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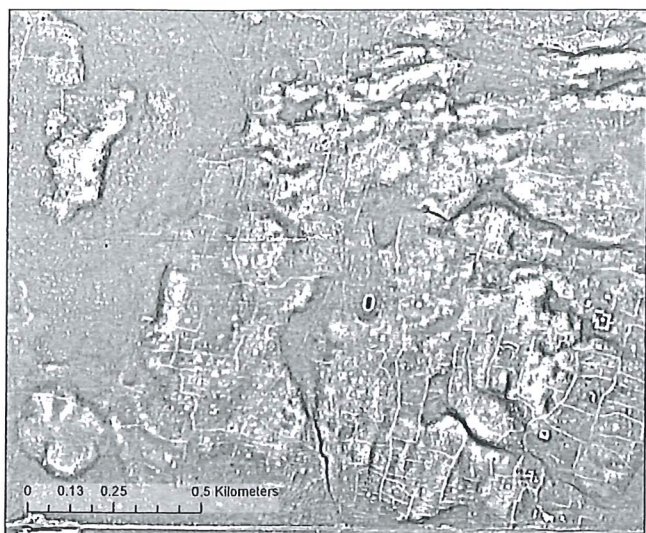


Figure 2. Enhanced LiDAR image showing Western Neighborhood, Xnoha with linear stone features highlighted. Illustration by Dr. Joshua Kwoka.

or other vegetation and are, today, the only archaeologically visible component.

Current and planned research related to these features include soil chemistry studies to investigate functional diversity within the houselots, continued ground truthing to confirm the nature and functions of the features, and study of the neighborhood as a social unit.

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Figure 3. Linear stone feature showing excavation and composition.

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## Contributions

### Another Look at Stela 2 of Caracol, Belize

Christophe Helmke, Arlen F. Chase and Diane Z. Chase

Although discovered in 1937, it was not until 1950 that the site of Caracol was the subject of archaeological investigations. These initial investigations were headed by Linton Satterthwaite of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, working in collaboration with then Commissioner of Archaeology, A.H. Anderson, and were focused primarily on the documentation of carved monuments. The profusion of monuments found at Caracol resulted in follow-up investigations in 1951 and 1953, leading to the discovery and documentation of the site's first 21 stelae and 19 altars (Beetz 1980; Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981: 1; Satterthwaite 1951, 1954). This corpus has since been augmented to 27 stelae, 25 altars, 5 ballcourt markers, as well as a series of painted texts in tombs, stucco texts on architecture and inscribed portable objects. These finds are the result of a long-term archaeological project initiated in 1985 that continues to this day (A. Chase and D. Chase 1987, 2015; A. Chase

*et al.* 1991; D. Chase and A. Chase 1994, 2017: 203–208; Grube 1994, 1996; Helmke 2018, 2019; Helmke *et al.* 2006; Houston 1987, 1991).

It is during the 1951 field season that Caracol Stela 2 was discovered, broken into seven fragments, in the corridor formed between Structure A10 and the platform of the eastern triadic complex dominated by Structure A6 (the Temple of the Wooden Lintel) (Fig. 1). From more recent excavations, we now know that Structure A10 was a vaulted building facing south and thereby closes and defines the northern end of the A Group ballcourt (formed by Strs. A11 and A12). The fragments of the stela were scattered behind this building over an area spanning approximately 1.5m (Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981: 11). As found, the fragments conjoin to form the upper 1.39 m of a stela that measures c. 87 cm wide by 40 cm thick with a central segment of the shaft measuring c. 86 cm high. The upper portion of the stela is in high relief



whereas the lower portion of the shaft is in more typical lower relief. It is only by conjoining these fragments that the full extent of the stela's carving can be appreciated. The butt of the stela was not encountered, indicating that the stela was found in a secondary context and had either been re-erected at this location secondarily or was in the process of being transported elsewhere (Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981: 11). As the fragments of the stela are quite battered and the details of the preserved carving were not adequately documented in the photographs secured in the 1950s, the published drawing showed very few details (Fig. 2) and did not warrant a lengthy description in its original publication.

Because of its cursory recording and publication, this monument did not raise any interest in the research community and was easily overlooked. As part of his epigraphic research at the site in the early 1990s, Nikolai Grube (1996) prepared a revised preliminary drawing and a short description, both of which remain unpublished to date. A recent re-examination of the stela, during the 2018 season, has significantly changed this picture. As part of these efforts, the senior author spent some time re-documenting the stela, studying the original fragments, producing field sketches as well as securing photographs, both daytime and nighttime shots with artificial raking light. This work confirmed that the central shaft conjoined with the upper segment, thereby allowing us to produce a new set of drawings that reveal heretofore overlooked details of the iconography as well as produced a record of the partial glyphic texts on the lateral sides of the monument. Here we describe the iconography of this important monument and draw comparisons to stylistically similar stelae at other sites in the central lowlands. The fragmentary glyphic texts are also analysed, allowing us to propose a dating of the monument by combining the remaining calendrical information with the stylistic features of the iconography. In so doing, this monument can be ascribed to the reign of a seventh century ruler of Caracol and testifies to important connections between this seat of royal power with the distant site of Copan, in Honduras.

