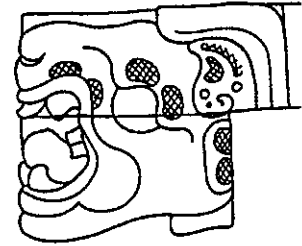


Copán Mosaics Project

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Taking the Headband at Copán

by Linda Schele and Elizabeth Newsome

edited by Khristaan Villela

In 1986, David Stuart (1986) redated Stela 4 to 9.14.15.0.0 and connected its dedication date to 8.6.0.0.0, an early date also recorded on Stela I. In *Copán Note 30*, Schele (1987) discussed this early date, suggesting it corresponded to the founding of Copán as a polity in the Classic Maya mode of organization. Recent insights and decipherments now allow a more subtle interpretation of the events associated with this early date.

Stela I (Fig. 1) records two events and dates: 8.6.0.0.0 and 8.6.0.10.8 (December 19, 159 and July 14, 160, respectively). The first clause in the passage begins with the Calendar Round 10 Ahaw 13 Ch'en, and the Lord of the Night. The verbal

phrase, "had been completed, the sixth k'atun," follows the temporal information. The clause ends with a compound consisting of a *chi* hand over an eccentric *kawak* that may refer to the Altar Q type of ancestral throne. At Tikal on Stela 31 (Fig. 2a), this throne glyph occurs as part of a place name¹ where important early events occurred. Examples of these "eccentric *kawak*" compounds at Palenque and Yaxchilan (Fig. 2b-c) have *yahaw te'* enframing the throne or following it so that the person named (the founder, in the case of the Yaxchilan text) is a *yahaw te'* of the "chi-*kawak*" structure, whatever it is. Its function on Stela I may be related in that it either identifies the place

1. This place name is the controversial "zero-bird" glyph that Schele (in the Texas Workbooks as early as 1978) identified as an office on the Leiden Plaque. Peter Mathews and Federico Fahsen later suggested it was part of the name of the ruler on Leiden Plaque, Altar 13, and Stela 31. Most recently, Schele (1990) and Stuart and Houston (1991) have shown that this glyph occurs as a toponym on Stela 31 and Schele (along with several others at the 1990 Texas Workshop) suggested the *chi*-eccentric *kawak* on Stela 31 is a pictorial representation of a square (or round) altar sitting on large globular legs. This is exactly the form of Altar Q at Copán.

*The Copán Notes are a running series of commentaries and small reports deriving from the multidisciplinary research project designed to conserve, document, and analyze the architectural and sculpture monuments of the Classic Maya ruins of Copán. Originally undertaken by William L. Fash and known as the Copán Mosaics Project, this endeavor has since June 1988 formed part of the larger Copán Acropolis Project, funded and carried out by the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia through financing from the U.S. Agency for International Development. Funding for the Copán Mosaics Project, the Copán Hieroglyphic Stairway Project, and supplementary funding for the Copán Acropolis Project has been provided by the National Science Foundation (1986-1988), the National Geographic Society (1986-1989), the National Endowment for the Humanities (1986-1987), the Center for Field Research (EARTHWATCH; 1985-1988), the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research (1987; 1989), the H.J. Heinz Charitable Fund (1986), Council for International Exchange of Scholars (1987), and Northern Illinois University (1985-1989). The Copán Acropolis Project, as a dependency of the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia, is subject to the rules of that body. Regarding any re-use or subsequent distribution of these materials presented in the Copán Notes or in project publications, those rules stipulate that any publication using materials (either written or in the form of line drawings or photographs) derived from the Copán Acropolis Project must receive prior written consent from the Project Director (William Fash) and the Director of the Instituto (José María Casco). These notes are published by the Copán Acropolis Archaeological Project and the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia.

