marcador in Tikal, and in Mayan it means "high king" or overlord of conquered territories. The latest mention of Sihyaj K'ahk' is in 393 AD in Bejucal. Inscriptions at Bejucal indicate that Sihyaj K'ahk' was also the overlord of El Zotz, a site which is a few miles southwest of Bejucal (Houston 2008). Additional murals at Holcum, located east of Tikal, in a building commemorating the first anniversary of Sihyaj K'ahk's arrival in Tikal, show Teotihuacan warriors accompanying a new king during his ascension to the throne, with the supposition that the new king was installed at the same time as the Tikal replacement (Wade 2020).

El Zotz, at that time, was considered hostile to Tikal and existed along a borderland between two larger kingdoms of which Tikal was one. Based on a variety of epigraphic evidence, El Zotz is indicated to be politically subordinate to El Peru. Two exalted titles or "Emblem glyphs" associated with the ruler of El Zotz are the same Emblem glyphs linked to the distant mayor dynastic seat of Yaxchilan, Mexico, located on the Usumacinta River. El Peru was an archenemy of Tikal and was an ally of the dynasty of Calakmul, Campeche.

At El Peru, a city 45 miles west of Tikal, Stela 15 references the Sihyaj K'ahk' arrival with a date of January 8, 378 AD, just eight days before his arrival in Tikal. The inscription is missing important fragments, so it is not known what took place on that date. Given his title indicating the direction "West" and his travel from east to west, it seems as if he came from the east.

There is no evidence that Spear-Thrower Owl, the father of Nun Yax Ayin (the king installed at Tikal), was ever king at Tikal or even went to Tikal. There are numerous associations with his name and Teotihuacan militaristic iconography. In addition, the two components of his name link to a frequent ikon in Teotihuacan known as *lechuza y armas* (owl and weapons). Some variants of his

name at Tikal are similar to this Teotihuacan motif. The *lechuza y armas* motif appears on circular medallions worn on the collars of warrior figurines at Teotihuacan and is evidence of a militaristic order comparable to the later Jaguar or Eagle Orders of the much later Mexica Aztec. The death of Spear-Thrower Owl is recorded as 439 AD, so he was a king somewhere and ruled for over six decades (374-439 AD), with the conjecture being that he may have been the current ruler of Teotihuacan.

King Aaron₃

The name of the warlord Sihyaj K'ahk' who led the party of arriving foreigners in the Tikal area is found on Glyph C18 of Stela 31 at Tikal. The sign on the left depicts an iguana looking upwards. It is a logograph, conveying the meaning of an entire word, in this case the verb "to be born" (Maya glyph Number T740:126.181). The element on the right represents flames or smoke and is a logograph for "fire" (Maya glyph Number T122)(see figure1). This person's name was thus "Fire is Born", or Sihyaj K'ahk'.



Figure 1 Glyph C18 of Stela 31 at Tikal (www.mesoweb.com 2023)

In the Book of Mormon, Mormon, at the age of 20, indicates that he battled a Lamanite king named Aaron₃ just prior to the completion of year 330 (January 10, 325 AD) after the coming of Christ (Mormon 2:9), which given the base date of the Coming of Christ calendar in 6 BC would place this in 324 AD. No other Lamanite king is named for the balance of the Nephite/Lamanite war that led to the final destruction of the Nephites. Mormon indicates that before the final battle that he wrote an epistle to the "king of the Lamanites" (Mormon 6:2-3). Is it possible chronologically that Fire is Born is the Lamanite King Aaron₃? If the Lamanite king was young as was Mormon when he became head of one Lamanite army, say fifteen, then his birth would have been around 309 AD. With that birth date he would have been around 67 years old when he came to El Peru and Tikal, and 70 years old when he is identified with installing the lord at Bejucan.

Perhaps the best evidence that Sihyaj K'ahk' (Born of Fire) is in fact Aaron₃ is the Hebrew etymology of the name Aaron₃. First it must be recognized that multiple etymologies are possible for two different individuals with the same names, this has been shown to be the case for Noah in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon (Grover 2023, 169-71. Two of the possibilities involving the formative etymology of the Biblical name Aaron₃ is from the verb הרה (*hera*) which means to conceive a child or to be or become pregnant (Genesis 16:4, Exodus 2:2, Isaiah 26:18) with the related masculine noun הריון (*herayon*), meaning conception of pregnancy (Hosea 9:11, Ruth 4:13) and also the masculine noun אור (*'ur*), meaning flame (Isaiah 50:11, Ezekiel 5:2) (Abarim Publications 2021). The Lamanite King Aaron₃ looks to be the one and the same King Sihyaj K'ahk'.

