



THE DOS CAOABAS STELAE

Agnes Cougnaud, Hal Green, Bea Koch and Al Meador

This note is based on the presentation made during the Maya Meetings at The University of Texas at Austin (USA) on Saturday, March 15, 2003. We received help from virtually everyone at the Long Workshop, and trying to list all names without omissions would just be inviting trouble

Two stelae were discovered in situ at Dos Caobas in the early 1980s but it is not before 1993 that scientists paid attention to them. During summer 1997 they have been carried 5 kms away to a secure place in Frontera Corozal. They are currently on display in the new museum. This city is located a few kilometers south of Yaxchilan near the Usumacinta. The stelae were recorded by Tovalin, Mathews et al. (1998).

The front of Stela 1 [Figure 1] shows an image with three figures, a principal figure, dressed as a warrior (probably the king) on the right holding a spear in his right hand and a crooked staff in his left, and a lesser figure on the left about to strike the third figure being a naked captive hunkering between them. We cannot see any rope binding the captive's arms.

Above the scene there is a large, severely damaged text, with a shorter passage at the base whose first row of glyphs is largely readable, whereas the second row is badly eroded, but could be partly reconstructed (Figure 2).

Although the name of the captive may be incised on his chest, it is quite unreadable. Maybe we could guess *SAK ?? Emblem glyph*. However, the fact that three scars are plainly visible on his prominent male member, indicating participation in three blood-letting rituals, suggests that he was a substantial character.

The name of the left hand figure appears to be pecked into the stone in front of his face. If a "lazy S" can be presumed to have been, so his name reads *EK' MUY ya ? yu na (Ek' Muya(l) ? yu Na)*. Who is *Ek' Muya(l)* --- one of the *sajalob'* who did the fighting for *Itzamnaaj Balaam II* in his later years? (Martin and Grube 2000).



Figure 1: Stela 1, face (photo by Joel Skidmore)



Figure 2: Drawing Stela 1, face

Reading attempt (Figure 2)

B1	...	
A2	...	
B2	... tz'a-pa-ji-ya	... <i>tz'a(h)pjiy?</i>
A3
B3	... HO K'ATUN ch'a-ho-ma	... <i>Ho K'atun Ch'aho'm</i>
A4	... HO K'ATUN b'a-te	... <i>Ho K'atun B'a Te'</i>
B4	... HO K'ATUN <i>Ho K'atun ...</i>
C1
D1	... a BOLOM HAB'-ta	... <i>Aj Bolom Hab'ta(l)</i>
C2	... PA' CHAN-na AJAW <i>Pachan Ajaw</i>
D2	"title ?"- si CHAN na ...	
C3	"title ?"- na hu /chi?	
D3	Itzamnaaj B'alam 'u cha CHAN-nu	<i>Itzamnaaj B'alam 'u Chan</i>
E2	a HUN-K'AL b'a-ki	<i>Aj Hun K'al B'aak</i>
E3	a NIK-ki ya-YAL-la	<i>Aj Nik y-al</i>

