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Addendum to “The Discovery, Exploration, and Monuments of Nim Li Punit, Belize” (RRAMW Number 40)

Norman Hammond
Boston University

Sheena Howarth
Corozal Project

Research Report Number 40 was submitted in 1988; by the time it went to press in 1998, two of the original drawings, of Nim Li Punit Stelae 1 and 15, had been mislaid. Rubbings by Merle Greene Robertson were substituted (Hammond, Howarth, and Wilk 1999: Figures 3 and 6; Grube, MacLeod, and Wanyerka 1999: Figure 1). We here publish Howarth’s 1976 drawings of Stelae 1 and 15, to complement the rubbings and complete the record; stela descriptions have been repeated from the original text with a few printing errors silently corrected; no corrections to the Grube, MacLeod, and Wanyerka paper are presently necessary.

Research Report Number 40 included brief descriptions of the plain monuments of Nim Li Punit in the series Stelae 1-26, numbered clockwise around the plaza from Stela 1 at the southwest corner. A newly discovered text was reportedly found in the plaza, but it is not certain whether this was a previously reported but apparently plain monument, or a monument hitherto concealed under topsoil. From the size and shape it seems safe to accept it as Stela 21, as identified by the Belize Department of Archaeology (Nikolai Grube, personal communication 1999).

STELA 1

Stela 1 is 2.7 m high from the base of the carving, and tapers slightly upwards from a width of 1.13 m to 0.95 m (Figure 1). The carved area, also narrowing, from 0.9 to 0.7 m over a height of 2.5 m, is divided into four registers. The upper register consists of twelve glyph blocks, arranged in three columns of four, each glyph inset in a rectangular cell with a raised border round it, its shape in some cases squared off to conform to the cell margins. The first eight glyphs give a clear Initial Series date, read across the three columns and not pairwise, of 9.15.10.0.0. 3 Ahau 3 Mol (June 28th, A.D. 741). For a description of the remaining glyphs, see Grube, MacLeod and Wanyerka 1999 (RRAMW Number 41).

