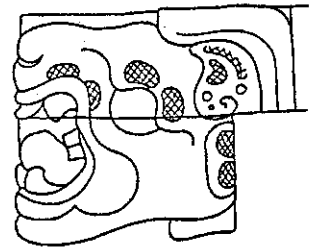


## Copán Mosaics Project

### Copan Note\* 25

September, 1987  
Copán, Honduras



## Some Ideas of the Protagonist and Dating of Stela E

by Linda Schele

Stela E, located on the west side of the Main Plaza in Copán, has been a difficult monument for epigraphers since it was first published by Maudslay. Morley (1920: 107-114) believed the most certain calendric data was on the altar in the plaza floor below the stela. Presuming the altar repeated the pattern of other stela/altar pairs, he deciphered the altar date as 9.9.5.0.0, the hotun ending between the IS dates of Stela P and 7. The proximity of this date and the style of carving to Stela 7 lead him to suggest that Stela E had been moved from Group 9 in the village sometime after 9.12.5.0.0.

Today with new drawings of the stela and its altar (Fig. 1-2) available there seems little to

recommend Morley's dating of Stela E or his suggestion that it is not in its original location. The dating of the altar is at best problematic. Morley correctly identified the haab as 18 Uo, but his argument about the day is difficult to confirm. The identification of the day sign is impossible in light of the present condition of the monument, but if it is ahau as he suggested, the surface depressions more closely resemble the T747a vulture *ahau*, rather than T533. Furthermore, the number that went with the day sign was and is missing. In short, the altar cannot be used to date the stela.

Morley<sup>1</sup> placed the only CR he was able to read, 10 Ahau 8 Uo (C2b-C3a) at 9.9.2.17.0, based on the altar hotun he reconstructed. The

<sup>1</sup> Morley (1920) designated the column north side C and the south D. I hope to show this is the incorrect reading order, but changing columns designations at this stage would only cause confusion in the literature.

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Lunar Series (4C, X, B, and 10A) recorded with the CR no D, 4th C), however, disputes his LC placement. On 9.9.2.17.0 (April 3, 616), it was 11.08 days past new moon. A Lunar age without Glyphs recorded should be on or near the new moon. Morley's LC is 11.08 days in error and nearer a full moon than a new one.

Riese (n.d.) chose different LC position, but he still set the CRs in the Katun 10. He chose to associate the Initial Series date with the 10 Ahau 8 Uo or Zip CR in column C. His reconstruction is as follows:

A1-C3	[9].10.15.[8. 0]	{10} Ahau	8 [Zip]
		[G],F,4C,X42,B,A10	
C13	(9.11. 0. 0. 0)	12 Ahau	(8 Ceh)
D10	(9. 9. 1. 2. 0)	13 Ahau	18 Zec or
	(9.11.13.15. 0)		
Altar		?? Ahau	18 Uo

Unfortunately, Riese's reconstruction will not work either because the IS date clearly has a lunar series of its own as well as a distinct CR.

At present, I have not been able to reconstruct the IS date, although some new data may prove to be a key. The number (A3) with the baktun has been assumed by everyone to be a nine, with good reason. However, I would like to suggest that the number (A4) with the katun is a four. Maudslay drew and I see clear evidence for cross-hatching over the eye of the beastie, which likely identifies it as a snake, *chan* or *can*. And the beastie is wearing a shell earflare which appears with the number four on Quirigua Stela D (Fig. 3). The three shell-fists perched on the monster's head may be phonetic *cha* if the identification is correct.

