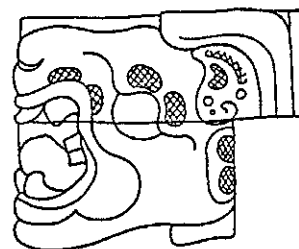


## Copán Mosaics Project

### Copan Note\* 19

November, 1986

Austin, Texas



---

# Interim Report on the Iconography of the Architectural Sculpture

by Linda Schele

Temple 22 was consolidated and reconstructed into its present form by Aubrey Trik in the 1935-1937 field seasons of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. Published in 1939, Trik's report detailed the results of his excavations and the basis of his reconstruction. He published photographs of the corner masks *in situ*, but unfortunately he did not include similar photographs of the fall found adjacent to the outer door of the temple. Nor does he describe the evidence used to place the stones he remounted in the reconstruction. Since Trik provided no published basis for his placement of sculpted stone in their present location, David Schele and I decided to accept the present reconstruction as the basis for a search for additional fragments that can be associated with the patterns set by Trik. David made 1:10 scale drawing of the sculpted pieces set in the wall as the

basis of identification of additional pieces and as a check for scale.

Searches were made of the major piles of sculptural fragments, especially Piles 10 and 22 on the south side of Temple 22, and Pile 5, a large conglomerate group located east of the Ballcourt and consisting of material collected from Temples 22, 21a, 22, and 26. Using the motifs known to belong to the door in conjunction with my knowledge of the anatomical components belonging to door monsters at other sites, I searched these piles for stone that potentially belong to the door relief. Each fragment was cataloged and I made a 1:10 scale drawing of each to use with the scale drawing made of fragments in the reconstructed area.

The first task was to determine the height of the door and the medial molding. In most Maya architectural styles the height of the exterior mold-

---

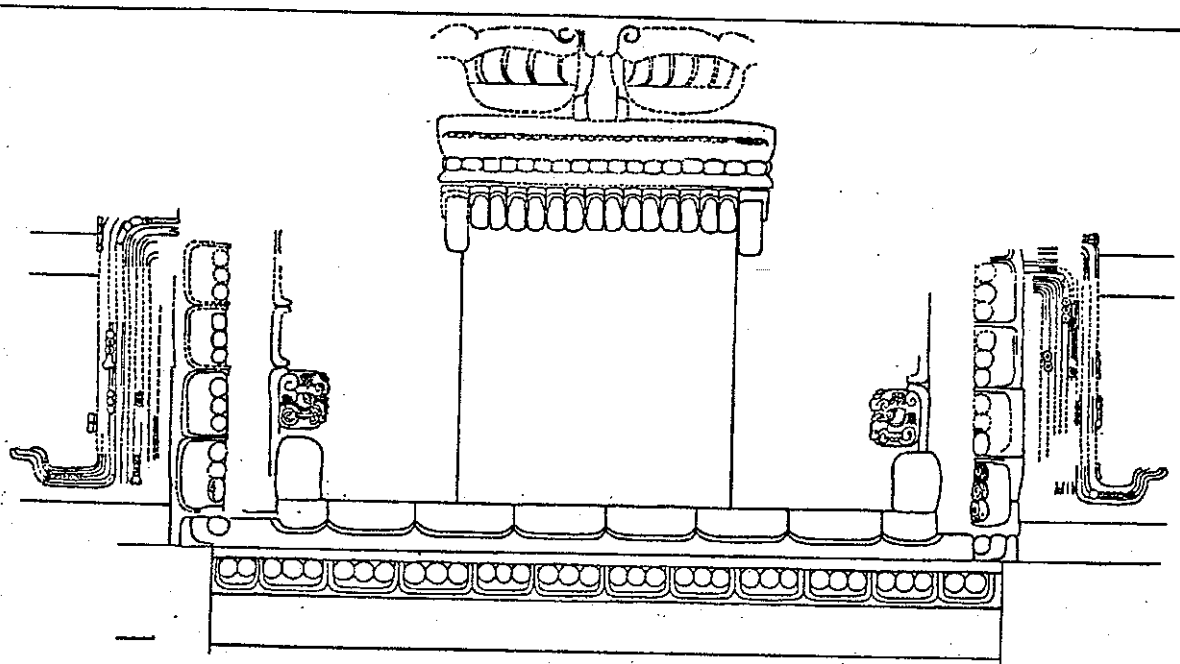
\* Copán Notes are a running series of commentaries and small reports deriving from the multidisciplinary research project designed to record and analyze the monolithic and architectural sculpture of Copán. The Copán Mosaics Project has received support from the Center for Field Research (Earthwatch; 1985, 1986, and 1987), Northern Illinois University (1985, 1986, and 1987), The National Science Foundation (1986 and 1987), The National Endowment for the Humanities (1986 and 1987), the National Geographic Society (1986 and 1987), The H. John Heinz III Charitable Foundation (1986), and the *Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia* (I.H.A.H.; 1985 and 1986) and is conducted under the authority and jurisdiction of the I.H.A.H. through a five-year agreement between the I.H.A.H. and Northern Illinois University. According to the terms of that agreement, any publication using materials (either written or in the form of line drawings or photos) derived from the Copán Mosaics Project must receive prior written consent from the Project director (William Fash) and the Director of the *Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia* (Victor Cruz Reyes).

