

FAMSI © 2004: Jorge Ramos

Research on Temple 16: An Ongoing Imagery Reconstruction of Temple 16, Copán, Honduras



Research Year: 2003

Culture: Maya

Chronology: Late Classic

Location: Honduras

Site: Copán

Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Temple 16 and Origin of the Project](#)

[Updating the Digital Database](#)

[Organization of the Sculpture at CRIA](#)

[Fragment Analysis and Rearticulation of Sculpture Mosaics](#)

[Conclusions](#)

[Pending Tasks](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[List of Figures](#)

[Sources Cited](#)

Introduction

The discovery that each building and its elaborate façade conveyed a particular visual message was a step forward in understanding the Copán Polity. This observation has also led to the development of new methodologies and approaches for the study of the Maya at Copán (B. Fash and W. Fash 1992).

It was discovered long ago that the rulers' purpose behind the erection and dedication of monumental temple platforms with their ornamental giant masks and their magnificent carved stone monoliths was the achievement of ideological and political power (Schele and Miller 1986:34; Schele and Mathews 1998:30; Webster 1988:24). It is also clear that Maya rulers used monumental art as a means to manipulate symbols to create and maintain power positions (Webster 1988:23). Political symbols and particular rituals under different cultural expressions are able to construct social meanings that will shape the reality in which people live (Geertz 1974). Regardless of the mechanisms by which members of the elite are chosen in complex societies, such people seek to justify their existence through a variety of symbolic forms (Geertz 1974:124). At Copán, Yax Pasah, the 16th ruler, constructed what is known today as Temple 16 (Structure 10L-16) at the apex of the Acropolis. While today this temple is largely gone ([Figure 1](#)), careful analysis of its components has provided extensive information on the manner in which it was used to support the rulership of its creator.

The preliminary study of some of the sculpture panels that formerly decorated the temple façades is indicative of the role ancestors and history (or social memory) played during Yax Pasaj's reign (A.D. 762-820). These were instrumental cultural means for this ruler in his efforts to maintain his power in a time of political, ideological, and economic decadence.

Submitted 09/16/2004 by:

Jorge Ramos

University of California, Riverside

jiquillite@yahoo.com



Figure 1. Temple 16, Copán, Honduras. (Photo by author.)

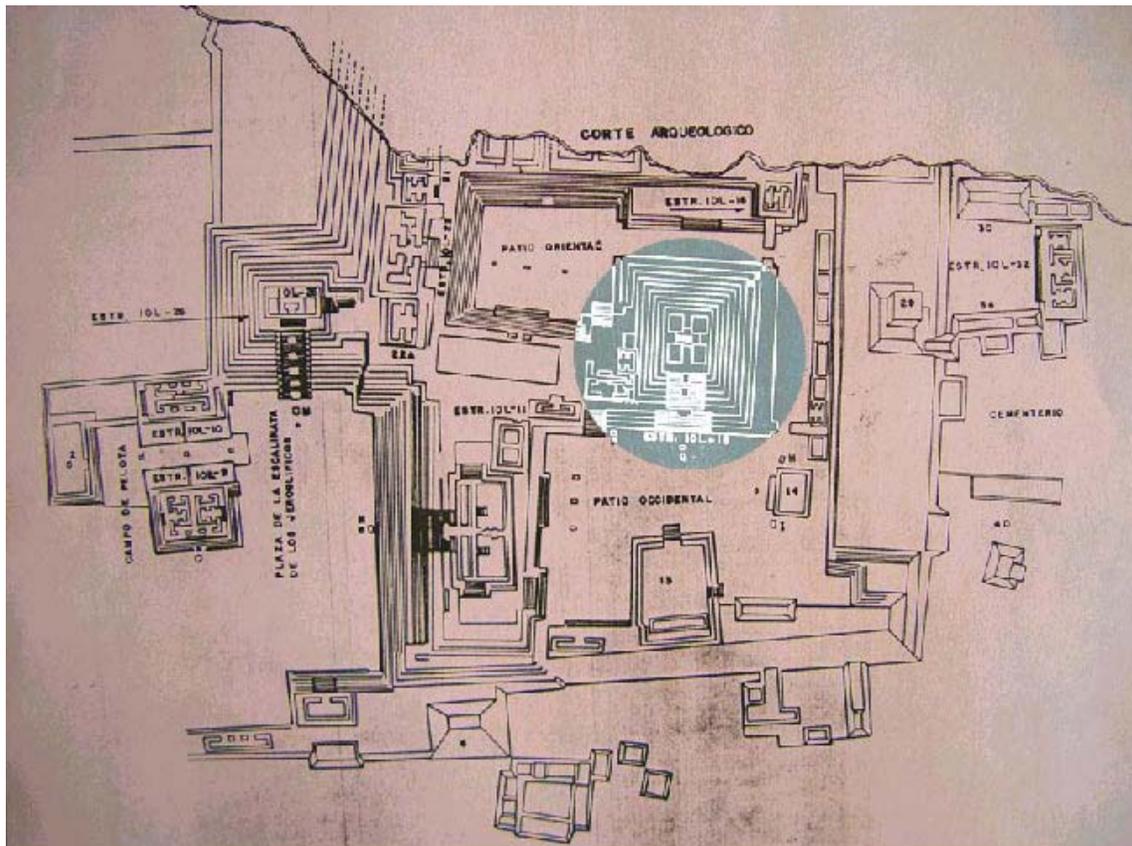


Figure 2. Acropolis and Temple 16, Copán, Honduras.

Temple 16 and Origin of the Project

The Copán core is comprised by two main elements: the Great Plaza and the Acropolis. The latter is a man-made hill, the outcome of approximately 400 years of construction of 16 kings. At its heart, it is located the imposing Structure 10L-16 (Temple 16) ([Figure 2](#)). Although Structure 10L-16 had been visited by earlier explorers by the turn of the nineteenth (Maudslay 1889-1902) and beginning of the twentieth century (Stromsvick 1935-1942), systematic scientific research in Temple 16 did not start until 1988 and was continued up to 1990 (see Agurcia *et al.* 1988-1990). Excavations at Temple 16 were part of a broader multidisciplinary program (Copán Acropolis Archaeological Project – PAAC) that included the participation of a range of qualified scholars in the fields of archaeology, epigraphy, iconography, art history, and conservation.¹ This program, aside from other specific scientific goals, sought to trace, document, and analyze the development of the Copán Acropolis as well as to search for the origins and founding of the Copán Maya polity in relation to the historical figure of Kinich Yax K'uk' Mo'. During the first two seasons, investigation focused on the last version of Temple 16, although its previous construction stages (i.e., Purpura, Rosalila, Oropendola, Celeste) were also explored during this time, and in additional seasons. Facing west, Structure 10L-16 consists of a pyramidal platform of ten terraces on top of which the Maya erected a rectangular temple (Agurcia *et al.* 1989, 1990, 1996; Stone 1990). Analysis of stratigraphy and archaeological artifacts revealed that the temple was commissioned by the 16th ruler of Copán, Yax Pasaj contemporary with Altar Q in A.D. 776 (Agurcia *et al.* 1996:200). Moreover, investigations uncovered and documented approximately 1,500 sculptural fragments, some of which (the most relevant) were analyzed contemporaneously and after the field seasons of PAAC (Stone 1990; Taube 1998; Taube 2000). These studies, besides providing the configuration of some sculpture mosaics, initiated the construction of a useful database for future research. Additional sculpture fragments, originally from Temple 16, still sit on sculpture piles around the site (i.e., Piles 16, 28).