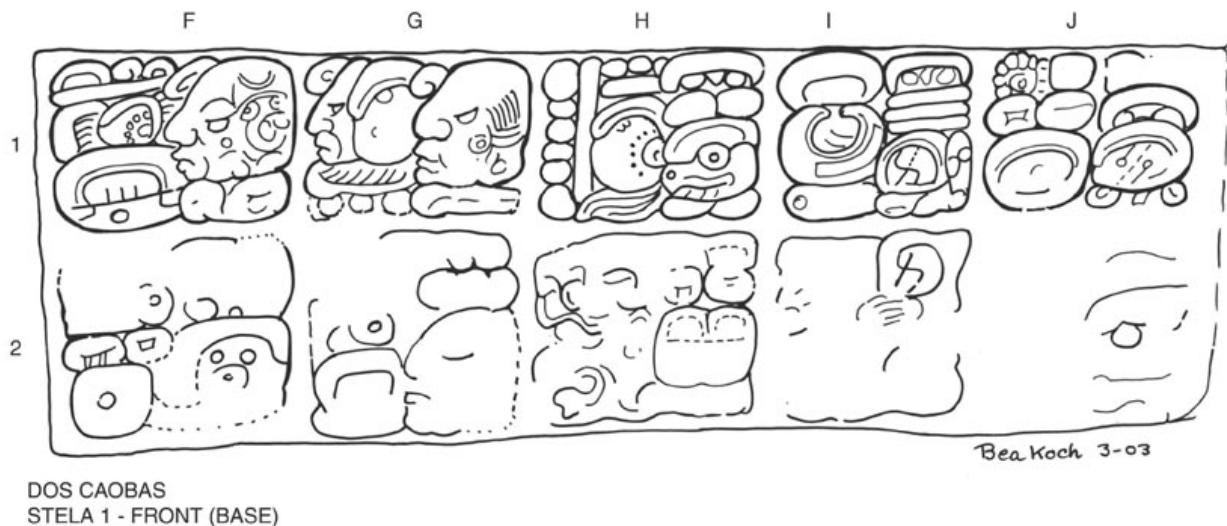


Figure 3: Drawing Stela 1, face base

Below the scene (Figure 3)

F1	WAK K'ATUN IX' KALOM TE'
G1	IX' pa-ka-la
F2a	JUN-li IX' PET?-ni? AJAW

6 K'atun Ix Kalom Te', Ix Pakal, Junil Ix Peten Ajaw

This is indeed the name of Itzamnaaj B'alam II's mother, whose complete name phrase is given on Yaxchilan Lintel 27. While the nominal phrase on Yaxchilan Lintel 27 ends with Ix B'akab', this title does not appear to be included in the Dos Caobas nominal phrase for *Itzamnaaj B'alam II*'s mother.

F2b/G2	'u NIK li CHAN K'ATUN AJAW Yaxun B'alam
H1/I1	'a WAK TUN ni 'u cha CHAN nu CHAK ja-la TE'
	'u HO-LAHUN TZ'AK-b'u-li
H2/I2	Yoaat B'alam K'UHUL Yaxchilan AJAW
	b'a ...TZ'AK-b'u-li
J1/J2	K'UHUL "Yaxchilan" AJAW 'u NA TAL-la '... KALOM TE'

'u Nikil Chan K'atun Ajaw Yaxun B'alam, Aj Wak Tuun, 'u Chaan Chak Jal Te' 'u Ho-Lahun Tz'akb'u-il Yoaat B'alam K'uhul Yaxchilan Ajaw, B'a ? Tz'akb'u-il K'uhul Yaxchilan Ajaw 'u Natal ? K'alom Te'

Expected next *'u nikil* (child of father), we can conclude that G2 likely gives the name of *Itzamnaaj Balam II*'s father, *Yaxun B'alam III*, preceded by his title, 4 *K'atun Ajaw*, as in Yaxchilan Hieroglyphic Stairway 3. At H1-I1 we can read *Aj Wak Tuun u' Chaan Chak Jal Te'*, known titles of *Yaxun B'alam III* (Hieroglyphic Stairways 2 and 3).

In the right half of I1, we can read *u' Ho-Lahun Tz'akb'u-il*, "the 15th successor", referring to *Yoaat B'alam I*, of whom *Yaxun B'alam III* is known to be the 15th successor (Martin and Grube 2000) and whose nominal phrase must be at H2, followed by

the Yaxchilan emblem glyph and at I2 by an unreadable collocation which includes *tz'ak* again.