ing corresponds to the height of the interior spring course. In the interior, this height measured from the original plaster floor surface to the spring course varies from 2.43 to 2.55 meters. Additional evidence is found in the reconstructed corner masks set in place by Trik. The earflare assemblages flanking these masks have a vegetation motif which is set vertically, rather than in the more normal horizontal orientation. This motif extends above the level of the forehead requiring a blank coursing line to be set between each pair of masks and between the second mask and the medial molding. The vertical height of the lower register of the exterior wall would vary depending upon the height of these two blank courses, but the minimum height achieved if the earflare counterweight of Mask 2 was set directly upon the vegetation motif of Mask 1 is between 2.37 and 2.45 meters. The proximity of the exterior and interior dimensions suggests that the medial molding began at about 2.45 meters above the lower molding.

Other research has located enough mask components to confirm a minimum of three corner masks were located on the southwest corner of the building, and since Maya architectural design was overwhelmingly symmetrical, especially at Copán, the demonstration of a minimum count of

three masks on one corner can be taken as evidence of four on each corner, set in pairs interrupted by the medial molding. The presence of four masks gives us a minimum height for the vertical wall area of 4.74 meters and a maximum of 4.86 meters, but the height of the medial molding is still a problem.

I was able to identify two kinds of sculpted fragments which, because of their planar designs and frequencies, may have served as the medial molding: a 20cm. high square-nosed dragon and 40 cm high cauc monster. Since the lower molding on Temple 22 is 40 cm high, the cauc monsters seem the most likely motif of the two to have been used as the molding. Trik (1939:101) reports finding enough fragments of this design on the south side of Temple 22 to reconstruct ten complete groups covering a total length of 11 meters. Each cauc masks was composed of three stones set in tandem; the central one depicted the main head with its forehead cut so that it overlapped the wall built upon the bearing surface, thus adding 15 cm to the total height of the image. The head was flanked on either side by a earflare assemblage consisting of the central disk, counterweight, and foliation scroll. The total width of each monster assemblage varied slightly, but the 11m total width closely approximates the 12 to



Partial Reconstruction of the Door of Temple 22, Copan

12.5 length of wall which is left after the area of the corner masks and door sculpture are subtracted from the total length of the facade. If we tentatively accept the cauc monsters as the molding, we can a total wall height to the superior molding of 5.4 meters, and if the superior molding retain the same 40 cm height, we have a total of 5.8 meters. Presuming that the sculptured mask around the central door did not include the upper molding, as it did not include the lower one, it would have incorporated a total height of 5.4 meters.

The height of door can also be determined from the evidence now at hand. It could have been set at the height--top or bottom--of the medial molding, or at the height of the inner door: 2.73 meters above the plastered floor. Trik's reconstruction gives us the components of the mouth design. The door threshold included the two massive inset fangs. This threshold step was carved along the front surface with the curved designs of the front molars. Labial plates, characterized by a half-oval shape with three interior bays, was carved on the front of the second step continued via sculpted fragments set on either side of the threshold to the vertical walls of the temple. The plates continued up the sides of the mouth as wall reliefs: the lowest vertical one with ahaus inside the circles. Trik reconstructed two and a half labial plates on the east side and one and a half plates on the west side of the door. Most importantly the stone which include the juncture between the second and third plates on the east side is carved so that the width between the plate edge and the outset wall narrows slightly.

In the summer of 1986, we found a number of fragments with parts of the labial plates; among them are five which have joints between plates. The two most important fragments have both joint details and part of the linear blood design<sup>1</sup> which Trik reconstructed on the wall flanking the outset area of the door. These fragments are carved to fit at the outer edge of outset wall and to include the recess back to the wall surface. Since both include plate joints, they cannot be

from the same side of the door. Using the 60 cm height of Trik's reconstructed plates, I have made a template into which these various fragments can be fitted. There are numerous possibilities, of course, but it is clear that the number of labial plates indicated by the joint fragments cannot all fit if the door beams were set at the height of the medial molding. Since the lip detail continued above the medial molding, and since we have evidence that the blood motif on the temple walls was connected directly to the outset portion of the mouth, we can assume that the medial molding terminated with the blood design.

