



Texas Notes on Precolumbian Art, Writing, and Culture

No. 70

August, 1994

Notes on the Chronology of Piedras Negras Stela 12

by Linda Schele and Nikolai Grube
Valladolid, Yucatan

The chronology of the left side of Piedras Negras Stela 12 has never been adequately interpreted, although epigraphers have known for several years that the text refers to an important star-war against Pomona. During the summer, Federico Fahsen and the two of us had the opportunity to examine Stela 12 with the permission of Dora Gonzalez, the director of the National Museum of Anthropology. Using ladders provided by the staff of the museum, we conducted a careful study of the inscription and made field drawings to record our observations. Using these observations, we can now offer a solution to at least some of the chronological problems.

The Right Side

The right side of the text (Fig. 1) begins with an lc recording the date 9.18.5.0.0 as the *na hotun*. The event is the T713a "flat-hand" verb inflected with an *u* pronoun and a *ha* suffix. The actor is Ruler 7, K'inich Yak, whose name appears with a full array of titles. This first passage of the text closes with a reference to the Paddlers Gods who are *u k'ul y-itah*, "the gods and companions of" the Piedras Negras lord. The glyphs for the Paddlers are followed by the god of number 3 appearing in a context that may read *chuwén* as a title

for the Paddlers. The *chuwén* reading is supported by the *na* sign suffixed as a phonetic complement.

The text continues with a dn of 8.3.1, the verb *utiy*, and the date 1 Kawak 12 Sak (9.17.16.14.19). The event is the capture of a lord named Te-ni-bi-wi Ah-???-K'in K'ul-Tok', who was the yahaw of a lord whose complex name follows in the next two blocks. The glyph includes a *wa* syllable, the *ahaw* title, and the head of the bak'tun bird. Although we are unable to identify the lord or his home city, a similar combination of a bird head with a prefixed *wa* syllable occurs as a toponym with the captives from Palenque House C. The right side ends with a dn of 1.13

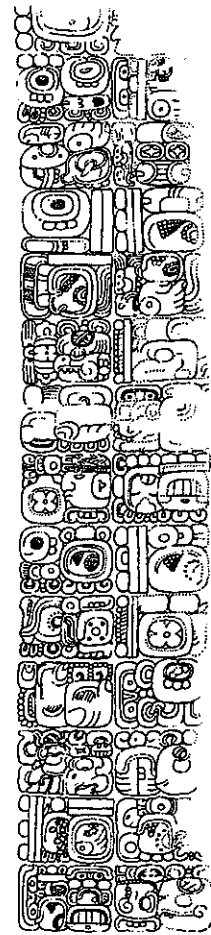


Fig. 1 Pn St. 12, drawing by John Montgomery with corrections from our field notes.

* The Texas Notes are an running series of commentaries and small reports on Precolumbian art, writing, and culture published for the purpose of quick, limited distribution among interested scholars and students working in the field. The series is published by CHAAAC, the Center of the History and Art of Ancient American Culture of the Art Department of the University of Texas at Austin. Funds for reproduction and distribution of complementary copies are provided by the John D. Murchison Professorship in Art, currently held by Linda Schele. Copyright is held by the authors and the CHAAAC and may be copied for scholarly purposes without further permission. Submissions will be accepted from contributors working in all disciplines and concerning any Precolumbian cultural tradition or its descendant traditions. Contributions may be submitted by anyone working in the field, but they may not exceed ten pages, including references. Any of the major word processors may be used, but final text must be submitted in the IBM format, although any IBM disk size is acceptable. All illustrations must be provided at the finished scale in either line or stippled drawings suitable for scanning. The publisher takes no responsibility for copy editing and the authors must clear all copyright permissions before submission of a manuscript. The editor reserves the right to reject submissions if they are deemed inappropriate or incorrectly prepared. Style conventions should follow Chicago Style B and text should be single column and formatted to conform with the paragraph, sub-titling, and other features of this note. Aldus Pagemaker or Corel Ventura will be used to format the text into this layout, which will then be printed on a Hewlett-Packard Laserjet III. A master copy of the recent notes will be put on file at Kinko's during each year and can be ordered from Kinko's Copies, 2901-C Medical Arts St., Austin, Texas 78705 (512-476-3242; FAX 512-476-2371). Authors are encouraged to use the unifroma alphabet to transcribe Maya words, and the editor bring manuscripts into compliance in some cases.

leading from 10 Manik' seating of Sak to the period ending that opened the text. The event is the forty-sixth anniversary of Ruler 7's birth.