This translation intent in the Book of Mormon with regards to names seems to have been a translation with a primary purpose of conveying the actual underlying meaning, and a secondary purpose of remaining true to the original languages of Biblical Hebrew, Egyptian and/or Sumerian (with a few in Greek) while retaining principles of name philology. A similar type of practice is widespread in Mesoamerica and is called “loan translation” (Carmack et al 2007). “Loan translation” (aka calques) is where an expression is translated word for word into other languages. For example, in most Mesoamerican languages the word for ‘egg’ is ‘bird-stone’. The concept was clearly loaned from one language to another, but when it was loaned, it was incorporated by translating it into the native language, not by borrowing by transliteration of a foreign word. There were a variety of word types in Mesoamerica where “loan translation” took place:

Calendrical terms, place names, personal names, and even metaphorical couplets passed from one language community to the other in the form of calques, or semantic loans, in which ideas were translated without the phonological structures associated with them in a given language. (Wright-Carr et al 2013)

The Book of Mormon chronology during this time (see table 1) is consistent with Fire is Born being Aaron₃. The size of the Lamanite overall armies grew progressively larger from being able to be defeated with a Nephite army of 30,000 in year 321 (315 AD), to the Nephites being able to clear the land of Lamanites in 349 (343 AD), to being outnumbered by the Lamanites in year 366-367 (360-61 AD), to the Lamanites not being able to be numbered in 375 (369 AD) (Mormon 4:17) because there were too many, and finally in 385 (379 AD) the greatness of their numbers filled every Nephite soul with “terror” (Mormon 6:8). If the growth of the Lamanites was by birth rate alone, one would have expected the Nephite military numbers to keep up with the Lamanites.

Since the increase in size of the Lamanite armies was so much greater than the Nephites, it is fairly obvious that the Lamanites were taking control over other armies, or at least were allying with additional armies. This is consistent with the apparent growing power of Fire is Born, especially considering he gained control of Tikal early in 378 AD, just a little over a year before the final Nephite battle (sometime in the year 385, the start of year 385 is December 28, 378 AD). Just before this time around 377 AD, Mormon had asked Fire is Born for time to gather his people at Cumorah for the 379 AD final battle. It would be consistent for Fire is Born to grant a short reprieve as he was also consolidating a huge force of added power during this exact time frame in Tikal and other Maya cities. This massive increase in forces was unknown to Mormon so the arrival of such a massive force of Lamanites was a surprise and terror to the Nephites (Mormon 6:8). A summary of the Nephite battles during the period of Aaron₃ are as follows:

Table 1 Nephite Battle Dates

<u>Nephite years</u>	<u>AD year</u>	<u>Summary</u>
321	315 AD	Number of battles on the borders of Zarahemla by the waters of Sidon, 30,000 Nephites, Lamanites withdrew
	315-319 AD	Gaddiantons are noted as among the Lamanites
325	319 AD	General war
325	319 AD	Mormon first went forth against the Lamanites
327-30	321-24 AD	Lamanites attack and Nephites lose territory, the land was filled with

		Gaddiantons, and Lamanites, a Lamanite King Aaron ₃ came against Mormon's army of 42,000 with an army of 44,000
344-49	338-43 AD	Nephites are attacked flee northward before the Lamanites Lamanites attack again with an army of 50,000, Nephites defeat them with an army of 30,000 and retake the lands of their possession against the Gaddiantons and the Lamanites
350	344 AD	Treaty made where the land southward up to the narrow passage goes to the Lamanites
360	354 AD	The king of the Lamanites (Aaron ₃) sends an epistle of battle
361-366	355-60 AD	A series of attacks and counterattacks between the Lamanites and Nephites involving primarily the city of Desolation
367	361 AD	The Nephites clear their lands of the Lamanites
375 -379	369-73 AD	Lamanites attack in huge numbers, the Nephites flee and lost territory, Nephites stop them temporarily
380	374 AD	Lamanites come again in great numbers, Nephites flee
381-383	375-77 AD	Nephites march forth before the Lamanites, Mormon writes an epistle to the king of the Lamanites (Aaron ₃) to meet at Cumorah
385	379 AD	Last battle of the Nephites
401	395 AD	All Nephites have been hunted down, the Lamanites are at war with each other, only Lamanites and Gaddiantons still exist in the land

Also consistent with Aaron₃ is the affiliation and influence with Teotihuacan, which itself is also consistent with the Gaddiantons. The correlation of the Gaddiantons with Teotihuacanos was developed by Brant Gardner in 2007 (Gardner 2007, 17-29). Essentially, the Teotihuacanos operated as trade operatives (including local resident merchants) to maneuver politically to gain control and rulership. The quick removal and death of Jaguar Paw also smacks of a Gaddianton type of tactic and sort of modus operandi of the early Gaddiantons in the book of Helaman, in murdering and deposing government officials.