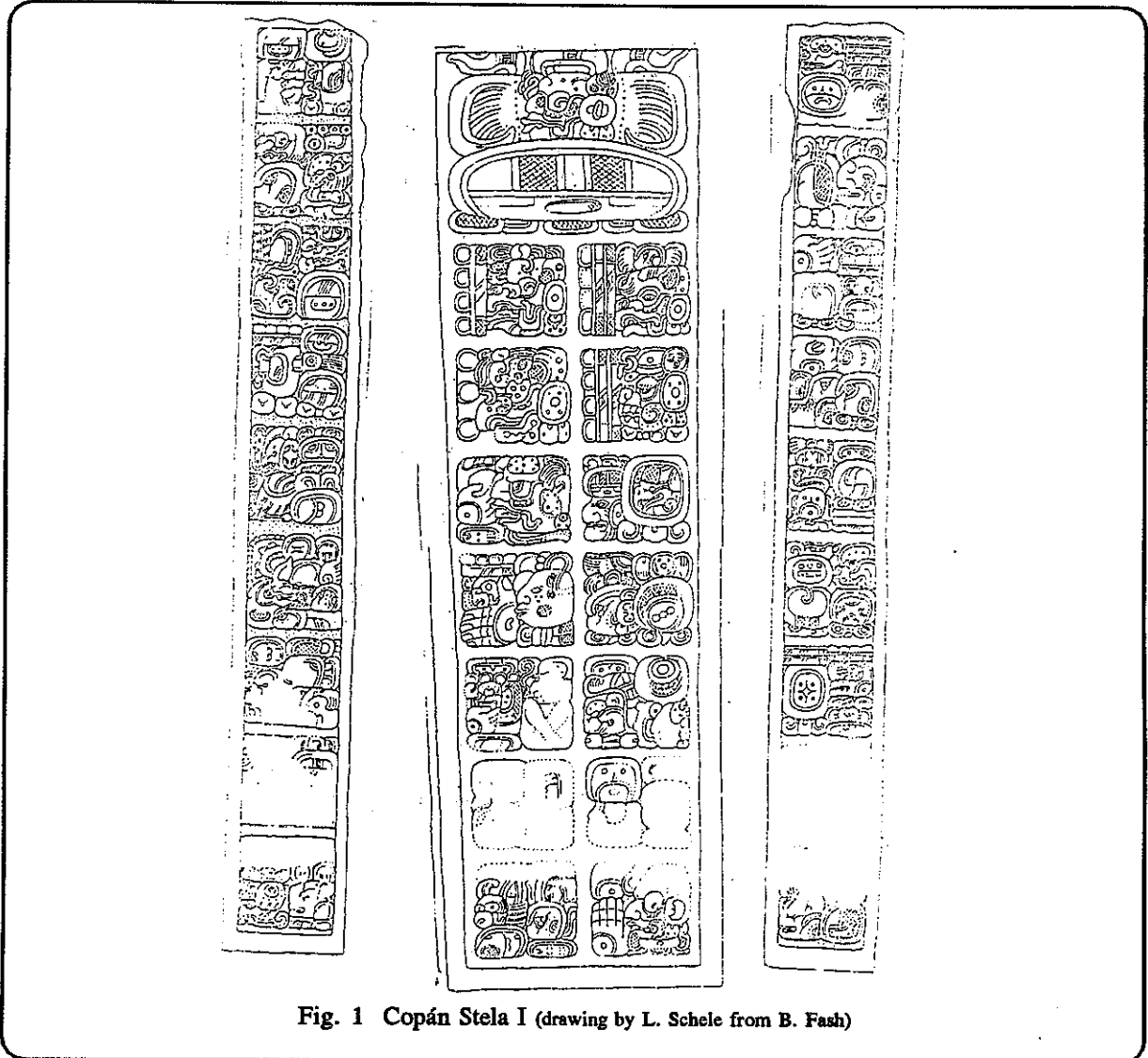


Fig. 1 Copán Stela I (drawing by L. Schele from B. Fash)

