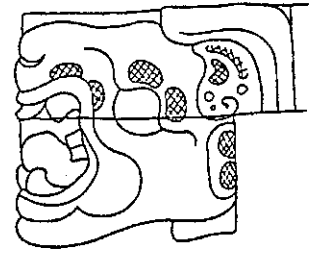


Copán Mosaics Project Copán Note 21*

July, 1987
Copán, Honduras



U Cit-Tok, the Last King of Copán

by Nikolai Grube and Linda Schele

Altar L, a late monument located atop the north platform of the Ballcourt, displays iconography and inscriptions especially associated with the rulers of Copán. On its south face (Fig. 1), two figures are shown flanking a central inscription which records the day 3 Chicchan 3 Uo. The date is followed by the T644:130.116 *chumwan* seating expression as the final glyph in the text column. The two figures flanking the inscription are shown sitting crosslegged on top a pair of glyphs. Both figures are displayed at the same scale and wearing identical costumes, which correspond in detail to the dress and attributes worn by the figures on Altar Q (Fig. 2) and the bench from Temple 11 (Fig. 3), both monuments of Yax-Pac. The figures on these monuments wear the same kind of *witz*-monster pectoral: a zoomorphic head with a T-shaped monster's

mouth, tied rattlesnakes over its top and bead strings hanging below. The Altar L pectorals bear cauc markings identifying the zoomorphic heads as personified "mountains," *witz* in most Maya languages and in the hieroglyphic writing system. The tied serpent located above the zoomorphic heads on Altar Q and the bench are replaced by T757 animals attached to the corners of the *witz*. We feel these may represent the name of the mountains.

Most of the figures on these three monuments are barechested, barefooted, and hold a scepter. The turban-type headdresses from Altar L are also worn by the majority of figures on Altars Q and the bench. The right figure on Altar L also wear a beard, perhaps indicating his advanced age or status as an ancestor, a feature which is paralleled, perhaps, by Stela C. The identifica-

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tion of Yax-Pac as an ancestral person is supported by the smoking cigar thrust into his forehead. This same feature occurs with posthumous portrait of Pacal on the sarcophagus at Palenque and with the figure on Copán Stela 11, also considered to be a posthumous portrait of either 18 Rabbit or Yax Kuk-Mo'. The smoking cigar appears to likewise identify Yax-Pac as a deceased person acting in the accession of his descendant.

Both figures on Altar L also hold feathered scepters which are associated with portraits of ancestral kings on Altar Q and the bench. If the composition of Altar L is of the same type as the other two monument, then the scene would record the transfer of political office from one of the figure to the other, an interpretation supported by the presence of the *chumwan* 'seating' glyph in the text.

The sixteen figures on Altar Q have been recognized as portraits of the sixteen successors of the Copan dynasty (Riese n.d.). Each figure sits on one of his glyphic names. This compositional device is also seen on Altar L, where the right figure sits on the name glyph and title of Yax Pac. We may presume, then, that the left figure is also sitting on his name, which is read phonetically as *U Cit-Tok* (T13.102:59.44:245).¹

The scene, style, and iconographic details of Altar L most closely resemble those of Altar Q and the Bench from Temple 11. These similarities and the presence of the Yax-Pac name under the right figure surely date the altar to Yax-Pac's reign or thereafter. 3 Chicchan 3 Uo occurs twice in the Long Count during or after Yax-Pac's accession date, 9.16.12.5.17 6 Caban 10 Mol. These positions are 9.16.19.1.5 and 9.19.11.14.5. The earlier date is unlikely because it is only seven years after the accession date and Yax-Pac is documented at Quirigua as having been ruler of Copán until at least 9.19.0.0.0. Furthermore, at Copán, the bench in Structure 9N-82 records ritual activity by Yax-Pac on the date 9.19.3.2.0 11 Ahau 3 Yax (*Copan*

Note 24). This late date corresponds nicely with the latter of the two Long Count positions for 3 Chicchan 3 Uo.

Furthermore, the name of the left figure, who is presumably the protagonist of the monument, does not occur on Altar Q. This lack suggests his placement in the succession was later than the sixteenth and final ruler of the Altar Q list. The fact that Yax-Pac wears a beard may indicate advanced age or more likely his status as an ancestor.

The late placement of the date, the presence of Yax-Pac as one of the figures, and the fact that the other name is missing from the Altar Q list argue for the identification of U Cit-Tok as the seventeenth succession to the Copán throne and for the date being his day of accession.