Teotihuacan architectural features started to show up among the Maya from 250-350 AD. The Book of Mormon notes that the Gaddiantons start to appear after year 260 (255 AD) (4 Nephi 1:42) so the correlation is consistent. A recently discovered Teotihuacan "embassy" in Tikal consists of an enclosed courtyard and stair-step pyramid appearing to be a miniature version of a structure called La Ciudadela, or The Citadel, in Teotihuacan. That citadel contained a temple known as the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent and a 38-acre courtyard large enough to accommodate 100,000 people. The smaller version in the Maya city of Tikal not only has the same layout, but it also has the same orientation. Four months of excavation of this building in Tikal revealed a structure built in six different stages. Researchers do not know much about the first stage of construction yet, but the second stage dated to about 250 AD and is reminiscent of architecture found in Central Mexico. The

third stage, built soon after, resembles The Citadel of Teotihuacan. The pyramid and courtyard were even oriented 13 degrees east of true north, very similar to ceremonial structures in Teotihuacan, which were situated 15 degrees east of true north (Pappas 2021).

Between years 300 and 305 (295-300 AD) the Gaddianton robbers spread “over all the face of the land” (4 Nephi 4:46). The Gaddianton’s were noted as being among the Lamanites around 318 AD (Mormon 1:18) and in year 330 (325 AD) (Mormon 2:8). The Mesoamerican archeological record is completely consistent with the Book of Mormon chronology.

Aaron₃ is identified as a Lamanite (Mormon 2:9, Moroni 9:17); however, the military affiliation and alliance of the Gaddiantons and the Lamanites seems to be implied given the fact that the Nephites had to clear both groups from the land southward and then enter into a treaty with both groups (Mormon 2:27-28). While the Nephites considered the Gaddiantons as enemies, they are only mentioned once as sometimes militarily engaging with the Nephites prior to the peace treaty together with the Lamanites, and never directly engaging with the Nephites after the peace treaty in the year 350. It seems that the military force was the Lamanites, with perhaps the Gaddiantons providing strategic support although unmentioned. The Book of Mormon, at the outset of reestablishment of the Gaddiantons, describes the “secret oaths” and “combinations.” Once established, the Gaddiantons are openly identifiable as individuals and as a group, so the Teotihuacanos should not be thought of as needing to be in disguise to be considered Gaddiantons as was the case early in Nephite history. The *lechuza y armas* medallions of the Teotihuacanos amongst the Maya look to be an identifier of an elite militaristic unit, again reminiscent of the Book of Mormon Gaddiantons.

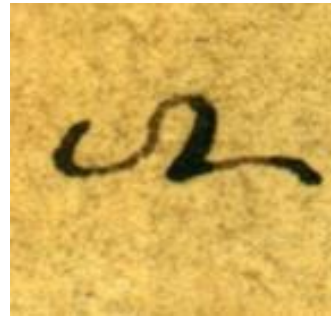
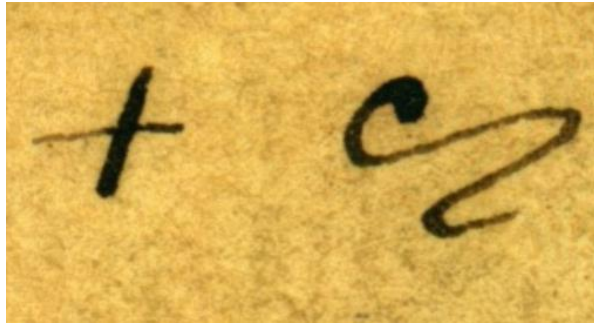
The geography of the area under the influence of Fire is Born is also consistent with the Book of Mormon geography. Under the Sorenson model, the Nephite/Lamanite boundary is somewhere not far west of the Usumacinta River. The shared Emblem Glyphs of El Zotz (where Fire is Born served as overlord) and the dynastic seat of Yaxchilan on the Usumacinta River imply a shared rulership. Thus, the early attacks from Aaron₃ against the Nephites when Mormon was younger would indicate that the Usumacinta boundary along which Aaron₃ operated are consistent with the Book of Mormon narrative.