Analysis of Temple 16's architectural sculpture was continued in 2001 by the author (Ramos 2001), under the direction of Ricardo Agurcia and Karl Taube. In 2003, a more ambitious program (Iconographic Reconstruction of Temple 16 Project – PRIT-16) was designed by the author to pursue the reconstruction of the sculptural program on the façade of the temple. This program was conducted under the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History's (IHAH) permission and with financial support from the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., (FAMSI). During the five months of work (July 15–December 15) in the Regional Center for Archaeological Research (CRIA), I was also kindly assisted by Uziel Gomez and Juan Rodriguez, as well as by Carolina Sandoval. The primary goal of the project was the decoding of the

¹ Results of PAAC research can be found in books such as *Visión del Pasado Maya: Proyecto Arqueológico Acrópolis Copán*; *Tikal y Copán: el Secreto de Dos Ciudades Mayas*; *Scribes, Warriors and Kings: The City of Copán and the Ancient Maya*; and in articles in books and journals such as *Yaxkin, Ancient Mesoamerica, Res*, etc.

visual message depicted on the building. There were other secondary objectives such as the elaboration of a digital database and analysis of sculpture pieces along with the possible rearticulation of sculpture mosaics; drawings as well as photographs of the motifs were also planned.

Updating the Digital Database

Photos

Due to the perishable qualities of paper, the last decade has witnessed the efforts in archaeology of introducing digital versions of databases. This method seeks to prevent the loss of archaeological data and the problems of long-term conservation of documentation. As part of its goals, PRIT-16 sought to update the conventional database of Temple 16's sculpture sample and its conversion to a digital format. The handling of data, here consisting of pictures, is more practical in the digital format. The first step for the PRIT-16 was the scanning of all the pictures of the sculptural fragments from the catalogue sheets.² Approximately 2,050 pictures were stored in Sony CDs with 700 MB capacity. The pictures maintained a print size of 72.25 x 54.19 (cm) with a resolution of 75 pixels. This size seemed appropriate for the sake of reducing pictures in the future without altering their image quality. With the assistance of Photoshop 5.0, all photos were enhanced in terms of light and shadow, obtaining in turn a sound image.³

Throughout this recording process careful note was kept of the work that needs to be completed relating to the graphic documentation of each of the sculpture pieces. Each catalogue sheet, in the upper right section, has a space to place a picture and a 1:10 scaled drawing of the sculpture fragment. Some of the sheets (108) did not have any form of pictographic documentation (drawing or picture); other pieces (703), had been drawn but not photographed, while yet others (21) had been photographed but not drawn. Furthermore, the quality of some pictures was poor due to preservational issues, so they were deemed absent. A table with the pertinent current information for each sculptural piece was created to identify work required for the future. Although a considerable amount of time was absorbed by this task, it led to a familiarization with the motifs of Temple 16.

Documentation of Fallout Patterns

One of the techniques used by the Study and Conservation of Mosaic Sculpture Project at Copán (PECEMCO) in the task of reconstructing sculpted stone mosaics, was the mapping of collapsed sculpture pieces in relation to the building where the pieces belonged. This technique entails the location and recording in 1:50 maps of every piece of sculpture recovered from excavations in relation to the original structure. Every piece

² Barbara Fash introduced the *Filemaker Pro* version 5 software to the sculpture electronic database.

³ Future researchers should use Photoshop when checking or making changes to these photos.

is then placed within a particular motif, which in turn is identified by a specific color. These maps provide a general picture of the building and all its motifs and the possible images that embellished it. Furthermore, they allow the reconstruction of collapse patterns through which the different mosaics can be tentatively placed in the façade from which they fell. Due to the array of elevations where the pieces were found, several layers or maps needed to be drawn in order to accomplish a thorough reading of the sculpture distribution. PRIT-16 benefited from this technique. However, I went a step further, incorporating into my work plan a software (AutoCAD 2002) that would allow me to use the same maps in a digital format. AutoCAD is a program designed for industrial purposes, but which has become a useful instrument for architects and archaeologists as well as others who work with objects in three dimensions. Reconstructions in this program can range from simple to complex designs in 3D; the program allows the use of topographic data or any kind of measurement to get accurate images.

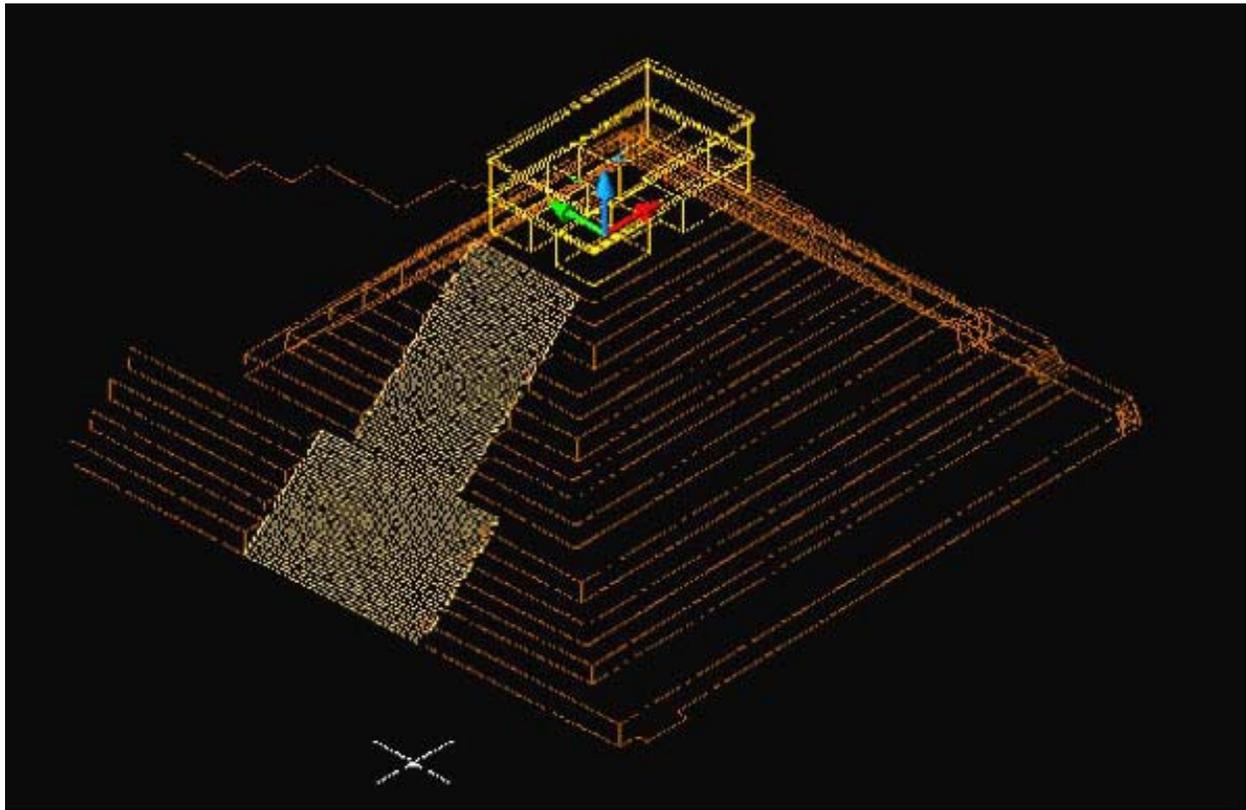


Figure 3. Temple 16 in 3D.

