

Cauac Monster, Cosmic Monster with Quadripartite Badge Headdress, Crocodile Deer and God N

Copan CPN 25,
Altar of Stela M

Parque
Arqueológico
Copán



Acknowledgements

We sincerely appreciate the permission from IHAH to photograph at night. You can get better photographs at night with a portable electric generator. We will donate these photos to IHAH.

Parque Arqueológico de Copán, the Museo de Escultura de Copán and museum in Copan Ruinas, Honduras is a great place to visit; local people are hospitable and I have enjoyed visiting the park and the village museum in the town of Copan Ruinas in the late 1960's, 1970's, 1990's, and again when digital cameras became available, to return with higher resolution.

We sincerely appreciate the assistance of the park rangers and local guides. I also thank the capable team of FLAAR Mesoamerica who assisted with setting up the portable photo studio, lighting, etc.

Caption for Front Cover Photo:

A half century of experience with portable studio lighting allows us to achieve this view. Photo by Nicholas Hellmuth, digital camera a decade ago.

The present FLAAR Report is to make photos available to students, professors and to the local guides at Copan Ruinas, Honduras. These photos can help students do term papers, theses and PhD dissertations. These photos can be used by professors in their PowerPoint lectures and at conferences and symposiums. The present report mentions iconography but is not intended to discuss details of Quadripartite Badge, Cosmic Monster etc. I covered that in my recent lecture at the Museo Popol Vuh, UFM. All the iconographic aspects have been covered by the capable iconographers, epigraphers and archaeologists that we include in the introductory bibliographies at the end of this report.

There are probably thousands of photos of this 3-dimensional altar with deep-relief carving. For example, the photos by Dr. Clark Erickson are excellent. I would estimate that the various Copan projects have plenty of photos, including 3-dimensional scans. But to study details it helps to have photographs at larger size and in good resolution. In a peer-reviewed journal article the images are often never in color and tend to be very small. I recently was reading a book on Maya iconography by two capable epigraphers/iconographers and the illustrations were so tiny you could not see details whatsoever. This is the fault of the publishers, not the authors. So we prefer not to publish in commercial books; our goal is to show the Maya sculptures in good details (which starts with using good portable studio lighting and using a tripod so the camera is not vibrating). And publishing at full-page size in good resolution.



FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 1, Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 1

Month by month we will find all our photos of each individual sculpture of Copan as part of our long-range project to provide digital scans of old 35mm color slides and digital photos from the last two decades. We will publish sculpture by sculpture so that once we have everything, we can deliver the digital images to IHAH.

**Cauac Monster, Cosmic
Monster with Quadripartite
Badge Headdress,
Crocodile, Deer & God N,**

**Copan CPN 25, Altar of Stela M
Parque Arqueológico Copán**



**FLAAR Photo Archive
Publication Number 1**

**Maya Sculptures of Copan,
Honduras, Publication Number 1**



This Copan altar (CPN 25, altar of Stela M) has two frontal Cauac Monsters, one on each side of the body of a Cosmic Monster. A similar yet different monster head faces up from the top. The Cosmic Monster is a crocodile head with deer ears at the front (left in this photo) and Quadripartite Badge Headdress deity at the end (right side of this photo). The Deer hooves are clearly visible. Instead of being a Starry Eye Deer, this bicephalic creature has the starry symbols in the ear of the deer (behind the head of a crocodile). So this altar is a composite of lots of supernatural monsters.

(listed in the Bibliography at the end of this report). The Cosmic Monster is discussed in dozens of reports; its previous name was Bicephalic Monster. We can tell this is a Cosmic Monster because there is a crocodile head at the front end (at the left) and a Quadripartite Badge Headdress deity at the end (at the right). You also know it's a Cosmic Monster because of the hooves of the deer. Google "Starry Eyed Deer" and you will learn about this. The generic sky/star/Venus symbol is normally in the eye but on this altar the front head is crocodilian; only the ears and legs are of a deer. If there were deer antlers, they are broken off or hard to detect

Cauac Monsters are described and discussed separately by Dicey Taylor and Carolyn Tate



Closeup of the east side of CPN 25 so you can see the details better. Photographed at 10:13 pm on the night of August 6, 2013 by Nicholas Hellmuth assisted by helpful park rangers and local guides plus the FLAAR Mesoamerica team of photo assistants. We use soft fluorescent lighting by Westcott. We do not use flash for many reasons; with

Westcott you can see BEFORE YOU PHOTOGRAPH which parts of the details need lighting at a better angle. And I prefer soft lighting rather than hard flash (though you can put a light modifier in front of your flash). Each Westcott light is on a sturdy studio light-stand.