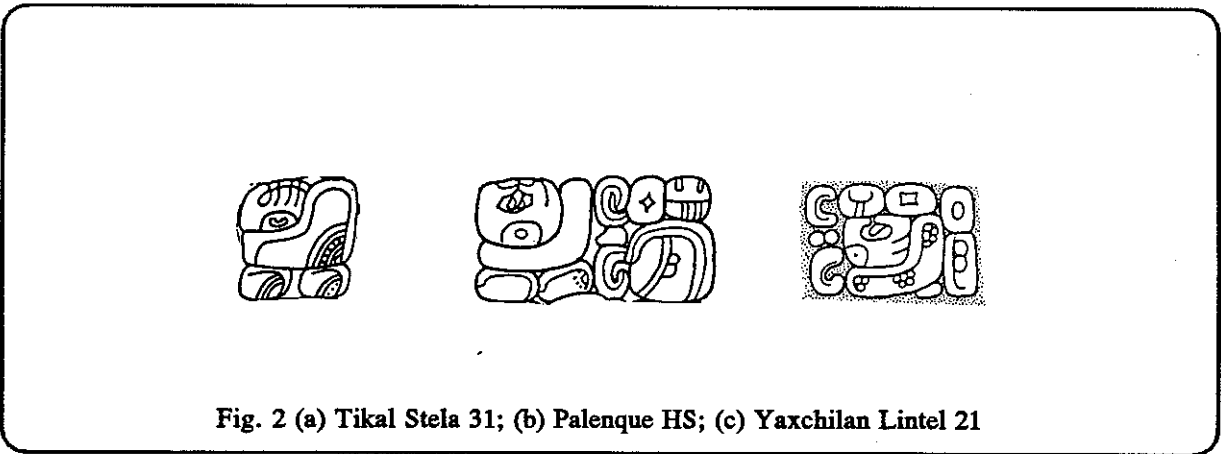


Fig. 2 (a) Tikal Stela 31; (b) Palenque HS; (c) Yaxchilan Lintel 21

or the political context in which the sixth k'atun ended.

The Stela I clause continues with *u kabi*, "under the authority of" or "by the action of." The name of the person recorded as the actor includes *Mah K'ina*, the *ya* sign, an ahaw surrounded by leaf forms, and *na*. Nikolai Grube and Werner Nahm, in a letter circulated to epigraphers in November, 1990, identified the ahaw outside of the day sign cartouche as *nik*, the word for "flower." cartouche. Schele (1975, 1991a) identified a combination of the Jester God with the single-leaf tree sign on the sarcophagus sides at Palenque and suggested it recorded the *yahaw te'* title prominent at many Maya sites. Virginia Fields (1982) further identified the Jester God as the Maya version of an earlier Olmec god representing the World Tree. This tree association was further enhanced when Stuart (in a letter circulated in response to the Grube-Nahm suggestions) suggested that the Jester God represented a deified flower.

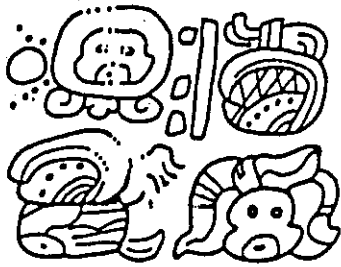


Fig. 3 Text from the Peccary Skull
(drawing by B. Fash)

Finally, the name of the Jester God was read by Schele (1991) as *sak hun* or *sak hunal*, a word meaning "white barkcloth," as a reference to the headband worn by kings. Apparently, very elaborate headdresses, such as the one held aloft by an old god on a tiny bone in the Dallas Museum of Art, were also called *sak hunal*. Furthermore, differences in the headdresses were registered in the supplementary expressions that followed verbs recording what was done to and with these elaborate insignia. To become king was often recorded as being "crowned" by one of these objects. The Stela I name apparently refers to the deified image of this flower headband. The personage who was the authority at this period ending was *Mah K'ina* ("Great Sun") Ya Nik Hun.²

That this Ya Nik Hun or Nik Hun refers to a general attribute rather than a specific person seems confirmed by the reappearance of the same "foliated ahaw" in the text of the Copán peccary skull (Fig. 3). Here the text records 1 Ahaw 8 Ch'en (8.17.0.0) and a period-ending event. The skull shows the placement of a stela and altar from the Xibalban side of the portal looking out into the human world.³ The actor is Nik Hun, but the two people shown wear a Macaw headdress on the left and a fantastic beast on the right. If these headdresses refer to the names of the persons shown, as is often the case in Maya imagery, then neither is named Nik Hun. Furthermore, since front-facing positions usually signal higher hierarchical position over profile people when the two positions are juxtaposed, we take the front-facing person on the right to be the protagonist and thus the person entitled Nik-Hun.