Using the topographic data recorded by PAAC (X, Y, and Z values), I created a line drawing with all its measurements in AutoCAD; the preliminary result has been the frame-like drawing of the entire building, which can be observed from any desired perspective ([Figure 3](#), shown above). As a second step, I introduced manually in

AutoCAD drawings of all the sculpture pieces containing an identifiable provenience (at least the X and Y values, with their CPN⁴ number). A total of 54 motifs have been documented for Structure 10L-16 up to date. With AutoCAD and its option of layer building, any desired number of motifs can be observed and manipulated at one time, according to the interest of the researcher ([Figure 4](#), shown below). This program has been of tremendous help in the study and analysis of the architectural sculpture of Temple 16; it is practical and is not limited to the space constraints presented by paper-based maps.

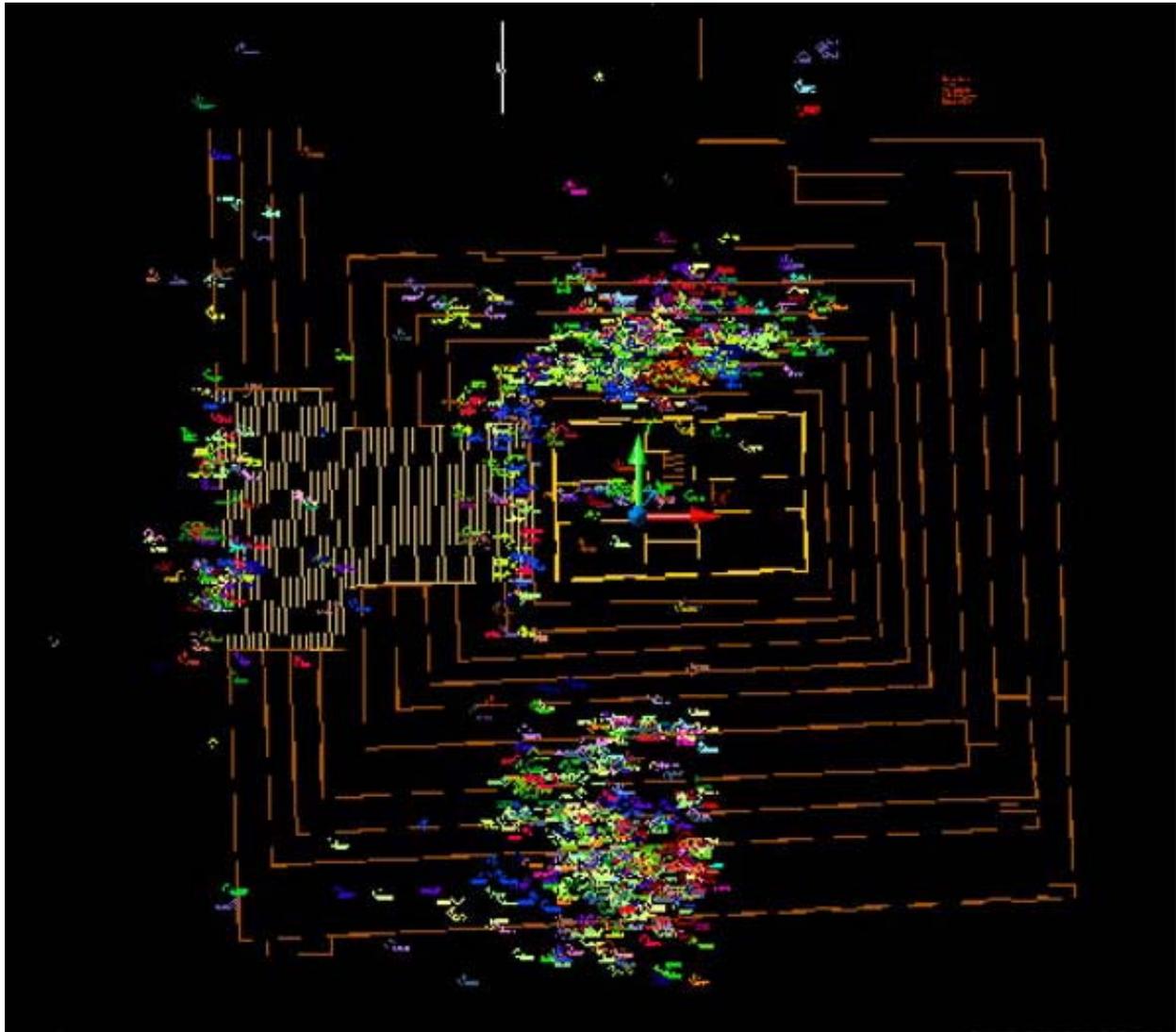


Figure 4. Sculpture fallout map.

⁴ The CPN stands for the number of every piece catalogued; with this number any fragment of sculpture can be tracked down.

Drawings

Most of the reconstructed images were recorded with professional ink drawings. Line drawings and digital photos were also made for all the motifs refitted.

Organization of the Sculpture at CRIA

PRIT-16 began the reorganization of the fragments associated with Structure 10L-16 in Bodegas III and IV. After analysis, the pieces were placed in the shelf according to the motif and mosaic to which they belong. Some mosaics utilized from one to four space units on the shelf. This grouping of pieces will allow future researchers to identify and easily take out entire motifs for comparison, recording, reanalysis, etc. Because of its new location, every piece was updated in relation to its current place in the house storage; an electronic table was constructed containing this information. This table can be consulted in the future to locate mosaic sections with specific motifs.

Fragment Analysis and Rearticulation of Sculpture Mosaics

One of the dominant figures that once embellished the Temple 16 façade is the image of an owl. Its partly closed eyes are typical of those of the *Witz* images on Temple 22 and other freestanding monuments at Copán. The rings around the eyes led Stone (1990) to relate it to the Mexican rain god Tlaloc. In fact, the trapeze and ray iconographic element that adorns its wings makes the image comparable with the Tlalocs depicted on the Nun Complex at Uxmal, Northern Yucatán (Foncerrada de Molina 1965, fig. 27; Schele and Mathews 1998:273, fig. 7.24.a). It is well known that owls are not well represented at Copán; they are even rarer in Classic Maya art. However, the protruding beak projecting downward and the double ball at its end identify this figure with the owl. Similar imagery can be found at Teotihuacán and in Late Classic Maya Teotihuacán-derived iconography (Winning 1948; Grube and Schele 1994). Although not abundant in the Temple 16 sculpture sample (some in pile 28), the paw motif was likely an iconographic attribute of this owl.