This is the west side. The Cauac Monster face is almost identical in all aspects with the Cauac Monster face on the east side. Difference is that here on the west side the deer hooves point forward, to the right. The head at the top of the altar shares some features yet is slightly different. The next time we are at Copan we will photograph the top. We are preparing a separate FLAAR Report on all the Cauac Monsters and Witz symbols at Copan. Plus there will be a lecture on Witz Band in CIIP23 iconography symposium this October in Barcelona, Spain.



West side of CPN 25, Altar of Copan Stela M.



East side.
It helps to see the two faces side-by-side.



The "starry" symbol is at both sides of the crocodile head. Usually the head of many Cosmic Monsters is really deer-like but due to the 3-dimensional aspect and there was no easy way to show antlers physically on the head. For some reason the ruler or patron who did this version of the Cosmic Monster wanted to show God N inside the open jaws of a

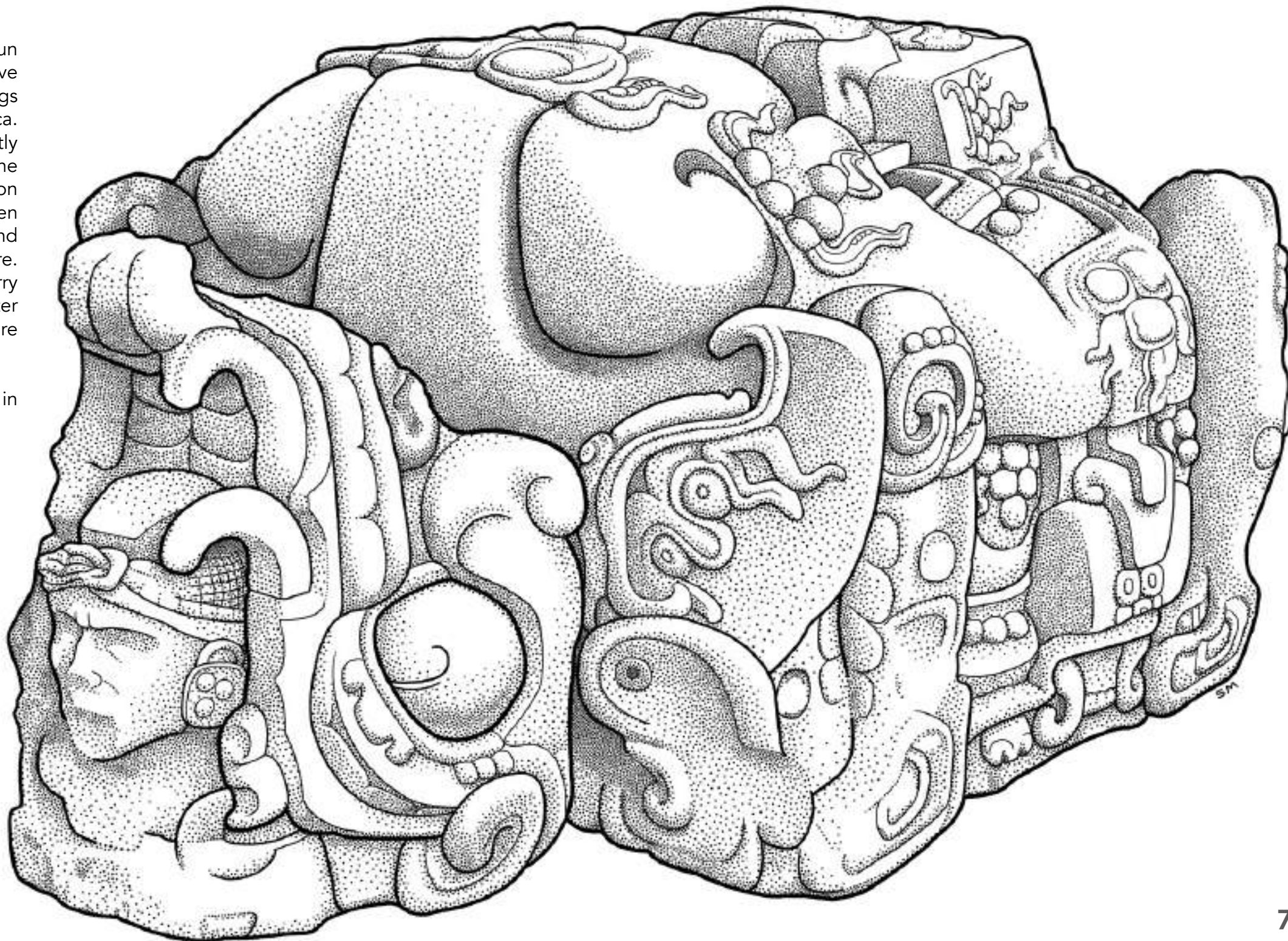
true crocodile (and so the deer and celestial aspects were in bas-relief on either side of the head). On the other side the celestial symbol is much better preserved. Line drawings by Simon Martin (2015: Fig. 39b) show excellent detail.

