

The Birth Monument of Butz'-Chaan

by Linda Schele and Nikolai Grube¹

July, 1987

Copán, Honduras

Altar Y was found cache under Stela 4, dated at 9.14.15.0.0, in the Great Plaza (Morley 1920:66). From this placement, we may deduce that the date on the Altar was earlier than Stela 4 and that 18-Rabbit placed the altar under the stela for some important family or historical purpose.

The verb (A2) preceding the name and following the opening date is clearly the T740.181 'birth' glyph (Fig. 1). The action then is the birth of someone important to 18 Rabbit and his dynasty.

The protagonist's name on Altar Y (B2-C1) consists of a snake with a T25 ca prefix attached to its forehead and a second glyph composed of a T122 'smoke' sign over a flattened fish. This combination of glyphs also occurs on Stela P (Fig. 2) as the name Butz'-Chaan, who was the eleventh successor of the Copán dynasty (Copán Note 14). If the person recorded on Altar Y is the same person then the date should be within biologically reasonable range of the known dates associated with this king. His accession was on 9.7.5.0.8 8 Lamat 6 Mac and his death on 9.9.14.16.9 2 Muluc 2 Kayab.

Morley (1920:66) read the Calendar Round as 6 Cimi 19 Uo with the possible Long Count placements of 9.4.8.12.6, 9.7.1.7.6, 9.9.14.2.6. The last two of these position are later than the accession date, and thus not possible candidates. The earliest placement would make Butz'-Chaan 5.6.4.3 or 104 years, 258 days, an unreasonable age, we think, for a Classic Maya king.

The numerical coefficient of the day sign, however, is as likely to be seven as six. 7 Cimi 19 Uo occurs at 9.6.9.4.6, giving an age of 3.5.12.3 or 64 years, 266 days at his death. The same birth date gives an age of 15.14.2 or 15 years, 200 days at his accession. Both ages are well within biological limitations documented for Classic Maya kings at Copán and other sites.

That 18-Rabbit should cache at altar recording the birth of Butz'-Chaan is in keeping with the particular reverence he displayed for this ancestor. David Stuart (personal communication, 1986) first noted the occurrence of Butz'-Chaan's name on the rear of Stela A, the monument adjacent to Stela 4. The name appears in a difficult passage that includes expressions for death and most importantly the verb TIX.679.177:683b, which also occurs on the tablet from Temple 14 at Palenque, which celebrates a posthumous event, perhaps the apotheosis, of the king Chan-Bahlum. Stela A is, therefore, likely to record a commemoration or perhaps the recall of Butz'-Chaan by his descendent.

References

Morley, Sylvanus Griswold

1920 The Inscriptions at Copan. *The Carnegie Institution of Washington, Pub. 219*. Washington, D.C.

Schele, Linda and David Stuart

1986 Butz'-Chaan, the 11th Successor of the Yax-K'uk'-Mo' Lineage. *Copán Note 14*. Copán, Honduras.

Notes

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, 1986, and 1987), Northern Illinois University (1985, 1986, and 1987), The National Science Foundation (1986 and 1987), The National Endowment for the Humanities (1986 and 1987), the National Geographic Society (1986 and 1987), 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* (Victor Cruz).

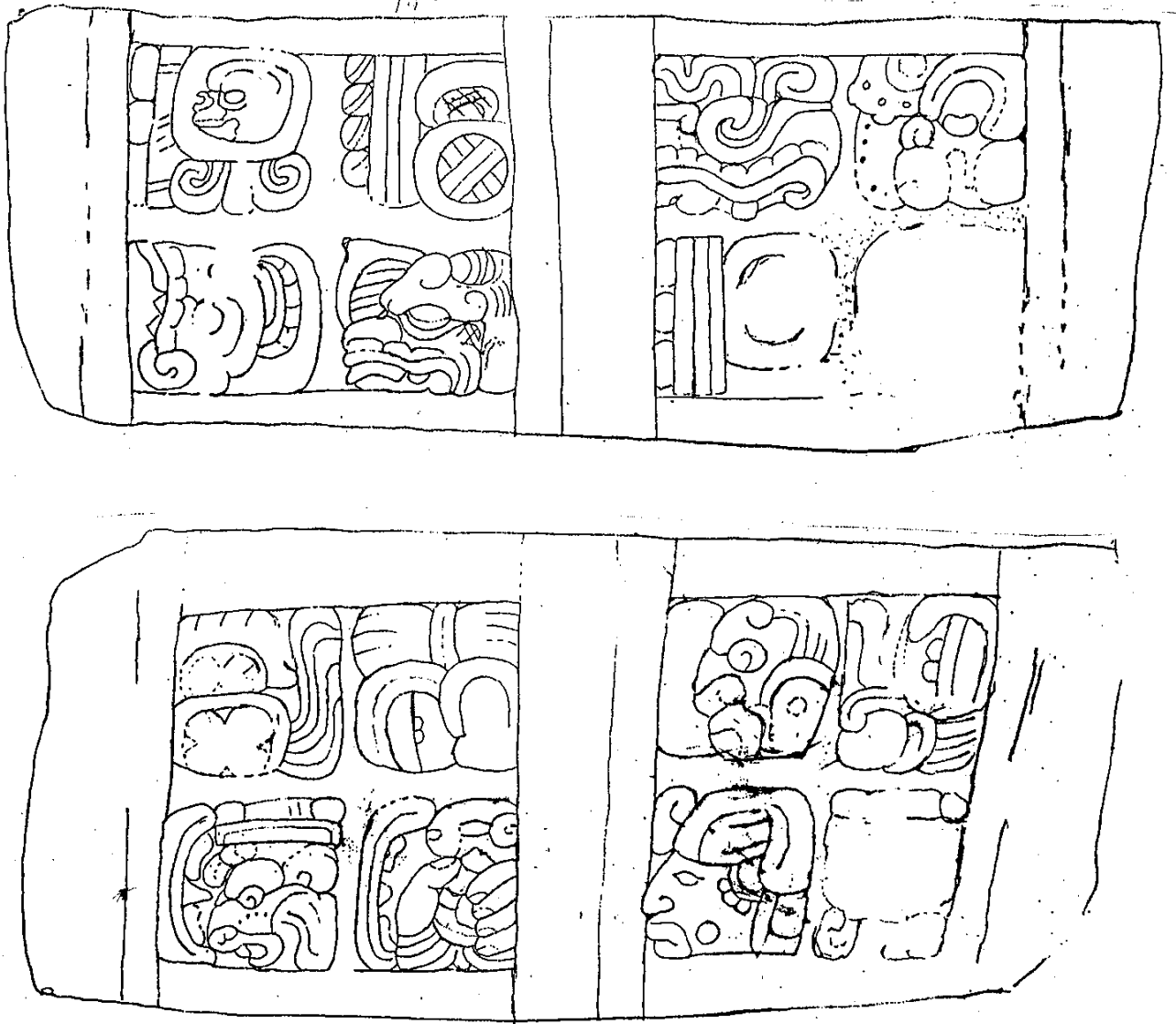


Figure 1 Altar Y



Figure 2 Butz'-Chaan from Stela P