The number with the uinal (A6) has a hand instead of a lower jaw making it zero or possible a ten. The Lord of the Night and the lunar age is gone, but the day sign at B9 appears on Stela 10 and the Hieroglyphic Stairs as Ahau. It is followed at A10 with the haab which is either 3 or 8

Zac. The head variant of *zac* is identical to the head variant of the number two, which often has a *zac* sign appended to it (Fig. 4).<sup>2</sup>

This combination gives 9.4??.0.0 ?? Ahau 3 or 8 Zac. Unfortunately no date in Katun 3, 4, and 5 work well with the reconstructed data. These closest fits are as follows:

9. 3.18. 0. 0	8 Ahau	8 Zac	G9
9. 4.18. 5. 0	2 Ahau	8 Zac	G1
9. 5.18.10. 0	9 Ahau	8 Zac	G2
9. 3.19. 0. 0	4 Ahau	3 Zac	G9
9. 5.19.10. 0	5 Ahau	3 Zac	G2

Fortunately, the remaining two dates recorded on Stela E can be deciphered. The first sentence continues after the Initial Series date with a verb used at Copán to record the erection of stelae (B10); the proper name of the monument (A11-B11), the Glyph B name closure and *te-tun* 'stela' glyphs (A12), and finally the name of the protagonist at B12 and probably again at B13. A13 seems to be the verb identified by Stuart (personal communication 1987) as "to see or witness."

Morley's and Riese's analysis presume the text then continues to Column C. However, a different reading order is likely. Column D begins with a string of titles, including ahau and West 'ma cuch,' while Column C begins with an unrelated CR. Since no verb precedes the titles in Column D, they should syntactically be considered part of the subject of a verb. Since Column C begins and ends with a date, the most likely function of these titles is that they are part of the protagonist's name and continue the first sentence of the text. And the chronological order of dates supports this proposed reading order: AB, D, C.

D10 records a CR read by both Morley and Riese as 13 Ahau 18 Zec and set by Riese at 9.9.1.2.0 or 9.11.13.15.0. However, the glyph following the CR include the Jaguar Paddler in an expression that frequently occurs with period en-

2 The head variant of the number nine also function as *yax*.

dings. I saw evidence on the original stone that the two outer dots of the number above the ahau day sign are drawn different than the center one, favoring a reading of this number as 11 or 12, rather than 13. 11 Ahau 18 Zec corresponds to the katun ending 9.5.0.0.0.

D12a appears to have been a DNIG that introduced now destroyed DN that lead to the head of Column C.<sup>3</sup> The text continues with a Lunar Series giving an age of zero days (no Glyph D), four lunations completed in the half-year (4C), and a moon of 30 days. The CR following thereafter is 10 Ahau 8 Zip or Uo. Both Morley and Riese opted for Zip because of its occurrence near the 9.9.5.0.0 hotun, but Uo fits perfectly with the proposed placed of the 11 Ahau 18 Zec date. 10 Ahau 8 Uo occurs on 9.5.10.0.0 with a true moon age of 3.77 days, not out of range for a zero D Lunar Series, especially if the lunation is counted from a first appearance of crescent.

The final date on Stela E is an isolated Ahau in C13. Morley read it as 13 Ahau and suggested it referred to the 13 Ahau 18 Zec in Column D. Riese's proposal is more in keeping with the known functions of isolated ahau dates like this one--they are often the names of katuns or other period endings. He proposed it be read as 12 Ahau as a reference to the katun ending 12 Ahau 8 Ceh (9.11.0.0.0). Since all of his LC placements fall before this date, his suggestion is a logical one. Since I have reconstructed a much earlier chronology, however, I follow Morley's argument, but read the date as 11 Ahau, rather than 13 Ahau.

Lastly, the CR on the altar if it is ?? Ahau 18 Uo cannot be placed in the LC with any security. However, if the CR is a PE and if the day sign is ahau, as proposed by Morley, then there is an ap-

propriate PE shortly after the 9.5.10.0.0. 2 Ahau 18 Uo occurred on 9.5.12.0.0.