Interestingly, Barbara Fash (personal communication, 1987) has observed that the north face of Altar L (Fig. 1), which shows two figures seated in profile on thrones, appears never to have been finished. We have examined the monument in detail and agree with her evaluation. The incomplete north face of the monument supports its late dating and suggests that the central authority in the valley of Copán collapsed before the monument could be completed. Archaeological evidence from the valley supports this approximate dating for the collapse of the central government, although activity continued for some time after in the residential areas away from the acropolis, such as in the Sepulturas region.

Summary

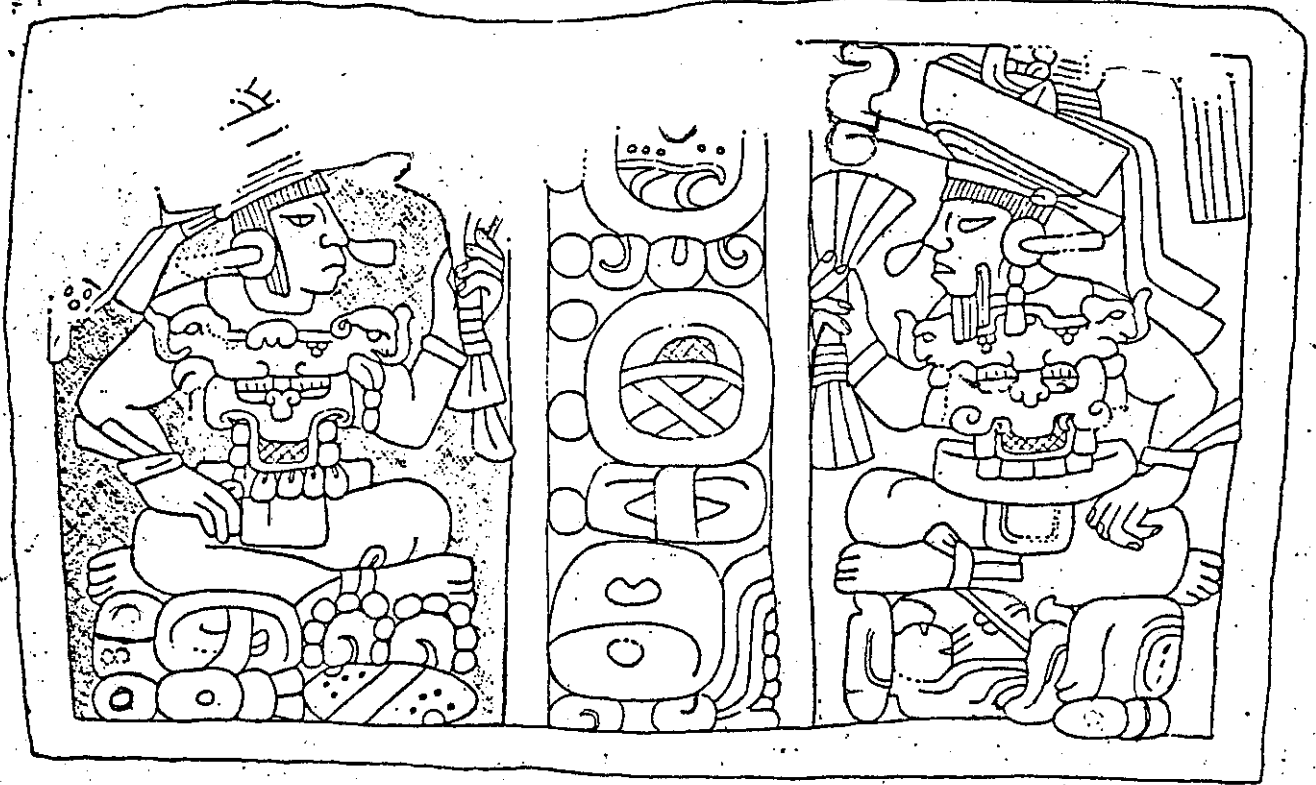
Altar L records and depicts the accession of the seventeenth successor of the Copán dynasty. Named U Cit-Tok, this ruler acceded on 9.19.11.14.5 3 Chicchan 3 Uo (February 10, A.D. 822), now the latest known date in Copán history. This new decipherment as well as the proposed date from the bench in Structure N9-82 (July 22,

¹ *Kit* is glossed in the Cordemex (321-322) as "término reverencial para padre," and is used in deity names such as *Kit Bolon Tun* and *Kit Chak Koh* from the *Chilam Balam* books. *Tok* translates as "flint" and as a general term for "bloodletting" in the major lowland languages.

A.D. 813) extend the reign of Yax-Pac eleven years beyond the previous limit of 9.19.0.0.0.

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Altar L lado sur escala 1:5 B.W. Ash 183 P.A.C.