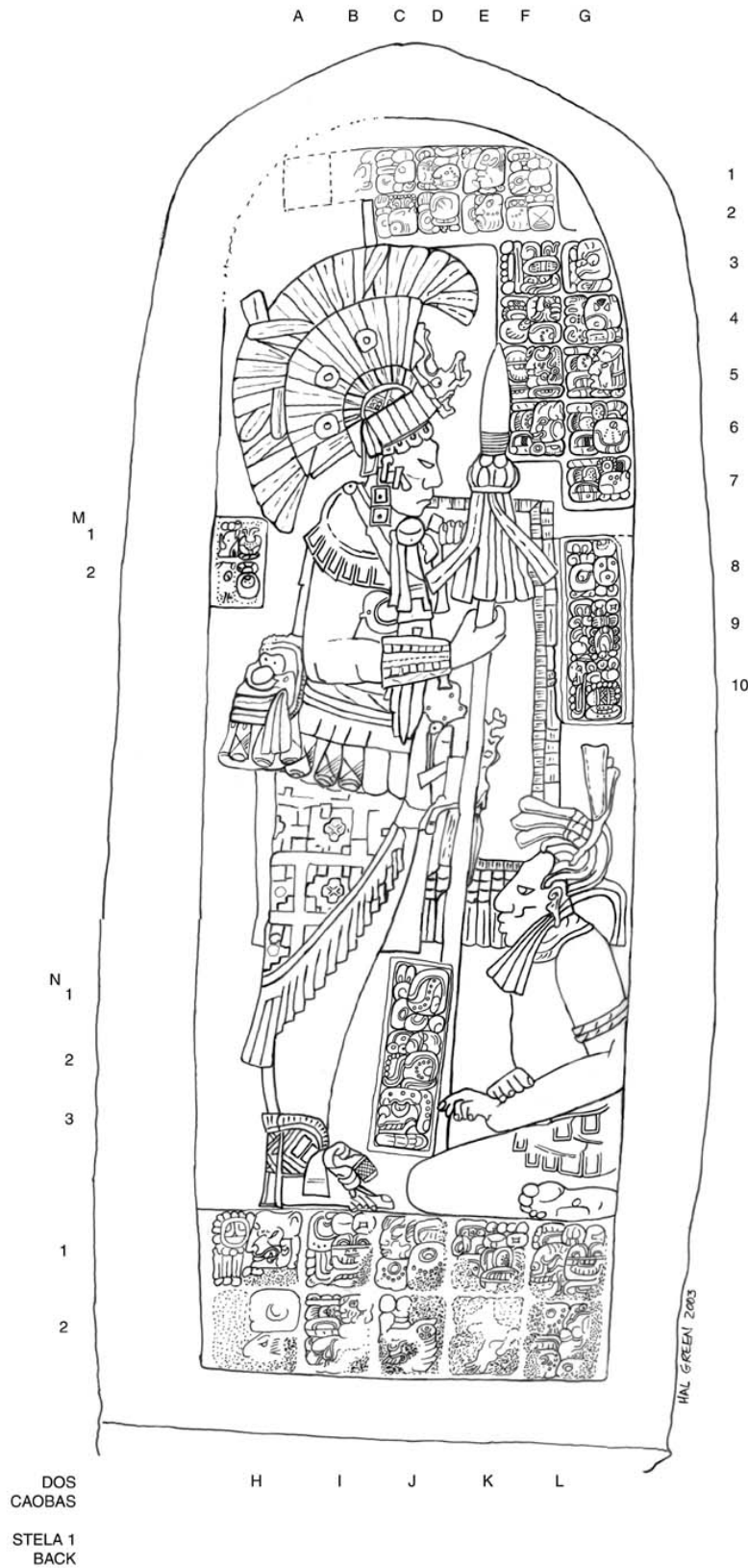


Figure 4: Drawing Stela 1, back. We see two persons on this side, a kneeling captive who is bound and naked, and a sajal, or maybe the king himself, holding ceremonial spear and shield. He has a skull at the back of the belt, perhaps a relic of an ancestor (Tate, 1992) and an upside down face on the front part. He wears an headdress with cut feathers, in which there is a Jester God signifying the man's status as Ajaw (Schele, 1986). Other adornments are visible, such as an earpool and a jade bracelet. We don't know exactly where the text begins because the whole area is badly eroded, but we expect the first sentence to end at D2 and to contain a verb for capture related to the scene shown on the stela.

DOS
CAOBAS
STELA 1
BACK

Thus, the base panel text on the front of Stela 1 is a parentage/ancestor statement of *Itzamnaaj B'alam* II, the principal figure in the image, whereas the small readable upper part of the stela quotes him as « He of the 21 captives » (E2), though *Itzamnaaj B'alam's* title is «He of the 20 Captives » on Hieroglyphic Stair 3

