

Textual reconstruction of Classic Maya inscriptions: what adaptations and copies tell us about scribes and the practice of writing

FELIX KUPPRAT

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE MÉXICO

While the task of reconstructing calendrical data is common in Maya epigraphy, the possibilities to fill other types of *lacunae* have only been treated in a superficial manner. However, the systematic reconstruction of missing parts of text, based on the comparison with direct or structural parallels, is essential to any contextual treatment of an inscription. This article presents two cases of Classic Maya texts from Copan, where textual reconstruction is not only possible, but also necessary in order to obtain certain information about authorship and the practice of writing.

Key words: Maya Epigraphy, hieroglyphic writing, copy, adaptation, textual reconstruction

Introduction

When we talk about the epigraphy of Maya hieroglyphs, we usually refer to a broad range of research problems and methods. So broad, actually, that one may speak of a trans-discipline that is concerned not only with the description, analysis, and decipherment of the writing system (grammatology), the evolution of writing and calligraphy (paleography), the documentation and analysis of the carriers of writing (archaeology), and the computation of calendrical dates and the correlation with other calendars (chronology), but also—and this is currently the principal focus of Maya epigraphy—the analysis and translation of texts (philology), source critique (history), and the reconstruction of the represented languages (historical linguistics), etc. In a certain manner, this vision contrasts with the traditional conception of epigraphy that was originally thought of as an auxiliary science concerned with the analysis of inscriptions on durable media (mainly stone, but also wood, metal, ceramics, bone, etc.), and with the specific problems raised by these materials. Epigraphic media provide direct data about the context and the time of use, information we usually lack when it comes to literary sources which only survived as copies from later periods. But at the same time, the physical preservation

of inscriptions is an extra challenge because they are frequently found in a destroyed, fragmented, or altered state. From a classical point of view, the epigrapher “prepares” the text for the historians and the philologists by describing its context, reconstructing destroyed and lost parts, solving abbreviations, and providing a date for the inscription (Sandys 1919, 1–2, 197–206; Klaffenbach 1957, 7–10), even though it is not necessarily her or his responsibility to translate it or to include it in a broader historiographic discussion. Today, this strict and static vision of classical epigraphy is not maintained, since its professionals are well aware that their field of work is shaped by practice rather than by a systematic delimitation, and that it converges with archaeology, history, paleography, numismatics, etc. (Bodel 2001, 1–5; Bruun and Edmondson 2015; Cooley 2012, 126–127; Gordon 1983, 3–4).

The first epigraphers in Maya studies were concerned with problems very like those of early classical epigraphers, which is actually why the label became popular in this field. The work of Sylvanus Morley (1920, 1938), for example, is focused on the archaeological (contextual) description of sculpted monuments, their detailed documentation by the means of drawings and photography, as well as the reconstruction and compu-

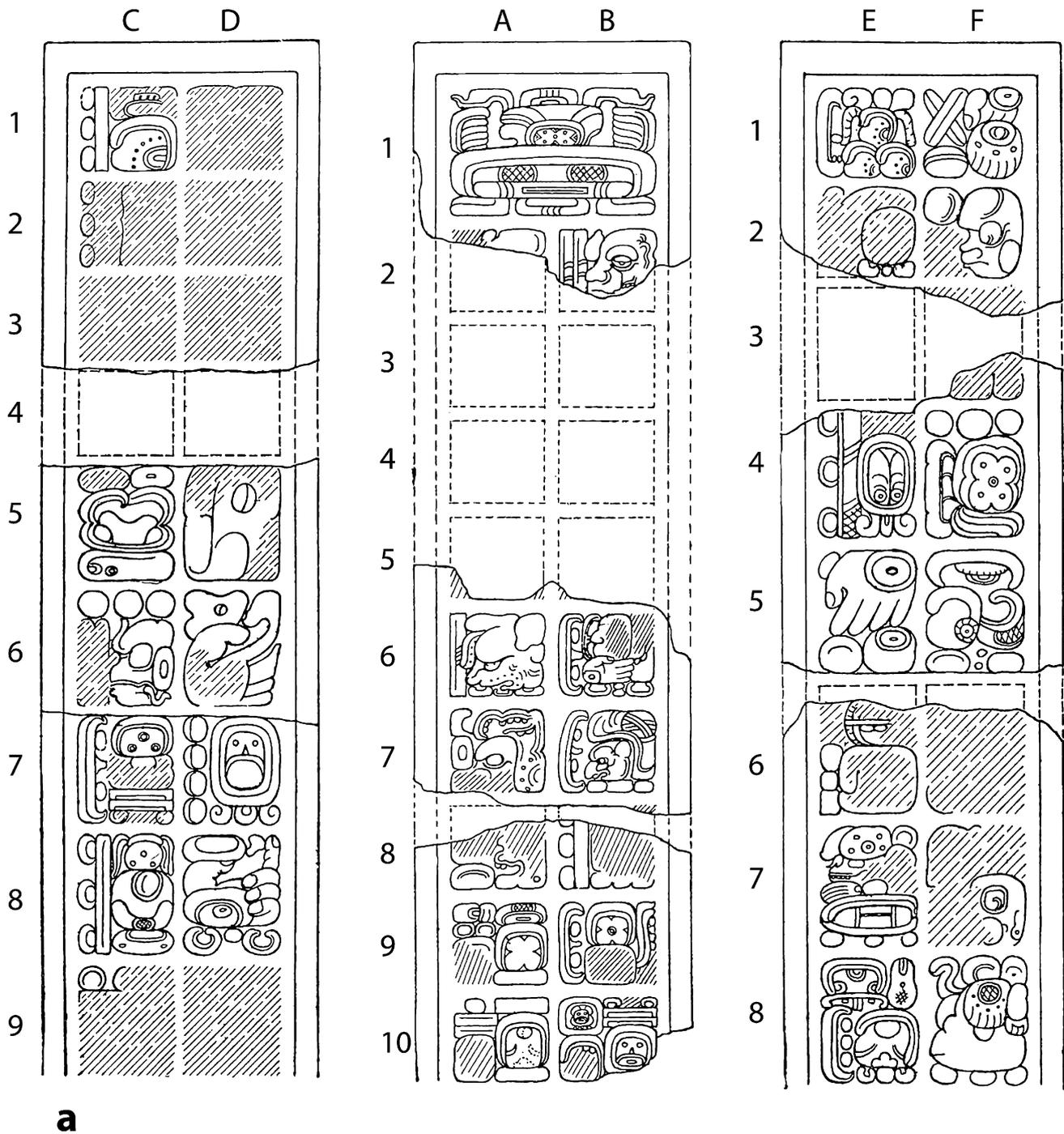


Figure 1. Stela 23 at Copan (Santa Rita). a) Inscription on the sides and back of the stela (Drawing by Sylvanus Morley 1920, 148, fig. 26). b) Partial drawing of the inscription on the front of the stela (Drawing by Sylvanus Morley 1920, 150).

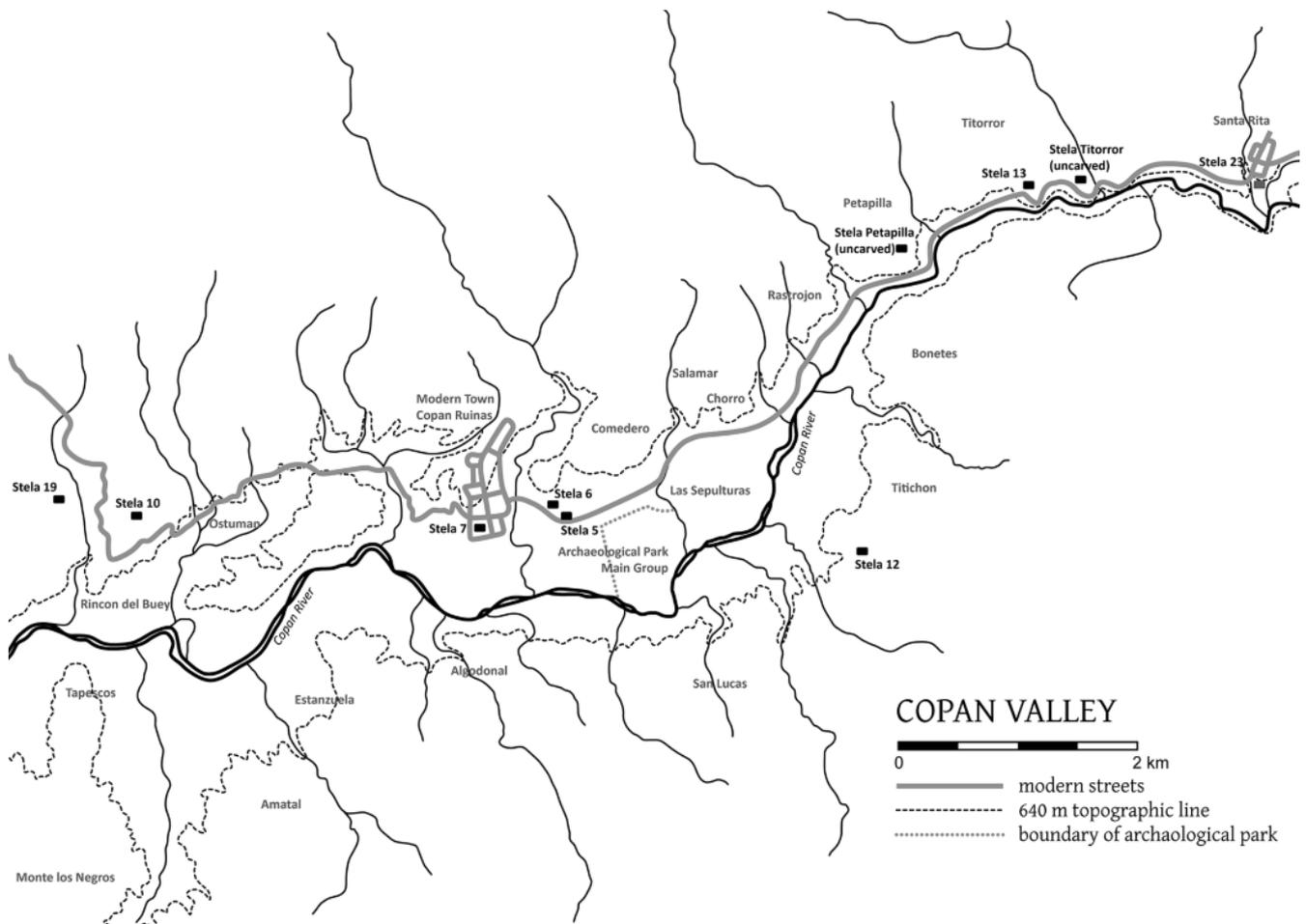


Figure 2. Map of the Copan Valley, pointing out the locations of the outlying stelae (Drawing by the author after Willey et al. 1994, 6, fig. 2).

tation of dates and stylistic dating. In light of the decipherment of the Maya’s hieroglyphic script—i.e. the correlation of signs with phonetic values in specific languages—from the 1950s onwards, recent research has concentrated on the contents of inscriptions, discussing their historical, social, cultural, and linguistic implications. The computation of dates is still an obligatory task in the study of any text with calendrical references, since it is frequently the key to a historically conclusive interpretation. Historical, textual, and comparative data are often used to determine even the dates of heavily damaged inscriptions. However, although the reconstruction of calendrical information is a common practice, little attention has been paid to the methodological possibilities of reconstructing other portions of text.