### The Iconography

The imagery of the stela represents the monarch boldly facing forward (Fig. 3). This

is a solid break with the typical representational conventions at Caracol, where all other monuments feature lateral depictions of individuals. With minor exceptions, the rulers are typically represented looking over their right shoulder. On Stela 2 only the outline of the face remains, as a silhouetted oval. The absence of facial features is highly pronounced, especially considering how much of surrounding carving is preserved, implying that this is the result of deliberate defacement and obliteration in antiquity.

The ruler is shown cradling an impressive bicephalic ceremonial bar, held diagonally across the chest. The serpentine heads at either end of the ceremonial bar have wide open maws – edged by prominent scrolling and bifurcated canines – that disgorge two supernatural entities. Only the entity emerging from the upper end is preserved and presents the profile of the anthropomorphic Jaguar God of the Underworld, that can be identified by his profile and the distinctive cruller around the eye and above the nose (see Schele and Miller 1986: 50). This is one of the tutelary deities of Caracol, named, in pride of place, as one of the site's triadic patron gods on Stelae 3, 14, 16, 22 and on the hieroglyphic stairway of K'an II. The snout of the lower serpentine creature is marked with an abbreviated *ahk'ab* 'darkness' logogram, designating these

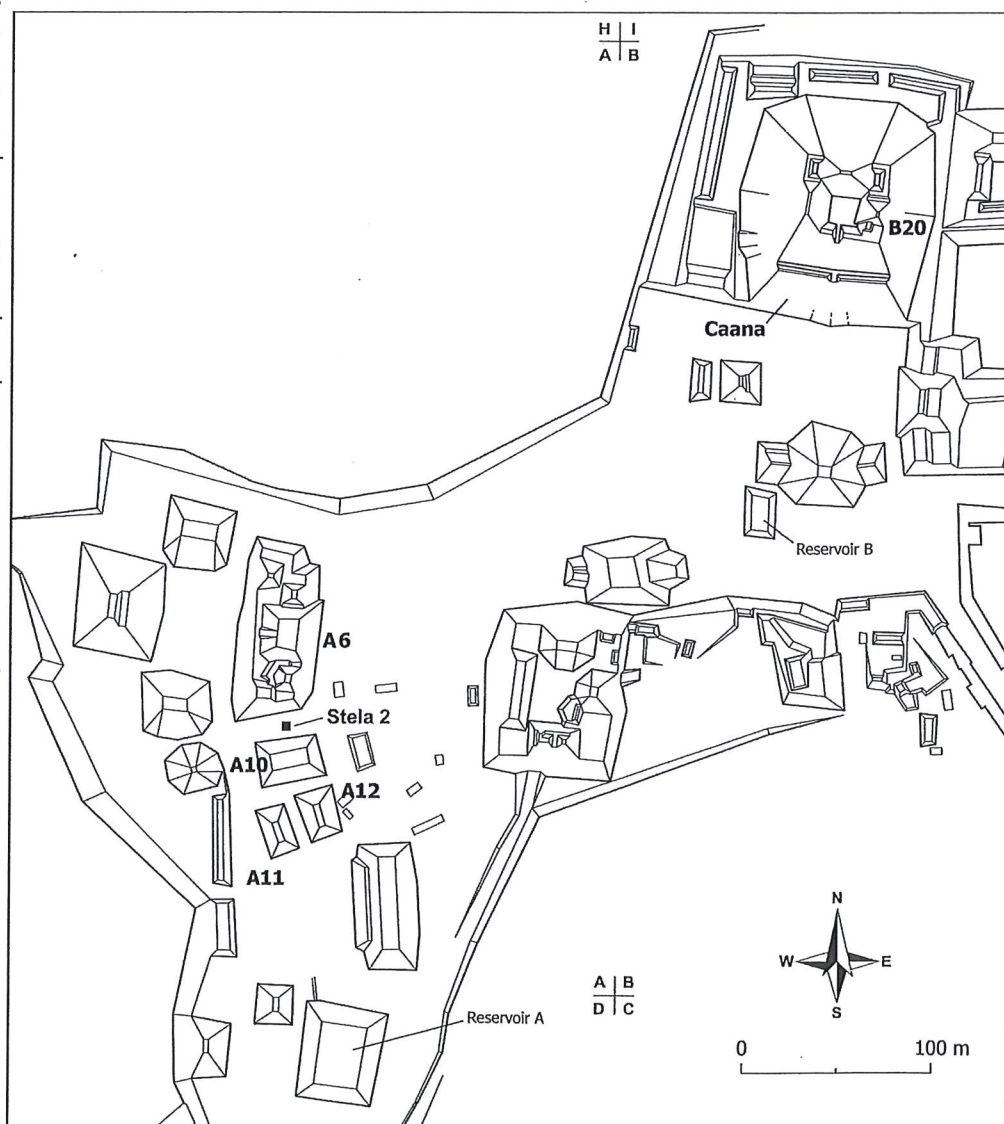


Figure 1. Epicentral Caracol indicating the location where Stela 2 was discovered. Structures mentioned in the text are also labelled and shaded (plan by Christophe Helmke, after Chase and Chase 1987: Figs. 46-47).



either as nocturnal or as creatures of darkness in a broader sense (Stone and Zender 2011: 144–145).

