

Copán Note 11

Thoughts on the Temple Inscription

from Structure 26

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Only eight glyphs, or parts of glyphs, have been reconstructed in their original sequence (labeled here within blocks p1 through p10). Most of what we know about the nature of this full-figure inscription comes from these fitted fragments, and so I will discuss them before commenting upon the more disconnected fragments of the text.

The most complete section of the Temple Inscription reveals that at least part of the text ran in two horizontal rows placed between upper and lower borders. Four courses of stone were used in the construction of these glyphs, the upper being beveled and projecting over the lower course. This feature may indicate that these stones were part of the vault molding inside the superstructure of Temple 26.

1. The Copán Notes are a running series of commentaries and small reports deriving from the multidisciplinary research project designed to record and analyze the monolithic and architectural sculpture of Copán. The Copán Mosaics Project has received support from the Center for Field Research (Earthwatch; 1985 and 1986), Northern Illinois University (1985 and 1986), The National Science Foundation (1986 and 1987), The National Endowment for the Humanities (1986 and 1987), the National Geographic Society (1986), The H. John Heinz III Charitable Foundation (1986), and the *Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia* (I.H.A.H.; 1985 and 1986), and is conducted under the authority and jurisdiction of the I.H.A.H. through a five-year agreement between the I.H.A.H. and Northern Illinois University. According to the terms of that agreement, any publication using materials (either written or in the form of line drawings or photos) derived from the Copán Mosaics Project must receive prior written consent from the Project director (William Fash) and the Director of the *Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia* (Ricardo Agurcia).

A probable reading order for these glyphs is presented in the diagram of Figure 1. The first glyph block that survives in this sequence (p1) is a combined Tlaloc-God K figure. This might be simply taken as a glyph for God K, since a number of glyphs in this text have Tlaloc features added to them for little or no reason (glyphically speaking). It may be a device used by the artisans of Temple 26 to fit this inscription into the Tlaloc-oriented iconography of the building. In any case, a suggestion will be made later about the role of this God K, or Tlaloc-God K, glyph, once a few more interpretations are offered. The next glyph (p2) is missing, I believe, but once occupied the block to the right of and above (on the upper beveled courses) the Tlaloc-God K.

Next, to the right of this missing glyph on the upper course (at p3), is a combination of the personified forms of the numbers 8 (the maize god) and 10 (the skeletal death god). This can only be a rendering of the number 18. The following glyph (p4) returns us to the lower courses, with full-figure forms of the T757 "jog" animal and God K. This glyph, with its predecessor, should be familiar as the name of the ruler 18 Rabbit-(God K).

At p5 is a glyph that is unrecognizable to me, though it seems likely that it might express some title or epithet for the ruler just named.

Continuing on to block p6, we find a glyph representing a seated human with a number of distinctive attributes and a numeral coefficient of 13. I doubt that this is a calendrical glyph, expressing a date or a Distance Number, for, as will be seen, the glyphs that immediately follow express another name. Rather, I suggest with some caution that this is a full-figure variant of the "hel" glyph, which with the number 13 would be naming 18 Rabbit as the "13th successor," just as he is named in the text on Stela B. The same full-figure glyph occurs on two fitted fragments the Temple Inscription with a

coefficient 11. Could this have been placed in association with the name of the 11th ruler, Butz'-Chan?

The glyphs that follow at p7 and p8 name Smoke-Monkey, the 14th successor in the line of Yax-K'uk'-Mo'. This is only the fifth example of his which has survived, the others being on the Hieroglyphic stairway of this building (two examples), the inscription on the base of Stela N, and Altar Q (there abbreviated somewhat). All seven components of the name are present here in full-figure form, making the identification positive.

The next glyph, at P9, is now missing. Only the very front portions of the following glyph (p10) survive, and this preserves only another numeral coefficient of 2. This cannot be a "hel" title, as we may have seen with 18 Rabbit, so I suggest that it might name Smoke-Monkey as a 2 Katun lord. We have no independent evidence that this ruler lived only into his second Katun, but we do know that he reigned for an unusually short time. He may therefore have been rather young (under 40) at his death.

This reconstructed passage suggests that much of the Temple Inscription was a simple king list, not unlike the text found in Structure 12 at Yaxchilan. The name of 18 Rabbit is followed immediately by the name of his successor Smoke-Monkey, and a possible "hel" title accompanies the first of these names. If this is so, where are the other names?

The Tlaloc-God K glyph noted at the beginning of this reconstructed glyph sequence might be a part of the name Smoke-Imix-God K. If so, then perhaps the missing glyph at p2 was a "12th successor" reference.

I have already made note of a possible "11th successor" title on two fitted fragments unconnected to the sequence already described. Presumably this could refer to Butz'-Chan, and his name glyph might be present on three other fitted fragments (note the "smoke" figure holding a snake).

Little more can be identified from the loose fragments of the Temple Inscription. I suspect that the entire text originally included dates and events, and the possibility is open that these full-figure glyphs were divided into multiple separate texts. In any event, the proposed nature of those fragments that can be associated with one another suggest that a list of rulers made up a considerable part of the text(s). This list may have been a synopsis of the long dynastic history presented in the inscription on the stairway of Temple 26.