In the following sections I will discuss some examples of textual reconstruction in Classic Maya inscriptions that are not restricted to the calendrical domain. As will be shown, the reconstruction of certain glyphs always requires an analytic comparison. *Lacunae* can only be closed if there are parallel texts which provide examples of the parts missing in the original. The first

case presented here is the inscription of the now missing Stela 23 at Copan (Santa Rita), which is only known from a drawing by Sylvanus Morley (Figure 1). A comparison with texts from Copan and other Maya sites permits not only a full and secure reconstruction of the initial series, but also of a considerable portion of the rest of the text. The second example is the parallel sections of contemporary stelae 2 and 12 at Copan.

Since the filling of *lacunae* is based on the comparison with parallel texts, the result will not augment the text’s value as a primary source, i.e. it will not tell us anything new about dynastic biographies or events of sociopolitical significance. However, both of the cases discussed here provide important information on other social issues, such as authorship and the production of hieroglyphic inscriptions, which have received little attention so far.

Local parallels and pan-Maya canons: Stela 23 at Copan

Stela 23 is one of at least seven sculpted stelae which were erected in the Copan valley (Figure 2), outside the

civic-ceremonial centers¹, in the second half of the 7th century AD, during the reign of the twelfth Classic dynasty, K'ahk' Uti' Juun Witz' K'awiil². Since the discovery of these monuments, their spatial distribution has received considerable attention and different arguments have been presented in search for an explanation (Fash 1991, 101–104). While some scholars have tried to make sense of the isolated stelae through an interpretation as fix points for astronomical observations (Morley 1920, 132–134; Carter 2014, 35–36), others have speculated about their religious functions (Proskouriakoff 1973, 171), their use as political/territorial markers (Schele and Grube 1988), or even as defensive devices (Fash 1991, 104).

Stela 23 was found by Sylvanus Morley in three fragments at a distance of almost six kilometers from the 7th-century center of Copan (Main Group). The author informs that the monument was “[f]ound built into the walls of the cabildo at Santa Rita [...]” (Morley 1920, 146). Previously, Alfred Maudslay (1889–1902, vol. 1, 16) had reported several fragments of one or more sculpted monuments on the plaza of Santa Rita—probably the same fragments that Morley documented some decades later. Since he made drawings of three sides of the fragments and provided a description of the fourth, it is obvious that he removed the blocks from the modern walls. However, there is no notice of the monument in posterior literature. Moreover, Morley (1920, 13) writes that he saw more sculpted fragments in several modern houses and their courtyards, as well as a cylindrical monolith on the main plaza which may have served as a foundation stone or as an altar for the Stela. Hence, Stela 23 was probably a public monument, integrated into the center of a Pre-Hispanic settlement at Santa Rita.

The lack of further documentation complicates the analysis of the inscription. On one hand, the drawing (Figure 1a) indicates that many glyph blocks were erod-

ed or otherwise damaged, while one fragment of the stela, which contained at least ten more glyph blocks, was completely absent. On the other hand, Morley's drawing—although legible in many parts—lacks certain details and one must suspect some inaccuracies and treat this source with caution. Nevertheless, in what follows it will be shown that it is possible to reconstruct a considerable portion of the inscription, since many of the signs identified in the drawing confirm that the text closely follows the canon of contemporary inscriptions at Copan and other Maya sites.

There is no complete visual documentation of the stela's front, but Morley (1920, 151–152) offers a brief description, stating that it bore the image of a standing individual in profile, accompanied by an L-shaped text of six glyph blocks. As already noted by the same author (Morley 1920, 147–148, 151–152), the style of the portrait is absolutely atypical for contemporary stelae at Copan: all stelae from the 6th to the 8th century show rulers in a frontal perspective (although the depth of the relief increases notably over time). The only example of a stela-portrait in profile is found on Stela 35, which is one of the earliest known sculpted monuments at the site (Riese and Baudez 1983, 186–190, fig. R-114–R115; Schele 1990, 23, fig. 14; Baudez 1994, 155, fig. 174). Anthropomorphic representations in profile are found on other contemporary sculpted media, such as ball-court markers and altars, as well as architecturally integrated sculptures from the 8th century, such as benches or door jambs, but never on stelae. Therefore, the imagery of Stela 23 has to be regarded exceptional. Actually, as already noted by Morley (1920, 151), the ruler's portrait in profile with its text in an inverted L-shape is more characteristic of the central lowlands (e.g., stelae 23 and 29 at Naranjo) and may indicate that a foreign artist was at work here.

In his description, Morley provides a sketch of three of the six glyph blocks (Figure 1b), which can probably

1 Besides the Main Group, the center of the modern town of Copán Ruinas was a major civic-ceremonial center, at least until the beginning of the 7th century AD. Morley (1920), who named the Pre-Hispanic settlement “Group 9”, identified at least 18 sculpted monuments in this area.

2 In the inscriptions of Copán, the name of Ruler 12 is frequently spelled with the logogram HUN (T60 or T609b), usually representing the noun *hu'n* ‘book’ (e.g. K'AK'-u-TI' HUN-WITZ'-K'AWIL on Altar K; also see stelae 6, 12, E, and I, and the Hieroglyphic Stair of Structure 10L-2; Fash 2003, CPN 22; Riese and Baudez 1983, 149, fig. R-1b; Schele and Schele, no. 1007, 1012; Fash and Fash 2006, 121, fig. 4). However, it is quite probable that this sign should actually be read as *juun* in the name phrase of Ruler 12. The difference between /h/ and /j/ appears to have vanished at Copán by the beginning of the 7th century AD (see Carter 2014, 46–47), so that HUN could easily have served as a *rebus*-spelling for *juun*, and maybe it was a visual way to mark that Ruler 12 was a man of letters. *Juun* ‘one’ is a classifier that marks primordial beings, such as the maize god, Juun Ixiim, and the cultural hero Juun Ajaw who can be interpreted as mythological derivations of maize and lordship, respectively. Juun Witz' is a deity, probably the mythological originator of *witz* ‘splashing water’ (Stuart 2007a). Considering onomastic patterns in regal names (see Colas 2004), the presence of a composite theonym (i.e. Juun Witz' K'awiil, a fusion of Juun Witz' and K'awiil) is far more plausible in this context than a reference to mundane water (i.e. *witz*). Therefore, the transcription *k'ahk' uti' juun witz' k'awiil* is preferred here.

be read **u-BAH 13-u?-PIK** [.....]³ *ubaah uxlajuun upik*⁴ ‘[it is] his image, his “baktuns”⁵ are thirteen [...]’⁶, and it is possible that it was followed by the personal name of the portrayed individual (most likely a ruler). The reference to ‘thirteen “baktuns”’ is explained in the main text, as discussed below.

In Morley’s drawing, it is clear that the text starts with the Initial Series Introductory Glyph (ISIG; A1-B1). The following Long-Count and complementary series are very fragmented, which has led to different proposals for the represented date. The relevant elements documented by Morley are:

- the coefficient **10** in the position of the *katun*⁷
- the coefficient **8** in the position of the month (*haab*)
- the patron of the month *yaxkin* in the ISIG.

After the Initial Series, several glyph blocks contain extra-calendrical information (A9-B9) and are followed by a Distance Number that has been interpreted as 5.12 (Morley 1920, 151; see also Callaway 2011, 90). This Distance Number connects the Long Count date to the Calendar Round 12 *ahau* 8 *ceh*, which is best interpreted as the period-ending 9.11.0.0.0 (October 14th, AD 652; B10b-C1). However, a more detailed reconstruction of the passage in A9-A10a shows that the Distance Number is actually a different one, permitting a precise reconstruction of the Initial Series.

After the Initial Series, the inscriptions of Copan usually feature a dedicatory statement that specifies the creation or the inauguration of the respective monument. The verbal and positional roots that express the dedication are *tz’ap* ‘to plant’, *wa’* ‘standing’, *k’al* ‘to present/bind’, and—in some occasions—*tzutz* ‘to complete’ (e.g. Stela 2), which does not refer to the monument as an object, but to a related calendar cycle. The form represented on Stela 23 seems to be **wa-la’-[ja] wa’]laj** ‘it

3 Transliterations are marked by bold text. Upper case is used to represent logograms, lower case for phonograms, and Arabic numbers for dot-and-bar numerals. Hyphens connect the graphemes within a glyph block; a space indicates the separation of glyph blocks; and vertical lines mark a line break. Infix signs are written in curly brackets, while question marks are used for unsure readings. Square brackets are used for *lacunae*: each period indicates the presence of one unknown sign; two dashes represent an unknown number of unknown signs. Text in square brackets is reconstructed. Undeciphered signs are identified by the corresponding T-Numbers (Thompson 1962) or, if not assigned, by the corresponding code in Martha Macri and Matthew Loooper’s catalogue (2003).

4 Transcriptions are marked by italic text. Square brackets include phonetic values which are not marked in the hieroglyphic original text, as well as *lacunae* and reconstructed text. Question marks are used for unsure readings and parentheses indicate optional or possible readings.

5 Period of approximately 394 solar years. The term “baktun” is—just like other long time periods, such as “pictun” and “calabtun”—a modern nickname derived from Yucatec Maya numerals (see Thompson 1950, 147). The Classic Maya term was *pik*, *pihk*, or *pih*.

6 Translations are written between single quotation marks.

7 Period of approximately 20 years. The commonly used designation *katun* is taken from Colonial Yucatec Maya; another possible translation of the Classic Maya term *winiikhaab* is the literal one as “score-year”. Note that terms of Colonial Yucatec origin or derived from expressions in this language are represented in a Colonial orthographic style.

