

## Copan Note 4

### The Hieroglyphic Name of Altar U

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The supernatural face displayed on the front of Altar U appears to be some variation on the well-known Cauac Monster of Maya iconography. It features large round eyes, a protruding muzzle, and the necessary "cauac" markings on his cheek. However, there are two features that would seem to distinguish this image from other more standard Cauac Monsters: along the top of the head there is a horizontal bar-like element with cross-hatching. This same object is sometimes shown as a mat or a throne on which kings and their relatives sit, and so it is reasonable to assume that Altar U may have functioned as a throne or pedestal for noble individuals during certain ceremonial rites. The second feature of this deity on Altar U is the *k'in* glyph shown in each eye, combined with a smaller "ahau" infix.

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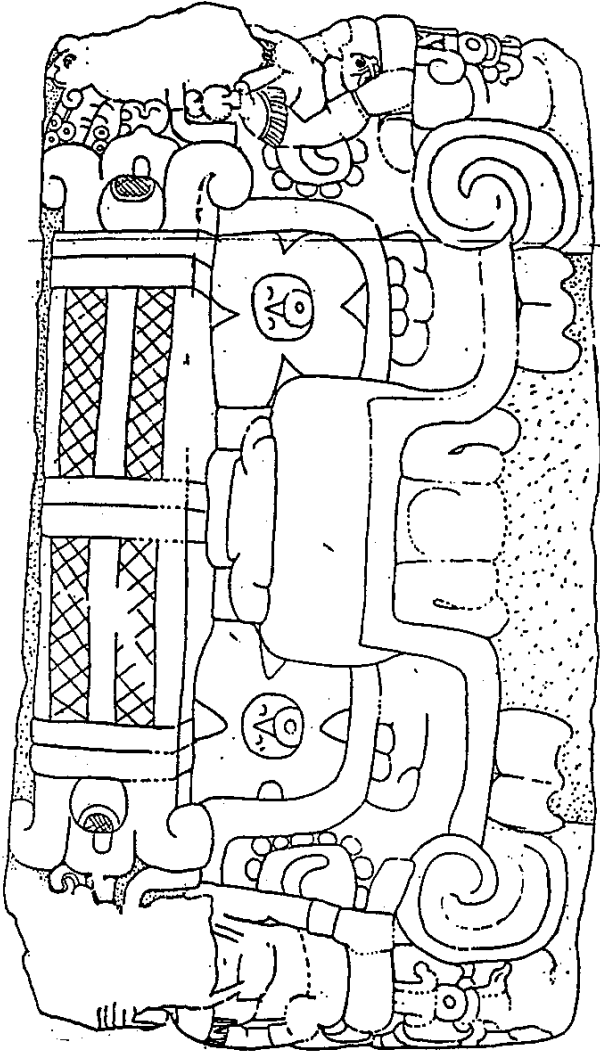
These features of the diety head are important to the decipherment of two glyphs of the main inscription of Altar U. M2 is a glyph that Mathews (1979) has identified as a variant of the *mah k'ina* title, and it is identical to some known renderings of *chik'in*, "west," from the codices. I have previously read this glyph in the titular context Mathews identified as *k'inich*, a documented title meaning "sun-eyed," rather than *chik'in*, "west." This makes more sense as an equivalent to *mah k'ina*, (sometimes rendered simply by the head of the sun god) and there are a few cases where the *chi* syllable sign is separated from its standard *k'in* infix and placed after the *ni* syllable (*k'in-ni-chi*, or *k'inich*). This *k'inich* glyph on Altar U immediately follows a verbal glyph, and I would presume that here it is working as a title for the associated name.

The next glyph at N2 is composed of a bar-like sign with two cross-hatched rows and *tun* with a *ni* phonetic complement. The bar-like sign is very similar to the element that is placed across the top of the cauac head on the front of the monument, and I would suggest that it is simply that iconographic component rendered as a hieroglyphic sign. The *tun* which follows can easily be equated with the standard Cauac Monster, and indeed the latter is often a head variant glyph for *tun*, "stone," or the day Cauac. We therefore have in these two glyphs, *kinich*-*"bar"*-*tun*, or literally "sun-eyed [throne??] stone." This glyph interpretation recalls the image on the front of Altar U -- the *k'in* in each eye of the Cauac Monster reflects precisely the literal significance of the title *k'inich*. This, I believe, can be considered confirmation of the *k'inich* reading. I propose that "sun-eyed [throne??] stone" is in fact the *name* of the Altar U itself.

References

Mathews, Peter

1979 On the Glyphs "West" and "Mah K'ina." *Maya Glyph Notes*, No. 6. MS provided by author.



AB - C D E F G H I J K L

