

Copán Note 12

The Chronology of Stela 4 at Copán¹

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Stela 4 at Copán was dedicated for the Period Ending 9.14.15.0.0 11 Ahau 13 Zac. The Calendar Round for this date appears at position A6 in the text of the monument followed by a 15 *tun* designator glyph (B6), sometimes referred to as "5 *haabs* lacking." The next katun ending 9.15.0.0.0 4 Ahau 13 Yax is also recorded on the back of Stela 4, at position A7, but this is surely not the dedicatory date. Since it immediately follows the 15 *tun* reference in the inscription, it is clear that the 9.15.0.0.0 refers to the katun for which 5 tuns are lacking at the "present" dedicatory date, namely 9.14.15.0.0. This pattern of naming a particular hotun with the upcoming katun ending is quite common in inscriptions at Copán and elsewhere.

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).

Once this fact is established, it is possible to deal with the more complicated aspects of the chronology in this inscription. The text opens with a Distance Number Introductory Glyph, which is noteworthy for the fact that the common "hel" sign is here replaced by a head variant. After this glyph there is a Initial Series Introductory Glyph at B1. It contains a moon sign as its variable element, indicating the patron of the month Ch'en. Although this glyph sequence is highly unusual, the ISIG is known in some texts to precede Distance Numbers of great length (an Initial Series date is in fact a Distance Number of sorts). This seems to be its function in this inscription, for at A2 and B2a there is a distance number that includes Baktun, Katun, and presumably Tun periods (note the IS-like ordering). The coefficient of the Katun is 8, according to the drawing published by Maudslay. The number on the Baktun is effaced, but appears to have been a small number, probably 5 or less. The Tun component of the DN is completely gone. Since there was apparently no space for Uinal and Kin parts to this DN, it is presumed that each were understood to be 0.

Inspection of the original monument reveals that the second half of B2 is occupied by an *ut* verb marked with the "anterior event indicator" suffix (possibly *-ix*). Next, at A3, is 10 Ahau, a remnant of a Calendar Round record that once filled the whole block. The DN of 7.8.?.0.0 is then to be added to this 10 Ahau date to reach that which follows, namely 11 Ahau 18 Zac, or 9.14.15.0.0.

Because the DN seems to have the Uinal and Kin set at 0, it would appear that this 10 Ahau date refers to a Period Ending in the distant past. Moreover, if we subtract the recorded 8 Katuns and for the moment ignore the unclear Baktun, the resulting earlier Long Count position would have a coefficient of 6 for the Katun (only if the number for the Tun in the Stela 4 DN is 15 or below, which is probable). Now the various possibilities for this 10 Ahau date must be tested.

A DN of 1.8.15.0.0, fitting the criteria noted above, reached 9.14.15.0.0 11 Ahau 18 Zac when added to the date 8.6.0.0.0 10 Ahau 13 Ch'en. There are two reasons to accept this as the most likely reading of the 10 Ahau date on Stela 4:

(1) The ISIG which comes before the DN contains the variable element associated with the month Ch'en, appropriate for a record of the date 8.6.0.0.0 10 Ahau 13 Ch'en.

(2) More importantly, the early date 8.6.0.0.0 10 Ahau 13 Ch'en appears on Stela I at Copán (dedicated at 9.12.5.0.0), offering a precedence to the Stela 4 reading. In the passage of Stela I that contains this date there is a glyph composed of a *chi* hand and a "bent cauac" sign. This same combination appears on Stela 4 in direct association with the suggested 8.6.0.0.0 date.

The suggested chronology for Stela 4, therefore, is:

8. 6. 0. 0. 0	10 Ahau 13 Ch'en
1. 8.15. 0. 0	
9.14.15. 0. 0	11 Ahau 18 Zac

8.6.0.0.0 10 Ahau 8 Ch'en appears have been an important historical or pseudo-historical date at Copán. I suggest that it was recorded on *two* monuments near to one another in the main plaza of the site.