The previous discussion has focused only on the chronological evidence itself, but there is a far more compelling piece of evidence supporting the early dating of Stela E. Waterlily-Jaguar, the seventh successor of the Copán dynasty (Schele and Stuart 1986), is recorded on Stela 15 with the dates 9.3.10.0.0 and 9.4.10.0.0. His name phrase occurs twice on the same monument at D3-C4 and E5 (Fig. 5). In both examples, it includes a jaguar chewing on a zero sign following by a second jaguar head, once surmounting the patron of Pax (C4) and once above an odd dotted sign (E5), which also occurs with his name on Altar Q. Note that at D3 only the zero sign remains, but the lip of the jaguar can still be discerned. This jaguar-zero combination occurs on Stela E at B12 (Fig. 1) and it is followed by the 'witness verb' and a sequence with two jaguar heads in it. The occurrence of the unique combination of the jaguar chewing zero and the double jaguar leaves little doubt that the protagonist of Stela E is the same personage recorded on Stela 15.

The accession and death dates of this ruler are as yet uncertain. However, a tentative reconstruction of the accession date of the ninth ruler has been suggested at 9.5.17.13.7 2 Manik 0 muan (or 9.5.16.13.7 6 Manik 5 Muan) and for the eight at 9.5.13(or 8).???.?? (Schele and Stuart 1986). The PE dates on Stela 15 associate him with 9.4.10.0.0 and perhaps 9.3.10.0.0. The proposed dates for Stela E, 9.5.0.0.0 and 9.5.10.0.0 date falls well within these limitations. Stela E may have been the last monument of Waterlily-Jaguar's reign. There are fragments of earlier portrait monuments, Stela 53 and 60 for example, but Stela E is the first to show the deeper relief that was to become Copán's hallmark. If Stela E is on or near

3 The text is very badly eroded at this point, but every artist who had drawn this monument, including me, has seen a nine in the day position. Since the day in all three CRs is ahau, a DN which records nine days is patently impossible. The expression in these last two glyphs blocks may not, therefore, be a DN at all.

its original position, as I suspect it is, excavations in the group behind it should prove interesting.

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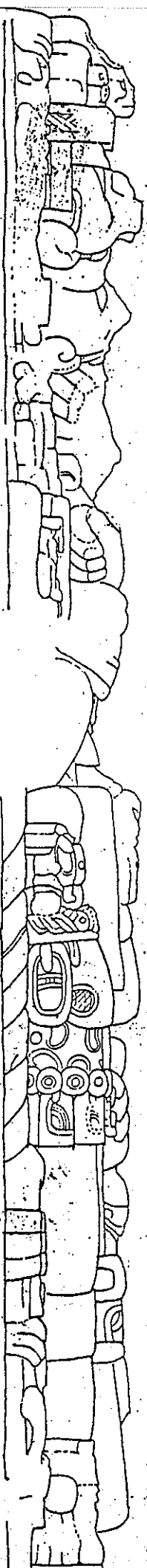
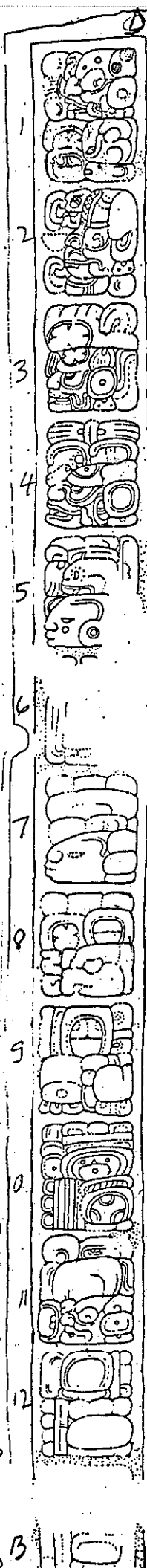
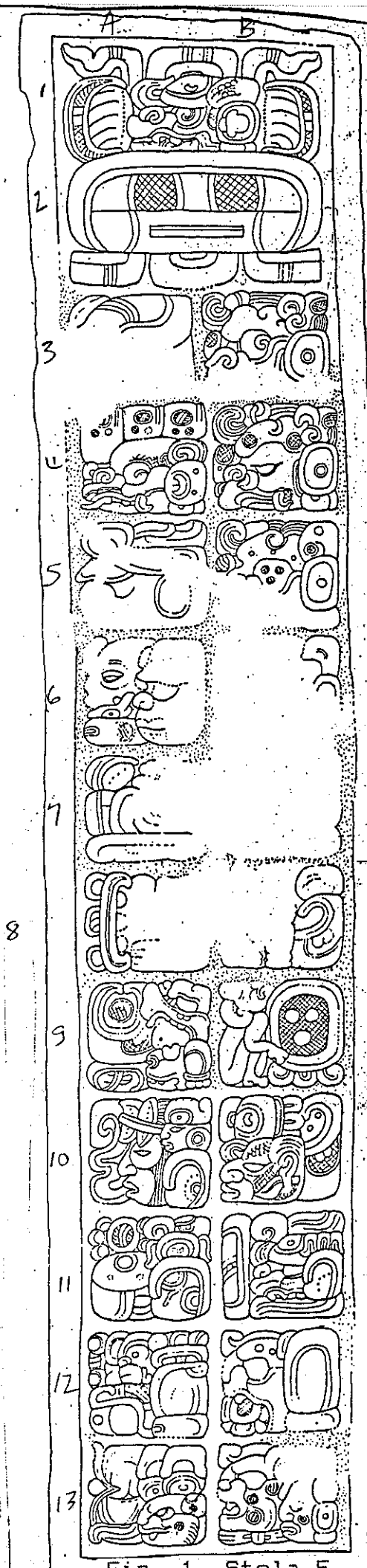
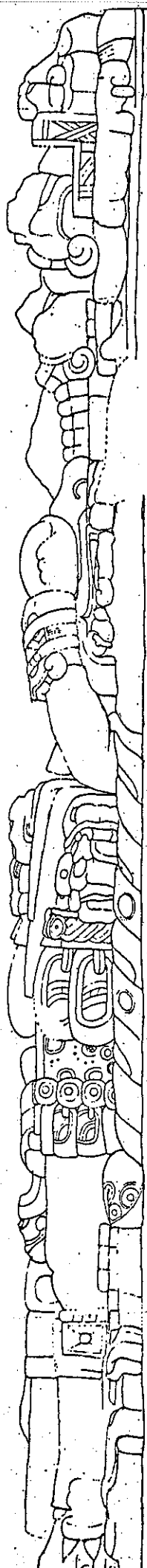