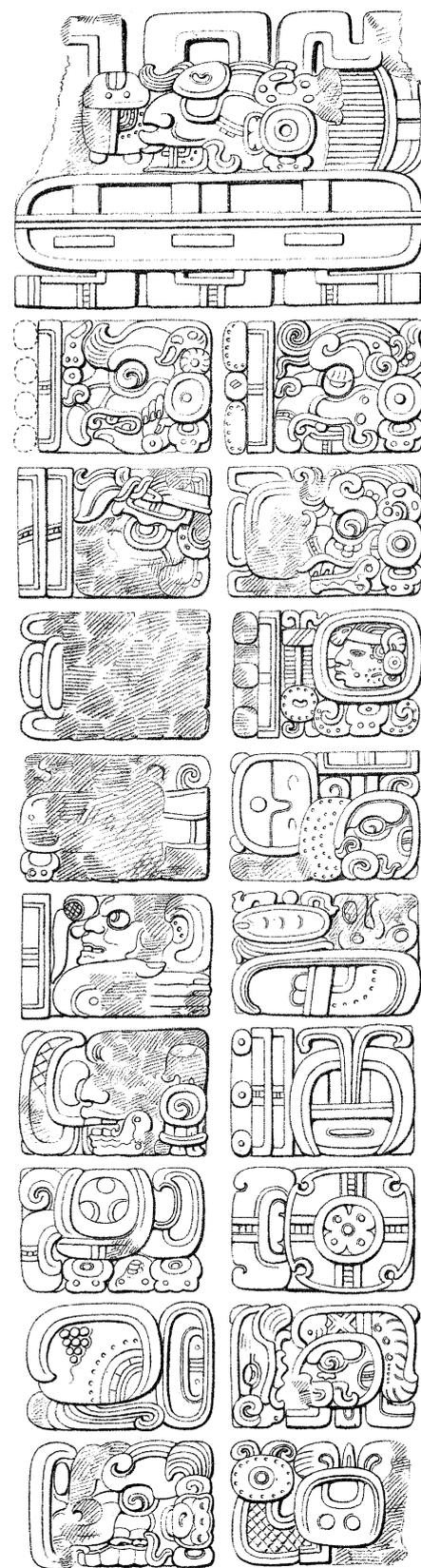


Figure 3. Initial part of the inscription of the now destroyed Stela 9 at Copan, back side Drawing by Annie Hunter (after Maudslay 1889-1902, vol. 1, plate 110).

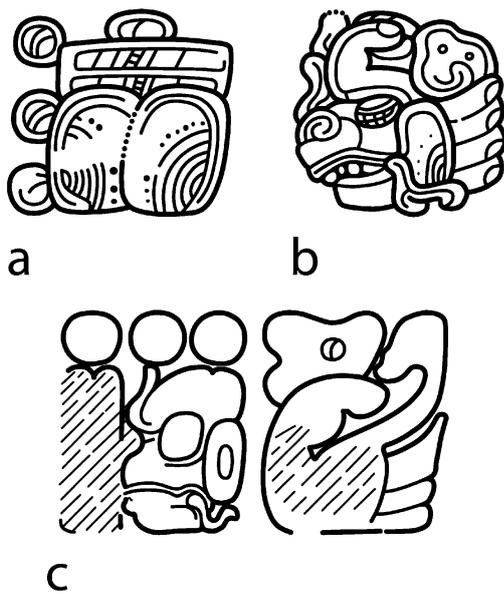


Figure 4. a) The 3-11-PIK-title on the Papagayo Step (E1); b) the conflated name-glyph of Tuun K'ab Hix on the Papagayo Step (M4). c) Detail of C6-D6 on Stela 23. Drawings by the author; a and b after Linda Schele (2000, no. 1045), c after Sylvanus Morley (1920, 148, fig. 26).

stands up' (A9a). After this predicate, the subject is required: YAX?-K'IN-[ni?] *yax? k'in* (A9b) is the proper name of the stela, as is clear from other texts with a similar structure that feature the optional expression *u(k'uh) k'aba'* 'is] the (divine) name of' (e.g., Copan, stelae 9, D, E, I, M; see Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1006, 1007, 1012). A similar name, *yax k'in tuunil*, was given to Stela 9 (Figure 3). Interestingly, Stela 23 is not classified as a *lakamtuun*, which is the most common term for stela, but as a *k'i[h]n [tuun]* 'heat-stone' (B9). The substitution of the standard expression *lakamtuun* is rare, but not exclusive to Stela 23, as proven, for instance, by the inscription of Stela 9 where the stela is classified as a *chaahk* (Stuart 2010, 296). On Stela 23, the object-classifier *k'i[h]n [tuun]* is possessed, so it is evident that the following glyphs in A10a (11-[.]) do not belong to a distance number, but rather to the name of the "owner" of the monolith. In contemporary inscriptions at Copan, this kind of owner is usually a specific supernatural entity that possessed or even inhabited the respective monument. Stela I (Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1012), for instance, was inherently possessed⁸ by a well-known deity (XAK?-YUK?-"G1"-mi) who was not only mentioned in the text, but also impersonated by the ruler who was portrayed in the god's guise on the stela's front. In the case of Stela 23, the "owner's" name includes the numeral 11, which is

likely to be a reference to the 11th *katun* as an abstract entity to be associated with the monolith. The next glyph in A10b, then, is a minimalized distance number to be read as 5-WINAL-[ya] *ho' winal[jiiy]* 'it had been five scores [of days]', so the long count can be securely reconstructed as [9.]10.[19.13.0 3 *ahau*] 8 [*yaxkin*] (July 6th, AD 652), a hundred days before the period ending 9.11.0.0.0. This solution—in perfect concordance with all the details documented in Morley's drawing—had already been suspected some decades ago by Linda Schele (1991, 3), due to the appearance of the same date on Stela 10, but no conclusive argument was presented. The reconstruction of the dedicatory phrase eliminates all doubts about the correctness of this solution.

Following the dedicatory statement, the stela inscriptions at Copan usually narrate certain ritual activities, which can include the scattering of incense, the evocation and impersonation of patron gods and other numina, etc. In the case of Stela 23, the Calendar Round implies that the event expected in D1 might have been the completion (*tzuhtzaj*), followed by the *katun*-count of 11 in C2. A comparison with other completion texts, such as those on stelae 7 (Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1031) and P (Schele 1990, fig. 10), suggests that certain supernatural and/or ancestral companions were mentioned on Stela 23 as witnesses or the ones responsible of this event. C5 of Morley's drawings possibly reflects the theonym *witzil ajaw*, which resembles the expression *balunte' witz* (Stela I; Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1012), as well as the later canonized *tukun witz ajaw* and *mo' witz ajaw* (Baron 2013, 219). Therefore, it is probable that a list of supernatural beings was introduced with *ukabjiiy* 'they had ordered it' or *yitaaj* 'in the presence of', somewhere between C2 and D4. The glyph in D5 is similar to the phonogram a, but it is actually more plausible to assume a logogram, such as MO' or some other bird-head sign. At first glimpse, the next two glyph blocks, C6 and D6, seem to contain another distance number and some verbal form that includes a root written with a hand-shaped glyph (TZUTZ, HUL, or K'AL). However, none of these readings make sense in the broader context, so another hypothetical reconstruction should be considered. C6 is composed of the numeral 3 and, possibly, another numeral, as well as the head of a supernatural being. This pattern is not only characteristic of distance numbers, but also of the title 3-11-PIK, the meaning of which is still unclear (seeLooper 2002). This title was used in different Early Classic inscriptions at Copan, most prominently on the so-called Papagayo-Step (Figure 4). On this sculpted monolith, the 3-11-PIK title is associated with the

⁸ Intimate possession is marked by the suffix *-il* in the expression *ulakamtuunil* 'the stela of'.

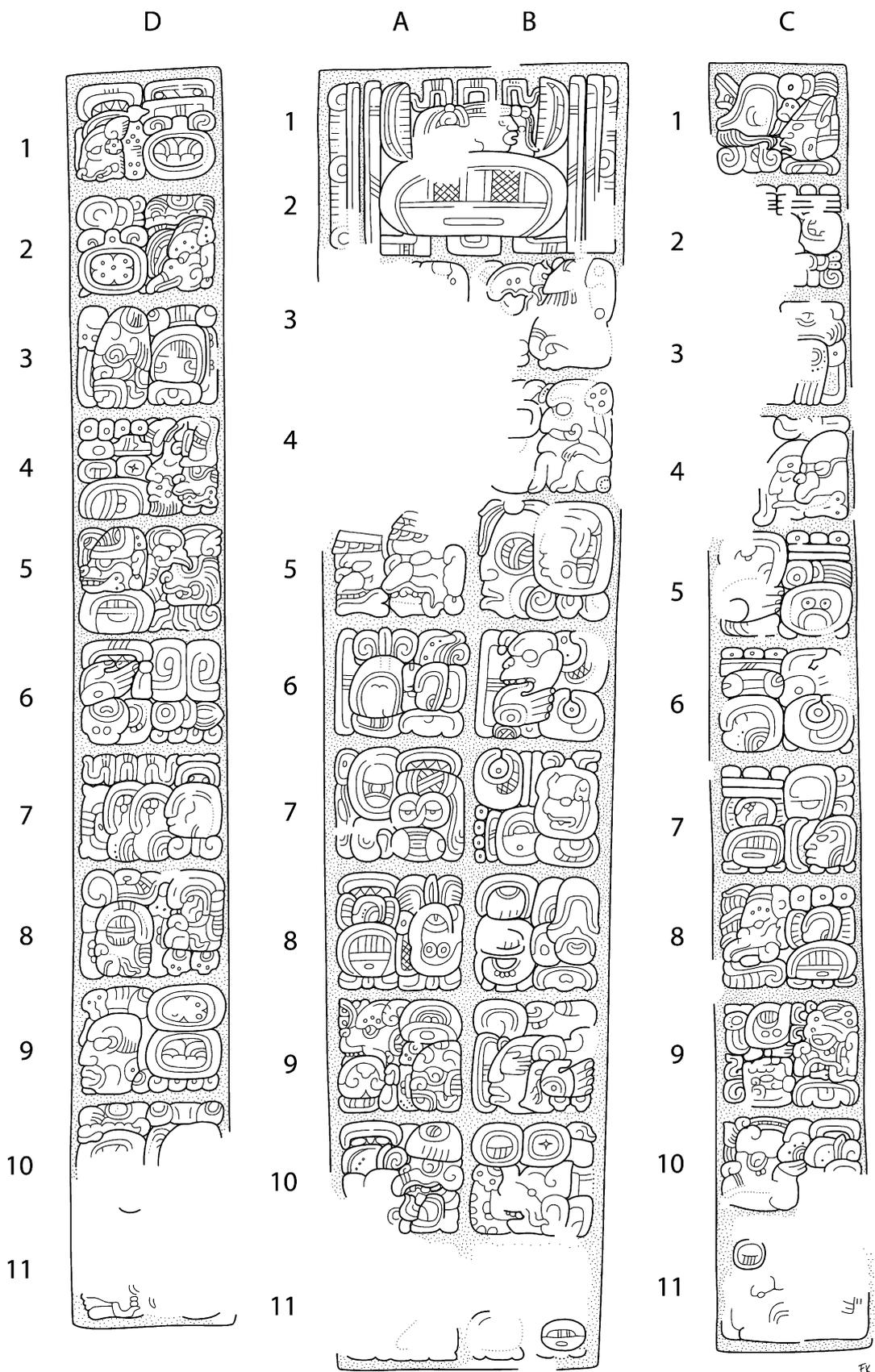


Figure 5 Stela 2 at Copan, inscription on the east, north, and west side. Drawing by the author, based on the drawing by Barbara Fash (Schele and Looper 2005, 366, fig. 9.18) and the original.

a syntactic alteration or, maybe more accurately, had not yet suffered this standardization. Nevertheless, the reconstruction of the segment *ti'chan* (D9) is valid, for this toponym appears constantly paired with *yax [...]nal* in the Classic corpus.

