

## Copan Note 5

### Paraphrase of the Text of Altar U

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July, 1986

Copán, Honduras

#### Clause 1 (A1-F3):

(It was) 10 tuns and 1 katun since it had come to pass 6 Caban 10 Mol (9.16.12.5.17). He was seated as ruler (*chumwanix ti ahau le*), Yax Pac, Sky-penis title, Blood Copan Ahau. And then it came to pass 9 Ik 10 Mol (9.18.1.13.12). He took part in a ritual to the sun-eyed stone throne, Crossed-bands ... *tu na chan*.

This clause links an event concerning the Sun-eyed (*k'inich*) throne stone to the earlier accession of Yax-Pac. The event glyph (T79.565:130.116) has the *-wan* affixing of positional verbs and appears to be part of a verb set which usually includes T79 as the

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

main sign and which occur particularly on dates associated with tun, haab, and tropical year anniversaries. This date corresponds to the 29th haab anniversary of Yax-Pac's accession (see Copan Note 3). The object of the event is the name of the god portrayed on this altar--a zoomorph made of stone and with *k'in* and *ahau* signs in its eyes, a throne sign as its forehead (see Copan Note 4). It seems unlikely that the event is the dedication of this monument, however, since the text records an event that occurred 235 days after this ritual.

The last two glyphs in the clause are not deciphered, but two possibilities exist for their interpretation. The name of the Altar U protagonist includes a crossed-bands sign preceding *ya:ah(or ha):la Chaan-na Ah Bac*. Two of the elements--the crossed bands and a *chan* glyph (written as a serpent head) occurs in E3-F3. If the intervening glyphs are substitutions for parts of the name phrase of the protagonist, then he may also be named as the actor in this clause; however, these substitutions have not been demonstrated in any other context and must remain extremely tentative.

Clause 2 (E4-H1):

To its fivetun the fourth tun (or haab) 4 Ahau 13 Ceh the anniversary event, 4 Ahau 13 Ceh.

*Tu [ho]tun u chan tun (haab)* may be an expression recording that it was approximately 4 tuns (or perhaps haabs in the usage of this text) to the hotun ending 9.18.5.0.0. The verb is repeats that at F1, which occurred on the 9 Ik 10 Mol date. Since it is not marked by the T126 AEI, the same ritual appears to have occurred again on the occasion of the

hotun, a syntactical arrangement that may be marked by the bracketing of the event by the Calendar Round date.

Clause 3, part 1 (G2-N1):

13 haabs [since] it had come to pass 3 Eb seating of Pop. It had been seated

*Yax.k'a:?:la.ix ??chaan . . .*

He enacted the anniversary event for the era, Crossed-bands/*Yal Chaan Ah Bac*, child of Knot-Skull, and blood of Lady Chac-Xoc, mother of the bacab, Ahau of Copan.

The first statement of this earlier event begins with an DN of 13 haabs counted from the occurrence of 3 Eb seating of Pop, 9.17.9.2.12. The second sentence records the event that occurred on that date as the seating (*chumwanix*) of a phrase including *yax* 'first' preceding a phonetic spelling of *k'a:?:la.ix* (or *ih*) followed by a zoomorphic head and *chaan* 'sky.' The remaining part of the phrase consists of *ahau* of Copan preceded again by *yax* 'first' and a title "3-11 pictuns" that occurs in the names of rulers at other sites. Since the ruler Yax-Pac is believed to have been alive at this time, the title should not here refer to the king, and in the next phrase, the second half of this couplet construction, another protagonist is named. The reference to the actor as "First Copan Ahau" may be the key. Houston and Mathews (1985) and Mary Miller (1986) have identified *ahau* as a title carried by high-ranked nobles as well as kings. The robed lords in Room 1 at Bonampak who witness the designation of the heir are *ahaus* and the ruler of Arroyo Piedra was an *ahau* of the king of Dos Pilas. The *Yax Copan Ahau* title at I1 may identified this actor as the "first lord" of the king of Copan.

I2 is an unknown glyph which may be part of the name of the protagonist or the first element of the verb in the second half of the couplet construction. J2 is, however, clearly a verb, and more importantly it is the same verb as that at F1 and F5. In this version, T102 *ta* replaces T565 *ta* and the verbal affixing is different. This verb is followed by T89 *tu* and a phrase that occurs in all other known examples as the event that occurred on 4 Ahau 8 Cumku at the beginning of this era. The Long Count date 9.17.9.2.12 occurred 3,895 haabs (365-day years) + seventeen days after the era date. the haab anniversary is easily detectible in the Maya calendar since it must occur on 8 Cumku, but perhaps the ritual was considered close enough to the actual anniversary seventeen days earlier that an association was made.