9.19.1145 3 CHICCHAN 300

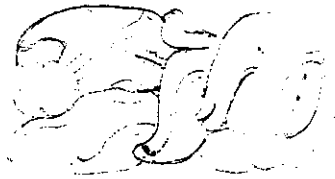
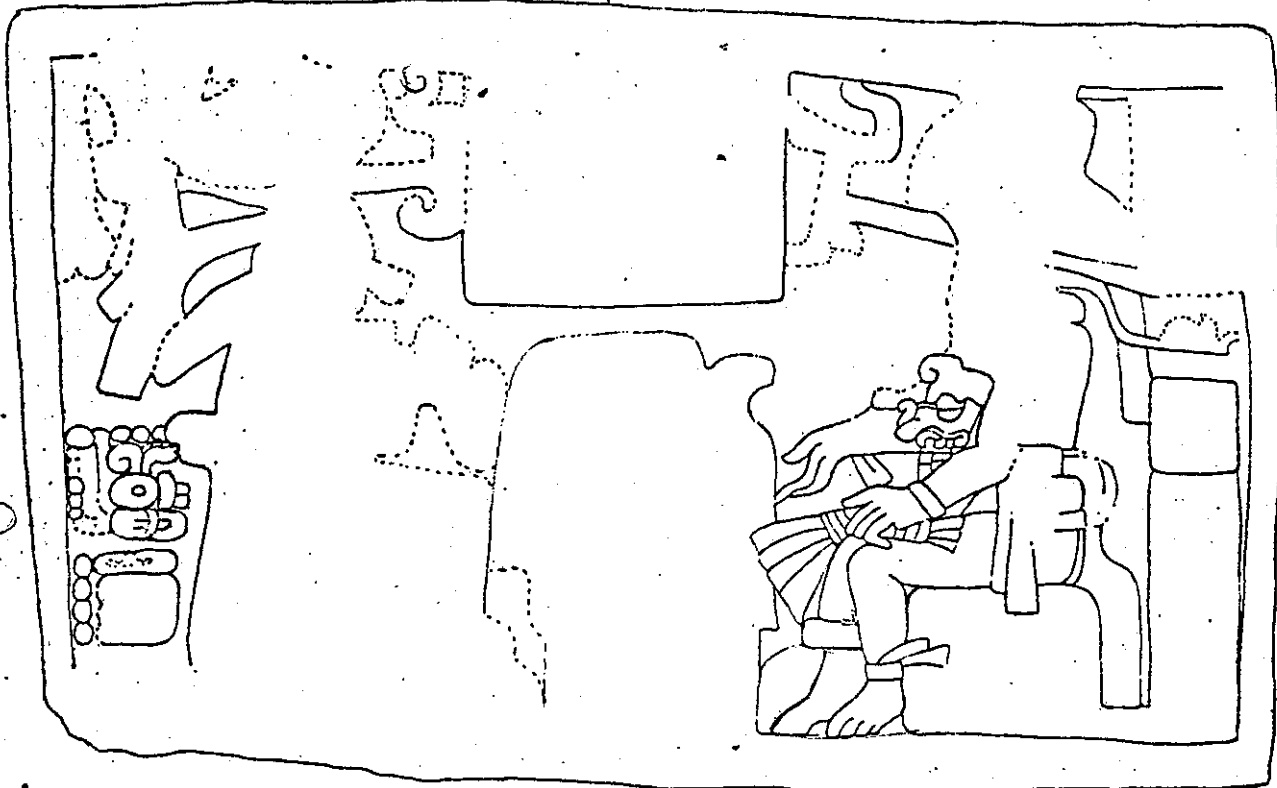
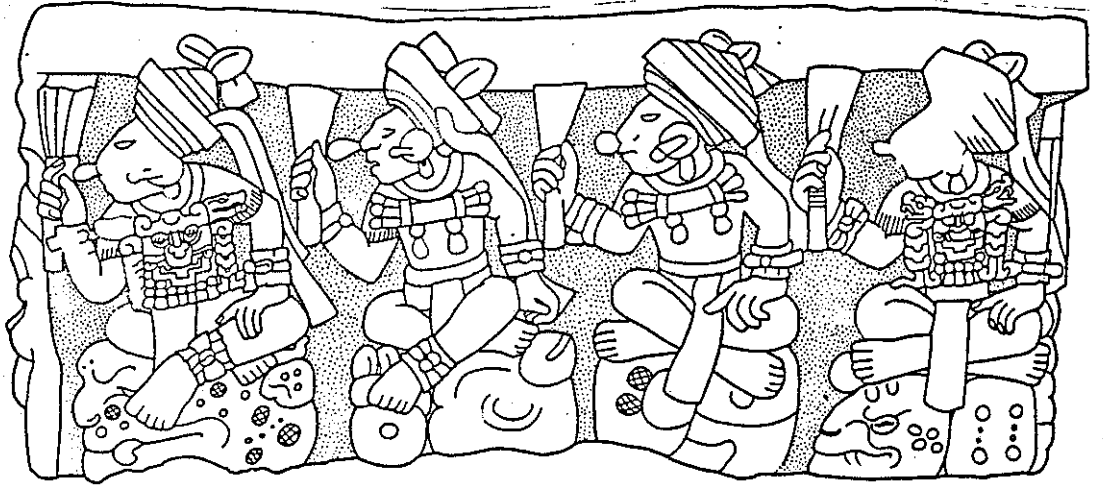
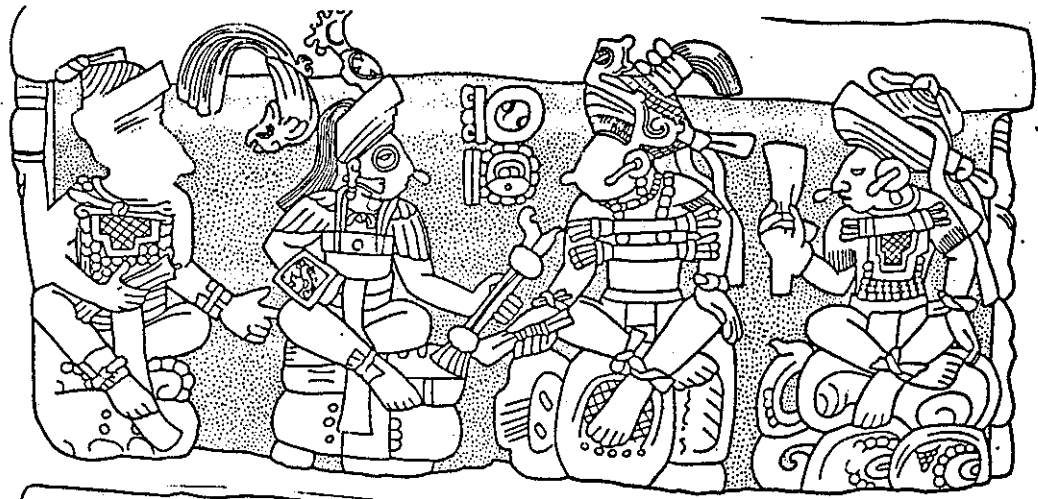