One of the very distinctive features that sets Stela 2 apart from all other monuments at Caracol is its high relief. In fact, it is not so much that the stela exhibits deeply raised relief, it is that the sculpture is raised to such an extent that it can be described as partly in the round, with major carved elements exhibiting relief that ranges, between 4 and 9 mm. The depth of carving separating the medial foreground to the highly recessed and plain background, on the upper portion, above the ruler's waist, ranges between 3.2 and 5.0 cm. In cross-section, the upper half of the stela is essentially convex, whereas the lower portion of the shaft is squared, thereby more readily conforming to the typical stelae of Caracol. The resulting high relief of this monument cannot be compared to any other at Caracol, making this stela unique in its sculptural format for the corpus of the site.

In a cursory purview of sculpture across the central Maya lowlands, we can note that frontal depictions of standing rulers and are known from a series of sites, including El Peru (Stela 23, 8.18.0.0.0, as well as Stela 16, 8.19.0.0.0) and Uaxactun (Stela 20, 9.3.0.0.0). Furthermore, deep relief is found also at Tikal (St. 10, 9.3.0.0.0; St. 12, 9.4.10.0.0; St. 23, 9.3.16.8.4) and El Palmar (Stela 14). Together these features

span between AD 396 and 524, suggesting that the format of Stela 2 at Caracol could plausibly be the product of a shared local development. Yet, apt comparisons can also be drawn to monuments found in the south-eastern range of the Maya area, especially at the sites of Copan and Quirigua, where the frontal pose and high relief are in many ways characteristic traits. Some of the best analogues to Stela 2, are Stelae E (CPN 9), P (CPN 29), 2 (CPN 40), and 7 (CPN 54), dated to between AD 613 and 657 (Baudez 1992) – although the date of Stela E remains unclear, 9.11.5.0.0 is a distinct possibility (Kupprat 2017). At Quirigua, comparisons can be made in particular with the early Monument 26 dated to AD 493 (Jones 1983), as well as more peripherally with the south faces of the later Stelae A and C both dated to AD 775, especially given the low relief of the base and high relief of the upper portion of the monuments (Sharer 1990). Based on these comparisons alone, and assuming that these provide contemporaneous temporal assignments, then Stela 2 could be assigned to a comparable stylistic range of AD 493 to 657 (compare to Proskouriakoff 1950: 22–24, Fig. 8, where the range for the same feature is concentrated to between 9.6.0.0.0 and 9.12.0.0.0, or AD 554–672).

In terms of regalia, the belt is dominated by a cranium with feline ears and a cruller around the orbits, with smaller human faces decorating the sides of the belt, undoubtedly small masks topping a trio of polished jadeite celts. Large bracelets with personification heads weigh down the wrists, and a large horizontal pectoral bar serves as the central element of the necklace. The nearly square earflares are bound with small knots and flanked by two personification heads. It is the headdress that truly dominates the trappings of the ruler and draws the attention of the viewer. Delineating the face is a row of beads, probably part of an early type of beaded “bib” headdress that is more typical of the Early Classic (for reference see Stelae 20, 16, 14 and 5 at Caracol dated to between AD 400 and 613). Significantly for our dating of Stela 2, these same “jewelled hoods” appear on face caches of Caracol and date to the early Late Classic Period after AD 550 (Chase and Chase 2013: 15). On the sides of the headdress are circular openwork armatures that are embellished by a series of small, stacked personification heads. At the top, the central crowning element of the headdress includes two superimposed and forward-facing heads each with their own sets of earflares. These two heads are topped by the T533 glyph, usually referred to as a stylized “ajaw”, which is here set within a crest of three sinuous leaves, together known as a “foliated ajaw” (see Taube 2005: 28–30, Fig. 6). Jointly, the T533 glyph and the leaves render the full-form of the logogram *huun*, naming the wild fig tree from which bark paper is made. Eponymically, *huun* also means ‘paper’, since this was preferentially made from the inner bark of the same wild fig tree (*Ficus* sp.) (Stuart 2012). Despite the literal meaning of this lexeme, by extension *huun* also means ‘headdress, headband’ in the figurative sense, since many diadems were originally fashioned of bark paper. Therefore, in this context, the use of this logogram serves to name the particular headdress as one that is qualified by the small heads beneath, which together would have provided the full name of the headdress. Unfortunately, in this case we cannot discern the original name of the headdress worn by the ruler.