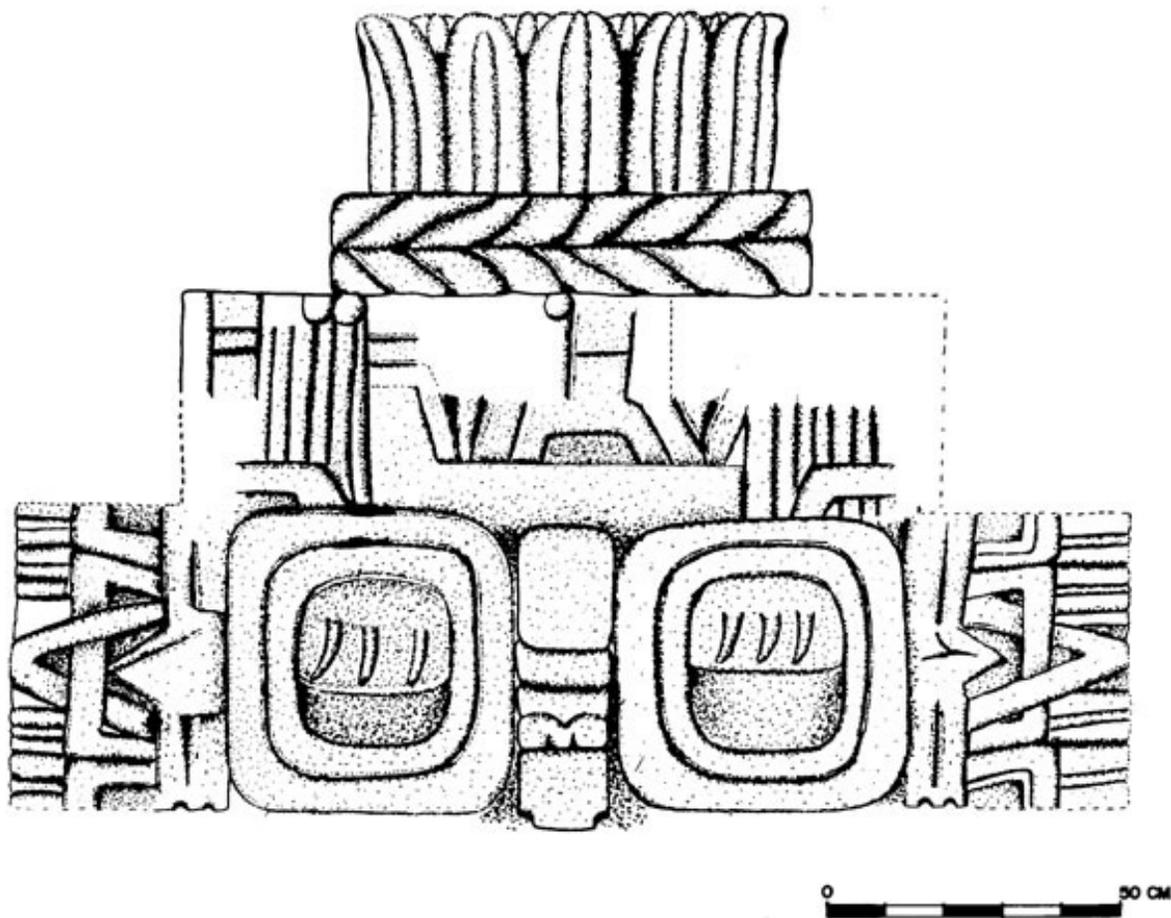


Figure 5. Owl. (Drawing by José Espinoza).

Rope is common in the motif repertoire of Temple 16. This motif was excavated from all of the investigated sides of the structure. Although still lacking rearticulation and iconographic context, it was associated with war by the PAAC team working on Structure 10L-16; a theme supported by other motifs on the building (Agurcia *et al.* 1996; Stone 1990; Stone *et al.* 1996). This season, I noticed through the fallout maps a similar distribution of ropes and plumes and their close association with owl pieces around the building. In addition, during fitting experiments, it was found that arrangements of the plume motif are comparable to that of the rope motif; this discovery, added to the similar carving style and size proportions, suggests that both the rope and plumes were part of the repeated owl images on the building. As my sculpture analysis shows, it is quite possible that the owl on Temple 16 was displayed in the same manner as the macaw on the late Classic ballcourt in the great plaza (B. Fash 1992, fig. 3); with its tail visible and projecting upwards. However, the tail of the owl on Temple 16 had its plumes tied with a rope (Figure 5). Similar examples are found in the architectural imagery at the site of Uxmal (Foncerrada de Molina 1965, fig. 4 and 36). At Teotihuacán, the owl commonly appears in the context of war (Winning 1987a:85, 88).

According to Taube (1998), the element on the tip of the beak of the owl could be a human heart. Therefore, war and sacrifice may be emphasized by this image on Temple 16 and other Maya sites (Grube and Schele 1994). The owl of 1.90 m width and 0.9 m height was depicted at the center and corners at the level of the upper section of the first floor.⁵

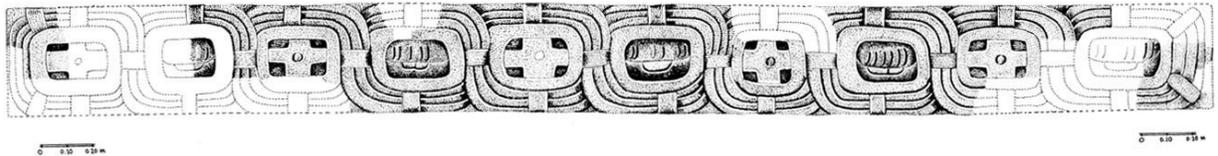


Figure 6. Intertwined Band. (Drawing by José Espinoza).

A peculiar motif uncovered on the north and south sides of Structure 10L-16 was the so-called intertwined band with alternating Kan Cross and owl eyes (Agurcia 1996:191; Stone 1990; Taube 1998). My research indicates that this motif, of only 0.45 m high, covered one-third of the length of the north and south façades (Figure 6). It probably laid upon the medium molding of the first floor in a central position. This impressive band, 5.3 m long, likely served as a resting place for the owl, which was depicted a bit higher. Lintel 3 of Temple IV at Tikal features a curving serpent on top of a temple doorway framing the figure of victorious Yik'in Chan Kawil ruler, who stands inside the temple (Harrison 1999:153, fig. 94); a bird, possibly an owl, rests on top of the serpent with extended wings. A rope with alternating discs representing Kan Cross and owl eyes (Taube 1998) seems to be a feasible interpretation for this band since there are no other iconographic elements that could support another explanation. An interlocking eye motif formerly displayed on the Late Classic Temple 21 at Copán (the "Obsidian house" –W. Fash and B. Fash 1989, fig. 8; 1992, fig. 17) depicts the same type of rope as found on Temple 16. The rope on Temple 21 is less elaborate and lacks the Kan Cross.

Aside from Copán and some Maya sites in Northern Yucatán (Uxmal), Teotihuacán is the only place where interwoven bands are portrayed. At Teotihuacán, the motif is in some cases a depiction of the plumed serpent. The body of the serpent is further covered by a range of different iconographic attributes such as cut shells⁶ (Séjourné 1966:258, fig. 146), Kan Cross⁷ (ibid, fig. 90), warrior helmets⁸ (Séjourné 1966, fig. 32), and others⁹ (Pasztor 1997, fig. 4.8). An interwoven serpent is a common theme depicted at Teotihuacán¹⁰ (Pasztor 1988: fig. III 16; 1997: fig. 11.4) and at the site of

⁵ A second floor has not been confirmed, except for the stairs on the north room of the building.

