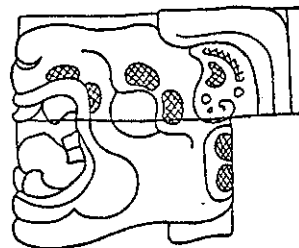


Copán Mosaics Project

Copan Note* 31

November, 1987
Copán, Honduras



The Inscription on Stela 5 and its Altar

by Linda Schele

The damaged surface of the Stela 5 inscription has long given epigraphers difficulty in deciphering the chronology and historical contents of the text. Morley (1920:204-208) argued for a placement of the IS date at 9.13.14.0.15 6 Men 18 Kayab and a dedication date of 9.14.0.0.0. Riese (n.d.) followed Morley's placement and proposed this chronology:

A1-A8	9.13.14.0.15	6 Men	18 Kayab
B1-B2	1.15		
	9.13.13.17.0	10 Ahau	3 Pax

David Stuart (n.d.) first arrived at the correct decipherment. Noting the 18 Kayab haab and the likely seating event at A8b (Fig. 1), he proposed the reading 9.9.14.17.5 6 Chicchan 18 Kayab, the date now known to have been the accession of

Smoke Imix/God K. Corrected drawings of Stela 5 and its altar confirm Stuart's proposal.

A2 contains the baktun and katun notations. Although the number with the baktun is now destroyed, it can be confidently reconstructed as nine. The still legible katun number clearly is the head variant of nine. The coefficient with the now-missing tun glyph is the sungod head of number four with a skeletal lower jaw making the number 14. A3b is clearly the number seven with a line that appears to be the top of the skeletal jaw, giving the most likely reading of 17. And finally the day sign, though eroded, has the features of an animal head and the haab at A8a is 18 Kayab. The readable and reconstructable components are 9.9.14.17.? ?? ???? 18 Kayab. Stuart's proposed reading of 9.9.14.17.5 6 Chicchan 18

* 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), Council for International Exchange of Scholars (1987) 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 Reyes).

Kayab is the only possible reading that fits these conditions.

The Distance Number at the head of column B further confirms the placement. The clause begins with the DNIG followed by 15 days, 2 katuns to be counted from the seating. This DN is repeated again at A5 and directly associated with the later event, "scattering," and date, 4 Ahau in its 10 Ahau. This 4 Ahau is the Initial Series date on the east altar of Stela 5--9.11.5.0.0, the first hotun of Katun 10 Ahau or 9.12.0.0.0 10 Ahau 8 Yaxkin.

The chronology is as follows:

A1-A8	9.9.14.17.5	6 Chicchan	18 Kayab
B1	2.0.0.15		
B6, altar	9.11.5.0.0	4 Ahau	13 Mol

Curiously, the Supplementary Series for both Long Count dates are flawed. The stela records for 9.9.14.17.5 as moon age of 8D, 3C and the seventh Lord of the Night. The correct moon age is 25 days and G3 is required for that Long Count. The LC date on the altar gives the correct moon age of 28 days, but it records G3, instead of G9 was is required for all period endings. This last error is so blatant that I suspect the recorded G3 is perhaps intended to correct the IS date of the stela: However, Copan is notorious lax in recording the Lord of the Night. Both dates may simply be in error.

The lunar ages are also of interest. The Uniform System of lunar ages requires 27D, 4C for 9.11.5.0.0 and 26, 27, or 28D, 3C is recorded. For 9.9.14.17.5 using an average lunation of 29.5 days, the Uniform System yields 9D, 4C. Since 3C is recorded in both dates, rather than the expected 4C, it is possible that the lunar age of the earlier date is a backward calculation using the faulty moon formula. 6, 7, or 8D is recorded for a calculation yielding 9D in the Uniform System. The moon age of the stela IS date may be in error (the real age was 25 days) because it is a backward calculation from the dedication date of the monument, 9.11.5.0.0.