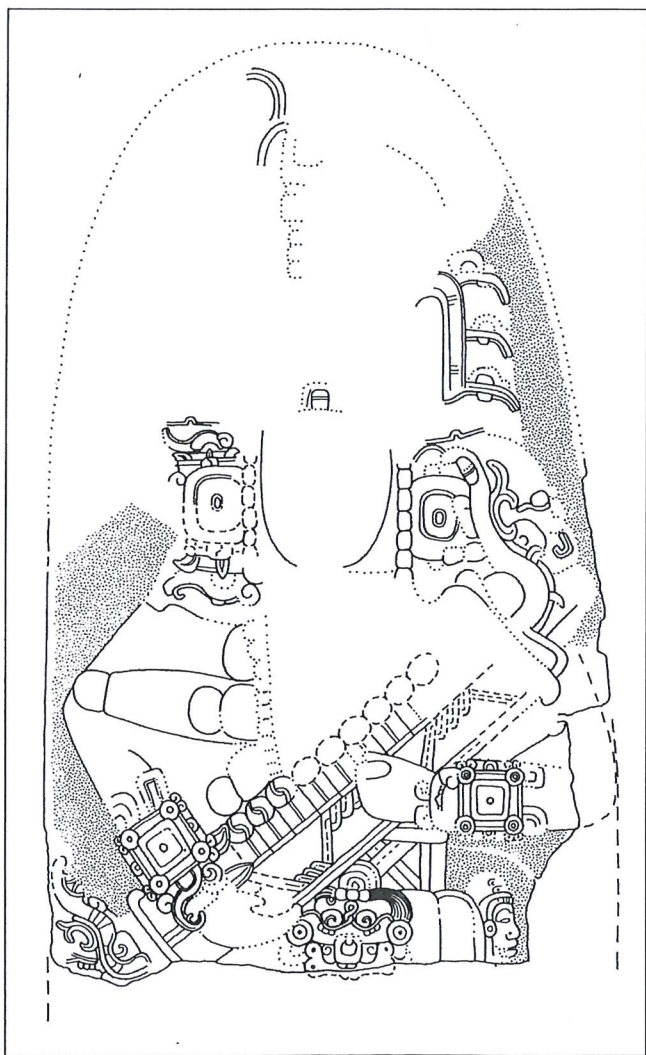
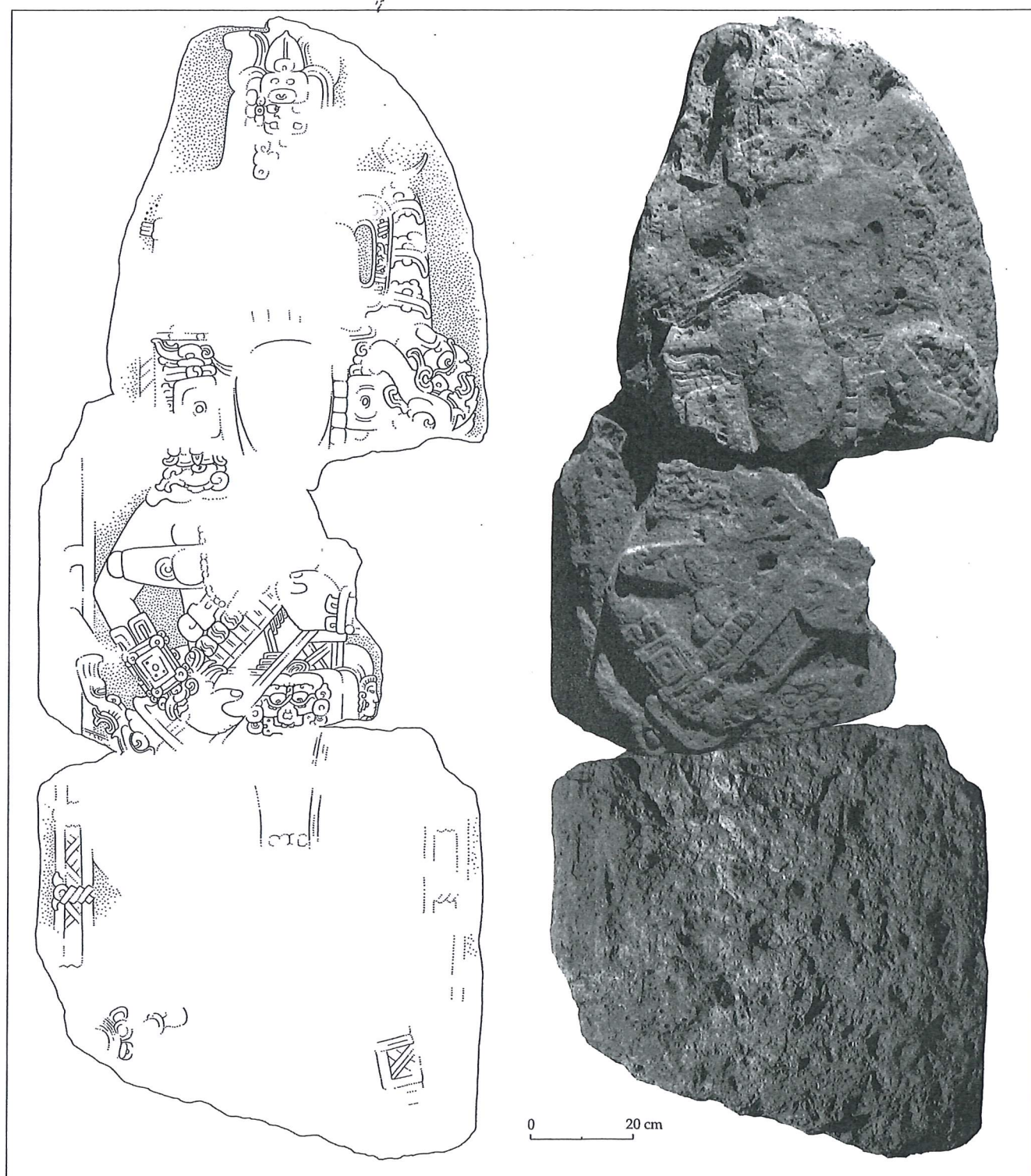