The Left Side

The scribe of Stela 12 did not link the dates on the right side to those on the left side so that the initial

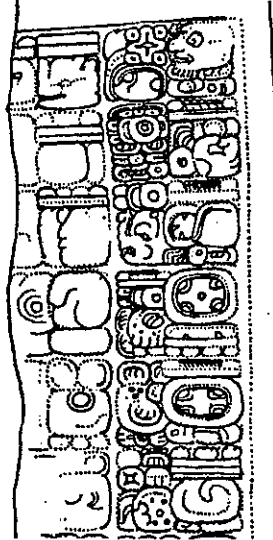


Fig. 2

cr on the left side (Fig. 2) has always floated without an anchor. Not enough detail was detectible in

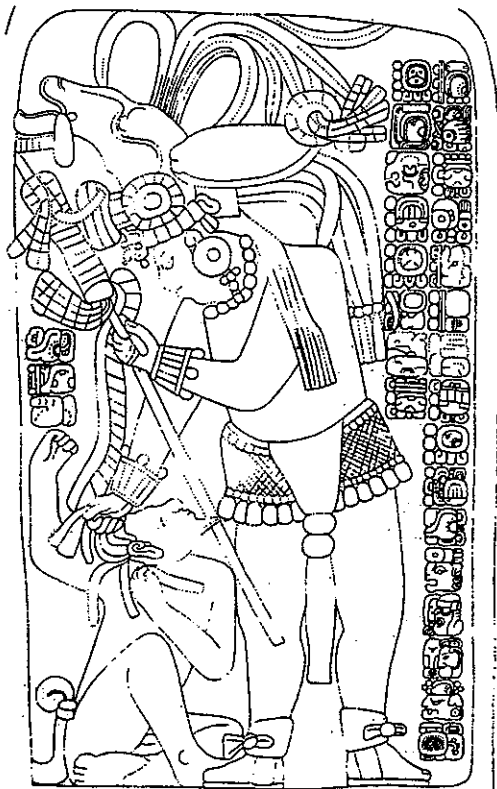


Fig. 3 La Mar St. 3, drawing by John Montgomery with corrections from our field notes

available drawings or photographs to be able to identify the damaged elements of the date. Our examination of the original monument, however, found the elements clearly recognizable. The cr is 7 or 8 Ik' 10 Sotz'. These elements yield only one lc that fits the context—9.18.1.9.2 7 Ik' 10 Sotz' (April 1, 792). This date is confirmed by the text on La Mar Stela 3 (Fig. 3), which involves the same events and people associated with the date 9.18.1.8.18 3 Etz'nab 6 Sotz', four days earlier.

The Piedras Negras event is a star-war against Pakab, the nearby site called Pomona today. The primary statement of the event is followed by two badly eroded glyphs. From the Piedras Negras text we could not say much about the event, but La Mar (Fig. 4) has *ch'akah oxlahun ???-ki*, "it was chopped, 13 ...k." The second of the two eroded glyphs on PN St 12 could well be the "13 ...k" location or name from the La Mar text.

This phrase on Piedras Negras Stela 12 (Fig. 2) is followed by *u tz'aka??-te*. We don't know the meaning of this glyph, but it in turn is followed by a series of names and titles including Sak-Sotz', Ah K'in-Yet, K'ech-At, Ah Sak-Kab-K'an-Bolon. This last glyph, K'an-Bolon also appears in the name of a woman on a looted monument now in the Dallas Museum of Art, and on a panel of similar size that was excavated by the Pomona project several years ago (Peter Mathews, personal communication, 1994). Two more eroded glyphs are followed by Kalum Ah K'ana, another eroded pair and then K'ul Yokib Ajaw. We suspect that *yichnal* precedes this last series of glyphs which names the local Piedras Negras agent.