The Initial Series date with its erroneous moon date is followed by "was seated as ahau" and presumably the king's name in the now destroyed section at A9-A10. The text continues to Column B, which opens with the DN of 2.0.0.15 discussed above. The scribe repeated the same *chumwan ti ahau le* event from the other side of the monument as the base event of the calculation. The glyphs in B3-B4a appear to record auxiliary information about the accession with the king's name and the Emblem Glyphs following at B4b and B5a1.

The remaining glyphs in B5 are difficult, but glyph blocks on this stela are written with vertical and horizontal orientations freely interspersed. I suggest B5 is one of the vertical blocks with 15 kins in the lower left corner, the number two in the upper right, and katun in the lower right, given "15 kins, 2 katuns" as the reading.

A6 is "scattering" and it appears to have T679 *iwil* infixed to mark it as the featured event. The date follows as "4 *ti* Ahau *ti u* 10 Ahau." The event is the T686 dedication rite of a *te-tun*. The remaining part of the text is too badly eroded to read with certainty, although I suspect the proper name of Stela 5 occur in B8 and Smoke-Imix-God K's name in the remaining two blocks.

The text on the east altar (Fig. 2) repeats the PE date and associates it with the two-katun anniversary of Smoke-Imix-God K's accession which took place fifteen days earlier. The first information is the date recorded as 9.11.15.5.0.0 3G, F, 28D, 3C, X, B, 29A, 13 Pop. The verbal phrase is "was ended, the fifth hotun lacking to its 10 Ahau."¹

This completion statement is followed by "he scattered" at K1b and at L1a an inverted vase that appears to name what was scattered.

L1b is too damaged to read, but logically it must be a DN of 15 days for what follows is "*ti* 2 katun, he completed as ruler (*ti ahau le*)," Fragments of Smoke-Imix-God K's name can be seen at N1b, letting us reconstruction glyph block O as

¹ This Ahau date has caused problems since Morley's day. The statement is clearly "5 tuns lacking to a katun." 9.11.15.0.0 is five tuns lacking to 9.12.0.0.0, which is 10 Ahau 8 Yaxkin. 12 Ahau, if it is written here, would record 9.11.0.0.0 12 Ahau 8 Ceh in an improper usage. I, therefore, suggest at the numerical coefficient is *u lahun Ahau*, ("his 10 Ahau") in a phrase that parallels B6 where the same date is written *Chan Ahau ti u Lahun Ahau* ("4 Ahau in its 10 Ahau").

containing the second part of his name and perhaps the Copan EG. The chronology of the anniversary is as follows:

9. 9.14.17. 5	6 Chicchan	18 Kayab
2. 0. 0. 0		
9.11.14.17. 5	2 Chicchan	18 Yaxkin
15		
9.11.15. 0. 0	4 Ahau	13 Pop

The West Altar also plays with this same chronology, although its dedication date appears to be slightly later. Morley (1920:171-174) proposed a reading of 9.7.19.17.11 9 Chuen 14 Mol for the IS date. Although his proposed decipherment is not now acceptable, some of his reasoning still holds. The readable parts of the date are 9.?.14.17?.11, 12, or 13 and G9 of the Lords of the Night. Since the two Lords of the Nights already discussed for this stela are in error, we cannot rely too heavily on that calculation to determine the correct date, but interestingly this time it appears to be correct. Furthermore, Morley had available to him a now missing fragments recording 29A and the haab as Mol with a coefficient showing one dot and a bar. Morley opted for readings of either 9 or 14 Mol.

The components are remarkably close to the anniversary date above and I suggest the IS date is in fact 9.11.14.17.11 8 Chuen 4 *te* Mol, with the numerical classifier *te* accounting for what appears to be a bar in Morley's drawing. This date is only six days after the two-katun anniversary date and it requires G9 as Lord of the Night. Since Maya rituals are recorded at Palenque and elsewhere as occurring over several successive days, I suggest that this day was part of the anniversary rite--perhaps the final day. The east altar would then record the first day of the ritual and the west altar the last.