It is interesting that the Gaddiantons are not indicated to have broken the year 350 truce that was made with the Nephites, only the Lamanites. The Gaddiantons were not involved in any battle with the Nephites after the truce, and only the Lamanites were implied to have ended the truce. The text seems to indicate that it was more of a 10 year “cease fire” as the Nephites during that time “prepared their lands and their arms against the time of battle” (Mormon 3:1) anticipating an end to the “cease fire.” After the end of the tenth year, King Aaron₃ provided notice to Mormon that they were coming again to battle, which indicates that notice was to be provided to recommence hostilities at the end of the cease fire.

Considering that the Teotihuacanos were interested in trade routes, it is notable that the geographic boundaries of the truce gave the Nephites the land northward “even to the narrow passage which led to the land northward” (Mormon 2:29), so it seems that the narrow passage itself was not included in what the Nephites controlled. The land southward was given to the Lamanites, and a primary trade route was left open for use (or even controlled) by the Gaddiantons, providing a route for these Teotihuacanos to continue to access Teotihuacan and the Maya in the land southward, even during the Nephite/Lamanite conflict. This also provides a reasonable explanation as to why the Nephites did not flee further north as the Teotihuacanos were to the north and controlled territory to the west and north and the Nephites were still maintaining a peace treaty with them.

Gaddianton Tribe (Robbers)

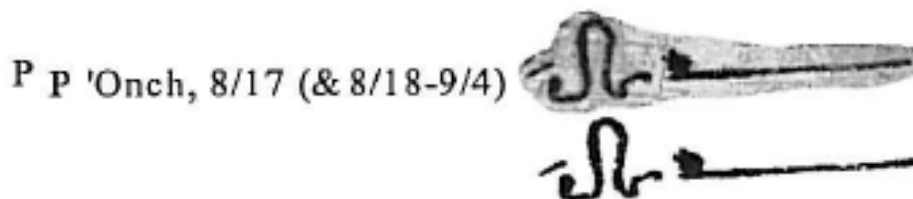
The Caractors Document contains a calendar of prophetic events which mentions the Gaddianton siege prior to the coming of Christ. The Gaddianton tribe consists of Characters 141 and 142 from the Caractors Document, and is later reflected as Character 181:



What the Caractors Document indicates is actually the name of the Gaddianton tribe. In the Egyptian Demotic, according to the *Chicago Demotic Dictionary*, the following character means “wealth, riches; (good) fortune” (CDD R [01.1], 50) and constitutes the Egyptian word *rnn.t*. The glyph match with the Caractors Document and Gaddianton is nearly exact:



(Erichsen 1954, 250)

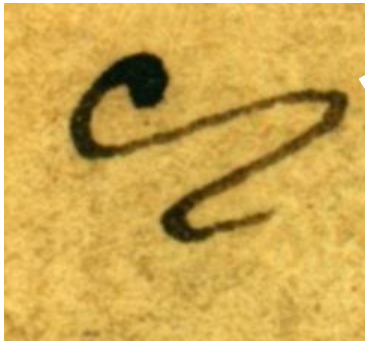


Ptolemaic Papyrus, Onchsheshonqy, CDD R (01.1), 50 (*Chicago Demotic Dictionary* 2014)

The identification as the Gaddiantons as a "tribe" or "-ite" here is a little bit puzzling since the Book of Mormon does not identify this group as an -ite, which would indicate that the group has, or originally had a king. It is important to note that this section of the Caractors Document looks to have been written by Moroni after the completion of Mormon's abridgment. He has utilized the modified name, or in the alternative, modified the original glyph to accommodate the name of Spearthrower Owl.

In my original translation of the Caractors Document I did notice that there were a couple of hieratic Egyptian glyphs that were also matches to the Gaddianton glyph with creative positioning. The first was the owl glyph (G17) which in hieratic is Möller number 196 (reverse and slight rotation).

G17	
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Character 142



Hieratic is Möller number 196

For those unfamiliar with ancient Egypt, the monumental form of Egyptian is the full form glyphs depicting various birds, reptiles, human forms, etc. Each of these glyphs is designated by a Gardiner number consisting of a letter and a number. Hieratic and demotic Egyptian are shorthand versions of these glyphs with hieratic glyphs being assigned a Möller number.