A1/B1	...
C1	'u b'a-ji ti ...
B2/C2	ti to-k'a ti pa-ka-la
D1/E1	K'AK'? SAJAL-la 'u cha-CHAN-nu ... AJAW-wa
D2	CHAK b'a
<i>... 'u b'aaj ti ... ti to'k ti pakal K'ak' Sajal 'u Chan ... Ajaw Chak B'a</i>	
E2	'u b'a 'a-nu
E3/F3	'a K'AK' 'o CHAK-ki
E4	'u k'u-hu-lu TZAK-ku
<i>'u b'aaj(il)-an' Aj K'ak' O Chaak 'u k'u(h) hul tza'k</i>	
F4/E5	ICH'AK k'a? si CHAN na ... na
F5/F7	HO K'ATUN AJAW-wa HO K'ATUN b'a TE' HO K'ATUN pi-tz'i HO K'ATUN ch'a-ho-ma
G1/G3	'u cha-CHAN-nu 'a NIK-ki 'u cha-CHAN-nu NOHOL AJAW 'a HUN-K'AL B'AK
H1/I1	<i>Itzamnaaj B'alam</i> K'UHUL "Yaxchilan" AJAW
<i>Ichak? k'a si Chan ?? Ho K'atun Ajaw, Ho K'atun B'a Te', Ho K'atun Pitz'(il), Ho K'atun Ch'aho'm, 'u Chaan Aj Nik, 'u Chaan Nohol Ajaw, Aj Hun-K'al B'aak, Itzamnaaj B'alam K'uhul Yaxchilan Ajaw</i>	

And then appears the conjuring of the God *Aj K'ak' O Chaak* [F3-G3] by *Itzamnaaj B'alam*. The king is impersonating the God who seems to be the protector of the Yaxchilan dynasty. He appears in the text of Yaxchilan Lintels 10, 25 and 42.

The text continues with *Izatmanaaj B'alam's* titles [G5-G7], his name, and a parentage statement including the child of mother *Ix' Pakal* and the child of father *Yaxun B'alam* (Fig 5).

H2/I2/J1	ya-YAL-la TZIKAL IX' WAK K'ATUN KALOM TE' (IX' PET AJAW-wa OR pa-ka-la) IX b'a-ka-b'a
<i>Y-al Tzikal Ix' Wak K'atun Kalom Te' Ix' Peten Ajaw/Pakal Ix' B'akab'</i>	
K1	'u NIKIL CHAN K'ATUN AJAW
I2/K2	'u CHAN-nu CHAK ja-la TE' (<i>Yaxun B'alam</i> ...)
L1/L2	K'UHUL "Yaxchilan" AJAW b'a-ka-b'a KALOM TE'
<i>'u Nikil Chan K'atun Ajaw 'u Chan Chakjal Te' Yaxun B'alam ... K'uhul Yaxchilan Ajaw B'akab' Kalom Te'</i>	