South (crocodile front of the Cosmic Monster). At this angle you can see the "Starry Deer" ear; not the usual Starry Eye Deer (but it's essentially the same composite monster). Curiously this crocodile does not have crossed-bands in its eyes (so lots more for a student thesis or research by iconographers). I do not notice deer antlers possibly because the top of the crocodile's head is hidden by its raised jaws. The angle of the lighting is different for each angle of the altar. 9:39 pm, Aug 6, 2013, FLAAR Photo Archive.



Since the times of Sahagun (for the Aztecs) people have been producing drawings of art of Mesoamerica. Each person has a slightly different style. I would rate the 3-dimensional style by Simon Martin as the best I have seen for a zoomorph-like 3D and deep-relief Maya sculpture. The crocodile fangs, the Starry Ear deer ear, and the monster faces on the side and top are all nicely rendered.

Drawing by Simon Martin in Martin 2015: Fig. 29,b.



Close-up view so you can see the Ek' hieroglyphic aspect in the "ear of the deer". Depending on the context, Ek' can mean generic star or Venus. So I consider it a generic symbol of a cosmic relationship.

There was no easy space for the sculptor to show the antlers of the deer since the main face was primarily focusing on the crocodilian aspects. There are various curved motifs that could be to remind us of the antlers, or they could have fallen off during the last thousand years as trees crashed down on the sculptures during rainstorms for many centuries. We are preparing an iconographic list of all Cosmic Monsters and documenting all the variants. This will be a chapter in the publication of our July 2023 lecture at the Museo Popol Vuh symposium organized by museum curator Camilo Luin. When this FLAAR presentation by Nicholas Hellmuth is posted (first week of September) you can see lots and lots of Cosmic Monsters and see more of the deer aspects.



The fanged monster head is a crocodile with no obvious deer features on the actual head. The deer features are the hooves on the sides of the main stone (visible in several other photos in this report). The “deer ear” is behind the supraorbital plate of the monster (as we show on the next page). That “deer ear” has the Ek’ hieroglyphic symbol; Ek’ is generic star, celestial, or Venus.

If you look at reports on the Cosmic Monster you can see lots of these bicephalic creatures with heads and hooves of an obvious deer. But on this Copan altar the Starry Eyed Deer aspects are not on the crocodile head itself; the celestial symbol is not in the eye, it’s just on the ear (visible in other photos). You can see the “ear of the deer” with starry symbol in Simon Martin’s excellent 3-Dimensional rendering of the deep-relief sculpture of this Copan altar (Martin 2015: Fig. 39,b).

This diagonal view allows you to see the reptilian fangs better, and to notice they are curved, so more like venomous snake fangs, since crocodile teeth are not as curved (but actual snakes have only one such thick curved fang on each side). So the priests and rulers want this mythical monster to be very terrifying.

I estimate the deity head sticking out of the open mouth of the composite reptilian head is a God N, especially if the “cord” around his forehead is the stem of a water lily. Simon Martin’s 2015 iconography report shows lots of Old Gods. Some Old Gods are God N; others are God D. God L is also elderly but easy to recognize because of his wide-sombrero, often (but not always) with a row of feathers and a bird perched above.

My 2023 *Iconografía y etnozoología de los cocodrilos de Mesoamérica y su relación con la cosmología del inframundo y el Cielo*, shows dozens of Cosmic Monsters, Bicephalic Sky Band Monsters, Starry Eyed Deer and crocodiles in Classic Maya art. So no need to repeat that here. We will post each individual chapter of this 100+ page lecture later this month(August 2023).

The lecture itself, in person, was 27 de julio del 2023. VI Seminario Internacional de Epigrafía Maya en Guatemala. Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquin.