⁶ This is depicted on the Principal Patio, north side.

⁷ This is depicted on Zacuala/Atetelco Apartment Complex.

⁸ This serpent is featured on the Temple of Quezalcoatl.

⁹ This serpent is featured on the Tepantitla murals.

¹⁰ At the Atetelco and Tetitla Apartment Complexes.

Uxmal, and Chichén Itzá in Northern Yucatán. The best representative example that recalls the Temple 16 motif is the one depicted on Mural 3 inside the Room 2 of the Tepantitla complex (LaGamma 1991, fig. 6). Although there is not enough supporting evidence, aside from the interwoven rope (serpent?), to argue for a serpent motif on the Temple 16 façade, we cannot rule out this possibility. It is possible that the serpent mouth depicted on the inside of the western room of the building could be in some way related to the exterior imagery. The pervasive presence of Teotihuacán imagery on Temple 16 might support this hypothesis. The Postclassic Maya codices, the Madrid and Dresden, offer some examples of celestial serpents carrying on their bodies Kan Crosses, along with other signs (de la Garza 1984: fig. 12).

During excavations, archaeologists working at Temple 16 uncovered a variety of images then identified as Tlaloc (Agurcia *et al.* 1996; Agurcia and B. Fash 1997; Taube 1998). From around 1,310 sculpted fragments recovered during excavations, they put together a giant Tlaloc head. On the basis of archaeological evidence, Stone (1990:9) noted that at least 12 (two on each façade and one in each corner) of these representations decorated the lower portion of the temple. In addition, they uncovered a portion of at least two of the figures *in situ* on the north side of the structure, an event that led to the partial union of the images. Based on the numerous representations of this deity on the building, and the analogy of the Popol Vuh, B. Fash (1989:67) labeled Temple 16 as the "Tlaloc House".

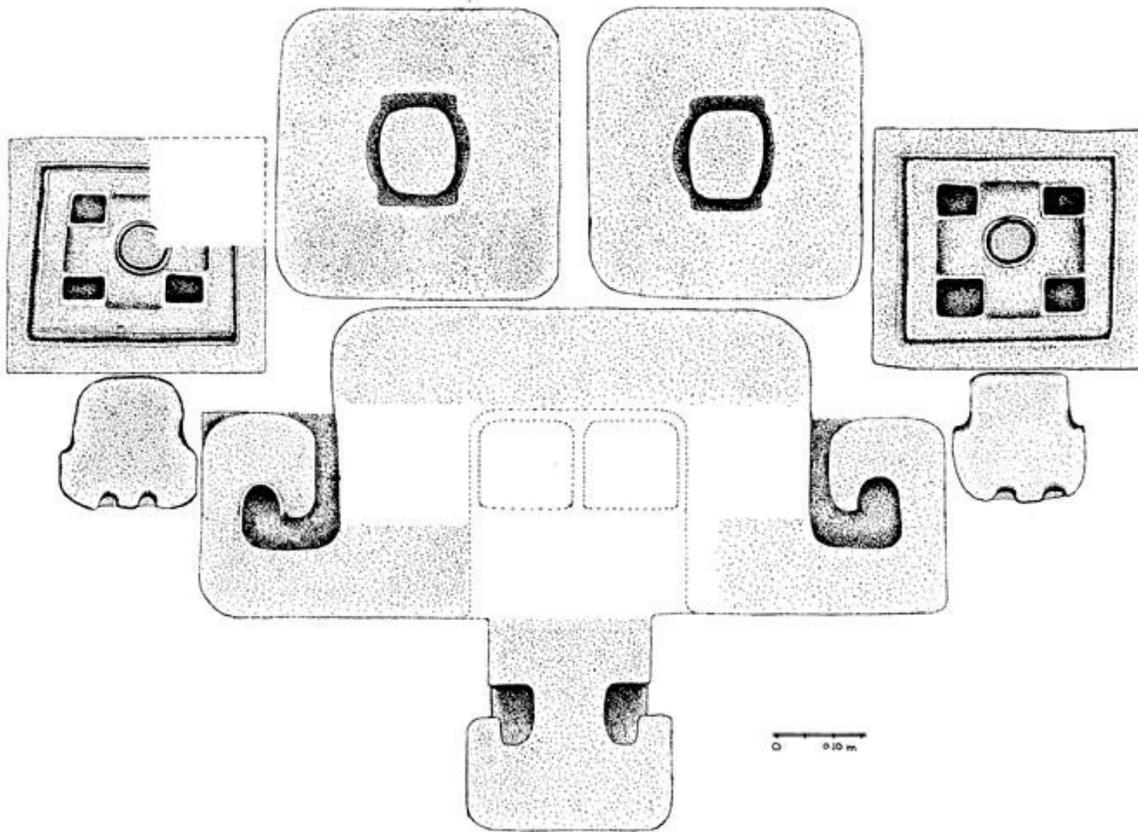


Figure 7. Tlaloc. (Drawing by José Espinoza).

In 2003, PRIT-16 sought to complement the configuration and dimensions of this Tlaloc mask. One of the features observed in the sculpture sample was the large number of the Kan Cross motifs. An even representative sample was found on all the excavated sides of the structure. Almost the same pattern was observed for the dangle motif. I took out all the pieces pertaining to one of the Tlaloc masks and rearticulated the mask adding the Kan Cross on the sides of the mask and attaching the dangle at the base of the KC; the Kan Cross and the dangle formed the ear spool of the Tlaloc (Figure 7). All the Tlaloc depictions at Temple 16 and other Late Classic monuments at Copán are portrayed associated with Kan Crosses as ear flares. The Kan Cross is an iconographic attribute of Tlaloc in Teotihuacán imagery and is even considered as its denomination glyph (Taube 1998; Winning 1987:65, 66, fig. 1a-1c, 3a-3d). Another recurrent motif found in close association with the Tlaloc images is a piece with one of its ends in a curved form; this piece is very similar to the pieces from the eye of the same Tlaloc, but it certainly is not an eye. It is likely that this motif was part of the mouth—the upper part of the rolling fangs on the sides of the mouth. I also propose that the mask, as with the other representations, was depicted with upper incisor teeth and lacking the lower maw; with these elements, the mask reaches 2.50 m in width and 1.40 m in height, an

adequate dimension to accommodate the rest of the images on the wall.

The Tlaloc is depicted in a plain style, even simpler than the Tlaloc masks represented in the pyramid of the same building and on Temple 21. The bas-relief was applied only to some portions (fangs, tongue, and ear flares). The entire figure, however, lacking the lower jaw and portrayed with death features, is more dominant than the other Tlaloc representations. In addition, the number of the masks (12) and their size emphasize the importance of Tlaloc imagery for Yax Pasah. Moreover, other small Tlaloc heads (0.25/0.30 m high) discovered by Maudslay (1889-1902) decorated the building; the tenon or projecting element in the back of the pieces indicates they were prepared to be on the façade. Teotihuacán imagery displayed on the temple symbolized the social memory or past connections with that great Mesoamerican metropolis. Stuart (2000:502-504) contends that Teotihuacán was the original home of the founder of Copán, Kinich Yax K'uk' Mo' (KYKM). In the iconography of Copán, he is always featured in Teotihuacán costume (Sharer 2003). Teotihuacán was not only the original place of KYKM, but the Tollan for many Mesoamerican culture groups including the Aztecs (Boone 2000a; W. Fash and B. Fash 2000:456). Therefore, with an explicit Teotihuacán-derived imagery, Yax Pasah recalls not only the ancestral home of the founder, but also the social memory of the Copán people.