Not much more can be read on the badly damaged altar. N2 records 10 Ahau 8 Yaxkin,

9.12.0.0.0, the katun recorded on the east altar. "Scattering" is at O1a preceding what appears to be another date. The last readable glyph, P1, is the name of Smoke-Imix-God K, confirming that the dates should be in his reign and that this altar was always intended to be read with Stela 5.2

Lastly, it should be noted that Stela 5 was dedicated with a special cache, the Early Classic Altar X and under it, a pot bellied figure (Morley 1920:208-209). Stela 4, which was found with a similar cache containing Altar Y and another pot belly, is notable for its reference to the early date 8.6.0.0.0 (Stuart 1987). The Stela 5 cache must have been placed earlier than that of Stela 4, but its association with a monument recording the accession and its 2 katun anniversary of the predecessor of 18 Rabbit, the Stela 4 protagonists, may have set the precedent for this particular kind of cache.

References

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- Stuart, David
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- n.d. A letter to William Fash dated November, 1984.

2 Since Morley's decipherments of Stela 5 and its altars separated them by wide margins, he suggested that the west altar was original with another stela. This suggestion now seems invalid in light of the new decipherments.

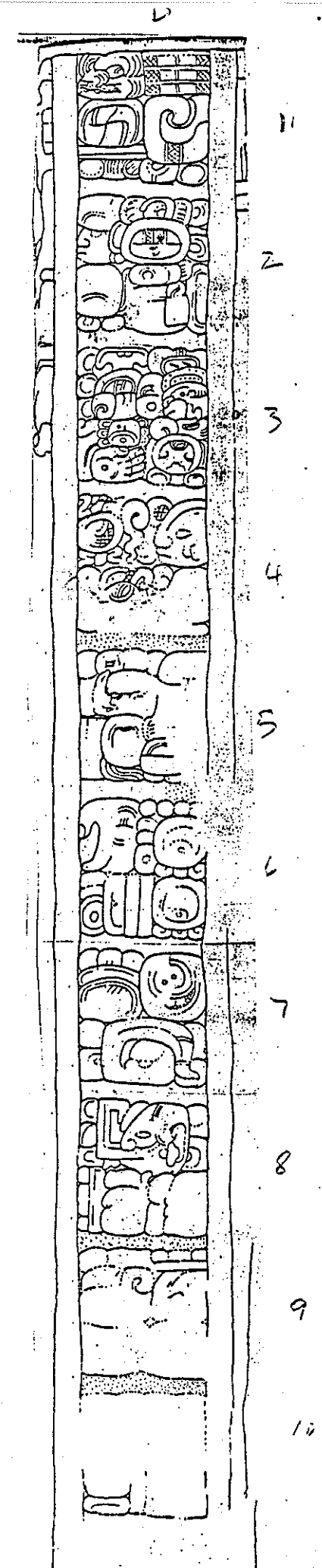
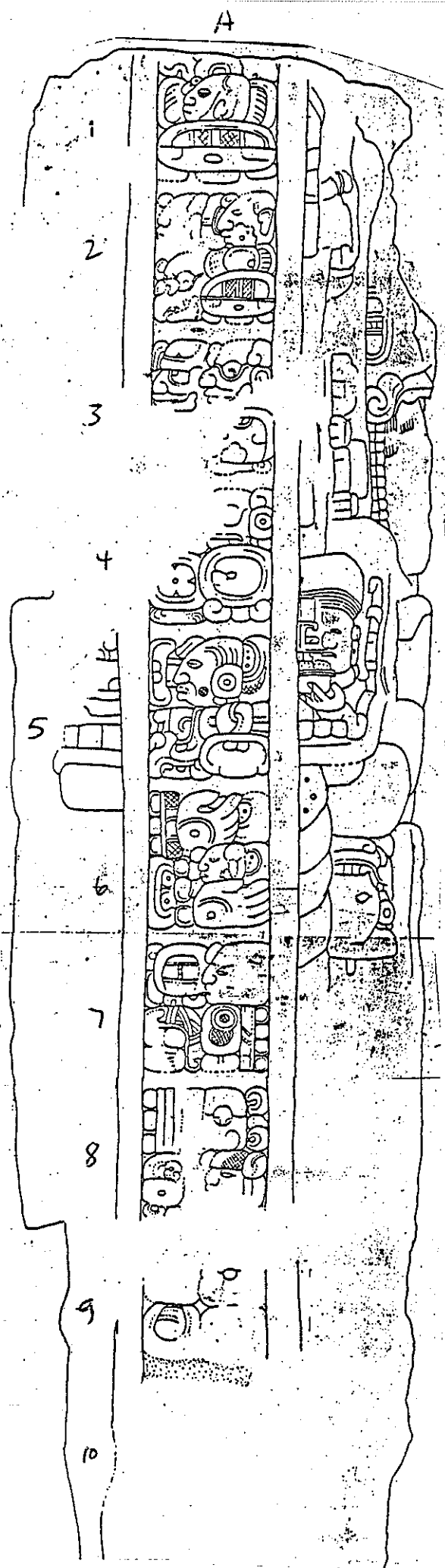