The text (Fig. 5) continues with a *dn* consisting of 11.16.??18, *utiy*, a missing day sign, and 2 or 3 Kumk'u or Wayeb. These elements leave only two possible dates as a reading 9.6.5.1.4 13 K'an 2 Wayeb and 9.6.5.0.4 6 K'an 2 Kumk'u. The event is the dedication (*huhi*) of

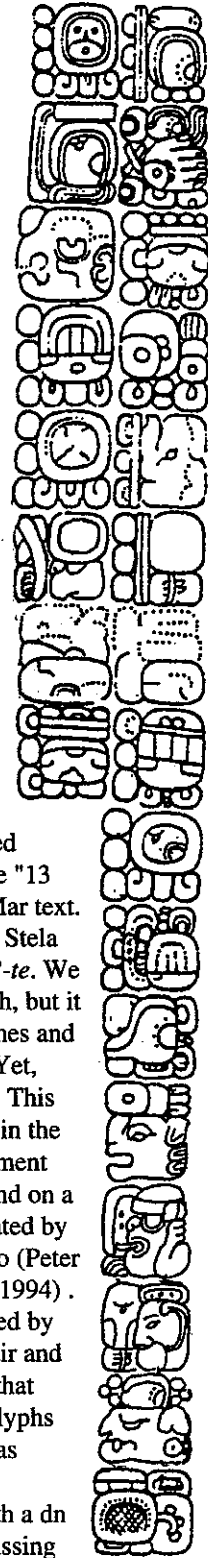
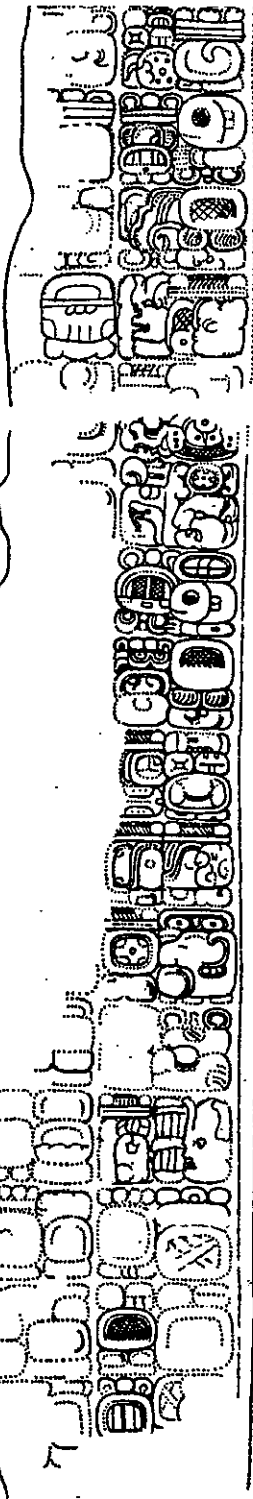


Fig. 4 La Mar inscription

Pakal ???-Chan. We suspect that this was a building at Pomona. The next several blocks are badly damaged, but the clause concludes with *yichnal* and the name of a diety or ruler consisting of a jaguar holding a *k'in* over his head.

Fig. 5



The chronology of the next clause remains a problem, but we can provide material that will set an approximate range. La Mar Stela 3 (Fig. 4) records the same series of wars and captures. The second date on that monument is 9.18.3.5.19 1 Kawak 2 Wayeb. Since the first date on PN Stela 13 is within four days of the La Mar date, and since the same captives are involved, we think it a pretty safe bet that the second PN date is within \pm four days of the second La Mar date. This requires a *dn* of 1.14.17 +8 days and we have

1.???.?? preceding the verb and the place where the *cr* once was carved. We think the PN date should fall between 9.18.3.5.19 and 9.18.3.6.7.

The event has a numerical prefix of "2" suggesting the second time it occurred. Since the next glyph is Pakab, we think it is the second attack against that kingdom. The names of the persons involved include the same Ah K'in-Yet, Ah K'ech-At, and Ah K'ana. This last name is followed by *u sahal*, a badly eroded section, and finally Ah Hanab-Chih-Tz'am-Sotz'. Ah K'ech-At and Ah-Hanab-Chih-Tz'am-Sotz' occur as the names of two of the prisoners on the front of the monument so that the names in the principal text can be identified as captives taken in the star war against Pomona (Fig. 6 and 7).