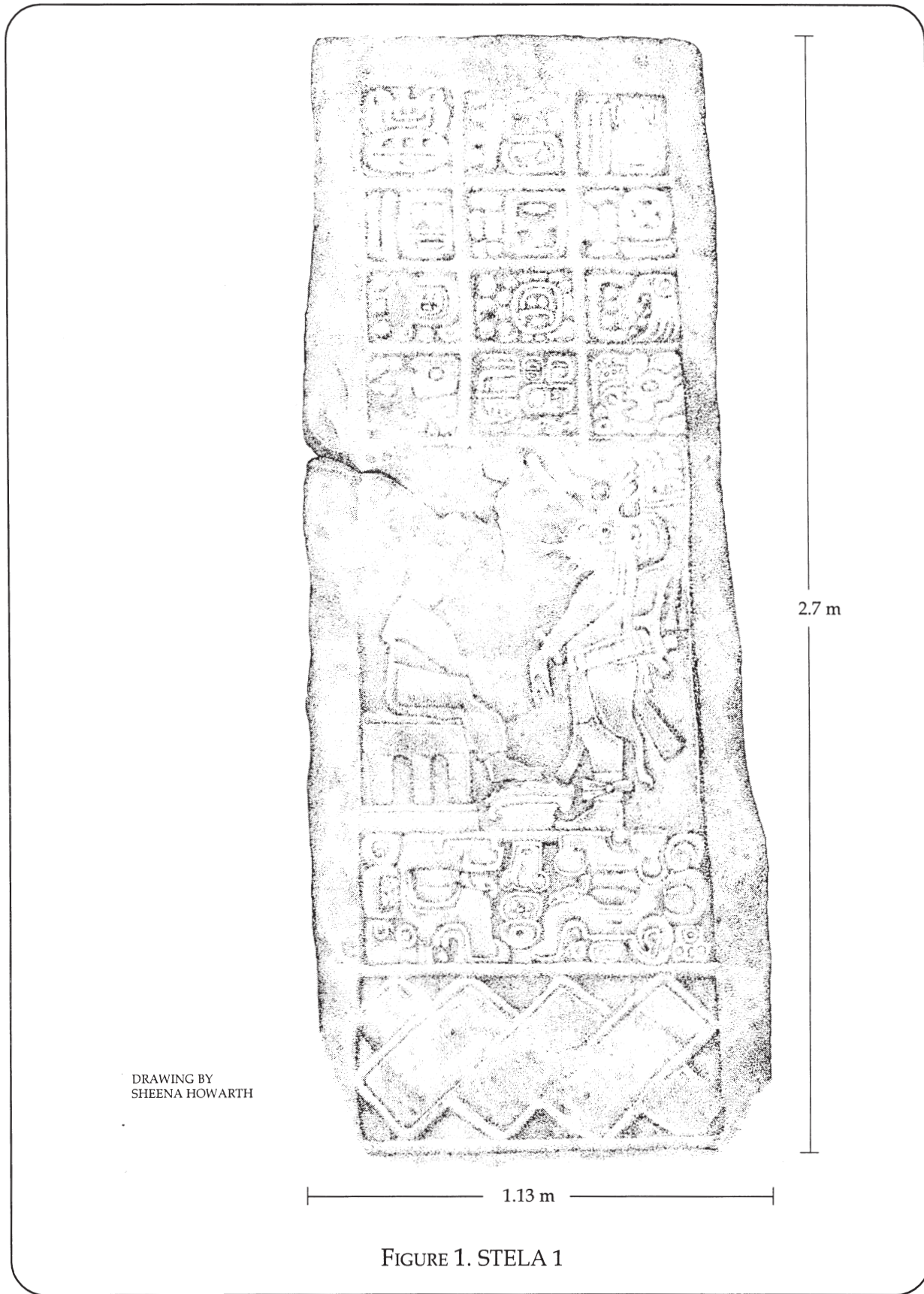


FIGURE 1. STELA 1

The lowest register is occupied by a large woven-mat *pop* motif 0.27 m high, and the second by a panel of the same size containing two long-nosed/lipped monster heads in profile, of slightly differing design and facing each other; two glyphoids and a lobate shaped he between them. The border with the main panel above is not continuous, as it is below the heads, but only covers the central part of the panel, so that the heads could be considered as part of the main composition.

This comprises two human figures in a panel 0.93 m high. That to the viewer's right is standing, the other seated. The standing figure is male, wearing an *ex* loincloth hanging to ankle level at the front, an overgarment hanging to the same level at the rear, a heavy belt with what seems to be a backrack, and an elaborate headdress with a mask over the face, an infixed *pop* motif, and a high feathered panache. Wristlet and anklet (the figure is in profile with only one arm and leg shown) are of "bow-tie" form. The upper body is apparently unclad. The left arm is extended obliquely in front of the body – the hand open and pointing downwards.

