

Copán Note 6

Yax-K'uk-Mo', the Founder of the Lineage of Copán

by David Stuart and Linda Schele¹

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Floyd Lounsbury first identified a character named Yax-k'uk'-mo', but to date no portrait of this important Copan ruler has been identified. His name is composed of a *yax* sign preceding a quetzal and macaw either of which may appear in phonetic or pictorial form or conflated as a crested macaw. On the top of Altar Q, this name appears in conflated form with an *ahaw* over the quetzal-macaw. In most other examples, his name appears with a *Mah K'ina* or *k'inich* title, and only this ruler is known so far to have carried these titles in his name.

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).

The figure to the left of the Calendar Round date on the west side of Altar Q appears with the element of this name in his headdress. A crested long tailed bird perches on the rear of his turban. Close examination of the original monument has shown that the eye of this bird is surrounded by a circle of dots, the characteristic eye of a macaw as well as the phonetic sign *mo*. The bird is a quetzal-macaw or a *K'uk'-Mo'*.

Attached to the front of the turban are two glyphic elements: a *yax* shell sign placed atop a *k'in* glyph. These two components, when combined with the quetzal-macaw, comprise the full glyphic rendering of the name *Mah k'ina* (or *k'inich*) *Yax K'uk' Mo'*.

The *ahaw* glyph which is found with the *K'uk'-Mo'* name on the top inscription also appears with this figure as the glyph on which he sits. This is the T518 variant of the title *ahaw*. This might be considered as a fifth component of the name associated with this figure, especially since the other figures on the sides of Altar Q sit on their name glyphs (Riese, n.d.).

Riese identified the sixteen figures on Altar Q as the sixteen successors of the Copan dynasty. The sixteenth successor, *Yax Pac*, is located to the right of the Calendar Round date. Moving counterclockwise, the first successor is located on the left of the Calendar Round. *Yax K'uk' Mo'* is, according to this analysis then, the first successor of the Copan dynasty.

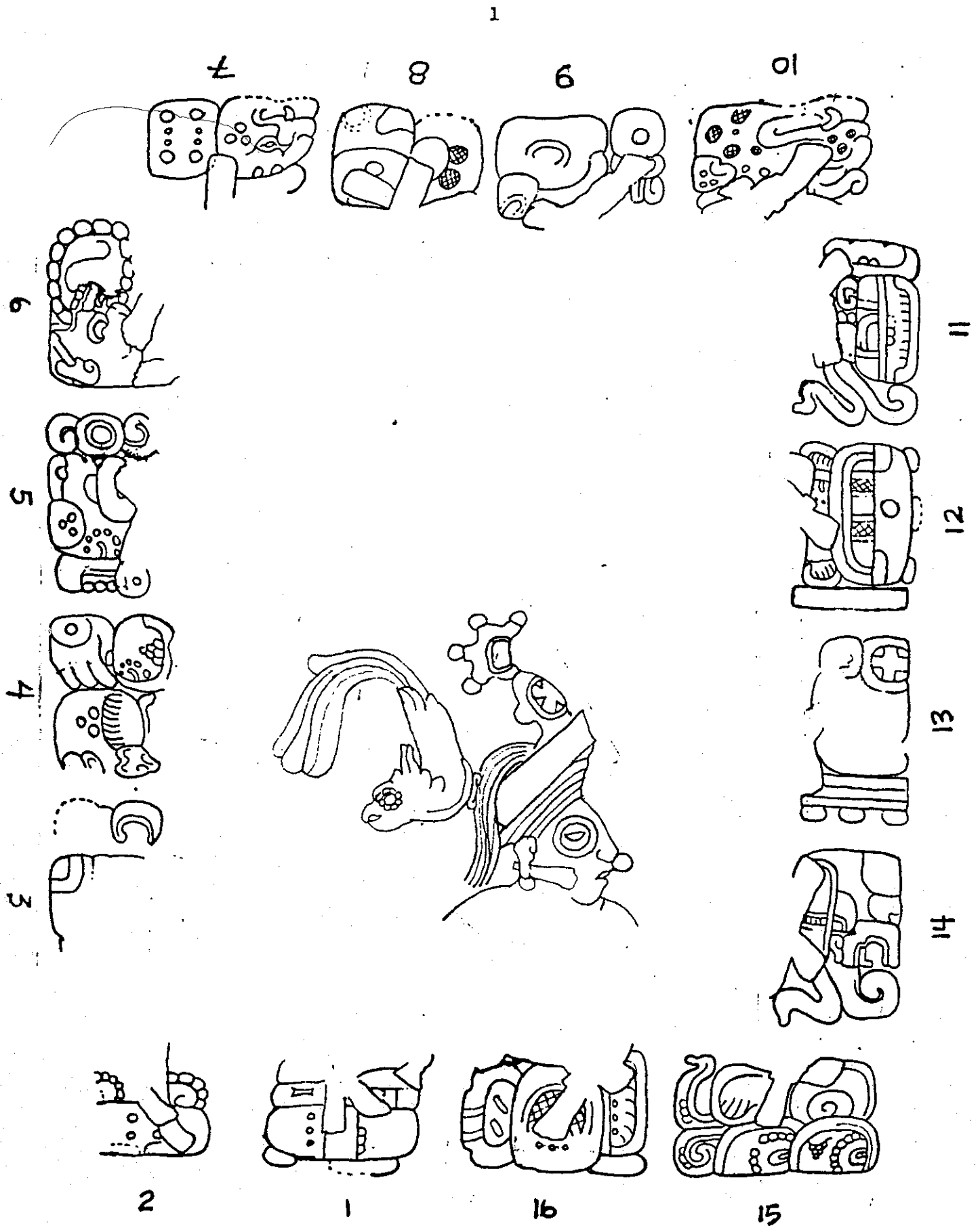
The only known dates associated with *Yax K'uk' Mo'* support this evaluation. On the "mat" side of Stela J at Copan, there is a reference to a God K-in-hand event enacted by *Yax K'uk' Mo'* on 9.0.0.0.0. A similar event occurs in the upper inscription of Altar Q associated with the date 5 Caban 15 Yaxkin. A second event is recorded three days later on the day 8 Ahau 18 Yaxkin. *Yax K'uk' Mo'* is clearly the actor in both of these events. A