Fig. 1 Copan Stela 5 inscription on the north and south sides.

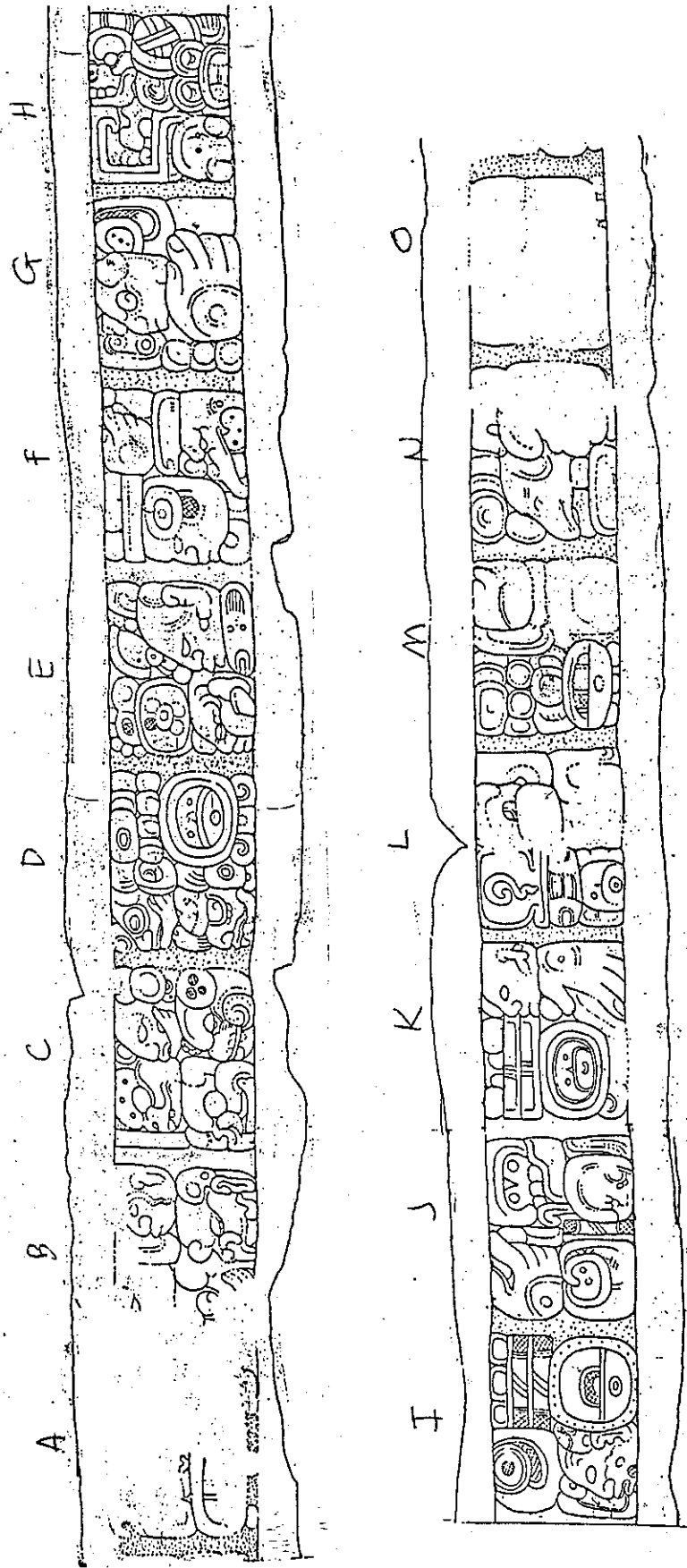