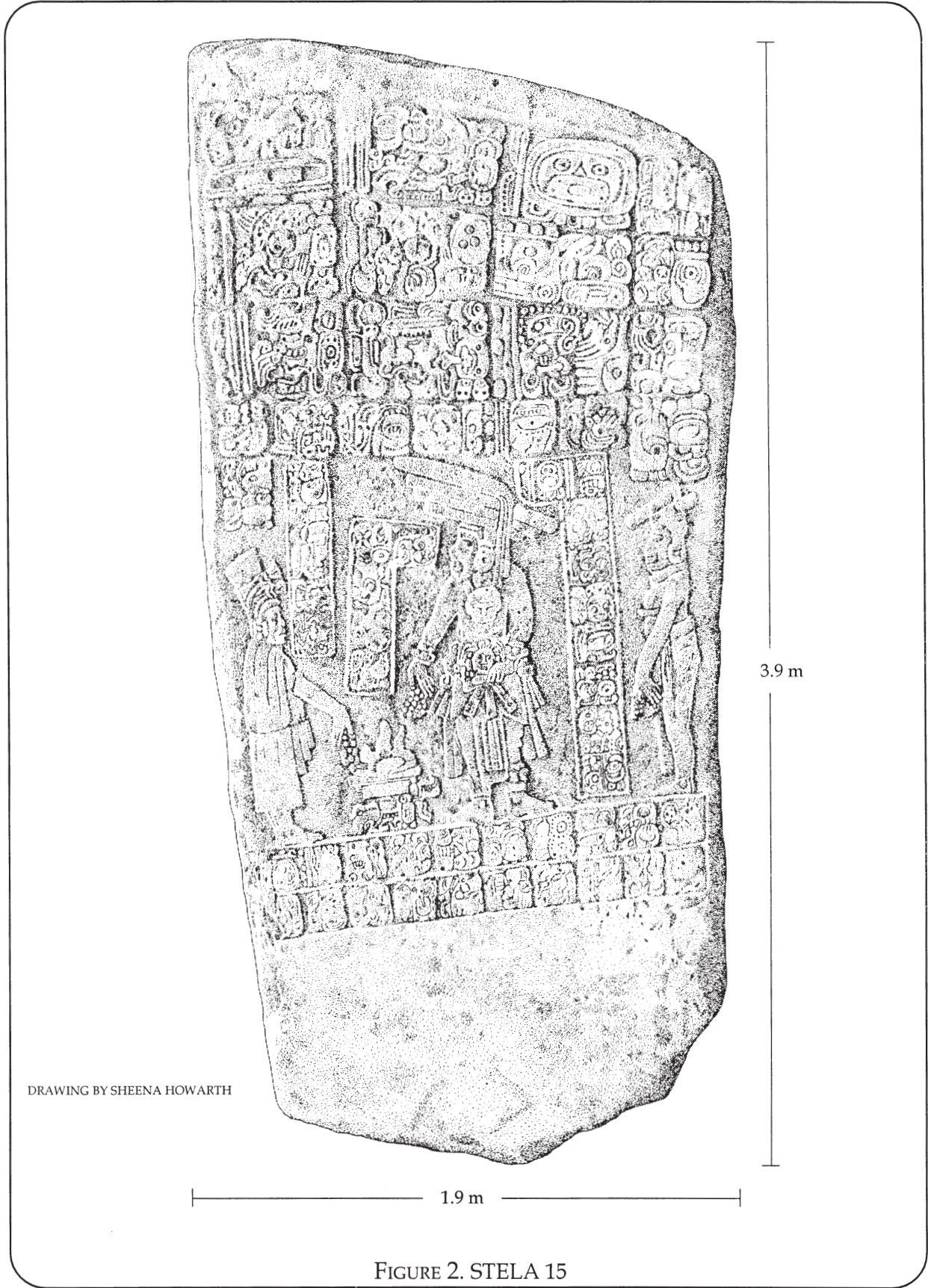
The facing seated figure wears both a *huipil* and a skirt down to the ankles; no decoration is visible on these, and the head is eroded, but the figure seems to be female from its garb and by comparison with the scenes on Stelae 2 and 15. Like the male figure, she is in profile, with only one leg and the right arm shown. She sits on a square boxlike seat, her foot well clear of the ground; the seat has a base with a molding, a top molding, and two cut-out panels in the main part (their tops squarer than the drawing shows, as can be seen on Hammond, Howarth and Wilk 1999: Figure 3). It is a higher and more elaborate version of the seat on Stela 2, which is closer to the Classic Maya "throne" known elsewhere. Her arm is extended out and down diagonally away from the body, the hand (eroded) apparently open.

Below the feet of the seated woman and in front of the toes of the standing man is shown a bowl, with heavily everted and rolled rim, standing on the ground surface. In it is material with a multi-peaked edge, which on the basis of such monuments as Yaxchilan Lintels 15 and 17 we can identify as folded sheets of bark paper. The open-handed gestures of the two figures suggest that they are allowing something to fall into the bowl: unfortunately the stela is so eroded that what this was, if it was in fact shown, cannot be ascertained.

The overall style of Stela 1 is plain, although some double-lining is used to provide interest on the *pop* panel and the monster heads, and Stela 2 – which partnered it in front of Structure 2 – has both striking similarities in composition, and major differences in detail and style.

STELA 15

This large slab, 3.9 by 1.9 m (Figure 2), was found lying beside Stela 14, in front of Structure 4 and with its butt end pointing towards the structure. It was lying on its face; the presence of carving was ascertained by excavation, and the slab was then lifted with the aid of the Royal Engineers to a vertical position for study. The slab was complete, with a plain butt 0.9 m high below the carved area; there was no indication of a socket in which the monument would have stood, although a gap in the spacing of stelae along the east side of the plaza at this point makes it entirely feasible that one would be located by excavation. The possibility that Stela 15 was never erected, although not impossible, is rendered unlikely by its early date. The carving was well preserved, and is organized into three registers, although the upper two are not clearly divided from each other or framed in the way that the later compositions are. Exposure since 1976 has resulted in some erosion of fine detail, and there is superficial damage from attempted looting (Jackson and McKillop 1985).