The protagonist is named after the statement of the action with the personal name that was used on Altar T and GIII. It is followed by what appears to be a parentage statement although the glyphs between the between the protagonist and his father--the T757 auxiliary verb and the baktun bird--have not been previously identified in the structural position of a relationship statement. The T712 "child of parent" glyph at K3-L3 is, however, a well known relationship metaphor and it is followed by the names of a woman. Interestingly, her name phrase concludes with a "mother" glyph and bacab, *ahau* of Copan. Presumably she is being identified as the mother of a highly placed lord. This oblique statement most likely refers to the protagonist himself, but possibility the reigning bacab, Yax-Pac, may be intended here.

Clause 3, part 2 (O1-U3):

On 3 Caban seating of Pop, the thirteenth haab (after) *la:t(a) ????* *Yax k'a:?? la:ix*  
(or *ih*) *???? chaan . . . .*

The third clause continues to the top of Altar U and the date 3 Caban 0 Pop, which is 13 haabs (13 X 365 days) after the date late mention on the rear. Perhaps because the text move to a surface not obviously next in the reading order, the clause begins with a restatement of the Distance Number (now written in ordinal form) and the earlier event. At H4, this event is written with a *yax* preceding phonetic *k'a*, T140, *la*, and T126 *ix* or *ih*. On the top, the *yax*, *k'a*, and T140 signs appear at P3, and the T178 *la* and T126 signs are at Q1. In both occurrences these signs are followed by a zoomorphic head and a "sky" glyph.

The remaining part of the text is too eroded to decipher. R3 is the T757 auxiliary verb, suggesting that the statement of the 3 Caban 0 Pop event begins at that point. The text ends with the Copan Emblem Glyph, although the name of the protagonist no longer remains legible.

The foregrounded event of the text must have been written in this now lost section. The date is the latest in the chronology and the text builds toward this climax, stating the event of which it is the 13th haab anniversary twice in full detail. The actor is not the king of Copan, but the text begins with the king's accession, linking it to its 29th haab anniversary. The rite celebrating this anniversary involved a "sun-eyed throne stone," the name of the deity carved on the front of the altar and perhaps another throne of the same type. The actor in this ritual is not clearly named, but the date of the ritual is linked to the hotun in which it occurs.

The remaining text sets the stage for the peak event, but stating the background event to which it is linked. The peak event took place on the 13th haab anniversary of the background event which is written with *chumwanix* 'he had been seated' followed by office or object unique to Altar U. In its second record the event includes part of the expression which usually refers to the 4 Ahau 8 Cumku era event. Here the protagonist is named which a statement of his parentage. The third record of the event (on the top) reuses the formula of the first record, although *chumwanix* is replaced by *lat* and a now-eroded glyph.

The actor appears to have been an important official of high rank and power subordinate to the king Yax-Pac. On Altar GI, this same person is again named in conjunction with Yax-Pac. On one side the date 9.18.10.0.0 10 Ahau 8 Zac is record with the same rite that appears with the 9 Ik 10 Mol date on Altar U. This T79 event is followed by *yax* and a serpent head with a beaded forehead element identifying it as the same serpent form that appears in a "bloodletting" parentage metaphor on the Palace Tablet at Palenque. A cauc glyph is infixed in the lower right corner, indicating that this serpent is made of stone. It is followed by a fancy cross-shape marked by cauc signs, perhaps indicating a carved stone. Since Altar GI depicts entwined Vision dragons, these two glyphs may well be the name of the altar itself. The text continues with *u cab* and the name of the king. The other side names the Altar U protagonist with his personal names appearing at D1-D2. It is preceded and followed by glyphs prefixed by the number four; perhaps these same titles appear in a much eroded condition at S2-S3 on Altar U.

The individual as the protagonist on Altar U had rank and prestige enough to warrant titles and prerogatives rivaling the king. On Altar T, her included the Copan Emblem glyph and the title *ahau* in his name. On Altar U, he is named a *Yax Copan Ahau*, and to

have had the right to commission such monuments as Altars U and T suggests that it behooved Yax-Pac to award these honors in order to insure the loyalty and cooperation of this lord.