The next glyph blocks (E2-F3) cannot be reconstructed, since Morley's drawing does not show enough detail in this damaged portion of the inscription. Considering that E4-F4 contain the Calendar Round 8 *lamat 1 yaxkin*—probably 9.10.18.12.8 (June 30th, AD 651)—, it is possible that E3-F3 originally showed a distance number (1.0.12), but not necessarily so. The event of this date, the scattering of incense, was written in E5, but the following glyphs are, again, impossible to reconstruct. Apparently, F5 expressed another predicate, but the subject cannot be identified with certainty. It may have been Ruler 12, whose name was written at the end of the text (E8) as *k'ahk' [u]ti' witz' k'awiil* (see Riese 1979). However, judging from Morley's drawing, the preceding glyph block (F8) seems to have included the expression *uwinik* 'the man of', implying that the protagonist was not the ruler of Copan himself, but a subordinate individual, maybe a local leader of Santa Rita. Unfortunately, it is impossible to prove this, since the available data is quite limited.

The text of Stela 23 (Table 1) is but one of many examples that show the adaption of distinct local and pan-Maya canons in a rather complex discursive composition. We may talk of proto-texts which were constantly reproduced and—to various degrees—modified in monumental literature. The first part of the text on Stela 23 follows a pattern present on other Late Classic stelae at Copan, so the structure of the proto-text may loosely be reconstructed as follows:

Initial Series + (sometimes explicit reference to a period ending) + dedicatory statement + associated ritual activities + supernatural actors or witnesses + presence/actions of current ruler.

This formula seems to have been (re)used at Copan from the earliest inscriptions onwards (see, e.g., Stela 63; Fash 1991, 82, fig. 37), but has its origins in the central lowlands (e.g. Stela 26 at Tikal, Stela 1 at Caracol; Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981, fig. 1; Jones and Satterthwaite 1982, fig. 44). However, at Copan, this sequence became a long-lasting standard which was applied (with variations) until the 8th century AD.

The Era Day-passage is a different case. A comparison with the parallel texts which are found throughout the entire Maya area, makes clear that the sequence on Stela 23 was copied with a high degree of fidelity from an exist-

ing proto-text. The crucial elements of Era Day-inscriptions (see Callaway 2011) show minimal variation in composition and in the choice of specific signs. Certain elements could be omitted and others could be added, but the essential predicates are quite homogeneous. Therefore, we must assume that the proto-text was not only copied again and again over long periods of time, but also exchanged (probably by means of paper books) among the scribes in virtually all Classic Maya cities.

Copies in Classic Maya monumental texts: Stelae 2 and 12 from Copan

While direct copies of larger portions of hieroglyphic text are rather common on ceramics (especially in the so-called Primary Standard Sequence; Coe 1973, 18–22), they are extremely rare in monumental inscriptions in stone or stucco. One of the few examples is found in the openings of the texts of Stela 2 from Aguateca (A1-E2) and Stela 2 from Dos Pilas (A4-C3), respectively, where the same event is repeated word-by-word (Houston 1993, 92, fig. 3–28, 115–116, fig. 4–20). However, the second parts of both inscriptions differ from each other, so we may assume that the shared opening was copied from an original text.

A more complex case of copies in monumental inscriptions is known from stelae 2 (Figure 5) and 12 (Figure 6) at Copan. Both monuments were erected in AD 652, during the reign of K'ahk' Uti' Juun Witz' K'awiil. It has long been known that large sections of the texts on both monuments are identical (David Stuart and Barbara Fash, personal communication with Schele 1991, 2), but, regarding the date, no extensive study of the similarities and differences has been published.

Stelae 2 and 12 are formally different, for the former features the ruler's portrait on the front and an inscription on the remaining three sides, while the latter is completely hieroglyphic. These variations correspond, in all likelihood, to the original locations of the stelae. Stela 2—today exposed in the Copan Sculpture Museum—was found broken into two pieces in the alley of Ball Court A, while a cruciform offering chamber in the platform of Structure 10L-10, which limits the ball-court to the north, indicates that this was the Stela's location before the abandonment of the site (Fash 2011, 58; Strömshvik 1941, 75, fig. 5c–d). However, stratigraphic data indicates that the cruciform chamber and the associated platform were built about a century after the stela was produced, so it was clearly re-erected in the 8th century AD (Cheek 1983, 336–337), while its original location might have been a different one. Rulers' portraits are typical for the stelae of the Main Group and its surroundings¹⁰, so Stela 2 stood most likely in

10 Stelae 1, 3, I, and probably E (Baudez 1994, 113–114, fig. 150–153; Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1007, 1012, 1027), all bear ruler portraits and were erected in the Main Group during the 7th century.

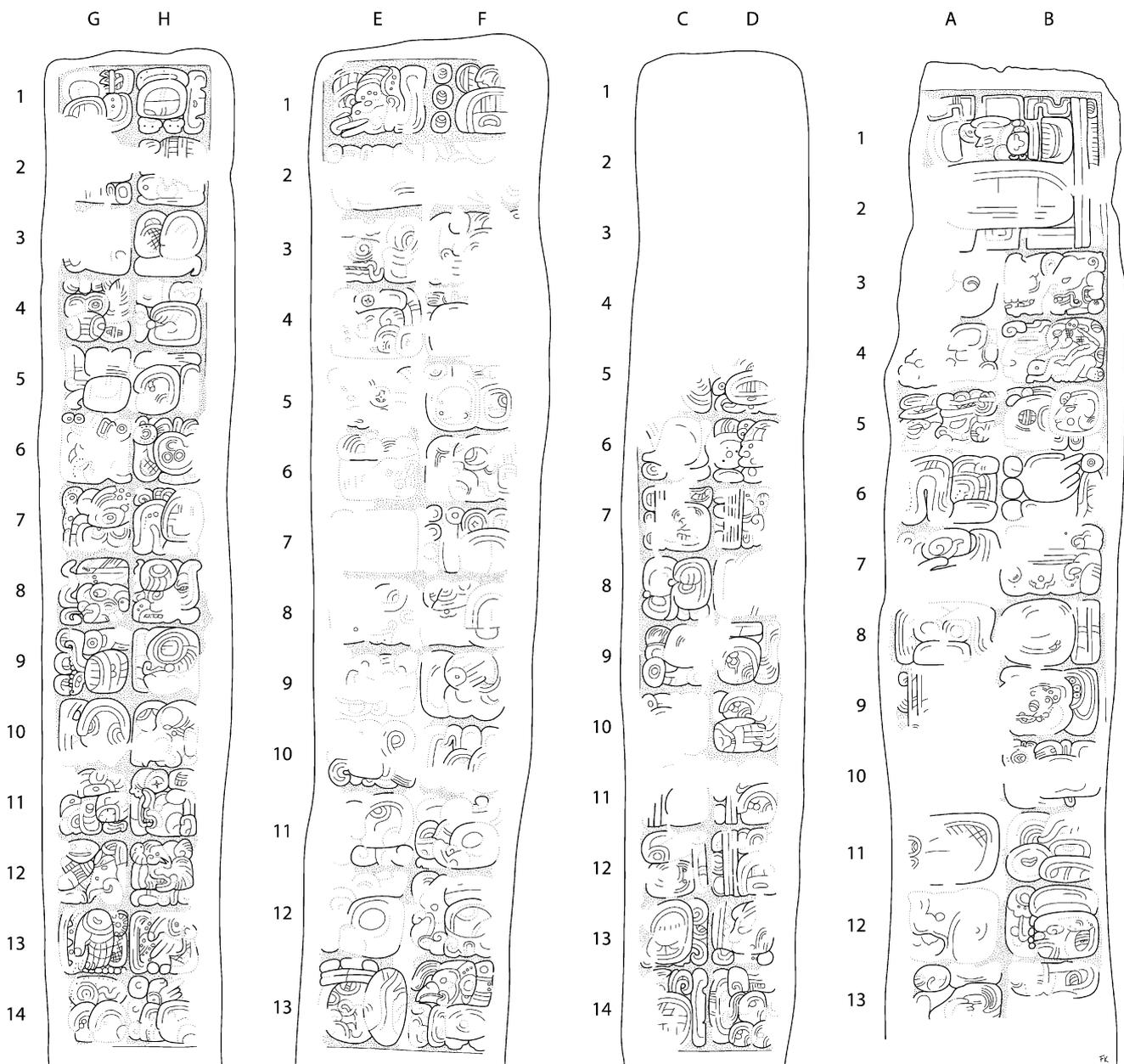


Figure 6. Stela 12 at Copan, south, east, north, and west side (Drawing by the author).

this area during the 7th century. On the contrary, Stela 12 is one of the isolated outlying stelae, for which K'ahk' Ut' Juun Witz' K'awiil apparently preferred the full hieroglyphic format¹¹. Usually, the inscriptions on this type of stelae are read surrounding the monument counter-clockwise (front-right-back-left), following the

standard reading direction from left to right, but Stela 12 features a reversed layout in the order front-left-back-right.