The association of the flower-Jester God headband with this early 8.6.0.0 event is confirmed by the record on Stela 4 (Fig. 4). Stuart's (1986) analysis argued for a Distance Number Introductory Glyph, an Initial Series Introductory Glyph with the patron of the month Ch'en, a distance number of [1].8.[15.0.0] leading from 8.6.0.0.0 10 Ahaw 8 Ch'en to 9.14.15.0.0, the dedication date of the monument. The event for both these dates is recorded with a strange bundle device resembling a bag tied closed with a knot. The

2. The other possibility is that the *ya* is to be read with the *na* to spell *yan*, the word in the Ch'olan languages for "difference, alteration, other, belonging to another." This could be *Yan Nik*, "altered or changed flower," in reference to the establishment of a different kind of power at Copán.

3. Several people, including Barbara Fash and MatthewLooper, have realized how the imagery of the peccary skull was meant to be read and shared their insights with us.

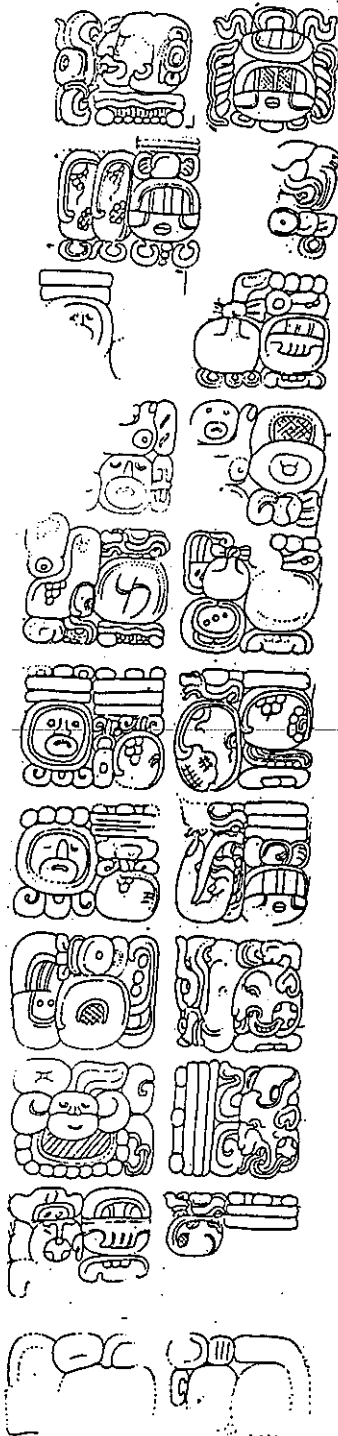


Fig. 4 The text from Stela 4
(drawing by B. Faah)

only other example of this odd bag-like glyph known to us was found by Julie Miller in the rubble fallen from Temple 21. Unfortunately the sculptural fragment is out of context and not even clearly identifiable as glyphic in its function.

Although we cannot suggest a meaning for the verb, it is followed, both in its early manifestation and its late reenactment, by *chan te chan*, a glyph occurring with a sequence of "four-sky expressions" in the ritual passage that closes the text of Copán Stela A. These four-sky expressions seem to be related to the directional circuits involved in stela dedications at Copán and still practiced by many Maya groups today.

In the record of the 8.6 event, this bundle-four-sky expression is followed by two ahaw-in-hand phrases that are very revealing. T670 ahaw-in-hand is now known to be polyvalent. Chris Jones (1977) first identified it at Tikal as a relationship glyph, which Schele, Mathews, and Lounsbury (n.d.) later identified as an expression for "child of mother." Several epigraphers entertained the reading *al*, which Stuart (n.d.) formally proposed as its phonetic value in this context. *Al* is a widely distributed term for "child of woman" in Mayan languages.