Fig. 2 East Altar of Stela 5

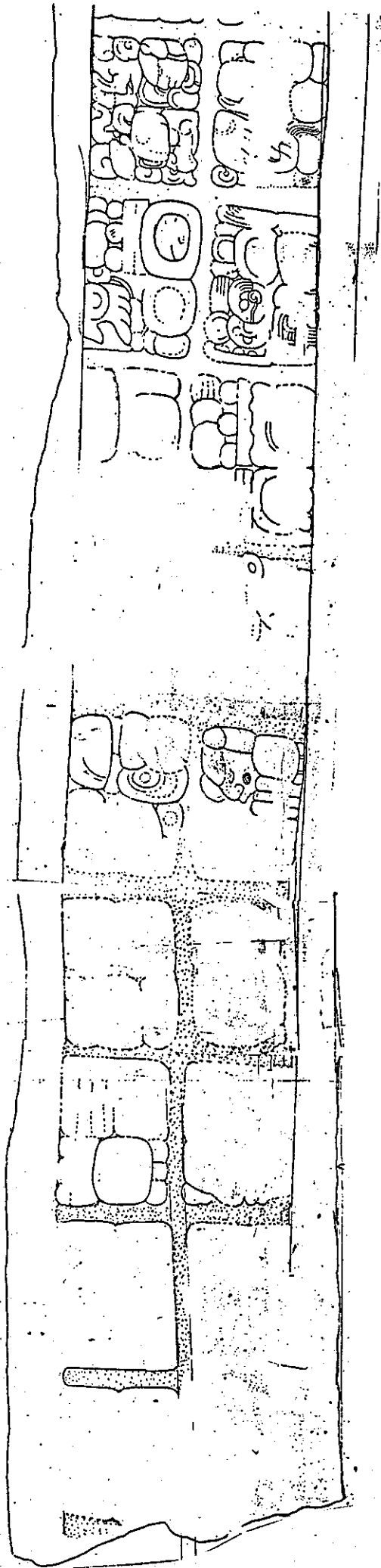
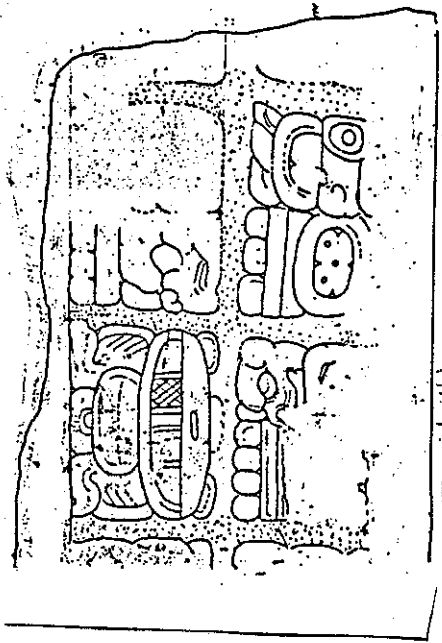