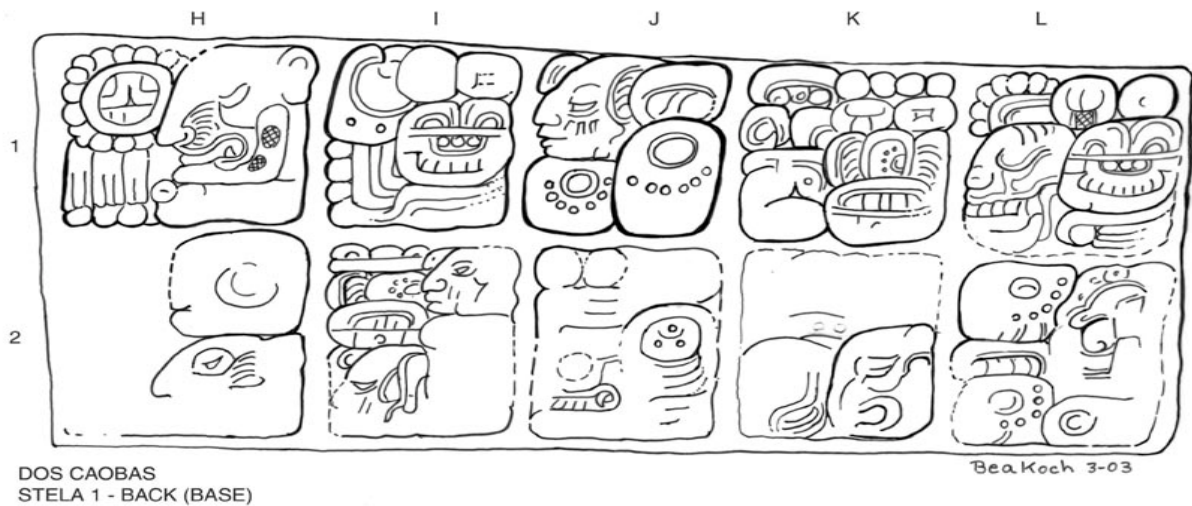


Figure 5: Drawing stela 1 back base

Just in front of the prisoner [Figure 6] appears his name *Sak ?? Aj ?? Tuun* and *B'aak* to make sure we are not mistaken. The first ?? (Easter egg shaped) glyph is seen on the temple XIX bench of Palenque (south side) and may be a glyph for Waterlily. An other interesting thing is apparently the scribal signature *y-uxul Hun Witz'il Chaak Chakal Te'*. On Yaxchilan lintel 45 just behind the king's leg we can read *y-uxul Hun Witzil Chaak Chok Chakal Te'*, so those two pieces could have been sculpted by the same artist.

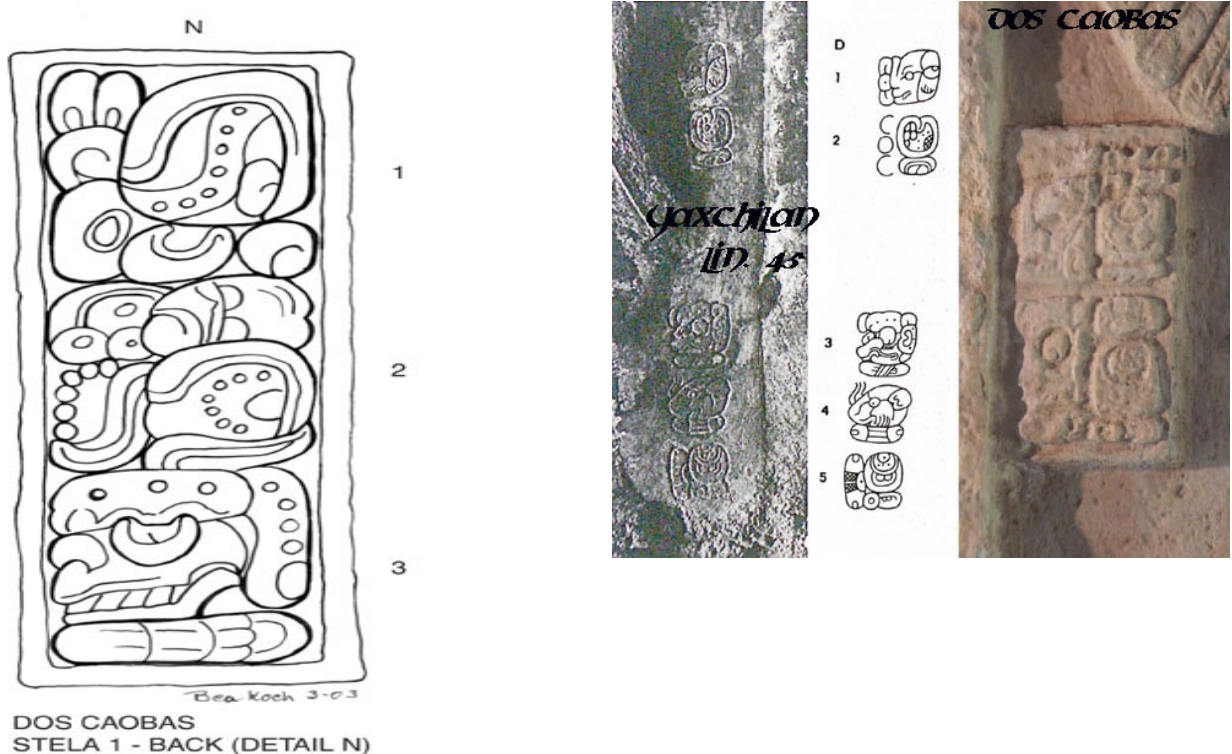


Figure 6: Drawing of captive's name and photo of scribe's signature (photo by Joel Skidmore)