However, there is an independent context where the *al* reading does not seem to apply. As early as 1979, Schele at the Texas workshops had proposed that in this other context, the ahaw-in-hand glyph (T670 with an ahaw resting in the thumb) recorded the holding or display of God K. In reviewing all the contexts, Schele (1989) suggested that it was the holding or display of scepters. When the glyph was unmarked, God K was to be understood, but other kinds of scepters could be named in glyphs following the hand. Using phonetic complements that occur with T670 in this context, she proposed a reading of *ch'a*, "to take or possess," in Yukatek, but also showed that the glyph frequently appears with *ma* and *xa* suffixes, with the latter especially associated with Copán. Grube and Stuart have independently seen the same evidence and suggested *ch'am* as a reading. *Ch'am* is a Ch'olan term for "receive", but Attinasi (1973) also lists it as "to take, grab, harvest" and Wisdom (n.d.: 715) lists *ch'ami* as "grasp, pick up, gather." Since the phonetics seem clear with a *ch'a* complement on Piedras Negras

Lintel 2 and *ma* complement in many other examples, we accept the reading suggested by Stuart and Grube and take the glyph to read *ch'am*, "it was taken" or "it was grasped."⁴

In most examples of the *ch'am* glyph in Waxaklahun-Ubah-K'awil's⁵ inscriptions, it is followed by *xa*, which must now be taken as a separate word rather than as a phonetic complement to the verb because of its distribution at Copán and elsewhere. *Xa* is glossed in Ch'orti (Wisdom n.d.:646) as "now, already," while Attinasi (1973) has it as "thoroughly, completely, everywhere." Ch'olti had it as "más" and Tzotzil as "already, more." This allows it to function as an inflection on the verb marking the action as "thoroughly, complete, and already done." However, Attinasi (1973:336) has another entry which provides an alternative interpretation: *xahlel*⁶ and *xaholel* are glossed as "stone, boulder, rocky ground." The *xa* may then refer to the thing grasped as made of stone, although how a gloss referring to "boulders" can refer to things made of stone, such as jade, is still unclear.

The *ch'am* hand is followed by an *ahaw* sign with a *ki* suffix in the configuration Grube and Nahm identified as *nik*, "flower." The object taken was therefore a flower, but more specifically, because of the next phrase, Schele thinks it was a flower headband. The passage continues with a repetition of the same *ch'am* verb, this time with a damaged suffix that was likely another *xa* sign. The object held is written as a black headband-*ik*⁷ *hun*. The glyph shows the sign for "black" superfixed to the knot found consistently in Glyph F of the Lunar Series. Substitution patterns in Glyph F and other contexts identify the knot as a substitution for the Jester God and another set of glyphs which all read *hun* (Schele 1991). *Hun* is the word for bark cloth and is used today by the Lakandon in their expression for the red barkcloth headbands, *ch+k huun*, worn in god pot ceremonies. The Classic period

headband was a *sak hun* or *sak hunal*. Furthermore, in its unmarked form, it referred to the Jester God headband worn by kings. But with the additional names included, it could refer to any of the headdresses worn by the Maya.

Here, the specific kind of headdress is specified as a "black barkcloth band" associated with the eccentric *kawak* title discussed above. Whereas, Stela I records the end of the sixth k'atun in association with this title, and Yaxchilan and Palenque refer to founders as *yahawte'* of the title, Copán refers to the earliest specified event in its own history as a black headband of that quality. I suspect that while Palenque's white headband refers to the Jester God and white bark cloth, Copán's refers to their distinctive turban, which was likely made of woven cloth.

Black headbands are rare in Classic Maya texts, but there is one reference which may be relevant to the Copán example. The lintels of Temples 1 and 4 of Tikal make reference to the great protector beasts that hover above and behind the protagonists. Temple 1, Lintel 2 (Fig. 5) refers to the Waxaklahun-Ubah war serpent, and Lintel 3 names Nupul-Balam-Chaknal. Lintel 3 of Temple 4 names the great arching serpent as ??? Na-chan.

Where the texts in the passages fully survive, they include a still-undeciphered verb consisting of a *kawak* sign flanked by three dots on each side, a *chi* hand or a *ta* sign, and a *ha* sign. On Lintel 2 of Temple 4, (Fig. 6) this verb occurs at B11 followed by a glyph reading *nik pilip*. As a root in Yukatek, *pil* means "to embroider, to work with cloth, to wind thread around something." The combination seems to be a direct reference to a flowered cloth or headband of some sort. The next glyph names the standing protector god, who wears a Jester God headdress, as K'in-Hix,⁸ "Sun-Jaguar." The jaguar's name is followed by Ek'-Hun, "Black Headband," but this time *hun* is written in its personified form (Schele 1991). The text continues with *u k'ul Yax May*

4. The inflection in most examples does not include a prefixed pronoun, thus identifying the form of the verb as intransitive, and probably a passive.