Figure 8. Small Tlaloc. (Drawing by José Espinoza).

Another interesting motif carrying Tlaloc attributes is the so-called Tlaloc Block; this name refers to its form and style, which is found on one single block of tuff. In 1995, B. Fash and Taube, while working on the rearticulations for the exhibitions at the Sculpture Museum, found another motif that may be part of the Tlaloc Block. This season, I found a motif that is likely part of the same assemblage; it complements the lower part of the mosaic. Upon completion of its refitting process ([Figure 8](#), shown above) the figure recalls the images that decorated the Temple 10L-33 at the residential royal complex 10L-2 or *Cementerio* (Andrews V and B. Fash 1992:70, fig. 7b; Schele 1992, fig. 8d). His face has rings around the eyes with rolling fangs on the sides framing two superior incisor teeth (primary Tlaloc attributes) and the Mexican year sign crowns his head—this is a secondary Tlaloc feature (Winning 1987:77). Two tied bundles compose the lower part of the body, as in a cross-legged position. This iconographic component recalls the founder glyph on top of Altar Q and other monuments where the founder is also mentioned. As a whole (0.40 width and 0.55 m high), the image is portrayed with his arms resting at his waist, in a cross-legged position and carrying the Mexican year symbol. The entire assemblage reminds one of the old fire god representations of Teotihuacán and the ancestors on the Structure 10L-29 of the residential royal complex

at Copán (*Cementerio*); here they carry the kin, a sun symbol (Andrews V and B. Fash 1996:166). Nevertheless, this figure, as with other representations from the Structure 10L-33 at the Cementerio, becomes a variant of the founder's motif (Andrews V and B. Fash 1992:70; Schele 1992: fig. 8d). I propose the hypothesis that this image is a representation (and evocation) of the founder KYKM.

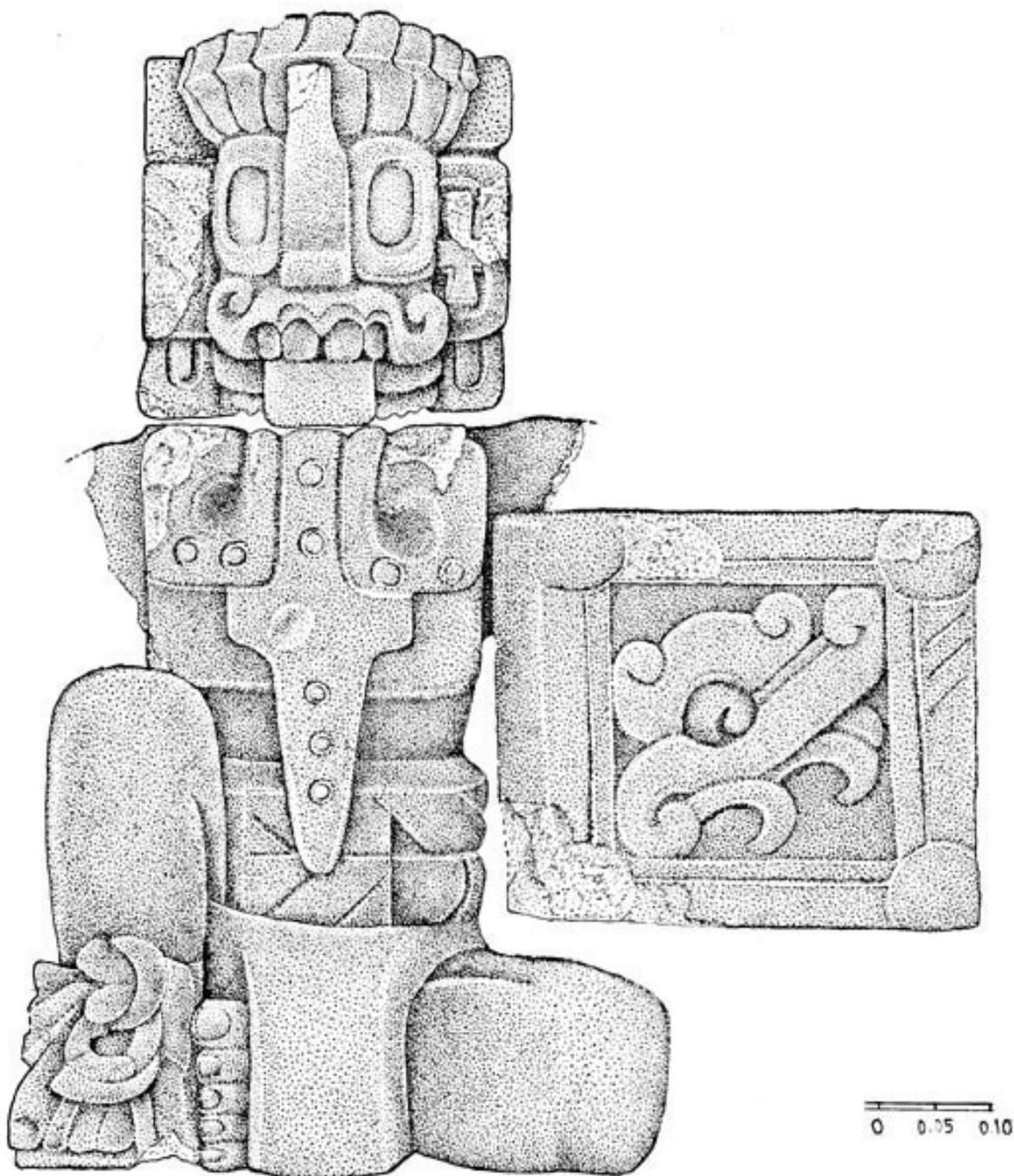


Figure 9. Kinich Yax K'uk' Mo'. (Drawing by José Espinoza).