Distance Number of 17 Katuns leads to the Period Ending 9.17.5.0.0 6 Ahau 13 Kayab, suggesting that these Calendar Round dates should be placed in the vicinity of 9.0.0.0.0. The closest Long Count positions for these two dates are 8.19.10.10.17 5 Caban 15 Yaxkin and 8.19.10.11.0 8 Ahau 18 Yaxkin. These very early dates are appropriate for a ruler who was the first of sixteen successors. It is also noteworthy that no dates later than these can be securely associated with the reign of *Yax K'uk' Mo'*.

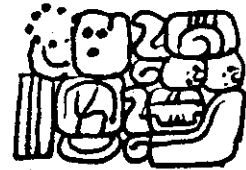
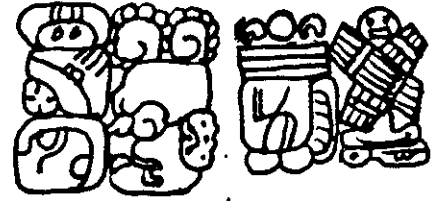
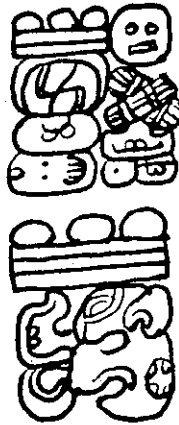
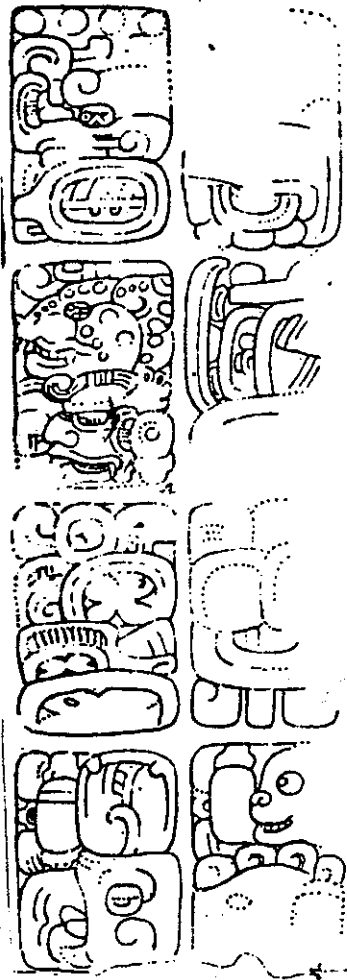
References

Riese, Berthold

n.d. Notes on the Copan Inscriptions. On file in the archives of the *Proyecto Arqueologia de Copán*, Copán, Honduras.

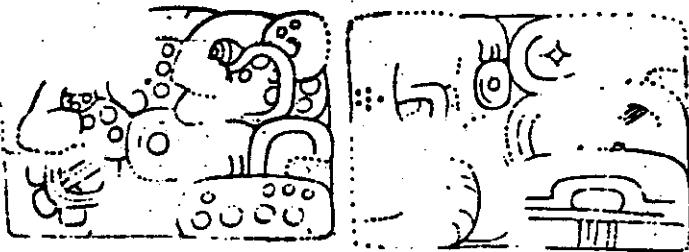


Copan Altar Q



Stela B,
18-Rabbit
13th successor

Temple 11
reviewing stands
Yax-Pac, 16th successor
Smoke-Shell, 15th successor



STELA 15
9.4 10.00.
Water lily-Jaguar
7th successor



ST. P
Butz-Chaan
11th successor



ST 19
Smoke-Imix-God k
12th successor