There are multiple species of owls in Egypt (El-Sayed Kitat 2019), and although some of the monumental Egyptian (G17) glyphs for owl seem to show somewhat of a combined depiction of multiple species, the species of owl depicted since the Predynastic Period is the Eagle Owl, which is one of the largest species of owl in the world (Newberry 1951).

The owl was seen to be a sign of both evil and death in ancient Egypt, primarily from its utilization as a glyph with certain meaning, or its use as a primary glyph in certain Egyptian words. In the Pyramid Texts, the owl was used as a determinative (this is an unspoken portion of a word which defines or classifies the word it is attached to) for the word *ḥśk* which means “to decapitate.” The same meaning was represented as an owl chopped off by a knife in Ptolemaic texts. In the late period the owl was considered to be a bird of death, based on the association of the owl glyph use in the word *mwt* which means “death” (El-Sayed Kitat 2019).

The owl is also connected to the god Horus and thus is relevant to kingship in Egypt. In the temple of Semna, there is a scene featuring king Tuthmosis III performing a ritual holding three scepters in his right hand one of which displays an owl.

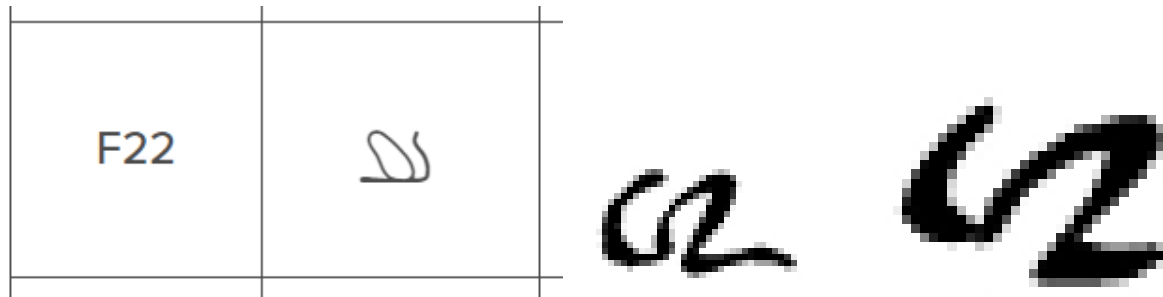
The owl was also associated with the goddess Neith (El-Sayed Kitat 2019). The goddess Neith, a borrowing of the Demotic form Ancient Egyptian *nt*, likely originally to have been *nrt* "the terrifying one" was a goddess in Ancient Egyptian religion. She was the original goddess of the war and was associated with weaponry and death (Wilkinson 2003, 156-9).

Similar to the word *mwt* meaning "death," the Egyptian goddess Ammit, consisting of the ancient Egyptian orthography of *'mmwt* or *'m mwt* which contained within its name the pronunciation of "death" with the addition of an additional owl glyph on the front (which has the phonetic pronunciation of *m*), thus containing two sequential owl glyphs (G17)(Vygus 2012 187, 1395). From that Ammit derived an association with "Devourer of the Dead" was an ancient Egyptian goddess with the forequarters of a lion, the hindquarters of a hippopotamus, and the head of a crocodile—the three largest "man-eating" animals known to ancient Egyptians and was regarded as a demonic creature (Wilkinson 2003, 218). The composite form of land and water animals left the damned no place of escape from the goddess's wrath. The god, in the role of underworld deity, was the destroyer of those who had led wicked lives and who were not to be granted access into the afterlife.

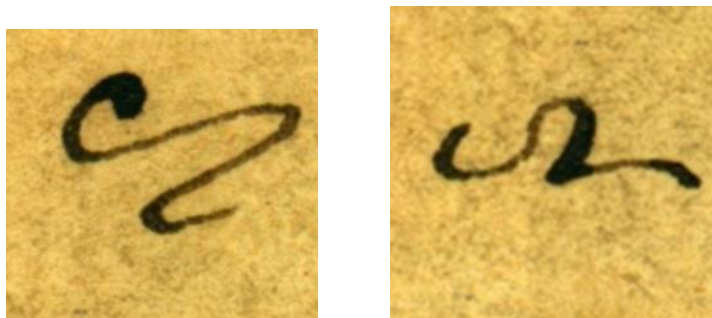


Figure 2 The Egyptian goddesses Neith (Dahl, 2007) and Ammit (Dahl, 2007)

The second was the glyph representing the hindquarters of a lion or leopard (F22) which in hieratic is Möller number 163 which is the word *phwy*, which means "to spear" in Egyptian.