In this front view you can see the “starry ear” on the right. The one on the left is eroded.

You can see inside the top of the crocodile’s mouth.

All these photographs of this Copan CPN 25 are by Nicholas Hellmuth in past decades. The photos in this report were processed by Jaqueline González, FLAAR Mesoamerica.





Three-quarter view. I am curious whether the raised frame at the right side of the starry symbol is intended to suggest deer antlers? The shape below I estimate is the ear of the deer aspect.



With trees falling during thunder storms over a thousand years, the face was broken in the past.



Frontal view of supernatural with base of the Quadripartite Badge Headdress.



In this view you can see the stylized seashell on the upper left side of the Quadripartite Badge Headdress. This seashell (usually a stylized Spondylus shell) is one of the four motifs that gave rise to the name 4-part Badge Headdress.



The earring pendant deserves to be identified.



We moved the lights for each photo, so the amount of light and angle of light varies since our goal was to make the bas-relief details stand out.



Here I repeat the front cover photo so I can explain what's visible. The deer hooves point to the right (since it's a Starry Ear Crocodile Deer, so has deer hooves; however the legs are actually more human proportions).

The head at the right is a crocodile with an open mouth. The head at the left is the Quadripartite Badge Headdress Deity. This supernatural is usually at the back end of a Cosmic Monster (but occasionally is at the front end). In a Sky Band version of a Cosmic

Monster the Quadripartite Badge Headdress Deity is usually upside down; but not enough space for that here.

Two frontal Monsters are shown here; they are pure frontal (so not two profile views conjoined at the middle). One frontal view of a Cauac Monster occupies this west side of the altar. The sculpture at the top is a deep relief frontal version with slightly different features, looking straight up (you need to see the 3-D rendering by Atsushi Noguchi on SketchFab.com to see this upper monster).



In this view of the east side, the deer hooves point forward to the left; the crocodile is the front head of the Cosmic Monster. The side of this altar is an almost identical Cauac Monster to the one on the west side.

The Cauac-like Monster looking up from the top of this sculpture has a longer nose and

the proportions are what you often find when a Loincloth Apron Face is on top of a Bufo toad (but no toad and no pure Loincloth Apron Face on CPN 25). To achieve this photo I am standing on a ladder so we can at least see part of the top. The rest of the top you can see in the impressive 3D model by Atsushi Noguchi on SketchFab.com <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/altar-m-copan-bbccdbbcd3324f3c856>



Closer view of the Cauac Monster facing us, and the other Monster up top, that looks straight up to the heavens.



Same side (East side) as the previous photo but now at an angle so you can see more of the Quadripartite Badge Headdress Deity at the right (the back head of this bicephalic supernatural composite creature). Photograph by Nicholas Hellmuth with Nikon D800E camera with Nikkor (Nikon) 60mm lens, 10:08 pm the night of August 6, 2013, FLAAR Photo Archive of Copan Sculpture. This photo is 16MB file size, JPG format. Obviously

reduced for a PDF otherwise would be not easy to host a PDF file with many photos of that size. One nice aspect of 16MB file size is that IHAH can print this for posters if they wish. In today's decade (2023) we photograph in RAW and high-res JPG simultaneously so both files are automatically available.



Now you can see the Quadripartite Badge Headdress Deity. The Kin (4-petaled flower) symbol in the forehead is scrunched since not enough space for the sculptor to show that aspect at full size; he wanted to show the erect shark's tooth/exaggerated stingray spine. The shell is at the left of the perforator; the hieroglyphic symbol is at the right.

What still needs to be done?

When I photographed the carved stelae of Nim Li Punit several decades ago in Belize, I would use a ladder to climb up onto the rafters of the thatch-roofed hut over the stelae (they were outside in that decade, not in a museum standing up straight). I was then able to photograph straight down. In Belize I had a tripod head custom made to screw onto the rafter so I could photograph straight down (in those decades a Hasselblad was THE best camera to get high quality results).

The top of this Copan sculpture is an amazing deep-relief rendition of a Cauac Monster. Would help hugely to be able to be above this altar, with lighting at night, to get a shot from above. Nowadays you can do this without a tripod because cameras have in-camera stabilization and in-lens stabilization. Plus today Nikon, Canon and Sony cameras can produce excellent resolution (so you do not need a heavy Hasselblad). Sony has the best in-camera stabilization but new mirrorless Nikon and new mirrorless Canon technology is catching up to Sony (who started mirrorless cameras many years ago).