Figure 1 Altar L



P.A.C. Altar L escala 1:5 lado norte B.W. Ash 183



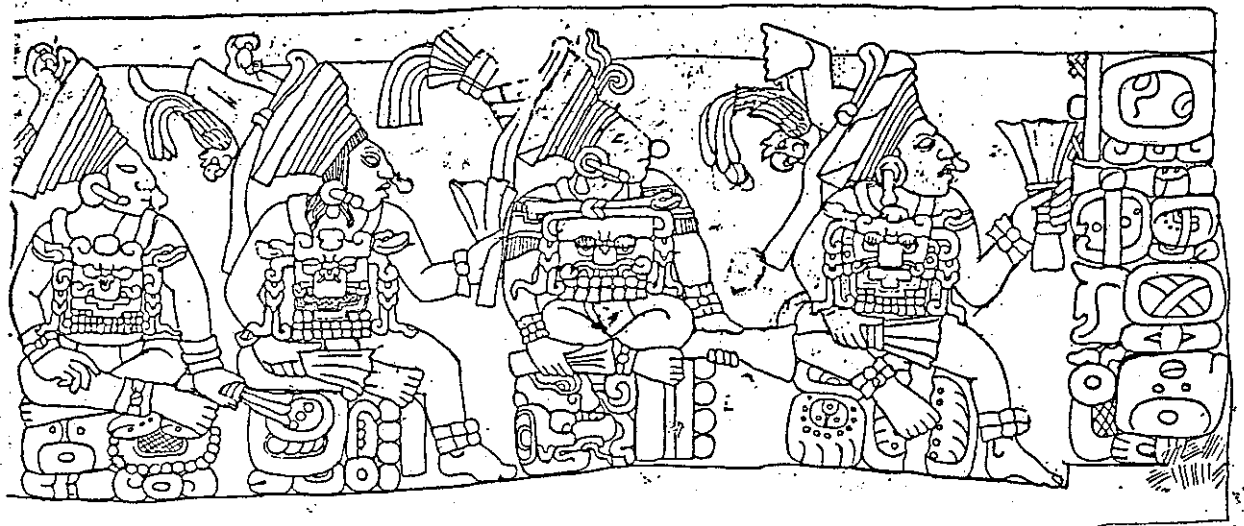


Figure 3 Bench from Temple 11, east half