Table 2 exposes the extent of the copied text on both monuments. Due to the different format, the text on Stela 12 is longer, so the last section does not have a cor-

11 This format was also used for stelae 10, 13, and 19 (Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1033, 1034, 1040). Stela 23 is a special case due to the unconventional carving on the front side and its location in a secondary settlement center. Stelae 5 (Baudez 1994, 128–129, fig. 161–162; Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1029) and 6 (McCready et al. 1988, 4, fig. 1; Fash and Fash 2006, 121, fig. 4) were both erected outside the Main Group and feature the ruler portraits, but they are slightly later and were not located in isolated spaces, but in what appears to have been a major road that connected Copán's two Classic civic-ceremonial centers (see Kupprat 2015, 174–207).

respondence in the inscription of Stela 2. The first part, however, is almost identical on both monuments, not only with respect to the content, but also visually. Although Classic Maya scribes disposed of a vast repertoire of graphemic variants, which were frequently used to make repetitive text portions visually more heterogeneous, the texts on stelae 2 and 12 are glyph-by-glyph copies. This is astonishing, since the calligraphy and “orthography” are very unusual. The use of logograms to represent the numerals in the Initial Series and non-traditional phonetic complementation (e.g. CH’EN-ne instead of CH’EN-na¹²) indicate that the scribe intended to compose a “sophisticated” text, which was and is difficult to read. Moreover, in some of the graphemic variants, one can observe archaisms, i.e. old forms that had become uncommon by the time the text was created. The Initial Series Introductory Glyph is one of those archaic signs, since it is very similar to the counterparts on earlier monuments, such as Stela P (AD 623). Another example is the phonogram *la* (T178), which is represented in a T-shaped form typical of early Classic calligraphy. In E6 on Stela 2 it even presents the semi-circle inclusion, which by the 7th century had already evolved into a circle (see Lacadena García-Gallo 1995:297, fig. 296.299). At Copan, the T-shaped variant of T178 was still used on stelae 7 (AD 613; Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1031) and P (AD 623; Schele 1990, fig. 10), but contemporary monuments (stelae 10, 13, 19, and E; Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1007, 1033, 1034, 1040) do not feature this allograph anymore.

The text on Stela 2¹³ starts with the statement that K’ahk’ Uti’ Juun Witz’ K’awiil completed his first twenty-year-cycle as a ruler¹⁴ on 9.10.15.13.0 6 *ahau* <8> *mol* (July 28th, AD 648) (Schele 1992). By including a facultative theonym in his name phrase (Colas 2004, 263-277), the ruler assumed the identity of a personal ‘companion-god’ (*chit k’uh*; Prager 2013, 518-525) during this “anniversary”. The text goes on with an incense-scattering and stone-binding ritual, probably on the *ho’tuun*¹⁵-station 9.10.15.0.0 (November 10th, AD 647),

and then it skips forward to the ending of the eleventh *katun* in AD 652. A couple of ritual activities described in the following section are connected to this important date: the visit of a sanctuary of the previous ruler, K’ahk’ Uti’ Chan Yopaat, an impersonation event that involved a series of deities, as well as another completion and bathing event which was ordered by the heavenly and the earthly gods. Up to this point, the text on Stela 12 is basically the same, but the last six glyph blocks on Stela 2, where the putting in order of something or somebody is mentioned, do not have a counterpart on the parallel monument.

The final section of the text on Stela 12 is harder to read because the inscription is not as well preserved as the one on Stela 2. After what appears to be a list of further deities, we learn that K’ahk’ Uti’ Juun Witz’ K’awiil did something under the auspices of the (then long deceased) dynastic founder K’ihnich Yax K’uk’ Mo’. At the end of the text there is a reference to two instances of incense-scattering that are, in a somewhat unspecific manner, related to the calendrical super-cycles of one(?) “Pictun” and three “Calabtuns” (a total of 480,996 solar years).

A comparison of the two parts of the inscriptions on Stela 12—Part 1 includes A1-E11 and Part 2 F11-H14—reveals that they are not the work of the same author. A first indicator is the reading order inside the glyph-block, which is consistently top-down/left-right in Part 1, but less strict in Part 2, where we find forms like K’AK’-HUN-TI’ WITZ’{K’AWIL}-wi for *k’ahk’ [u]ti’ [j]juun witz’ k’awiil* (G9-H9) or YAX-K’UK’{MO’}-{K’IN}chi-ni for *k’i[h]nich yax k’uk’ mo’* (G11). Inconsistencies and even errors in the spelling of canonic expressions confirm the hypothesis of a second author. In H1, for instance, the theonym *chanal k’uh* (‘heavenly gods’) is rendered CHAN-na-la-K’UH, although the canonic and infrequently modified spelling includes the logogram NAL, as seen in F11 or in D8a on Stela 2 (but also in other contexts throughout the Maya lowlands). Far more critical is the spelling of another theonym,

12 Nicholas Carter (2014, 46–47) interprets this variation of the complementation pattern as a reflex of linguistic change, specifically the loss of vocal complexity (*ch’è’n* > *chèn*). However, the example in the copies on Stela 2 and 12 is the only one, while on contemporary and later monuments (e.g. stelae 10 and J, or the Altar of Stela 13; Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1014 1033, 1040) we find the canonic spelling CH’EN-na. This does not contradict Carter’s interpretation, but it is necessary to emphasize that the expression CH’EN-ne on stelae 2 and 12 was a scribal experiment that did not become a local convention.

13 Besides the discussion about the calendrical information, a partial analysis of the text has been published by Linda Schele and MathewLooper (2005, 365–368) and a detailed transliteration, transcription, and translation was proposed by Péter Biró and Dorie Reents-Budet (2010, 321–333).

14 As stated also on stelae J and 5, as well as Altar H’ and the Hieroglyphic Stairway at Copán, K’ahk’ Uti’ Juun Witz’ K’awiil became ruler on 9.9.14.17.5 6 Chikchan 18 K’ayab (February 8th, AD 628) (Stuart and Schele 1986, 7; Stuart 2005b, 383), which is actually one *katun* (twenty-year-cycle) and 275 days before the date on Stela 2. Maybe the “anniversary” expressed on this monument refers to a post-accession event.

15 Period of approximately 5 years. The ‘last *ho’tuun*’ is the third five-year-ending within a 20-year cycle (Lacadena García-Gallo 1994, 2002, 45–46), in this case probably 9.10.15.0.0 6 *ahau* 13 *mac* (November 10th, AD 647).

kabal k'uh ('earthly gods') as [KAB]-NAL-K'UH in E12. A literal reading leads to the form **kabnal k'uh*, which is not the desired one. The common rendering of this theonym is KAB-*la*-K'UH, as for instance on stelae 2, 7, and 10 (Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1031, 1033), as well as—again—in other lowland texts. Apparently, the author of Part 2 of Stela 12 mixed up the signs for NAL and *la*, a type of mistake which does not occur in the first part of the text.

However, there are also some differences between the text of Stela 2 and Part 1 of Stela 12, mostly in the initial series. The coefficient of the month *mol* is, erroneously, 9 on Stela 2, but plausibly 8 on Stela 12. Glyph F of the supplementary series was apparently not included on Stela 2 but is present on Stela 12. Also, glyphs G, C, and X are different, which has led Linda Schele (1992, 2) to believe that the initial dates are not the same, but that the date of Stela 12 is 260 days earlier than that of Stela 2 (Morley 1920, 132–136). The problem with this interpretation is that the referred event is, beyond doubt, the same and it is probable that the variation on Stela 12 indicates an attempt of correcting the calendrical contents.

Besides these calendrical changes, the most notable difference in Part 1 of the inscription of Stela 12 is the addition of the name of the sanctuary of K'ahk' Uti' Chan Yopaat in C14-D14. TP'-CHAN-na YAX-ZC6-NAL is, as mentioned before, a toponym of mythic origin which apparently was used in 7th century Copan as a name for a shrine (and maybe the last resting place) of the 11th dynast. However, the incorporation of this name is syntactically problematic. D13-E1 is transcribed as *ukab[a]l ti' chan yax [...]nal ch'e[']n*, where the proper name *ti' chan yax [...]nal* is inserted in the descriptive expression *ukab[a]l ch'e[']n* 'his earthly cave'. Since the latter is a possessed combination of an adjective and a noun, *ukab[a]l ch'e[']n* should not be separated and the expected form would be **ti' chan yax [...]nal ukab[a]l ch'e[']n* 'Ti' Chan Yax [...]nal, the

earthly cave of.' This strange syntactic rupture suggests that the scribe responsible for the insertion was not very concerned about the integrity of the original text.¹⁶ A second example of textual expansion on Stela 12 is less obvious, since the actual inscription is lost in this section. However, what was expressed in one glyph block (A11) on Stela 2 seems to have occupied four or more glyph blocks on Stela 12, somewhere between C1 and C5, which suggests that the corresponding text in this section was actually longer than its counterpart on Stela 2. Unfortunately, it is impossible to reconstruct the contents of this passage, since the monument has suffered severe damage in this part.

Finally, some minor variations are observed in other portions of the text. One of them is the substitution of T86 on Stela 2 (B9) with T84 on Stela 12 (A13-B13). Although it is commonly assumed that both signs are allographs of NAL, it has recently been suggested that the signs had different values (Stuart 2005a, 161, note 49). The substitution on stelae 2 and 12 could mean that there is no difference at all, but it is also possible that it is another "correction", since at least the name LEM?-PH9-NAL? (Stela 2, B9 and Stela 12, A13) usually features T84 (see, e.g., Dos Pilas, Hieroglyphic Stairway 4, Step IV, J2, Houston 1993, 109, fig. 4–11; Copan, Stela 10, Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1033).

A last difference is found comparing the names of the Paddler gods¹⁷ in D1b-D2a on Stela 2 and in F5 on Stela 12. As on Stela 2, the name of the Jaguar-paddler is usually named first, while the Stingray Spine-paddler is named second—a pattern not only seen at Copan but in the whole Maya area. Although the glyphs of the corresponding section on Stela 12 are hard to distinguish, it seems that the names were switched, starting with the name of the Stingray Spine-paddler. The reason for this variation is unclear, but—again—it goes against the literary canons at Copan and of the major Maya area.

16 Note that the same toponym is found in a syntactically uncommon position on the contemporary Stela 23 (see above). However, at this point I cannot offer an explanation for this (maybe coincidental) parallel.

17 The Paddler gods are first mentioned in texts from central Peten, but at some point in the Early Classic period they became principal patron deities at Copán (Sánchez 2012). They are a couple of supernatural actors who have been nicknamed Jaguar-paddler and Stingray Spine-paddler because of their distinctive iconographic attributes. They are associated with liminal moments (Velásquez 2010, 116), most importantly with the death of the Maize God and his journey through the otherworld (Triak 1963, 12; Schele and Miller 1986, 52), as well as the events of the Era Day at the primordial location Naah Ho' Chan (Freidel et al. 1993, 67; Velásquez 2010). At Copán, one of the first references to the Paddler gods is found on Stela 16 where they are associated with the mythological three-stone place. On the monuments from the 7th century, these numina are frequently mentioned in the god lists of ritual companions or witnesses of ritual activities (stelae 1, 2, 6, 7, 12, P, and the Altar of Stela I). In some occasions, they even 'bind stones' (stelae 1, 7, and 13), they 'bathe' other deities (Altar of Stela 1 and Altar I'), and they are being impersonated (stelae 2, 7, 12, and P).

Table 2. Comparison between the transliterations of the inscriptions on stelae 2 and 12 at Copan. Text highlighted in grey marks graphemically identical parts of text. White text marks a reconstruction based on a direct parallel.