Also needs better photos of the complete front, to see what deer features are present or absent. The super-helpful 3-dimensional model by Atsushi Noguchi shows the “starry eye” especially at the better-preserved right side of the face.

List of Suggested Reading on Sculptures of Copan

BAUDEZ, Claude-François

1994 Maya Sculpture of Copán: The Iconography. University of Oklahoma Press. 300 pages.

FASH, Barbara W.

2011 The Copan Sculpture Museum, Ancient Maya Artistry in Stucco and Stone. Peabody Museum Press. 216 pages.

FASH, Barbara W.

2004 Early Classic Sculptural Development at Copan. Pages 249-264 in *Understanding Early Copan*, edited by Ellen E. Bell, Marcello A. Canuto, & Robert J. Sharer. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

FASH, William L.

1991 Scribes, Warriors, and Kings: The City of Copán and the Ancient Maya. Thames and Hudson. 192 pages.

There is now a year 2001 edition.

MAUDSLAY, Alfred P.

1889-1902 Vol. 2 of *Biologia Centrali-Americana; or, Contributions to the Knowledge of the Fauna and Flora of Mexico and Central America: Archaeology*.

Many volumes; several editions. The edition we have was reprinted via Francis Robicsek, kindly provided by Fundacion la Ruta Maya.

Suggested Reading on the Cauac Monster in Classic Maya Art

HELLMUTH, Nicholas

2023 Iconography of Cauac Monsters in Classic Maya Art & Architecture. PowerPoint presentation for museums, universities and for associations of guides in Guatemala and at Maya sites in other countries of the Maya Lowlands. FLAAR (USA) and FLAAR Mesoamerica (Guatemala).

This Powerpoint format presentation with lots of photos and drawings of Cauac Monsters is focused on Cauac Monsters primarily in bas-relief sculptures. Cauac Monsters on painted vases will be a separate lecture, though in the above first "volume" we do show several key Cauac Monsters in Late Classic painted vases.

MARTIN, Simon

2015 The Old Man of the Maya Universe: A unitary Dimension to Ancient Maya Religion. Pages 186-227 in Maya Archaeology 3, edited by Charles Golden, Stephen Houston, and Joel Skidmore. Precolumbia Mesoweb Press.

TATE, Carolyn

1982 The Maya Cauac Monster's Formal Development and Dynastic Contexts. Pages 33-54, Chapter 4 in Selected Readings in Pre-Columbian Art History, Vol. 2, Edited by Alana Cordy. Peek Publications.

Excellent discussion of the iconography of the Cauac Monster.

TAYLOR, Dicey

1979 The Cauac Monster. Pages 79-90 in Proceedings, Tercera Mesa Redonda de Palenque, editor Merle Greene Robertson. Robert Louis Stevenson School.

One of the earliest complete discussions of the Cauac Monster.

Suggested Reading on the Cosmic Monster in Classic Maya Art

ARIAS Ortiz, Teri Erandeni

- 2004 El cocodrilo en la cosmovisión Maya: Un proceso de larga duración. B.A. thesis, Ethnohistory Area, Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Secretaría de Educación Pública.

COHODAS, Marvin

- 1982 The Bicephalic Monster in Classic Maya Sculpture. *Anthropologica* New Series, Vol. 24, No. 2 (1982), pp. 105-146

Bicephalic Monster was an early name for what later (and today) is designated the Quadripartite Badge (the headdress of the deity often at one end of the Cosmic Monster (that has a crocodile head at the other end; often with deer ears and deer hooves; the Starry Eyed Deer).

GREENE Robertson, Merle

- 1974 The Quadripartite Badge – A Badge of Rulership. In *Primera Mesa Redonda de Palenque* Part I, edited by Merle Green Robertson, pp. 77-93. Robert Louis Stevenson School, Pebble Beach, California.

Still uses the early name Bicephalic Monster for the Cosmic Monster and 99% of her helpful research is on the Quadripartite Badge not on the complete Cosmic Monster and especially not on crocodiles. What later was suggested to be a stingray spine Merle calls a leaf.

You can also download it on: www.precolumbia.org/pari/publications

HELLMUTH, Nicholas

- 2023 Iconografía y etnozoología de los cocodrilos de Mesoamérica y su relación con la cosmología del inframundo y el Cielo, 27 de julio del 2023. VI Seminario Internacional de Epigrafía Maya en Guatemala. Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín. Over 100 pages of full-size photos and illustrations.