Moreover, at least two of the captive names also occurs on La Mar Stela 3 (Fig. 4). In that text, the name Sak Sotz', who appears with the earlier attack in the PN text, follows *chuki*, "he was captured," on the date 9.18.3.5.19. His name identifies him as the *sahal* of the ruling lord of Pomona. The PN text may record subordination to the same person, but the final name is the Ah Hanab-Chih-Tz'am-Sotz' (Fig. 7). We do not know if this is another name for the Pomona ruler, but we can identify him as the principal captive

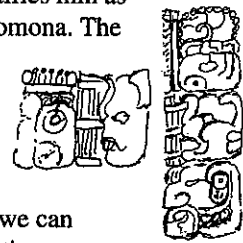


Fig. 7 Pn names from our field notes

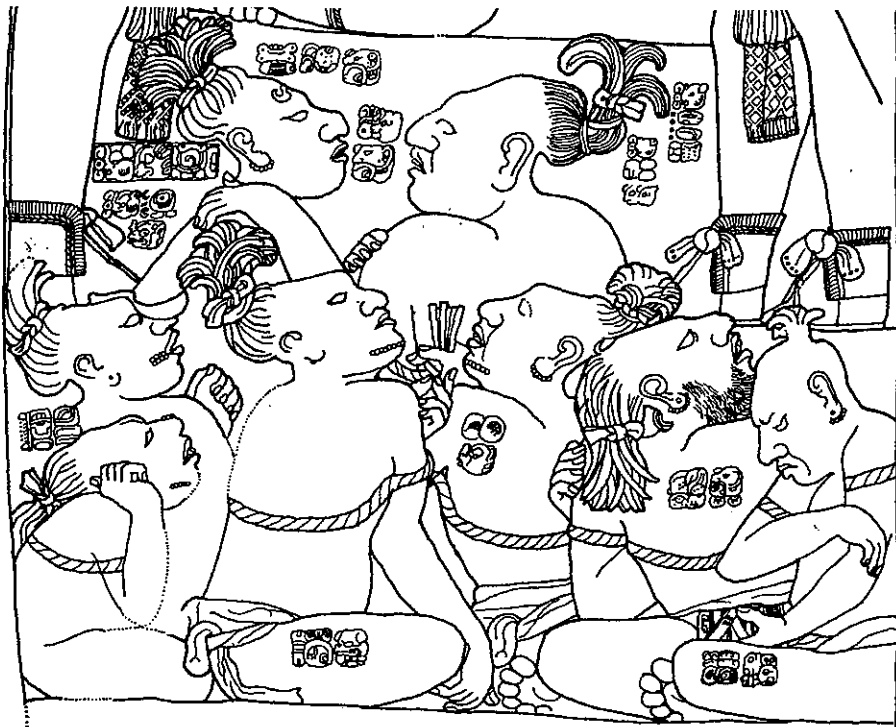


Fig. 6 PN St 12 drawing by L. Schele



Fig. 8

depicted on the front of PN Stela 12. On the La Mar stela, *chukah* also precedes the name Ah K'ech-At, which is associated with captive shown in the scene. The same person is named on Stela 12, and he is depicted as second prisoner seated on the left. Sak-Sotz'

mentioned prominently with the earlier attack is the kneeling prisoner on the right.

The last section of the text was too badly eroded to yield many details to our examination. We identified a date consisting of 4 ??? 2 or 3 ????, but we could not find a satisfactory solution to the chronology or identify the action and actors.



Fig. 9 La Mar Stela 3

Summary:

While the condition of Stela 12 does not allow for the full decipherment of all the dates, events, and actors, we feel that the date of the first starwar against Pomona can now be read. The association of this and a subsequent attack are tied to the dedication of a building or other monument at Pomona some eleven k'atuns, sixteen k'atuns earlier. These same events are recorded on La Mar Stela 3, which also depicts the capture of a man named Ah K'ech-At (Bent-Penis). Grube suggests that this La Mar lord also appears on the PN monument. We identify the upper figure as Ruler 7, while he suggests that the two standing lords who flank the central captive are La Mar sahal. The lord standing on the left may be the La Mar sahal whose accession is recorded on La Mar Stela 1 and who ended the hotun named on Stela 3. Interestingly, neither the PN or the La Mar ruler is named on Stela 3, so that we are left to deduce who the captor was from the context. However, the principal captives taken in this war are named in the texts and depicted on both monuments. PN Stela 12 includes many other captives taken during this war.