On the upper section of the first floor, Yax Pasah portrayed clear images of the founder KYKM (Figure 9). In an almost life-size form, he is featured in warrior costume and in a seated position, almost identical in form to the figure on Altar Q. The head features (goggled eyes, lolling tongue) evidently represent the apotheosis of KYKM as the Mexican Tlaloc god. He is also portrayed with Kan Cross ear spools, a typical Tlaloc attribute and a common motif at Copán. Although a throne has not yet been recovered, the founder is portrayed with his left leg crossed perpendicular to the right leg. As with the images on Altar Q and the Hieroglyphic Stairway of Copán, he is portrayed in a warrior costume, bearing on his left forearm a rectangular shield with the image of a serpent, probably a Teotihuacán war serpent. His skull-like head and rectangular ear flares resemble other Tlaloc sculpture heads recovered from Structure 16 (Taube 2000: figures 11a-d) and other Late Classic monuments at Copán (Baudez 1994: fig. 63 and 64; Taube 2000: figures 11e-f; [Figure 6]). Like the western Stair Block 1 of Structure 16, this figure's head features a lolling tongue with perforator-like ending¹¹ with circles that could represent drops of blood; on the sides of the mouth, large fangs roll up in a spiral form. Like most of Tlaloc representations in the Maya area, the head lacks a lower jaw. KYKM position as a warrior is supported by other archaeological data. The interment of the Hunal Tomb surely contains the remains of the founder (Bell 2001; Sharer 2000:10). Bone analysis indicates a fracture on his right arm, convincing evidence for injuries suffered during battle (Buikstra *et al.* 1997; 2001). It seems likely that a Mexican year symbol—a Teotihuacán symbol associated with war in Maya art (Proskouriakoff 1973)—crowned his head. Yax Pasah appears to have repeated the theme of war depicted by his predecessor Smoke Shell on the Hieroglyphic Stairway (Stone 1996:207, 208; W. Fash 2000:145).

Yax Pasah is the only ruler that constructed overt and explicit KYKM imagery on his monuments. I suggest that the figure of the founder and his probable veneration through accompanying rituals was a political symbol used by Yax Pasah to support his rulership and to perpetuate the dynastic succession, which unfortunately did not last much longer. As recent archaeological findings in hieroglyphic decipherment show, his power derived from the paramount political figure of Copán history. Yax Pasah also sought to reinforce his authority through symbolic cosmological terms. Of the image just described above (that of the founder), there were at least four figures around the first floor of the building, two on each of the north and south façades. These portraits are displayed on the façade of the building, I suggest, to mark the four directional points within a cosmological context. The cosmogram conveyed through these images is completed with a central or fifth figure. This figure, found in the middle of the building may be KYKM—with a pectoral the same as the one he bears on Altar Q. This figure, inside a serpent mouth, stood at the center of the world, unifying not only the four quarters, but joining sky, earth, and underworld. This scheme is a repetition of the cosmogram depicted with Tlaloc images in Teotihuacán derived style in the iconography of Escuintla in the Pacific Coast of Guatemala (Hellmuth 1975). The conception of the world in a

¹¹ Karl Taube has identified a sculpture head (CPN 527) with a tongue featuring a knife, which resembles the one of the skeletal figures.

quincunx form is a pan-Mesoamerican feature (Butterworth 1970; Carlson 1981:146-152). For the Maya, the universe was divided into four parts with a center or axis (Thompson 1961:225, 228; 1970:194-196; Schele and Mathews 1998:27). This quadripartite scheme is a pattern extended to Maya houses, temples, cornfields, community settlements, and larger socio-political spaces (Ashmore 1989:272; Bassie-Sweet 1991:172; Coe 1965:107-109; Girard 1949:893, 894, 897).

Conclusions

Work at Temple 16 this season has increased our understanding of the iconographic program displayed on the building and its tentative message. Results of this season (2003) of sculpture analysis have reached my expectations. However, there is still more to be done for which funding will be sought in the near future.

According to the past decade of studies in the Copán urban center and its immediate and farther surroundings, the Copán polity began to face difficulties at the end of the Late Classic. Explanations considering possible causes and rulers' strategies seeking the continuation of the kingdom have been offered in several volumes (see W. Fash 2001). Yax Pasah, the 16th ruler, among his several architectural endeavors, commissioned the construction of Temple 16 at the very center of the acropolis around A.D. 776, in the same place where the founder's remains were buried approximately three and a half centuries before. Preliminary analysis of the Temple 16 reconstructed mosaics reveals overt imagery of the founder Kinich Yax K'uk' Mo' and Teotihuacán symbols (Tlaloc, god of rain and possibly the plumed serpent).

I suggest that the location and prominence of Temple 16, along with the imagery depicted, convey a strong statement of legitimization. The founder and his ancestral origin from the once most powerful Mesoamerican center were likely intended political symbols used by Yax Pasah in his efforts to maintain not only his position, but also to assure the dynastic succession in the traditional form of Maya kinship.

Pending Tasks

Scrolls, beak, and cheek markings are some of the motifs that refer to a *witz* image. Future reassembling of sculpture pieces will have to complement this *witz* and determine its position as well as its number on the façades. With the stone incense burner with *tun* markings found by Maudslay (1889-1902:25) and the iconographic composition of the upper stair block of the pyramid (Taube 1998), we cannot rule out the possibility that Temple 16 was considered as a sacred mountain as well.

Several blocks recovered from the south side appear to have once been part of a framing niche for some image. These pieces need to be reconstructed and more research must be conducted to determine what kind of figure was once housed in the niche. In addition, these pieces, as well as other motifs such as *ahau* heads, a god K

head, and butterfly wings, need to be reassessed in terms of association and integration into the rest of the imagery of the temple façade.

Furthermore, there are some fragments that repeat the interwoven motif, but in a very shallow relief, close to graffiti style. Only another research season will allow us to reconstruct its form. A fair number of sculptural fragments lack recording, either by drawing or photo.

There will be a need to access the archaeological material to determine the building's original height and number of original levels, to better place the different stone sculptural mosaics that formerly decorated the façades.

Acknowledgements

I am especially thankful to Ricardo Agurcia Fasquelle who has been essential to all aspects of my research on Temple 16 since its inception. Iconographic research on Temple 16 has been sponsored by the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., (FAMSI) and the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History. I am also indebted to Karl Taube for his insightful orientation in the study of the sculpture motifs of Structure 16. He kindly shared with me his field notes and drawings related to Temple 16's iconography of previous field seasons at Copán. I am also very grateful to Uziel Gomez and Carolina Sandoval for their technical assistance during this season of fieldwork at Copán, and Cameron McNeil for her comments and editing revision of this report.

List of Figures

[Figure 1.](#) Temple 16, Copán, Honduras. (Photo by author.)

[Figure 2.](#) Acropolis and Temple 16, Copán, Honduras.

[Figure 3.](#) Temple 16 in 3D.

[Figure 4.](#) Sculpture fallout map.

[Figure 5.](#) Owl. (Drawing by José Espinoza.)

[Figure 6.](#) Intertwined Band. (Drawing by José Espinoza.)

[Figure 7.](#) Tlaloc. (Drawing by José Espinoza.)

[Figure 8.](#) Small Tlaloc. (Drawing by José Espinoza.)

[Figure 9](#). Kinich Yax K'uk' Mo'. (Drawing by José Espinoza.)

Sources Cited

Agurcia F., Ricardo, Donna K. Stone, and Jorge Ramos

1996 "Tierra, Tiestos, Piedras, Estratigrafía y Escultura: Investigaciones en la Estructura 10L-16 de Copán." In *Visión del Pasado Maya: Proyecto Arqueológico Acrópolis de Copán*. Edited by W. Fash, and R. Agurcia, pp. 185-201. Asociación Copán. Copán, Honduras.

Agurcia F., Ricardo, and Barbara Fash

1997 "Evolution of Structure 10L-16, Heart of the Copán Acropolis." In *Copán: The Rise and Fall of a Classic Kingdom* (in press).