Fig. 1. Stela E

B

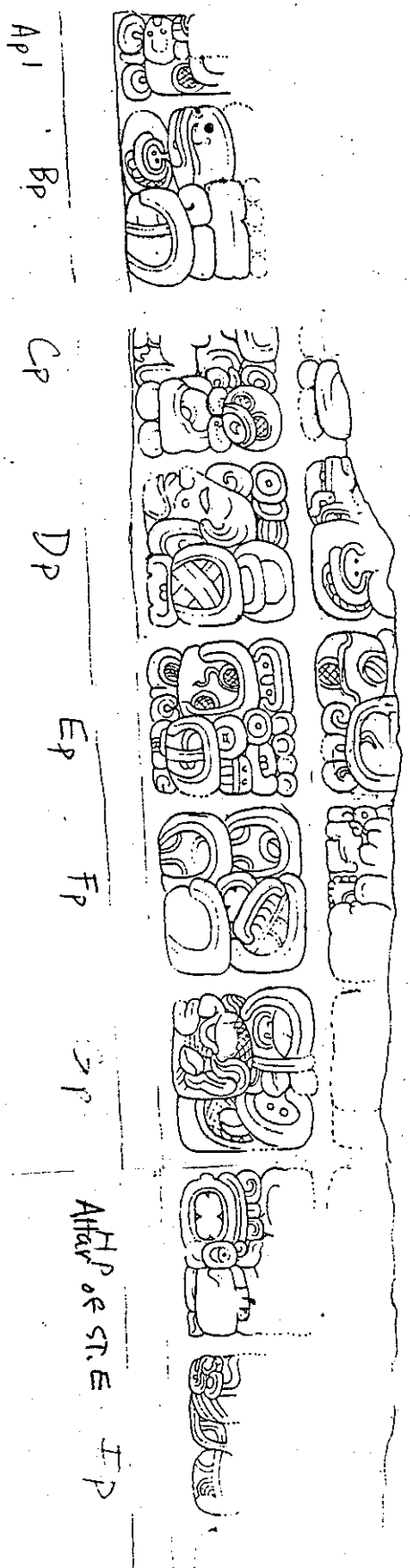


Fig. 2 Altar to Stele E

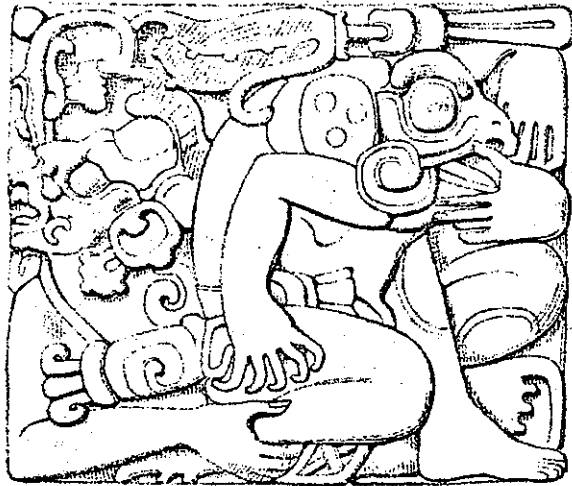
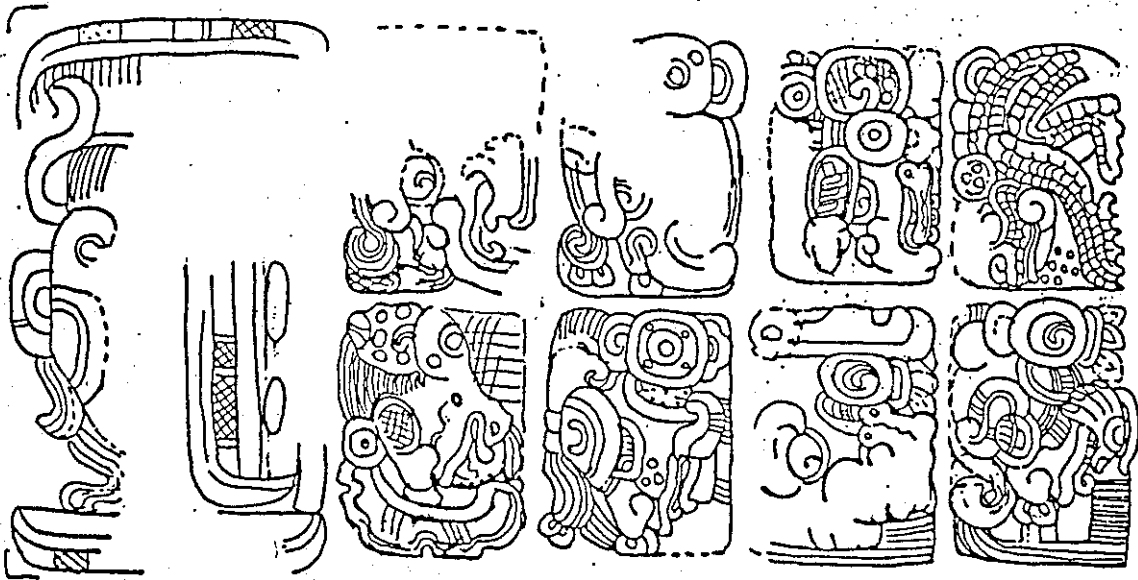


Fig. 3 '4 uinals' from Quirigua Stela D



Fig. 4 Head variants for the number two.