	Stela 2	Stela 12	
A1-B2	ISIG ¹⁸	ISIG	A1-B2
A3-B3	[BALUN-PIK] LAJUN-WINIKHAB	[BALUN-PIK] LAJUN-WINIKHAB	A3-B3
A4-B4	[HO'LAJUN-HAB UXLAJUN]-WINAL	[HO'LAJUN-HAB UXLAJUN]-WINAL	A4-B4
A5-B5	MIH-K'IN WAK-AJAW	MIH-K'IN WAK-AJAW	A5-B5
A6	G7?-TI'-HUN-na	G8-TI'-HUN?-na 3-HUL? ²² [ya?]	A6-B6
B6	NAH-K'AL-?-?-UH-?	[.]K'AL-IK'UJ?-UH	A7
A7	X3?-u-CH'OK-ko-K'ABA	X? u-CH'OK-ko-K'ABA	B7-A8
B7	WINIK?-LAJUN-9-mo{lo}-tzu{TZUTZ} ¹⁹ -ja	WINIK?-LAJUN 8-[mo{lo}] tzu{TZUTZ}-ja	B8-B9
A8	u-WINIKHAB-ch'a-ho?-ma	[u-WINIKHAB] ch'a-ho?-ma	A10-B10
B8	HA'?-IL-IK'?-MIJIN?-na ²⁰	[HA'?]IL-IK'?-MIJIN?-na?	A11-B11
A9	APP-ka?-{ku?}yu?-CHIT-K'UH	APP-[ka?-{ku?}yu?] CHIT-K'UH	A12-B12
B9	LEM?-PH9-NAL?-K'AL-la-NAL?	[LEM?]-PH9-NAL? [K'A.]NAL?-la	A13-B13
A10	[K'AK'?-u-TI'-[HUN?]-WITZ'-K'AWIL-la?	[K'AK'-u-TI'-HUN WITZ'-K'AWIL-la?	C1
B10	K'UH-T756d-pi-AJAW-wa?	K'UH-T756d-pi AJAW-wa?	-
A11	[---]	[---] [---] [---] [---]	D4
B11	[---]-CHAN-na-[---]-1?-WINIKHAB	[---]CHAN-na--- 1?-WINIKHAB	C5?-D5
C1	chu-[mu?]-ni-ya ti-AJAW-li	chu-[mu?]-ni-ya ti-AJAW-li?	C6-D6
C2	[6-ti-CHAN?] 18-{K'AN}a-si-ya	6-ti-CHAN? 18-{K'AN}a-[si]-ya	C7-D7
C3	[IL?-ji?] u-CHOK-ch'a	IL? ²³ -ji? u-[CHOK-ch'a]	C8-D8
C4	[ti-WI'-5-TUN ti]-HO'?-LAJUN?	ti-WI' 5-TUN-ni ti-[HO'?-LAJUN?]	C9-C10
C5	K'AL-TUN-ni ti-12-AJAW	K'AL-TUN-ni? [ti-12-AJAW]	D10-C11
C6	8-CHAK-SIHOM TZUTZ-ja	[.]CHAK-[SIHOM] TZUTZ-ja	D11-C12
C7	11-WINIKHAB IL-ya-u-KAB-la?	11-WINIKHAB IL-ya u-KAB-la	D12-D13
		TI'-CHAN-na YAX-ZC6-NAL	C14-D14
C8	CH'EN-ne 3-WINIKHAB	CH'EN-ne 3-WINIKHAB	E1-F1
C9	ch'a-ho?-ma-K'AK'-u?-TI'-CHAN?-na	[ch'a-ho?-ma K'AK'-u-TI'-CHAN-na]	E2-F2
C10	YOPAT u-TI'?-[---]	YOPAT [u-TI'---]	E3-F3
C11	K'UH-T756d-[]-AJAW [---]	K'UH-T756d-pi-AJAW [---]	E4-F4
D1-D2	u-BAH-AN u?-na-ZZ7 ti-ZZ6 u-MAM	[u-BAH-AN] ti-ZZ6?-[---ZZ7?] [u-MAM]	E5-E6
D3	K'UH u-SAKUN?-na-K'UH	K'UH [u-SAKUN?-na-K'UH]	F6-E7
D4	4-TE'-AJAW ²¹ BALUN-K'AWIL-la	4-TE'-AJAW [BALUN]-K'AWIL	F7-E8
D5	ha-i i-ya	ha-i [-ya]	F8-E9
D6	u-TZUTZ-la-ja AT-ti-ji	u-TZUTZ-[a]-ja ya-[AT-ti-ji]	F9-E10
D7	YAX-tzi-pi u-KAB-ya	[YAX]-tzi-pi [.]KAB-ya	F10-E11
D8	{CHAN}K'UH-NAL {KAB}K'UH-la	[.]CHAN-na-NAL-K'UH [KAB]-NAL-K'UH	F11-E12
D9	u TZ'AK-ji	u-u?-KAB?-ya	F12
D10	u-[.] u-MAM?	13?-K'UH-TAK MAM-a-wa-xa-[.]la	E13-F13
D11	[---] [---]	yi-ta-ja-WAY? K'UH-CHAN-na-la	G1-H1
		[K'UH-KAB-la---] [---]	G2-H2
		[---] IK'-[.]ji?	G3-H3
		4-CH'OK-ko-TAK-ki [.]IL	G4-H4
		[ti-]wi 5?-TUN-li?	G5-H5
		[.]TE' ch'a-ho?-ma	G6-H6
		K'UH-WAY-ya ?-CHAN-[na]	G7-H7
		K'AK'-HUN-TI' WITZ'K'AWIL-wi	G8-H8
		3-wi-ti-ki u-?	G9-H9
		u-KAB-[ya] ?-?	G10-H10
		YAX-K'UK'{MO}'-{K'IN}chi-ni	G11
		K'UH-T756d-pi-AJAW	H11
		WIN?-na-AJAW i-li?-ya	G12-H12
		u-CHOK-ch'a u-2-CHOK-ch'a	G13-H13
		T42-pi 3-TZUTZ?-pi	G14-H14

18 The ISIGs of both texts feature the head of a wind god as “patron” of the month *mol*. This sign was previously identified as Patron of Mac (Thompson 1950, fig. 23).

19 The gourd sign T370 probably is to be read *tzu* in this context. The head of a bat or feline (see Stela 12) is infixed in T370, and it is possible that it has an independent phonetic value. It may be related to the inverted bat-head-sign TZUTZ (APN), although in case of the latter, the 180°-turn is a distinguishing feature. Nevertheless, there is a parallel for the upright bat-head with the value TZUTZ in a fragmentary stucco text from Tonina (Stuart 2007b; I thank Marc Zender for pointing out this example).

Discussion

The reconstruction of damaged and missing parts of an inscription is to be understood as an approximation of the original text, but never as exact science. The degree of fidelity of a reconstruction can be estimated based on the type of parallel texts. Whenever we have a direct copy of the text that must be completed, the reconstruction will be quite accurate, but not necessarily without errors. However, when the available parallels differ from each other and from the known portions of the text to be analyzed, a reconstruction may become an educated guess. Therefore, a reconstruction without the precise citation and a critical analysis of the relevant parallel texts is inadmissible.

But what do these examples tell us about the ancient Maya? Why is the reconstruction of parallel texts relevant, if it only repeats what is already stated in other texts? The reconstruction of missing text means an analytical shift of focus from content to composition. The inscription on Stela 23 does not provide any new data about Era Day-events or political history. It does, however, contain valuable information about the narrative structure and scribal conventions at 7th century Copan. Although the monument was erected a hundred days before the completion of the eleventh *katun*, this important period ending was, without a doubt, the central event in the narrative. Actually, the stela seems to have been inherently possessed by this calendrical cycle, a role played by gods and ancestors in contemporary texts. Hence, the reference to the period ending on Era Day was integrated into the narrative as a semantic parallel to the current period ending, marking the latter as part of mythic tradition and primordial continuity. A similar strategy—i.e. the integration of deep-time period-endings in the principal narrative to (re)create the millennial tradition of *katun*-celebrations—was applied in other inscriptions at Copan, as, for instance, on Stela C (Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1004) where a connection is made between the end of the 11th pre-era “baktun” (February 5th, 3902 BC) and the *katun*-ending of 9.14.0.0.0 (December 5th, AD 711), since both dates share the same *tzolkin*-day and *haab*-coefficient. On other monuments, this connection is less obvious, as,

for example, on Stela I (Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1012) where the mythological period-ending 8.6.0.0.0 does not have a Late Classic counterpart, since the stela was erected sometime after the actual *katun*-ending.

The Era Day-passage on Stela 23 is one of the earliest known fragments of this narrative and it may have directly influenced later renderings, such as the text of Stela C at the neighboring site of Quirigua (Looper 2003, 12, fig. I.11). This inscription features one of the most extensive accounts of creation and includes all the elements present on Stela 23. Not only is the textual coincidence important, but also the discursive function, since Stela C at Quirigua presents the same argumentative pattern; the Era Day is followed by another important period ending (9.1.0.0.0; August 28th, AD 455), and finally it reaches the author’s present with the *ho’tuun*-ending 9.17.5.0.0 (December 29th, AD 775).

As indicated by the textual structure, by the contents, and possibly by the reception of the inscription, Stela 23 was a typical text of 7th century Copan. The master-scribe who designed it—not necessarily the same one who carved it into stone—was familiar with the local conventions of monumental inscriptions, as well as with pan-Maya mythological knowledge. Nevertheless, the imagery on the (mainly undocumented) front side was not typical of Copan’s stelae at all. Hence, it is likely that text and imagery were designed by two different persons. Given the original location of the stela, far off the center of Copan at a secondary settlement, it is possible that it was not directly commissioned by Copan’s ruler K’ahk’ Uti’ Juun Witz’ K’awiil, but rather by a vassal of his who resided at Santa Rita. The sculptor who elaborated the front side might have been a recently immigrated artisan from the central lowlands, while at least the primary author of the text was most likely a member of the royal court at Copan, trained in the conservative style of local literacy.

In a similar manner, the texts on stelae 2 and 12 provide information about the process of textual composition and authorship. As shown, the first and second parts of the inscription on Stela 12 were written by two different master-scribes, to be nicknamed Scribe A and Scribe B. Since the first part on Stela 12 is not only tex-

20 The same sequence—probably a (part of a) theonym that sometimes was incorporated into personal names—also appears on Stela E (A12; Schele and Schele 2000, no. 1007), as well as on a couple of painted plates that belonged to K’ihnich Waw, ruler of Tikal (I thank Dmitri Beliaev for pointing out this parallel).

21 At first sight, the correct transcription appears to be 4-TE’-AJAW{TE’}, but it is quite probable that in this case the TE’-element infixed in the logogram AJAW is simply a calligraphic variation.