Andrews V, Wyllys and Barbara Fash

1996 "Continuidad y Cambio en un Complejo Residencial Real Maya de Copán." In *Visión del Pasado Maya: Proyecto Arqueológico Acrópolis Copán*, edited by William L. Fash, and Ricardo Agurcia, pp. 151-184. Centro Editorial, San Pedro Sula, Honduras, C.A.

Andrews V, Wyllys, and Barbara Fash

1992 "Continuity and Change in a Royal Maya Residential Complex at Copán." In *Ancient Mesoamerica* 3(1):63-88.

Ashmore, Wendy

1989 "Construction and Cosmology: Politics and Ideology in Lowland Maya Settlement Patterns." In *Word and Image in Maya Culture: Explorations in Language, Writing and Representations*, edited by William F. Hanks and Don S. Rice, pp. 272-286. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Bassie-Sweet, Karen

1991 *From the Mouth of the Dark Cave: Commemorative Sculpture of the Late Classic Maya*. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman and London.

Baudez, Claude

1994 *Maya Sculpture of Copán: The Iconography*. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman and London.

Bell, Ellen E.

- 2001 "An Early Classic Elite Maya Funerary Complex at Copán, Honduras: The Hunal and Margarita Tombs." Paper presented at the 66th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology. New Orleans, Louisiana.

Berlin, Heinrich

- 1958 "El Glifo Emblema en las Inscripciones Mayas." In *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris* 47:111-119.

Boone, Elizabeth H.

- 2000a "Venerable Place of Beginnings: The Aztec Understanding of Teotihuacán." In *Mesoamerica's Classic Heritage: From Teotihuacán to the Aztecs*, edited by David Carrasco, Lindsay Jones, and Scott Sessions, pp. 371-395. University Press of Colorado.

Buikstra, J., D. Price, J. Burton, and L. Wright

- 1997 "The Early Classic Royal Burials at Copán: A Bioarchaeological Perspective." In *Understanding Early Classic Copán*, edited by Ellen Bell, Marcello Canuto, and Robert J. Sharer, Philadelphia: University Museum Publications, University of Pennsylvania.

- 2001 "The Cost of Being King: The Royal Tombs of Copán, Honduras." Presentation at UC Riverside Anthropology Department.

Butterworth, E.A.S.

- 1975 *The Tree at the Navel of the Earth*. Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin.

Carlson, John B.

- 1981 "A Geomantic Model for the Interpretation of Mesoamerican Sites: An Essay in Cross-Cultural Comparison." In *Mesoamerican Sites and World-Views*, edited by Elizabeth P. Benson, pp. 143-211. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection Washington, D.C.

Coe, Michael D.

- 1965 "A Model of Ancient Community Structure in the Maya Lowlands." In *Southwest Journal of Anthropology* 21(2):97-114.

Fash, Barbara

- 1992 "Late Classic Architectural Sculpture Themes in Copán." In *Ancient Mesoamerica*, 3:89-104.

Fash, William L., and Barbara W. Fash

1989 "Copán Temple 20 and the House of Bats." In *Seventh Palenque Round Table*, edited by Virginia M. Fields (Merle Greene Robertson, General Editor), pp. 217- 228. The Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute, San Francisco.

2000 "Teotihuacán and the Maya: A Classic Heritage." In *Mesoamerica's Classic Heritage: Teotihuacán to the Aztecs*, edited by David Carrasco, Lindsay Jones, and Scott Sessions, pp. 433-463. University Press of Colorado.

Foncerrada de Molina, Marta

1965 *La Escultura Arquitectónica de Uxmal*. Imprenta Universitaria México.

Girard, Rafael

1949 *Los Chortis ante el Problema Maya: Historia de las Culturas Indígenas de América*, 2ª edición. Tomo III. CVLTVRA, T.G., S.A. Guatemala.

Harrison, Peter H.

1999 *The Lords of Tikal: Rulers of an Ancient Maya City*. Thames and Hudson.

Hellmuth, Nicholas

1975 *The Escuintla Hoards: Teotihuacán Art in Guatemala*. Foundation for Latin American Research Progress Reports 1 (2). Foundation for Latin American Research, Guatemala City, Guatemala.

LaGamma, Alisa

1991 "A Visual Sonata at Teotihuacán." In *Ancient Mesoamerica*, 2:275-284.

Maudslay, Alfred P.

1889- *Biología Centrali-Americana: Archaeology*. Vol. 5, R.H. Porter and Dulau,
1902 London.

Pasztory, Esther

1997 *Teotihuacán: An Experiment in Living*. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman and London.

Proskouriakoff, Tatiana

1960 "Historical Implications of a Pattern of Dates at Piedras Negras, Guatemala." In *American Antiquity*, 25:454-475.

1973 "The Hands-Grasping-Fish and Associated Glyphs on Classic Maya Monuments." In *Mesoamerican Writing Systems*, edited by Elizabeth P. Benson, pp. 165-178. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.

Sharer, Robert

2000 "Early Copán Acropolis Program: 2000 Field Season Report." Report submitted to the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia. Copán Ruinas, Honduras, CA.

Schele, Linda

1991 "The Founders of Lineages at Copán and Other Maya Sites." In *Ancient Mesoamerica* 3(1):135-144.

Schele, Linda, and Mary E. Miller

1986 *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art*. George Braziller, Inc. and Kimbell Art Museum, New York.

Schele, Linda, and Peter Mathews

1998 *Code of Kings: The Language of Seven Sacred Maya Temples and Tombs*. Scribner New York.

Séjourné, Laurette

1966 *Arquitectura y Pintura and Teotihuacán*. Siglo Veintiuno, México.

Stone, Donna

1990 "Field Sculpture Report, Operation 41." Report submitted to Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia.

Stone, Donna K., Alfonso Morales, and Richard Williamson

1996 "Sacrificios e Iconografía de Guerra en el Grupo Principal de Copán." In *Visión del Pasado Maya: Proyecto Arqueológico Acrópolis Copán*, edited by William L. Fash and Ricardo Agurcia F., pp. 203-214. Centro Editorial, San Pedro Sula, Honduras, C.A.

Stuart, David

2000 "The Arrival of Strangers: Teotihuacán and Tollan in Classic Maya History." In *Mesoamerica's Classic Heritage: Teotihuacán to the Aztecs*, edited by David Carrasco, Lindsay Jones, and Scott Sessions, pp. 465-513. University Press of Colorado.

Taube, Karl A.

1998 "Iconographic Investigations of Structure 10L-16, Copán Honduras." Report of the 1996-1997 field seasons submitted to Ricardo Agurcia F., Co-director, Proyecto Arqueológico Acrópolis de Copán.

2000 "The Stairway Sculptures of Structure 10L-16: Fire and the Evocation and Resurrection of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'." Paper presented at the 65th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, Philadelphia.

Thompson, J. Eric S.

1961 *The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization*. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman.

1970 *Maya History and Religion*. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman.

Webster, David

1988 "Copán as a Classic Maya Center." In *The Southeast Classic Maya Zone*, edited by Elizabeth H. Boone and Gordon R. Willey, pp. 5-30. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, D.C.

Winning, Hasso V.

1987 *La Iconografía de Teotihuacán: Los Dioses y los Signos*, Tomo 1. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Ciudad Universitaria, México.