5. This king has been called 18-Rabbit in earlier notes and other published sources, but since the phonetic reading of his name is now demonstrated, we will use his correct name in this note.

6. This term appears to consist of a root for stone, *xah*, and the suffix *-lel*, which derives abstractive nouns from other nouns. *Xah* is "stone"; *xahlel* is "stoniness" or "a state of being stone."

7. The word for "black" in the Cholan languages is *ik'* rather than *ek*, as in Yukatek.

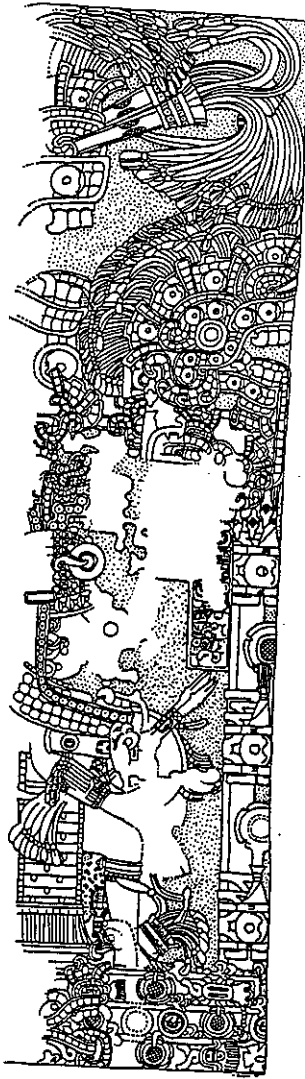


Fig. 5 Tikal T1, L2

Kan Chak Sak Hun, "the god of Yax-May-Kan-Chak, the White headband." In this text, the black and the white head bands appear to be contrasted. One is associated with the cruller-eyed sun god known as K'in-Hix and the other with a Chak. The god is shown wearing an elaborate headdress

8. The jaguar head is usually read as *balam*, but here it has a *hi* knot as a phonetic complement, identifying it as *hix*, an alternative term for jaguar.

9. This king has been called First Dawn, New-Sky-at-Horizon, and Yax-Pak, based on readings suggested by Lounsbury in 1977. Stuart (1988) first doubted the *ka* value for the last sign in the name and suggested an alternative value of *sa*, making the name Yax-Pas. *Pas*, the Ch'olan word for "open," is used in expressions for dawn, as in "to open the day." Grube and Nahm and Schele (1991) found very strong supporting evidence for the *sa* value. I now accept the name of this ruler as Yax-Pas, "First-Dawning."

which features the woven, beaded headband supporting three (two visible) anthropomorphic versions of the Jester God.

Whether the black headband of the Stela 4 text refers to the same kind of headband at Copán is uncertain. Jester God headbands are very rare at Copán. Instead a turban created by wrapping a narrow cloth around the head many times functions almost like a signal of membership in the Copán polity—a kind of ethnic marker. However, when Waxaklahun-Ubah-K'awil continued the text, he associated the very early taking of the headband with his own reenactment of the event, and with a title that was important in the Copán polity, especially during the reign of Yax-Pas.⁹

The text of Stela 4 (Fig. 4) continues with the date and the erection of the monument and its proper name, which apparently included *u ??? bahil* and a title which Newsome (1991) associates with a title used (Fig. 7) by Yax-Pas on the benches from Temple 11 and 21a and on the west door south panel of Temple 11. Grube and Nahm's reading of T533 as *nik* allows this title