22 The floral element attached to the hand-sign suggests the value TZUTZ rather than HUL. However, in the context of the complementary series, HUL is the expected expression, so this variation has to be interpreted as a scribal confusion of these distinct logograms.

23 The sign IL seems to be repeated in this occasion, but it was probably meant to be read as a single instance. Graphically, the sign depicts a seeing eyeball; maybe the scribe duplicated the sign in order to represent both eyeballs.

tually but also graphemically identical to the text on Stela 2, Scribe A was the primary author of both. In other words, Scribe B copied Scribe A's text and adapted it to fit on the raw monolith that became Stela 12. He changed not only the last bit of the original text and added a rather large section at the end, but he also realized calendrical corrections and included some minor changes and additions. By doing so, he maintained the archaistic calligraphy of the original, but he was clearly less experienced than Scribe A, for the incongruent spellings occur in the second part of the inscription, and his addition of the toponym *ti' chan yax[...]nal* does not respect the syntax of the original text. Hence, it is probable that Scribe B was an apprentice of Scribe A, taking his master's work as a draft for his own text. We do not know if Scribe A was directly responsible for the text on Stela 2, or if he made the original text design on some other (perishable?) material. Since there are no documented signatures of sculptors at Copan, it is unknown if the master-scribes who composed the inscriptions actually engaged in carving.

Why, then, would a rather unexperienced scribe oversee the elaboration of an inscription as complex as the one on Stela 12? The probable answer lies in the unprecedented extension of K'ahk' Uti' Juun Witz' K'awii'l's stela program. For the 11th *katun* alone he commissioned at least seven stelae with complex hieroglyphic inscriptions (2, 3, 10, 12, 13, 19, and 23) and their respective altars. The cutting of the stone, its transportation, and its carving required an immense amount of manpower. Is it possible that there were simply not enough skilled scribes to supervise the elaboration of all these monuments? The case of stelae 2 and 12 seems to confirm this hypothesis. While Stela 2 is the more important and prestigious object, because of the presence of elaborate imagery on its front and its location at or near the site-center, Stela 12 is a remote hilltop-stela with no architectural structures nearby (implying a lack of day-by-day reception), which could be entrusted to a less-skilled scribe. The scenario of a scribe shortage would also explain the presence of stelae Petapilla and Titorror, two hilltop-stelae that do not present any carving. This lack of inscriptions has led to the belief that these two monuments are Preclassic, non-Maya monuments (Díaz 1974, 20–22). However, the Titorror Stela has not only a carved cribbing-frame (Strömsvik 1941, 79), but also a “bound” altar, which is stylistically similar to the Altar of Stela I (Spinden 1913, 161, fig. 214–215). Both of these elements are typical of the sculpture of the 7th and 8th centuries AD, so the uncarved stelae may well have formed part of the 11th-*katun*-program. Perhaps these monoliths were not sculpted (but simply painted in red), because there were insufficient artisans to get the work done in time.

Final remarks

The presented cases have shown how textual reconstruction in hieroglyphic texts provides a ground for a broad contextualization of specific inscriptions and their carriers. However, it should always be noted that the possibilities for reconstruction vary significantly and that the results are never precise. Interpretations based on reconstructed texts should, whenever possible, be cross-checked with independent data to assess their reliability. In the case of Stela 23, for example, the degree of accuracy varies among different sections of text: D2-D5 can only be reconstructed very loosely as a “list of gods”, and the reading of C6-D6 as the name and title of a ruler is purely hypothetical. Nevertheless, the reconstruction of C9-D9 ([13-PIK TI'-CHAN-na]) is quite secure (even the phonetic complement!), thanks to the great consistency of composition and spelling in parallel texts.

Any reconstruction is, of course, only as good as the parallel text(s) on which it is based. While textual parallels with graphemic variation, commonly referred to as substitution patterns, have always played an important role in the decipherment of the hieroglyphic script, the case of stelae 2 and 12 makes it clear that the comparison of graphemically identical texts can also produce important data concerning contextual information, such as literary practices and authorship.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I would like to thank *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* and its Postdoctoral Fellowships-program, *Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Dirección General de Asuntos del Personal Académico* and the research project PAPIIT IN402213, “Las escrituras jeroglíficas maya y náhuatl: desciframiento, análisis y problemas actuales”, directed by Erik Velásquez García, as well as the Mexican *Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología* for their financial support in different phases of research. I am deeply grateful to the Honduran *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* and *Centro Regional de Investigaciones Arqueológicas* at Copan for granting the necessary research-permits. I am particularly indebted to the Archaeological Project at Rio Amarillo, under the direction of Cameron McNeil, for their hospitality, and especially to Edy Barrios, Antolín Velásquez López, and Walter Burgos for their logistic help and company. Last but not least, thanks to Verónica Amellali Vázquez López for her constant support, professionally and privately.

Appendix: Transcription and translation of the text of Stela 12 at Copan

[balun pik] lajuun winikhaab [ho'lajuun haab uxlajuun] winal mih? k'in wak ajaw [...] ti' hu'n ux[ij?] hul[iiy ...] kaal chuwaaj? uh [...] uchok kaba' winik?lajuun waxak [mol] tzu[h]tzaj [uwinikhaab] ch'aho'm? ha'? il[an] ihk'? mijjin? chit k'uh [lem?] [...]nal? [kaal]nal? [k'ahk' uti' [juun] witz' k'awiil k'uhul ...p ajaw ...chan...] juun winikhaab chu[mwa]niiy ti' ajawil ti' wak [chan?] waxaklajuun kanasiy il[aa]j u[chok ch'aa]j ti' wi'(il) ho'tuun ti' [ho'lajuun] kal tuun [ti' lajcha' ajaw] [waxak chak]siho'm tzu[h]tzaj buluch winikhaab il[aa]y ukabal ti' chan yax [...]nal che'n ux winikhaab [ch'aho'm? k'ahk' uti' chan] yopaat [uti' ...] k'uh[ul ...]p ajaw [...] u[baahila'n] [...] umam] k'uh [usaku'n? k'uh] chante' ajaw [balun] k'awiil ha'i'iy utzutz[la]j ya[tij] [yax] tzip [u]kab[jii]y chanal k'uh [kab]al k'uh ukab[jii]y uxlajuun? k'uhtaak mama' waxa[...]l yita[a]j wahy[is]? chanal k'uh [kabal k'uh... chan] ch'oktaak [...]ila[... ti' wi'] ho'tuunil? [...]te' ch'aho'm? k'uh way [...] chan k'ahk' [u]ti' [j]uun witz' k'awiil uxwi[n]tik [...] ukab[jii]y [...] k'i[h]nich yax k'uk' mo' k'uh[ul ...]p ajaw wiin[te']na[ah] ajaw iliiy? uchok ch'a[aj] ucha' chok ch'a[aj] [...] pi[k]? uxtutz? pi[k]

[It were nine “baktuns”], ten *katun*, [fifteen years, thirteen] scores, [and no] day. On the day 6 *ahau*, [when] “G8” was the *ti' hu'n* and three days had [passed] since the “JGU”-moon had arrived at the [...]th enclosure, [and when] its youthful name was [..., of] thirty [days], on 8 [mol]²⁴; the *katun* of the young man, [K'ahk' Uti' Juun Witz' K'awiil, the devine lord of ...p, as] Ha'(?), Ilaan Ik'(?), Mijjin(?) [...], the companion god, [Lem] [...]nal(?), [K'aal]nal(?), was completed.

[... and] one *katun* [had passed] since he had sat down in rulership, on the day 6 [*chicchan*], 18 *kayab*.²⁵ His incense-scattering was seen on the last *ho'tuun*, on(?) [fifteen] stone-bindings. [On the] day [12 *ahau*, 8 *ceh*], eleven *katun* were completed. Ti' Chan Yax [...]nal, the earthly cave²⁶ of [K'ahk' Uti' Chan Yopaat, the young man of one] *katun*, [the ti' ... of ...], the divine lord of [...]p, [...], was seen.

The image of the “Paddler gods”, the maternal and paternal²⁷ grandfathers of the gods, Chante' Ajaw, and [Balun] K'awiil [came to] exist²⁸. It had been them who completed it²⁹, [and who] bathed Yax Tzip(?), [as] the heavenly gods and the [earthly] gods had ordered it, [as] the thirteen gods [at] the ancestor-place(?), [at] Waxa[...]l(?), had ordered it. [He is/They are] in company of the *wahy*(?), the heavenly gods [and the earthly gods, ..., and] the Four Youthful Ones. K'ahk' Uti' Juun Witz' K'awiil, the young man [of the final *ho'tuun*(?)], the godly *wahy* [...] snake(?), the [...] of Ux Wintik, was(?) seen, [as] K'ihnich Yax K'uk' Mo', the divine lord of [...]p, the lord of the Wiin [Te'] House, had ordered it. His incense-scattering was seen(?), [as well as] his second incense-scattering, [on?] the “pictun” [and on] three “calabtuns”.

24 The date of the Initial Series correlates to July 28th, AD 648.

25 Date of the accession of K'ahk' Uti' Juun Witz' K'awiil on February 8th, AD 628, about 20 years before the production of Stela 12.

26 In this case probably to be read as ‘sanctuary’.

27 This meaning of *saku'n* has been pointed out by Albert Davletshin (personal communication, 2018) and will be discussed in an upcoming paper.

