Glyph Dwellers
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The Name of Wi' Ohl K'inich on Copan Altar Q

Matthew Looper
Yuriy Polyukhovych

Department of Art and Art History, California State University Chico

This note clarifies the interpretation of one of the royal names listed on the sides of Copan Altar Q, dedicated on 9.17.5.0.0 (775 C.E.) (Stuart 2008). Modern drawings of this monument by Barbara Fash (Schele 1989:71) and Anke Blanck (Baudez 1994:fig. 40) show the eighth ruler seated on a glyph block consisting of an obvious T158 **WI'** grapheme on the left and an unclear glyph on the right (**Figs. 1, 2**).

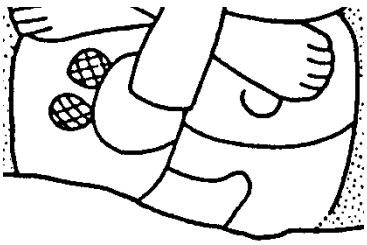

Fig. 1. Name of Copan Ruler 8, as recorded on Copan Altar Q. Drawing by B. W. Fash, after Schele (1989:71).

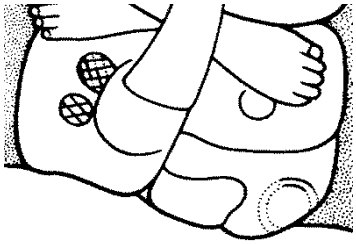

Fig. 2. Name of Copan Ruler 8, as recorded on Copan Altar Q. Drawing by A. Blanck, after Baudez (1994:fig. 40).

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In both drawings, the right hand part of the block is split horizontally, with a small circle at the top and a mandible-like form at the lower left. However, the drawings only reproduce the deeply carved major lines of the glyphs. Upon examining photographs of the Maudslay cast of Altar Q located in the British Museum, we realized that the glyph block actually includes four distinct graphemes, one of which is infixed (**Figs. 3, 4**). On the left half of the block, we could make out the form of T506 **OHL** infixed within

T158 **WI'**. This representation of the first part of Ruler 8's name is similar to that which appears on Copan Hieroglyphic Stairway Step 14, commissioned only a few years before Altar Q, though the altar lacks the syllabic complements (**Fig. 5**).

Fig. 3. Name of Copan Ruler 8, cast of Copan Altar Q in British Museum. Photograph by Yuriy Polyukhovych.

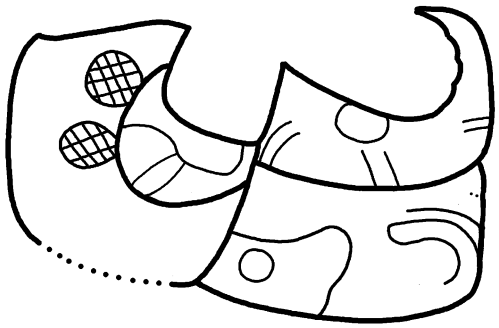

Fig. 4. Name of Copan Ruler 8, as recorded on Copan Altar Q. Drawing by Matthew Looper.

On Altar Q, the right half of the block represents the cupped **chi** hand (T671) with the **K'IN** grapheme (T544) above it, partly obscured by the ruler's foot. This differs from contemporaneous representation of the word *k'inich* at Copan, in which the **K'IN** logograph is typically placed at the wrist area of the **chi** syllable (e.g. Stela 11, Altar U). The **chi** sign is recognizable by the fingers on the right side of the glyph. The mandible-like form is in fact an exaggerated, calligraphic rendering of the joint attachment point of the hand. In sum, the Altar Q version of Ruler 8's name is transcribed **WI' OHL K'IN-chi**, yielding Wi' Ohl K'inich.

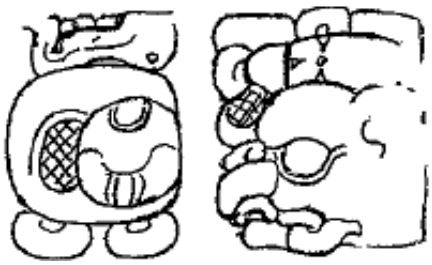

Fig. 5. Name of Copan Ruler 8 as recorded on Copan Hieroglyphic Stairway Step 14. Drawing by B. W. Fash, after Stuart (2008).

Fig. 6. Name of Copan Ruler 8, as recorded on Stela 52. Drawing by B. W. Fash, after Stuart (2008).

The spelling of Ruler 8's name on Altar Q differs from monuments dedicated during the Early Classic, which employ T117 **wi** to represent the first part of the name (**WI'**), as on Stela 52 and the Ante Step (**Fig. 6**). The rendering of the *k'inich* part of the name also differs from other examples, which always employ the Sun God head (T1010) or T184. It is partly for these reasons why the full understanding of the name of the ruler has eluded scholars for so long.

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