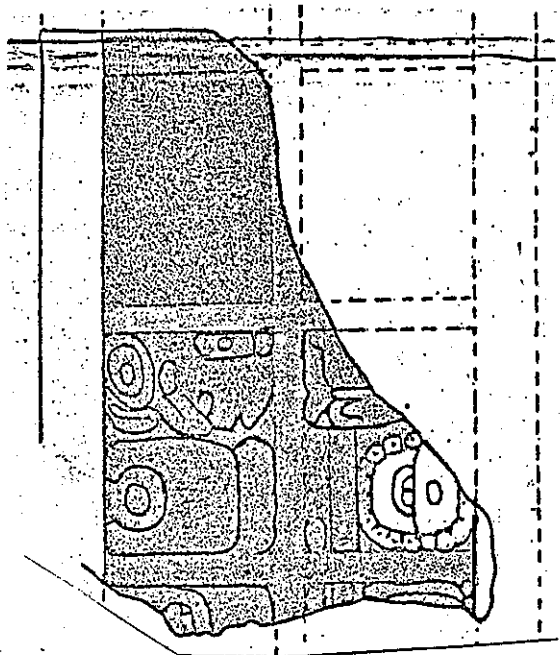
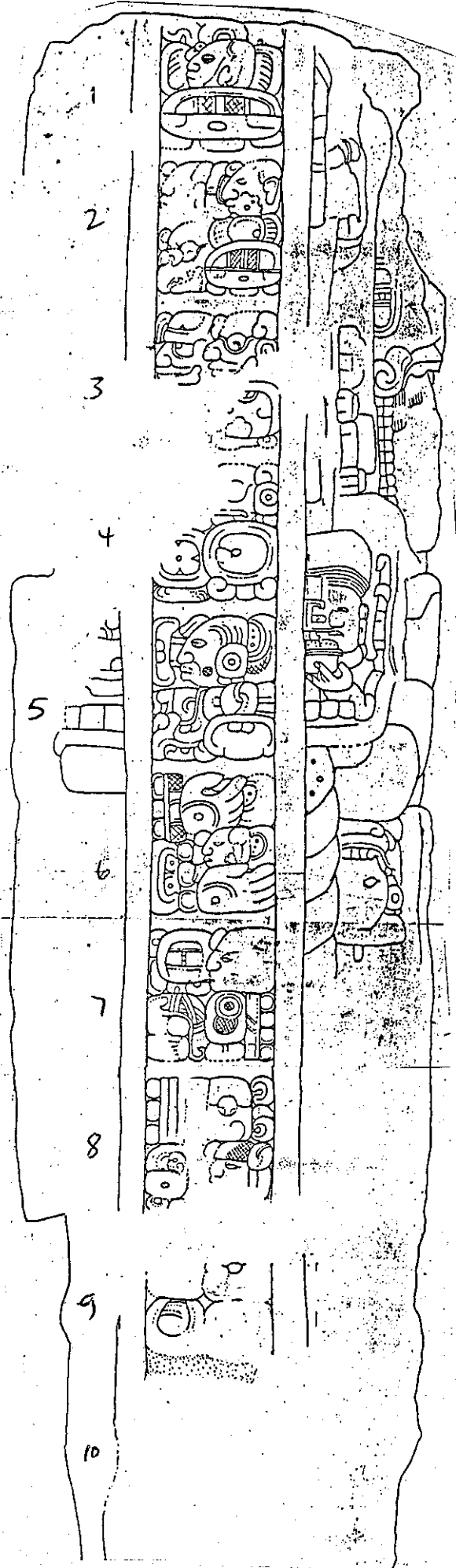


Fig. 3 West Altar of Stela 5

A



B