Figure 2. Original drawing of Caracol Stela 2 as published in *The Monuments and Inscriptions of Caracol, Belize* (drawing by Carl Beetz, after Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981: Fig. 2).



Intimately comparable instances can be found in the case of Stela 9 at Lamanai dated to AD 625, where the ruler *K'ahk' Yipyaj Chan Yopaaht* is shown wearing a large headdress, the central element of which combines the head of a shark (*xook*) topped by the glyphs *tzi?*-*K'IN*, both set within the large foliation of the *huun* head-variant (Stuart 2012: 135) (Fig. 4a). Together this can be read as *tzik'in xook huun*, 'Tzik'in Xook headdress', integrating the name of the preceding king (Closs 1988: 11, 13) and thereby specifying that this was the headdress of the predecessor to the throne. Another example is found on Stela 2 (CPN 40) at Copan dated to AD 652, which

in many ways is the closest analogue to Stela 2 at Caracol. On the Copanec Stela 2, the king *K'ahk' Uti' Juun Witz' K'awiil* is shown frontally, cradling a ceremonial bar. The large feline headdress that he wears is crowned by a combination of signs that once more are set within the leafy foliations of the personified *huun* sign (Fig. 4b). At the centre is a personified head with the markings of stone, for *tuun*, in front of an upright human hand, probably for *k'ab*. Together with the feline head this combination evokes the name of *Tuun K'ab Hix*, that of the fourth king of the dynasty, who ruled in the latter half of the fifth century (Martin and Grube 2000: 196).



100 Figure 3. The front of Caracol Stela 2 as documented 2018 (drawing and photograph by Christophe Helmke).



Once more, this is not just an instance wherein the name of a predecessor is rendered in the headdress, but specifically a label naming the headdress as that of a prominent forebear. This is a subtle, but important, nuance and makes it clear that rulers were keen to specify the aged and revered items of regalia that had once been owned by prestigious forebears.

### The Glyphs

That parts of glyphic texts were preserved on the fragments of the stela came as a surprise since these had not been adequately reported before (although see Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981: 11 and Grube 1996 for cursory mentions). While it must be conceded that the lateral sides have suffered much erosion and are heavily pitted on account of the quality of the limestone that included many soluble calcareous inclusions, detailed examination with raking light revealed a surprising amount of detail. Based on what remains we are inclined to suggest that the glyphic texts were disposed in single columns running vertically along the lateral sides. This disposition also find parallels with the monuments of Copan where texts were frequently added to the lateral sides of figurative stelae.

Although less than half of the original text is preserved, based on what remains it is possible that the text originally started on the left side of the stela (Fig. 5a). This is suggested by what appears to be a partial Initial Series Introductory Glyph (Ap1) that is preserved about halfway down, near the waist of the ruler. Above, no traces of carving remain, yet based on the placement of this sign, it may well be that another Initial Series once opened the text and occurred above this glyph. Alternatively, it may be that the original text was relatively short and only graced the lower half of the sides and did not extend appreciably above the waist of the ruler. Below the ISIG, it is promptly interrupted by a break and what may be an unusual skeletal head-variant for the Baktun sign occurs on the lower shaft (Ap2), followed by the heavily weathered outlines of two more glyph blocks (Ap3–Ap4). Unfortunately, these parameters are wholly insufficient to even begin positing any calendrical correlations.

The text would have continued on the opposite right side (Fig. 5b). While parts of the text remain on the lower shaft, there are no traces of texts preserved above on the upper fragments. The first legible glyph (Bp2) records a Tzok'in date 2 K'an. In a highly unusual manner, this is followed by what appears to be another temporal indicator written **1-HAB** (Bp3) (with the numeral embellished with a small bauble or decorative pendant). The calendrical record is closed by the second part of a Calendar Round recording the Haab date (Bp3), which can be transliterated as **12-[K'AN]JAL?-wa** for 12 Pop. Together, this appears to provide us with a partial Calendar Round for a historical event, which based on our estimation of the stylistic parameters of the iconography ought to be sometime between 9.3.0.0.0 and 9.11.0.0.0. Based on this range, only three possible anchors to the Long Count emerge:

What little is preserved is found in the following glyph block (Bp5), which provides a stative construction making reference to the calendrical station at this date, written **u-HAB-ma?-#**, somehow making a possessive construction between the station and an owner, either a historical figure or a supernatural entity.