A

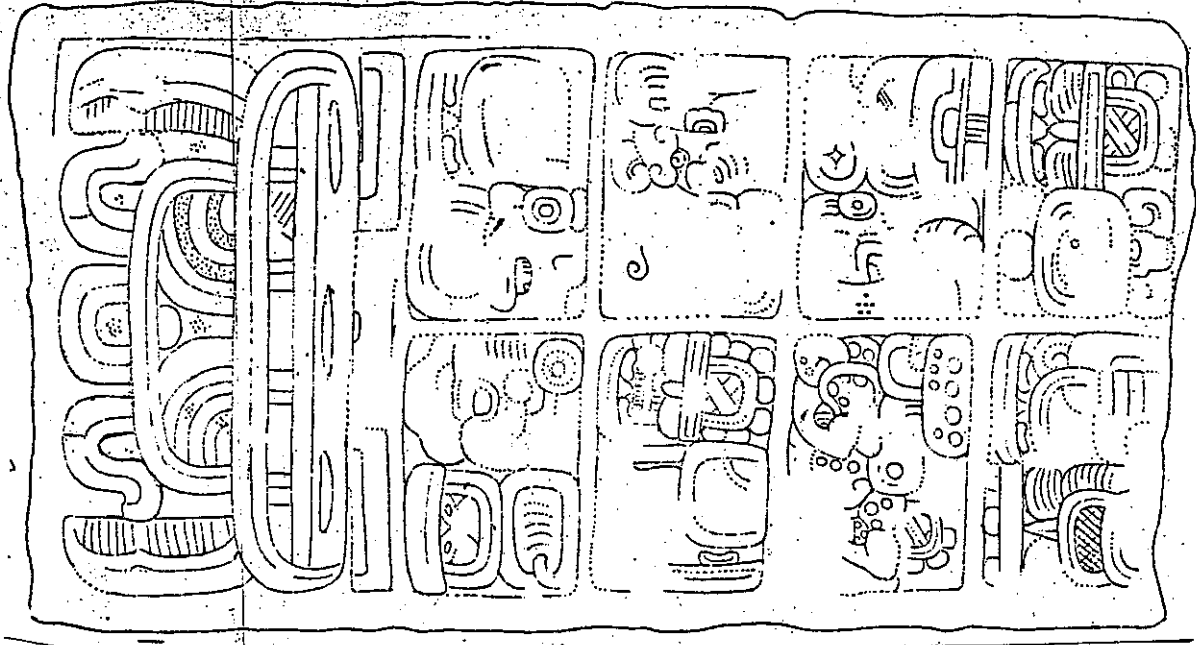


Wdg. by L. Schele

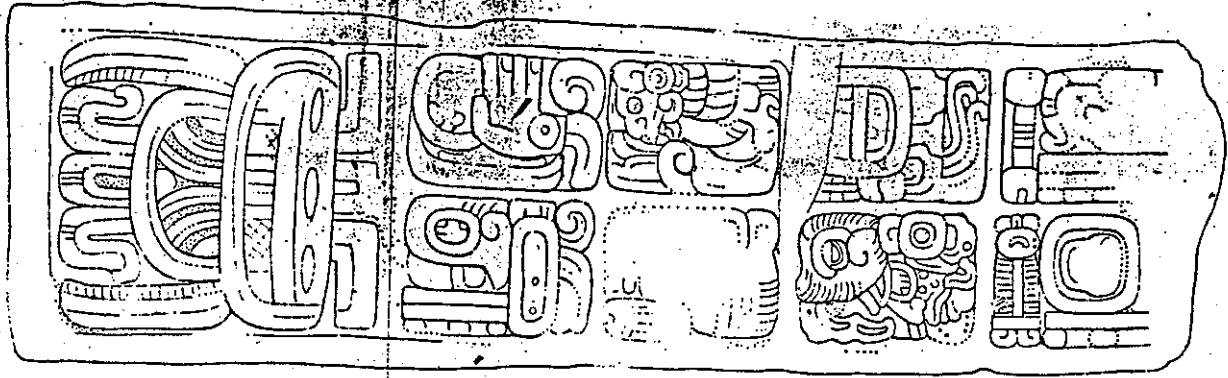
B



E



G



Drawings by Br. Stuart

Fig. 5 Copan Stela 15