Among the other fragments, I have found the two upper fangs and perhaps the front molars. Unfortunately, there are two kinds of front teeth, each of different size; since either size will fit the design, we require experimental fitting to determine the correct one. The two corner fragments of muzzle mounted over these fangs have also survived. Their presence requires that the upper surface of the teeth form a flat surface for seating the muzzle and this requirement gives us further information. David Schele, a professional architect, calculated the minimum thickness of the wooden beams required for the span of the door at 25cm. The larger of the two front tooth types has an overhang of approximately 25 cm, while the smaller has an overhang of 18 cm. If the smaller teeth were used over the door, the wooden beam would be visible below the teeth; for this reason we favor the large teeth as the ones from this door and have used them in the reconstruction drawing. The tenon on the large sized tooth is 20 cm deep, while the tenon on the huge fangs is 30 cm. In order to produce the plane required to seat the muzzle, we must assume that the door beams were notched to accommodate the extra deep fang tenon. However, David Schele informs me that such notching at the edges of the door would have weakened the doors beams at the most venerable point. It seems likely, therefore, that the fangs were mounted into the bearing wall and that the beams were notched to accommodate them after they had entered the wall. If this logic is the correct

1 This motif consists of parallel lines periodically interrupted by bead and bone signs which most likely mark the design as a flow of blood.

one, then the muzzle and mouth opening were wider than the door.

The small circles shown inside each labial plated continues as a solid design on the lips of the muzzle. This gives us evidence that the labial plates and circle designs entirely surrounded the great mouth opening. I have already shown that the number of labial plate junctions require that the sides of the mouth were higher than the bottom of the medial molding. We now also know that the door beams (a minimum 25 cm) were mounted by large teeth with 25 cm tenon, over which the muzzle and its labial designs was set. In Maya design cannons, the muzzle may be higher or level with the mouth corners, but never lower. The teeth and muzzle had to have been higher than the medial molding. We have no means of demonstrating beyond doubt the exact height of the door beams, but Maya architecture tends to be symmetrical. If the beams could not have been at the height of the medial molding, they very likely repeated the 2.73 meter height of the inner door.

Among the other fragments identified as probable parts of the monster door are four pieces of the left eyelid and two of the right. We also found several nostril parts near the southwest corner of the temple, although as yet we are unsure of the exact designed used to delineate the nostrils. Combining the evidence from these fragments, we can reconstruct a width of 4.10 .20 meters at the level of the medial molding. The mouth of the monster rose to a height above the medial molding with the bottom of the .25 (.10) meter door beams most likely set at 2.73 .05. The front teeth and fangs were laid above the beams with the fangs probably set outside the width of the door. The entire mask was outset from the main temple wall by approximately .30 meter, while the upper fangs and muzzle projected another .60 m. The mouth contour was marked by labial plates adjoining .40 m. wide lip. Two large cauc molars where mounted in an inner gum line. The door threshold included the lower fangs and molars and the lip and labial plates were complete on the riser of the first step (second riser).

The corners of the building were decorated by four cauc monsters divided into pairs by a medial molding which was probably also composed of cauc monsters. The predominance of this motif suggests that the door monster was also a Cauac monster--perhaps of the variety David Stuart has identified as a *witz'* or "mountain" monster<sup>2</sup>. If the door was rendered as a "witz'" monster then Temple 22 was designed to represent a sacred mountain.

We have been able to identify a number of other motifs that belong to the Temple 22 frieze--including Maudslays' famous singing girls, magnificently detailed busts which were probably portraits of the ruler who commissioned the temple, and numerous other types of motifs. The most interesting of these are huge blood scrolls carved on four sides and designed to be utilized as free-standing sculptures. There are large numbers of these fragments, but as yet we have not been able to experiment with physical fitting. The scale and free-standing design of these motifs suggest they may have been used as roofcomb sculpture.

To continue the reconstruction of the sculptural program of Temple 22, we will have to be able to use sandboxes to test various fittings after we have been able to physically isolate fragments identified with Temple 22 into a separate file. However, it is abundantly clear that we already have too many isolated fragments to achieve a viable reconstruction without additional archaeological data. Fortunately, we have the north side which has not been disturbed by previous excavation; with control over the fragments fallen from this facade and their relationship to each other we will be able to judge much more effectively how the various motifs interrelated in the overall pattern of the sculpture program.

#### References

- Trik, Aubrey  
1939 Temple XXII at Copan. *Contributions to American Anthropology and History*, No. 25. Carnegie Institution of Washington. Washington, D.C.

2 David identified the phonetic and logographic spelling of *witz'* and associated the glyphic form with the cauc monster with the stepped design in its forehead.