#### References

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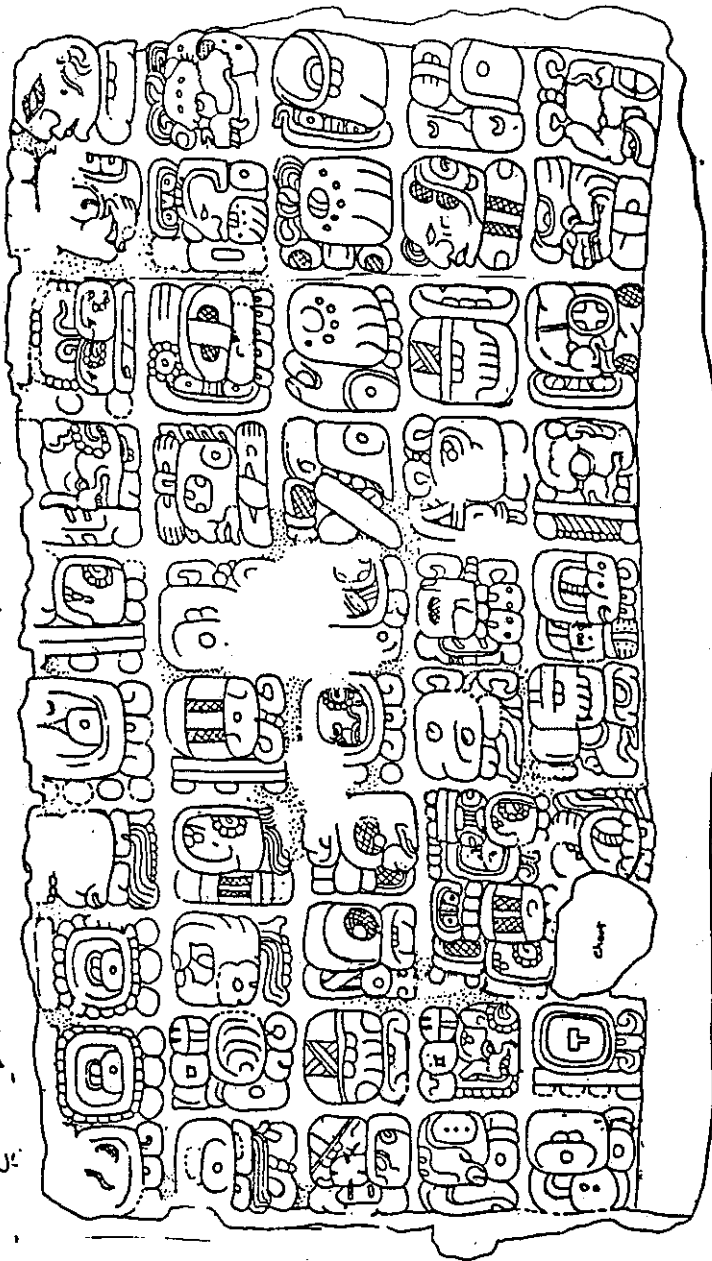
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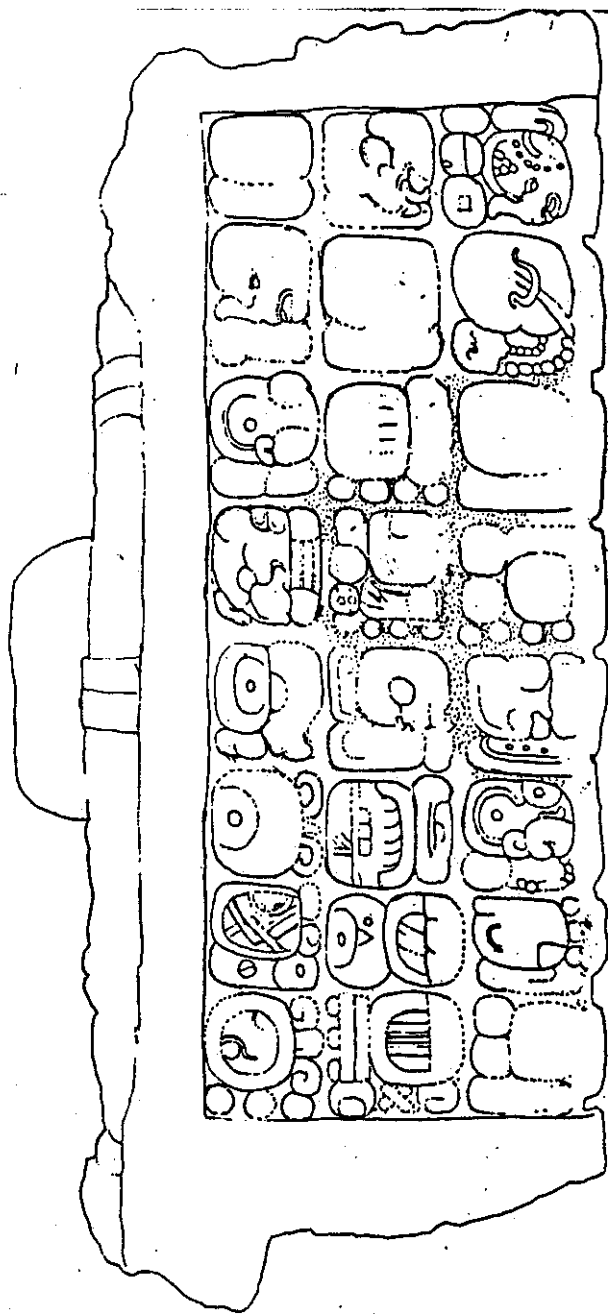
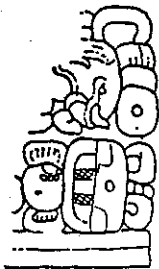
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