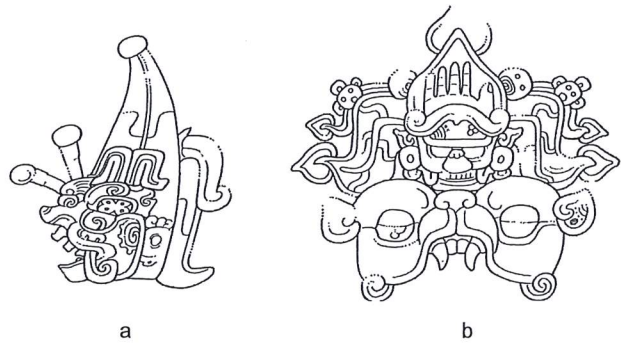


Figure 4. Comparison of the centrepieces of headdresses at Lamanai and at Copan, naming royal forebears: a) headdress of K'ahk' Yipyaj Chan Yopaht on Lamanai Stela 9 naming Tzik'in Xook, b) headdress of K'ahk' Uti' Juun Witz' K'awiil on Copan Stela 2 naming Tuun K'ab Hix (drawings by Christophe Helmke).

Unfortunately, the same date has not been documented on other monuments at Caracol, thereby disabling a viable link to a previously established event. Yet, based on these parameters, we can propose some links to a selection of different monarchs. Were the Calendar Round to represent the earliest possible anchor, then this could refer to an event that transpired at the end of the reign of *Yajawte' K'inich* I (r. AD 484–514+). The intermediate anchor would fall in the first k'atun of the reign of *Yajawte' K'inich* II (r. AD 553–593+). The latest of the three possible dates would occur in the first few regnal years of K'an II (r. AD 618–658). Interestingly, none of these possible Long Count placements include the coefficient 1 for the tun medial position, as might have been expected, given the expression recorded at Bp3. However, assuming that the initial date at the start of the text was a round Period Ending, and considering those that are temporally closest to the CR, the nearest PE date to that of 624, would have been 9.9.10.0.0, which is precisely one tun and four days earlier than the Calendar Round recorded. This temporal span corresponds not only to a tun, but actually to 364 days, which is a cycle of some significance in ancient Maya divinatory almanacs, such the Dresden Codex (see Grube 2012). As such, this reconciles the calendrical constraints at hand and thereby emerges as the most suitable anchor for the stela.

### More on the Caracol-Copan Connection

Whereas the temporal assignation of Stela 2 at Caracol remains provisional, assignation to the first half of the seventh century, and to the reign of K'an II in particular, has a series of important ramifications. This would represent the first known monument of his reign, just five years after his accession. Before this study, it was the prodigious output of monuments celebrating the k'atun Period Ending of AD 633 (in the 15<sup>th</sup> regnal year) that launched the historical record of K'an II (i.e., Caracol Altars 19 and 21, as well as Caracol Stelae 3 and 22 and Naranjo Panel 1, which all commemorate the Period Ending of 9.10.0.0.0). The prominent relief and style of the monument represents a deliberate break, albeit a short-lived one, with the orthodoxy of the monuments of old. It also suggests that K'an II, at the start of his reign, sought connections and influences elsewhere and, based on present evidence, this would point to the south-eastern part of the Maya area.