INGALLS, Victoria Ann

- 2012 The Quadripartite Badge: Narratives of Power and Resurrection in Maya Iconography. MA Thesis. 125 numbered pages in 134 pages in the PDF.

The Quadripartite Badge is a crucial feature of the right end of the Cosmic Monster (though sometimes the crocodile is at the back (so at the left)). So to learn about the Cosmic Monster it helps to learn about the Quadripartite Badge, the shape of deer ears and hooves, and of course crocodiles. To learn about the diversity of aspects of the Quadripartite Badge, this thesis is essential. It shows many examples not in shorter discussions of the Cosmic Monster.

LOOPER, Matthew

- 2012 The Maya "Cosmic Monster" as a Political and Religious Symbol. Chapter 8, pages 197-215 in the Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous. Taylor & Francis Group.

The Cosmic Monster is a major chapter in the iconography of crocodiles in Classic Maya art. This chapter by Looper is very helpful. The illustrations show three good examples of this Cosmic Monster (which usually, but not always, has a crocodile at the front and a Quadripartite Badge deity headdress at the back).

MARTIN, Simon

- 2015 The Old Man of the Maya Universe: A Unitary Dimension to Ancient Maya Religion. Pages pp. 186–227 in: *Maya Archaeology 3*, edited by Charles Golden, Stephen Houston, and Joel Skidmore, Precolumbia Mesoweb Press, San Francisco.

This is one of the best discussions of God N and crocodiles, especially since this article includes LOTS of illustrations and photographs.

MILBRATH, Susan

- 1999 *Star Gods of the Maya: Astronomy in Art, Folklore, and Calendars*. University of Texas Press.

Cosmic Monster on pages 277-281.

STONE, Andrea

- 1983 *The Zoomorphs of Quirigua*. PhD dissertation, Department of Art History, University of Texas at Austin. Austin, TX.

STONE, Andrea

- 1985 Variety and Transformation in the Cosmic Monster Them at Quirigua, Guatemala. In *Fifth Palenque Round Table*, 1983, edited by V. Fields and M. G. Robertson, pp. 39-48. Palenque Round Table Series 7, Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute, San Francisco.

Several different people have posted 3D renditions of CPN 25, Altar of Stela M. I estimate they are all the work of Japanese project of Atsushi Noguchi, The Center for Next Generation Archaeological Studies, Komatsu University. This 3D rendering allows you to see the frontal face across the top of CPN 25.

Initial List of FLAAR Reports to make available FLAAR Photo Archive photos on Copan, Honduras

Our long-range goal is to find all our 35mm and medium format film (1960's-1990's) and scan at good resolution. And simultaneously to find all our digital photographs from circa 1998-2015 that we have taken at the ruins and museums of Copan, Honduras. Once we have all the digital images we will sort them into topics so we can present the images topic-by-topic. Most of these publications will be in 2024 because we are still working on flora, fauna, and biodiverse ecosystems of the Reserva de la Biosfera Maya, Peten, Guatemala. But during the rainy season, when you can't fly a drone due to weather and the roads are too deep in mud even for a 4x4 pickup truck, we are working on preparing our decades of photography at Copan Ruinas. Below we list the first eight topics (lots more to come), plus we are looking for our Nim Li Punit stelae photos, our Santa Rosa Xtampak, Campeche photos, and lots more).

Cauac Monster, Cosmic Monster with Quadripartite Badge Headdress, Crocodile, Deer and God N, Copan CPN 25, Altar of Stela M
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number **1**,
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number **1**

Scorpion, Venus, Moon Goddess with Rabbit Companion, Celestial Deities on Sky Band Motifs on Copan Structure 8N-66C Bench Front
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number **2**,
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number **2**

Copan Ceramic Incensario Lids, Local adaptation of Teotihuacan Style
Volume I, Photos in full-page Height, Horizontal Format
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number **3**,
Maya Ceramics of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number **1A**

Copan Ceramic Incensario Lids, Local adaptation of Teotihuacan Style
Volume II, Vertical Format
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number **4**,
Maya Ceramics of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number **1B**

Glyphs on front of throne Str. 9N-82
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number **5**,
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number **3**

Beards on Kings of Copan
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number **6**,
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number **4**

Paddler God Faces and Hieroglyphs at Copan
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number **7**,
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number **5**

Cauac Monsters at Copan, especially in Stacks on Corners of Palaces and Mythical Structures
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number **8**,
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number **6**