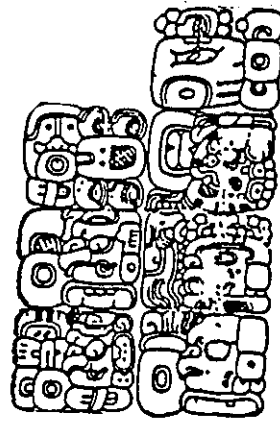


Fig. 6 Text from Tikal T4, L2

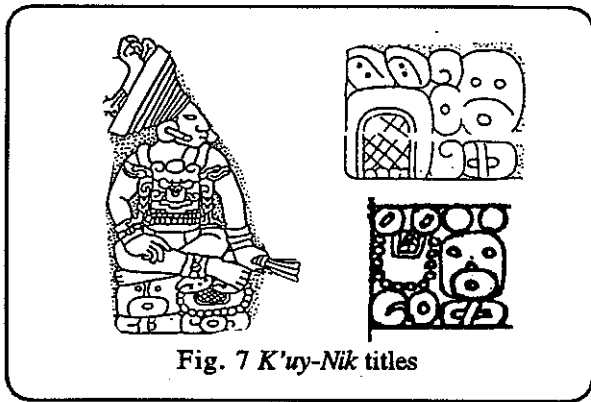


Fig. 7 K'uy-Nik titles

now to be read as K'uy Nik Ahaw. *K'uy* does not occur in Wisdom's Ch'orti vocabulary, but Atinasi (1973:286) lists *k'uy-an* as "bird, pájaro cantador." "Bird flower" seems an odd name at first, but flower bird combinations (Fig. 8) are shown among the flowers on House E at Palenque (Robertson 1985) and hummingbird flower head-dresses were worn in many Maya costumes. Considering that the name of Copán very probably was *Xukpi*,¹⁰ "Bird" or "Motmot" (Looper 1991), and that two of the mountains in the valley were named for birds--Macaw Mountain (Stuart 1988) and Dove Mountain (Schele and Grube 1990), having a bird-flower headband does not seem out of place. We suspect that the *k'uy nik ahaw* title may also have to do with that very first flower headband--the *ik' hun* taken on 8.6.0.0.0 at the beginning of the existence of *Xukpi* as a Classic Maya polity.

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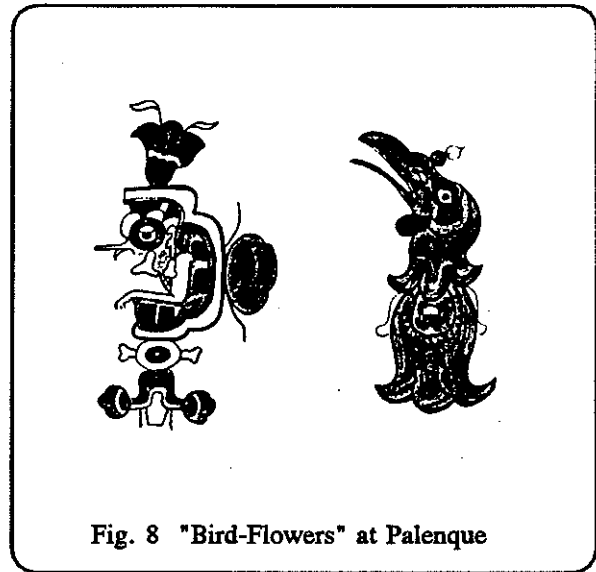


Fig. 8 "Bird-Flowers" at Palenque

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10. In reading a preliminary copy of this note, Bill Fash informed us that David Stuart does not accept the proposed *xukpi* reading of Copn's emblem glyph. The values were first proposed by Nikolai Grube in a May, 1990 letter to Schele in which he showed the substitutions of the bat glyph for *xa* signs in the title of Lady Chak-Kimi of Yaxchilan. In the same letter, he showed that the bird in bird-jaguar's name is replaced by a bat and a *ni* sign to give a *ya-??-n(i)* value to the bird. Furthermore a bird with the almost identical spelling occurs as an augury bird in the Dresden Codex. Grube found *yaxun* is the name of just such an augury bird in the Books of Chilam Balam. He went on to propose that the bat had a value of *xu* in the Classic period. Schele has spent a year testing the reading in other contexts and found it generally productive, and Grube has continued to add examples to his set of productive examples.

The *xu* value for the *bat* gives a combination of signs read *xu-ku-pi* or *xu-ku-pu* for the emblem glyph. Mathew Looper (1991) then found a Ch'ol entry for "bird" and was able to identify it as the word for mot-mot. Since he also found *xwukup* as mot-mot, he was able to explain both spellings. David Sedat and Luis Beltran, a speaker of K'eq'chi, informed us that *xuk* and *xukup* also mean "corner" and function in expressions which are particularly relevant to Copn's geographical position in the Maya zone and in the local area. We believe the *xukpi* reading will prove to be the correct one for Copn's ancient name.

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