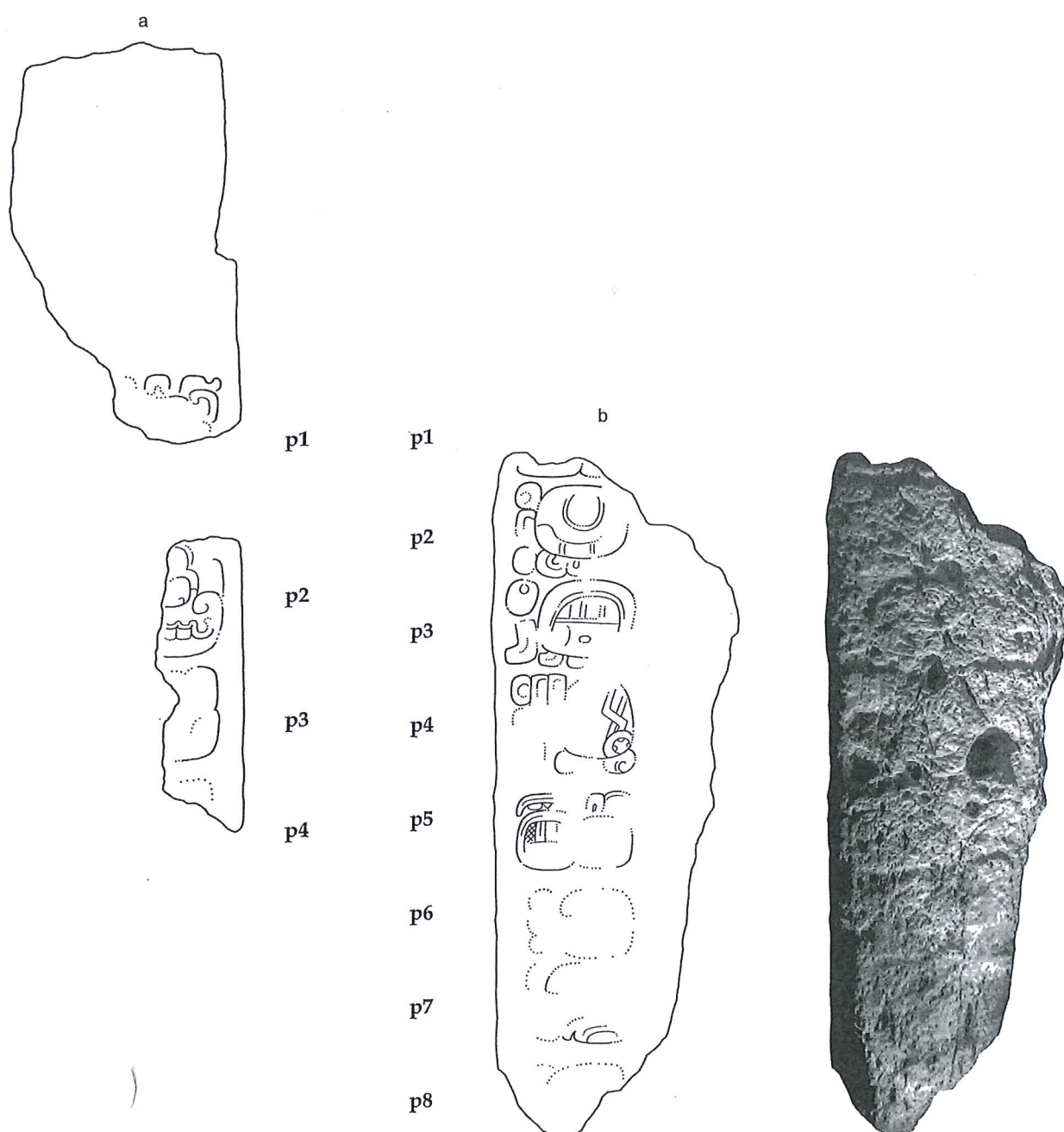


Long Count	Tzolk'in	Haab	Gregorian
9.4.5.10.4	2 K'an	12 Pop	13 Apr. 520
9.6.18.5.4	2 K'an	12 Pop	31 Mar. 572
9.9.11.0.4	2 K'an	12 Pop	19 Mar. 624

The connection between Copan and Caracol is in fact attested through several lines of evidence and at a variety of points in time. The earliest connection is as the place of origin of the dynastic founder of the Copan dynasty (Stuart and Schele 1986), who on two Late Classic monuments is retrospectively attributed the title of *Uxwitzd' Ajaw*, or 'three-mountain-place king' in reference to the ancient toponym of Caracol (Stuart and Houston 1994: 52, Fig. 63; Stuart 2007, 2018). As a result, rather than the vacuous "Central Peten" attribution made to the stable isotope signatures of the skeletal remains of Yax K'uk' Mo' (Nystrom *et al.* 2005:

205; see also Price *et al.* 2010: 19, 21, 24–25, 28–29, 31 who entertain a Caracol origin with their stable isotope data) we can now, on firmer footing, point to a specific site of origin, firmly unifying the epigraphic and archaeological data. From this, it necessarily follows that the long and linear dynastic sequence of the kings of Copan is in effect a cadet line of the Caracol royal house.

As such, it should come as no surprise that cross-references are made between one and the other dynasty, as distant relatives acknowledging their shared heritage. One such reference may be found on a finely incised travertine bowl, found in Tomb 3 within Str. B20 at the summit of the Caana architectural complex at Caracol that bears what may be part of the pre-regnal name *Yax K'uk' Mo'* (Chase and Chase 1987: Fig. 15a; Prager and Wagner 2013). Another salient mention to the contemporaneous 7<sup>th</sup> king of Copan, *Bahlam Nehn* (r. AD 524–532), is also made on the back of Caracol Stela 16



102 Figure 5. The glyphic text on the lateral sides of Caracol Stela 2: a) left side, b) right side (drawings and photograph by Christophe Helmke).



(Grube 1994: 105; Martin and Grube 2000: 197; Stuart 2004: 223, 240), apparently part of a larger pedigree relating a series of figures through multi-generational kinship expressions. These references demonstrate that ancient Maya royalty were keenly aware of their kinship with other, far-flung dynasties, even if this is not always made patent in the public monumental record. In peering to the south for reference and possibly allegiance, K'an II was evidently keeping with the deeds of his father in turning his back on Tikal, and may have sought alternate alliances at a time before the bonds between Caracol and the kings of *Kanu'l* had solidified.