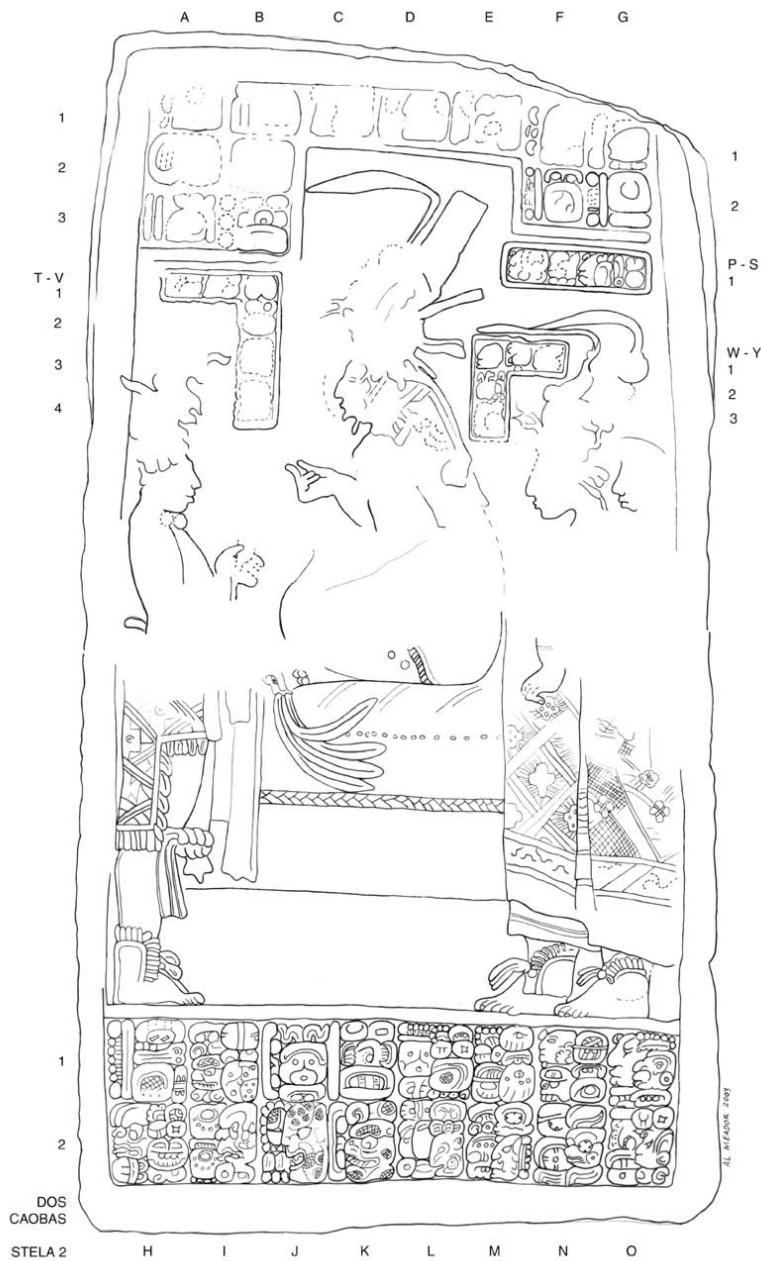


Figure 7: Drawing Stela 2. This drawing of Stela 2 shows a central figure of some importance flanked by two ladies wearing elaborate dress on one side and by a man on the other side. Severe damage across the middle of this stela prevents a clear understanding of the action depicted, but the man may be holding an instrument or object, possibly a blood-letter. While the text across the top is badly eroded, a few key glyphs can be made out well enough to conclude that the central figure is *Yaxun B'alam*, who in typical Yaxchilan style is identified by numerous circumlocutions. The glyphs identify him as the captor of *Ah Uk'* [G1/F2] and as He of 20 Captives [G2].

A1/B2	...
A3	...
B3	OX K'ATUN AJAW(?)
C1/D1	...
E1/F1	mi-xi-NAL YAXUN B'ALAM
G1/F2	'u cha-CHAN-nu 'a 'u-ku
G2	'a K'AL B'AK-ki

... 3 K'atun Ajaw ... Mixnal Yaxun B'alam 'u Chaan Aj Uk Aj K'al B'aak

The bottom panel [Figure 8] shows the continuation of the interminable name phrase for *Yaxun B'alam*, beginning with a curious epithet found only at one other site, La Pasadita, Lintel 3. "*Aj Yax Chopat*" seems to be the reading for this name phrase [H1]. This epithet appears to have a pictorial representation on this stela.