28 Usually, this expression refers to impersonation rituals.

29 Read: ‘the *katun*’.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Baron, Joanne Parsley. 2013. *Patrons of La Corona: Deities and Power in a Classic Maya Community*. PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Ann Arbor.
- Baudez, Claude F. 1994. *Maya Sculpture of Copán: The Iconography*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Beetz, Carl P. and Linton Satterthwaite. 1981. *The Monuments and Inscriptions of Caracol, Belize*. Philadelphia: University Museum, University of Pennsylvania.
- Bíró, Péter and Dorie Reents-Budet. 2010. "Los Monumentos de la Plaza Principal." In *Manual de los Monumentos de Copán, Honduras*, edited by Ricardo Agurcia Fasquelle and Vito Veliz, 65-383. Copán Ruinas: Asociación Copán.
- Bodel, John. 2001. "Epigraphy and the Ancient Historian." In *Epigraphic Evidence: Ancient History from Inscriptions*, edited by John Bodel, 1-56. London, New York: Routledge.
- Bruun, Christer and Jonathan Edmondson. 2015. "The Epigrapher at Work." In *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, edited by Christer Bruun and Jonathan Edmondson, 3-41. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Callaway, Carl D. 2011. *A Catalogue of Maya Era Day Inscriptions*. PhD dissertation, La Trobe University, Bundoora.
- Carter, Nicholas P. 2014. "Space, Time, and Texts: A Landscape Approach to the Classic Maya Hieroglyphic Record." In *Archaeologies of Text: Archaeology, Technology, and Ethics*, edited by Matthew T. Rutz and Morag M. Kersel, 31-58. Oxford, Philadelphia: Oxbow Books.
- Cheek, Charles D. 1983. "Las excavaciones en la Plaza Principal: Resumen y Conclusiones." In *Introducción a la arqueología de Copán*, edited by Proyecto Arqueológico Copán, vol. 1, 319-348. Tegucigalpa: Proyecto Arqueológico Copán, Secretaria de Estado en el Despacho de Cultura y Turismo.
- Coe, Michael D. 1973. *The Maya Scribe and His World*. New York: Grolier Club.
- Colas, Pierre Robert. 2004. *Sinn und Bedeutung Klassischer Maya-Personennamen: Typologische Analyse von Anthroponymphrasen in den Hieroglypheninschriften der Klassischen Maya-Kultur als Beitrag zur allgemeinen Onomastik*. Acta Mesoamericana. Markt Schwaben: Verlag Anton Saurwein.
- Cooley, Alison E. 2012. *The Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Díaz Zelaya, Rodolfo. 1974. *Guía de las Ruinas de Copán*. Tegucigalpa: Ariston.
- Fash, Barbara W. 2003. "Copán Archive and Database Project." *Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc.* Accessed on December 1st, 2015. <http://www.famsi.org/reports/00042/00042Fash01.pdf>.
- Fash, Barbara W. 2011. *The Copan Sculpture Museum: Ancient Maya Artistry in Stucco and Stone*. Cambridge: Peabody Museum Press, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard University.
- Fash, William L. 1991. *Scribes, Warriors, and Kings: The City of Copán and the Ancient Maya*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Fash, William L. and Barbara W. Fash. 2006. "Ritos de fundación en una ciudad pluri-étnica: Cuevas y lugares sagrados lejanos en la reivindicación del pasado en Copán." In *Nuevas ciudades, nuevas patrias: Fundación y relocalización de ciudades en Mesoamérica y el Mediterráneo antiguo*, edited by María Josefa Iglesias Ponce de León, Rogelio Valencia Rivera, and Andrés Ciudad Ruiz, 105-129. Madrid: Sociedad Española de Estudios Mayas.
- Freidel, David A., Linda Schele, and Joy Parker. 1993. *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path*. New York: W. Morrow.
- Gordon, Arthur Ernest. 1983. *Illustrated Introduction to Latin Epigraphy*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Houston, Stephen D. 1993. *Hieroglyphs and History at Dos Pilas: Dynastic Politics of the Classic Maya*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Iwaniszewski, Stanisław. 2007. "Glyphs E and D in the Lunar Series from Quirigua, Guatemala and Copan, Honduras." In *Archaeoastronomy in Archaeology and Ethnography: Papers from the Annual Meeting of SEAC (European Society for Astronomy in Culture) Held in Kecskemét in Hungary in 2004*, edited by Emília Pásztor, 149-159. London: BAR International Series. Archaeopress.
- Jones, Christopher and Linton Satterthwaite. 1982. *The Monuments and Inscriptions of Tikal*. Tikal Report 33. Philadelphia: University Museum, University of Pennsylvania.
- Klaffenbach, Günther. 1957. *Griechische Epigraphik*. Studienhefte zur Altertumswissenschaft 6. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Kupprat, Felix. 2015. *La memoria cultural y la identidad maya en el periodo Clásico: Una propuesta de método y su aplicación a los casos de Copán y Palenque en el siglo VII d.C.* PhD dissertation, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico.
- Lacadena García-Gallo, Alfonso. 1994. "Propuesta para la lectura del signo T158." *Mayab* 9: 62-65.
- Lacadena García-Gallo, Alfonso. 1995. *Evolución formal de las grafías escriturarias mayas: Implicaciones históricas y culturales*. PhD dissertation, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid.
- Lacadena García-Gallo, Alfonso. 2002. "Nuevas evidencias para la lectura de T158." *Mayab* 15: 41-47.
- Looper, Matthew G. 2002. "The 3-11-pih Title in Classic Maya Inscriptions." *Glyph Dwellers* 15.
- Looper, Matthew G. 2003. *Lightning Warrior: Maya Art and Kingship at Quirigua*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Macri, Martha J. and Matthew G. Looper. 2003. *The New Catalog of Maya Hieroglyphs Volume 1: The Classic Period Inscriptions*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Maudslay, Alfred P. 1889-1902. *Biologia Centrali-Americana; or, Contributions to the Knowledge of the Fauna and Flora of Mexico and Central America*. Archaeology. 4 vols. London: R.H. Porter, Dulau & Co.

- McCready, Mary, Barbara MacLeod, Vito Véliz, Peter Keeler, and Ruth Krochock. 1988. "A Suggested Reading Order for Stela 6 at Copán." *Copán Note* 48.
- Morley, Sylvanus Griswold. 1920. *The Inscriptions at Copan*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington.
- Morley, Sylvanus Griswold. 1938. *The Inscriptions of Petén*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington.
- Prager, Christian M. 2013. *Übernatürliche Akteure in der Klassischen Maya-Religion: Eine Untersuchung zu intra-kultureller Variation und Stabilität am Beispiel des k'uh "Götter"-Konzepts in den religiösen Vorstellungen und Überzeugungen Klassischer Maya-Eliten (250 - 900 n. Chr.)*. PhD dissertation, Universität Bonn, Bonn.
- Proskouriakoff, Tatiana. 1973. "The Hand-grasping-fish and Associated Glyphs on Classic Maya Monuments." In *Mesoamerican Writing Systems: A Conference at Dumbarton Oaks, October 30th and 31st, 1971*, edited by Elizabeth P. Benson, 165–178. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections.
- Riese, Berthold. 1979. "Humo-Jaguar Monstruo-Imix - Estudio Biográfico." In *Epigrafía: Informes*, edited by Proyecto Arqueológico Copán. Copán Ruinas: Centro Regional de Investigaciones Arqueológicas.
- Riese, Berthold and Claude F. Baudez. 1983. "Estructuras de las Estructuras 10L-2 y 4." In *Introducción a la arqueología de Copán*, edited by Proyecto Arqueológico Copán, vol. 1, 143–190. Tegucigalpa: Proyecto Arqueológico Copán, Secretaria de Estado en el Despacho de Cultura y Turismo.
- Robertson, Merle Greene. 1991. *The Sculpture of Palenque. Volume IV: The Cross Group, the North Group, the Olvidado, and Other Pieces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sánchez Gamboa, Ángel Adrián. 2012. "Culto a los dioses remeros en Copán." *Kin Kaban* 2: 13–27.
- Sandys, John Edwin. 1919. *Latin Epigraphy: An Introduction to the Study of Latin Inscriptions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schele, Linda. 1990. "The Early Classic Dynastic History of Copán: Interim Report 1989." *Copán Note* 70.
- Schele, Linda. 1991. "Venus and the Monuments of Smoke-Imix-God K and others in the Great Plaza." *Copán Note* 101.
- Schele, Linda. 1992. "The Initial Series Dates on Stelae 2 and 12." *Copán Note* 104.
- Schele, Linda and Nikolai Grube. 1988. "Stela 13 and the East Quadrant of Copán." *Copán Note* 44.
- Schele, Linda and Matthew G.Looper. 2005. "Seats of Power at Copán." In *Copán: The History of an Ancient Maya Kingdom*, edited by E. Wyllys Andrews and William Leonard Fash, 345–372. Santa Fe, Oxford: School of American Research, James Currey.
- Schele, Linda and Mary Ellen Miller. 1986. *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art*. New York, Fort Worth: G. Braziller, Kimbell Art Museum.
- Schele, Linda and David Schele. 2000. The Linda Schele Drawings Collection. *Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc.* Accessed December 1st, 2015. <http://research.famsi.org/schele.html>
- Spinden, Herbert Joseph. 1913. *A Study of Maya Art: Its Subject Matter and Historical Development*. Cambridge: Peabody Museum.
- Strömsvik, Gustav. 1941. *Substela Caches and Stela Foundations at Copán and Quiriguá*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington.
- Stuart, David. 2005a. *The Inscriptions from Temple XIX at Palenque: A Commentary*. San Francisco: Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute.
- Stuart, David. 2005b. "A Foreign Past: The Writing and Representation of History on a Royal Ancestral Shrine at Copan." In *Copán: The History of an Ancient Maya Kingdom*, edited by E. Wyllys Andrews and William Leonard Fash, 373–394. Santa Fe, Oxford: School of American Research, James Currey.
- Stuart, David. 2007a. "Reading the Water Serpent as WITZ". *Maya Decipherment: Ideas on Ancient Maya Writing and Iconography*. Accessed on December 1st, 2015. <https://decipherment.wordpress.com/2007/04/13/reading-the-water-serpent/>.
- Stuart, David. 2007b. "Stucco Glyphs from Tonina." *Maya Decipherment: Ideas on Ancient Maya Writing and Iconography*. Accessed on December 1st, 2015. <https://decipherment.wordpress.com/2007/11/28/stucco-glyphs-from-tonina/>.
- Stuart, David. 2008. *Copan Archaeology and History: New Finds and New Research, Sourcebook for the 32nd Maya Meetings, February 25 – March 2, 2008*. Austin: The Mesoamerica Center, Department of Art and Art History, The University of Texas at Austin.
- Stuart, David. 2010. "Shining Stones: Observations on the Ritual Meaning of Early Maya Stelae." In *The Place of Stone Monuments: Context, Use and Meaning in Mesoamerica's Preclassic Transition*, edited by Julia Guernsey, John E. Clark, and Barbara Arroyo, 283–298. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.
- Stuart, David and Linda Schele. 1986. "Interim Report on the Hieroglyphic Stair of Structure 26." *Copán Note* 17.
- Thompson, J. Eric S. 1950. *Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: Introduction*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington.
- Thompson, J. Eric S. 1962. *A Catalog of Maya Hieroglyphs*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Trik, Aubrey S. 1963. "The Splendid Tomb of Temple I at Tikal, Guatemala." *Expedition* 6 (1): 3–18.
- Velásquez García, Erik. 2010. "Los Dioses Remeros mayas y sus posibles contrapartes nahuas." In *The Maya and their Neighbours: Internal and External Contacts Through Time: Proceedings of the 10th European Maya Conference, Leiden, December 9-10, 2005*. Acta Mesoamericana 22, edited by Laura van Broekhoven, Rogelio Valencia Rivera, Benjamin Vis, and Frauke Sachse. Markt Schwaben: Verlag Anton Saurwein.
- Wiley, Gordon R., Richard M. Leventhal, Arthur A. Demarest, and William L. Fash. 1994. *Ceramics and Artifacts from Excavations in the Copan Residential Zone*. Cambridge: Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.