Now eight decades since the modern rediscovery of Caracol, our re-documentation of Stela 2 and the recognition that it could be a local emulation of the contemporary style of Copanec statuary suggests interesting connections between the two sites. This may also speak of relationships maintained with Copan rulers, particularly at the end of the reign of the 11<sup>th</sup> and start of the 12<sup>th</sup> rulers, namely *K'ahk' U...w Chan Yopaaht* and *K'ahk' Uti' Juun Witz' K'awil*. These potential relationships constitute another piece of evidence, and it is the monument of the latter ruler in particular, Copan Stela 2, which provides so many points of equivalence to the Stela 2 of Caracol. It is thereby not at all coincident that the closest analogues to Stela 2 at Caracol were raised by precisely these Copanec monarchs (i.e., Stelae 7, P, 2, and E, in assumed chronological order) during the relatively short span of AD 613 and 657. This does much to support the temporal assignment of Caracol Stela 2, re-establishing the proper place of this essentially forgotten monument in the dynastic history of site, and thereby allowing us to flesh out details pertaining to the reign of what was undoubtedly Caracol's greatest ruler.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Nikolai Grube for sharing with us his observations and drawings of Stela 2. The senior author would like to thank Elizabeth Graham for inviting him to serve as project epigrapher to the Lamanai Archaeological Project and Bruce Love, for sharing his photographs of Lamanai monuments and Stela 9 in particular. The Chases wish to thank the Belize Institute of Archaeology members for all their support over the years; support for the 2018 field season at Caracol was funded by the Alphawood Foundation, the Geraldine and Emory Ford Foundation, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas—full documentation of past project funding can be found in D. Chase and A. Chase 2017. Felix Kupprat, an anonymous reviewer and Nikolai Grube read an earlier version of this paper and offered constructive comments and valuable observations for which we are thankful.

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- ABSTRACT: In this paper, we present new drawings of Stela 2 of Caracol based on recent re-examination of the monument conducted by the authors during the 2018 field season. The new drawings reveal heretofore-unknown details of the iconography and associated glyphic text. Whereas the iconography exhibits stylistic features that are best compared to the statuary of Copan, the glyphic text provides partial calendrical data that allow a tentative attribution to the first half of the seventh century and thereby to early in the reign of K'an II of Caracol. These lines of evidence provide yet more information pertaining to the important Caracol-Copan connection that is hinted at in the epigraphy and archaeology of the two sites, but has yet to be properly comprehended. The attribution of Stela 2 to the initial part of the reign of K'an II does much to flesh out this previously unknown part of his reign.
- RESUMEN: En este artículo presentamos nuevos dibujos de la Estela 2 de Caracol basados en el reciente reexamen del monumento realizado por los autores durante la temporada de campo de 2018. Los nuevos dibujos revelan detalles hasta ahora desconocidos de la iconografía y el texto jeroglífico asociado. Mientras que la iconografía exhibe características estilísticas que se comparan debidamente con la estatuaría de Copán, el texto jeroglífico proporciona datos calendáricos parciales que permiten una atribución provisional a la primera mitad del siglo VII y por lo tanto a la parte inicial del reinado de K'an II de Caracol. Estas líneas de evidencia proporcionan aún más información relacionada con la importante conexión caracoleña-copaneca que se insinúa en la epigrafía y la arqueología de los dos sitios, pero que aún no se entiende adecuadamente. La atribución de la Estela 2 a la parte inicial del reinado de K'an II también hace mucho para dar cuerpo a esta parte previamente desconocida de su reinado.
- ZUSAMMENFASSUNG: In diesem Artikel stellen wir neue Zeichnungen von Stela 2 aus Caracol vor, die anhand einer rezenten Neuuntersuchung des Monuments durch die Autoren während der Feldkampagne 2018 angefertigt wurde. Die neuen Zeichnungen lassen bisher unbekannte Details der Ikonographie und des dazugehörigen Hieroglyphentextes erkennen. Während die Ikonographie stilistische Eigenschaften aufweist, die sich am besten mit der Monumentalskulptur von Copan vergleichen lassen, beinhaltet der Text bruchstückhafte kalendarische Angaben, welche eine vorläufige Datierung in die erste Hälfte des siebten Jahrhunderts, und somit in die Regierungszeit K'ans II. von Caracol, zulassen. Diese Hinweise schaffen zusätzliche Erkenntnisse über die wichtige Verbindung zwischen Caracol und Copan, die sich anhand epigraphischer und archäologischer Daten aus beiden Stätten erahnen lässt, aber noch nicht vollkommen rekonstruiert werden kann. Die Zuordnung von Stela 2 zum Beginn der Regierungszeit von K'an II. ermöglicht es, eine Informationslücke in dieser Zeitspanne zu füllen.

## Endnotes

- 1 From a review of the corpus, we can see frontal depictions on stelae in the Peten prior to the sixth century, whereas analogous examples from the south-eastern region date predominantly after AD 600. Considering the temporal distance between the Peten monuments and Stela 2 at Caracol, the analogy drawn with the monuments of Copan remain, especially given their contemporaneity. As such, we do not consider the frontal depiction of Stela 2 at Caracol as a central Peten trait.
- 2 Whereas most information pertaining to the reign of K'an II stems from after AD 633, Caracol Stela 3 may provide a politically expedient record of the first bloodletting ritual of K'an II in AD 593, under the aegis of his father *Yajawte' K'inich* II (D. Chase and A. Chase 2008: 100).

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