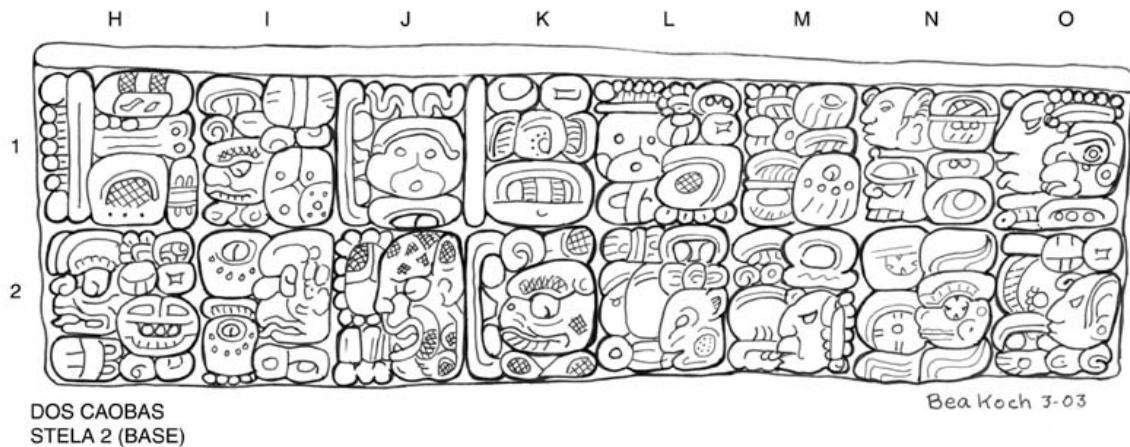


Figure 8: Drawing of Stela 2, base

The Cordemex translates "*Chopat*" and "*Yax Chopat*" as *coroza*, apparently a reference to the tall, conical penitent's hat worn by the more fortunate victims of the Spanish Inquisition. Here we see the central figure, *Yaxun B'alam*, in just such a hat. It is remarkably similar to the ones worn by two of the figures in the Temple XIX bench from Palenque. This observation leads to several interesting questions, though: Why doesn't *Yaxun B'alam* carry this title, if it is what we think it is, on any other inscriptions than the one from La Pasadita? What is the phrase "*Yax Chopat*" doing in the Cordemex? Does it refer, perhaps, to some ceremony still practiced in the days when the Cordemex source material was being compiled?

H1/I1	'a YAX cho-pa-ta 'u cha-CHAN-nu CHAK wa-WAY-b'i
H2/I2	CHAK-ki K'UHUL "Yaxchilan" AJAW-wa b'a-ka-b'a KALOM TE'
J1/K1	'u NIK-li HO K'ATUN AJAW
J2/K2	Itzamnaaj B'alam 'u cha-CHAN-nu
L1/M1/L2a	'a NIK-ki K'UHUL "Yaxchilan" AJAW b'a-ka-b'a KALOM TE'
L2b/M2	'u b'a 'u HUN TAN-na TZIKAL IX K'UH
N1/O1	IX IK' JOLOM CHAN-na-li? IX 'a K'UH-na
N2/O2	ELK'IN-ni yo-OK'-K'IN-ni HO K'ATUN IX AJAW-wa

Aj Yax Cho'pat 'u Chaan Chak Wayeb' Chaak K'uhul Yaxchilan Ajaw B'akab' K'alom Te' 'u Nikil Ho K'atun Ajaw Itzamnaaj B'alam 'u Chaan Aj Nik K'uhul Yaxchilan Ajaw (X2) B'akab' K'alom Te' 'u b'aaj 'u Huntan Tzikal Ix' K'uh(ul) Ix' Ik' Skull Chan ? Ix'Aj K'uh(ul) Na Elk'in Yok'in Ho K'atun Ix' Ajaw

Those two «new» stelae are magnificent and give us new prisoners' name, but we could regret that no date are readable and that they are not the key which could explain the gap between *Itzamnaaj B'alam* II's death and *Yaxun B'alam* IV's Accession.

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