Hieratic Möller number 163



Spearthrower Owl

"Spearthrower Owl" (possibly Jatz'om Kuy, translating to "Striker Owl") was a Mesoamerican person from the Early Classic period, who is identified in Maya inscriptions and iconography. Mayanist David Stuart suggested that Spearthrower Owl was a ruler of Teotihuacan at the start of the height of its influence across Mesoamerica in the 4th and 5th century, and that he was responsible for an intense period of Teotihuacan presence in the Maya area, including the conquest of Tikal in 378 CE. (Stuart 1998).

"Spearthrower Owl" is a name identified by archaeologists to describe the Teotihuacan-originated atlatl-holding owl symbol, stylized as one or two Maya glyphs usually used to represent his name. One version of the ruler's name glyph shows a weapon (an atlatl or other type) combined with an owl sign. At Tikal, the name appears written once with phonetic elements, suggesting the Mayan version of the name is Jatz'om Kuy, "striker owl," or "owl that will strike" (Nielsen et al 2008; Boot 2007). The weapon-owl version is therefore probably the logographs for JATZ' together with KUY or KUJ.



Figure 3 The name glyph Spearthrower Owl from the Tikal Marcador (Stuart 2024)



Figure 4 Drawing of the name Spearthrower Owl from the Tikal Marcador (Stuart 2024)

Various logographs or glyphs depicting an owl and a spear-thrower are documented in Teotihuacan and in the Maya cities of Tikal, Uaxactun, Yaxchilan, and Toniná. They may or may not refer to the same individual, or have other symbolic meanings, derived from Spearthrower Owl motifs. Stuart has noted that some of the glyph depictions, at least, may reflect other raptors, possibly an eagle (Stuart 2024, 58-60). Maya inscriptions at several sites describe the arrival of strangers from the west, depicted with Teotihuacan-style garments and carrying weapons. These arrivals are connected to changes in political leadership at several of the sites.

Stuart noted that the Marcador monument at the Petén Basin center of Tikal records Spearthrower Owl's ascension to the throne of an unspecified polity on a date equivalent to 4 May 374 CE. Monuments at El Perú, Tikal and/or Uaxactun describe the arrival of a personage Siyaj K'ak' somehow under the auspices of Spearthrower Owl in the month of January 378. The exact date of his arrival in Tikal is identical with the death of the Tikal ruler, Chak Tok Ich'aak I. Tikal Stela 31 describes that in 379, a year after the arrival of Siyaj K'ak' at Tikal, Yax Nuun Ahiin, described as a son of Spearthrower Owl and not of the previous ruler Chak Tok Ich'aak, was installed as king of Tikal. His rule saw the introduction of Teotihuacan-style imagery in the iconography of Tikal. Stela 31 was erected during the reign of Yax Nuun Ahiin's son Sihyaj Chan K'awil and describes the death of that ruler's grandfather, Spearthrower Owl, in 439 CE (Maya date 9.0.3.9.18). (Stuart 2011). Spearthrower Owl was mentioned in later texts; for example, on a door lintel of Temple I where the Tikal ruler Jasaw Chan K'awiil I celebrated the thirteen k'atun (13 x 20 x 360 days) anniversary (in 695 CE) of Spearthrower Owl's death when they "conjured the holy one" (Stuart 2000).



Figure 5 The Tikal Marcador (Stuart 2022)

Conclusions

The identification of the Lamanite king Aaron₃ as the Teotihuacano-backed Maya regional king named Sihyaj K'ahk' (or "Born of Fire") is fairly straightforward once it is recognized that the name Aaron is a calque for this Maya regional king. What is known of the Teotihuacan chronology in the Maya area and of Sihyaj K'ahk' matches exactly the Book of Mormon chronology of the Gaddiantons.

The multiple reading of the Caractors Document glyphs meaning "Gaddianton tribe" (presumably modified and finally engraved by Moroni) also provide the double glyph meaning in Egyptian of "to throw a spear" and "owl" with the translation being "Spearthrower Owl's tribe." The Egyptian glyph for owl and it's cultural meaning of evil, death, and war are completely consistent with the name and motif of this leader of the evil Gaddiantons, who Mormon indicated that at the end of his book, this Gaddianton did provide the overthrow, and "almost the entire destruction of the people of Nephi" (2:13).

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