The upper register consists of an inscription, in glyph blocks of varying sizes: those used for the Initial Series and lunar series are ca. 0.5 by 0.3 m, with each glyph down as far as the *tzolkin* given a whole block, and below that two glyphs to a block. These nine blocks, in three columns of three (A-C) read by single columns, are flanked on the right by a fourth column (D), of four blocks half the size of those preceding it, and each with two glyphs packed in. Below A3-C3 is a horizontal line of glyphs, with two blocks below each column and one or two glyphs in each block, read *boustrophedon*, from right to left. The three outlined panels of glyphs below this clearly belong to the scene in the main register as labels for the individuals and actions there: the main inscription presumably continues in the lowest register, where ten columns and two rows of glyphs run below the feet of the figures.

The upper register begins with an Initial Series date of 9.14.10.0.0. 5 Ahau 3 Mak (October 11, A.D. 721). The remaining glyphs are discussed by Grube, MacLeod and Wanyerka (1999).

The main scene in the second register has three people, all standing, and three short glyphic panels, the longest of nine blocks and the others each of five. They hang in front of the figures, dividing a unified scene into three separate individuals performing the same action. The central figure is a man, frontal but with his head turned to his right in profile. He wears the *ex loincloth*, a cutaway hipcloth, an elaborate belt with three human heads, each with long hair and pendant plaques (one shown as carved), and a large trilobate pendant with an *Ik* sign incised on it. His wristlets and anklets consist of large beads over tight-fitting cuffs, and he wears large earflares. His headdress consists of four layers, each cantilevered out over the one below, similar to those on Copán Altar Q but larger relative to the head. Three streamers or feathers hang from the top layer down behind the ear. The ankle-bone is shown by an incised circle leaving a raised knob. The left arm hangs beside the body, the hand cocked forward at the wrist, the fingers possibly clenched. The right arm is extended out diagonally, the hand hanging open, with a cluster of discrete nodules, at least 18 in number, descending from it. The destination seems to be a bowl with everted rim set on a profile monster head with many of the traits of the elaborate head on Stela 2 (vegetal tendrils at the rear, dots below the eye, large oval earflare). The bowl contains what we see as folded paper, here with three wavy flamelike elements rising from it.

To the left of the bowl assemblage is the second figure, who stands facing the first. She is shown as a woman, wearing a skirt to mid-calf and a short cape hanging from the neck; or, alternatively, a single long garment gathered at the waist. Below it is a huipil with short sleeves, which also seems to be gathered with the same cord, since the stepped element below waist level at the front continues the line of the front of the huipil and appears to show how it drapes. Her feet are bare, the ankle-bone indicated, and a line parallel to the calf seems to indicate the left leg behind the right. Her face has a long groove from nose to chin, separate from the mouth, which may indicate old age. The ear ornament appears to be a quatrefoil; the headdress is a tall cylinder adorned with two "bow-ties" set one above the other. Only the right arm is shown, held out diagonally from the body, the hand hanging open, the palm forwards, with a cluster of ten nodules dropping from it on to the paper in the bowl. The actions of both figures are the same, using the same hand.

The third figure, standing on the far right of the scene and separated from the central man by a column of glyphs, is simply dressed in a long, *ex loincloth* hanging almost to ankle level, and possibly in a hip-cloth. He wears a bar pectoral and a collar, an earflare, and a flat headdress tilted forward that looks like a single element of the central figure's more elaborate outfit. He wears neither wristlets nor anklets. The right leg is shown behind the left by a line down the thigh and calf, and the ankle bone is indicated. The left arm hangs diagonally out

from the body, the hand open with the palm away from the viewer, and a tight cluster of ten nodules dropping from it.

The remainder of the scene is occupied by the three glyph panels; in the bottom register are ten glyph columns each with two glyphs (K1-T2); each horizontal row of glyphs is within a panel, however, with a continuous divider, as though the intention were to read them horizontally in two rows: Grube, MacLeod, and Wanyerka (1999: 23-24) note only that “most of this text is too eroded for identification and decipherment,” although they suggest a Calendar Round date of 9.15.8.3.0. 6 Ahau 13 Sak at K1-L1.

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