

FLAAR



FLAAR  
MESOAMÉRICA



# *Theobroma cacao* Pods

on Copan Stone  
Sculpture  
Copan Sculpture  
Museum

**Nicholas Hellmuth**

# *Theobroma cacao* Pods



## on Copan Stone Sculpture Copan Sculpture Museum

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FLAAR Reports  
FLAAR (USA) and FLAAR Mesoamerica (Guatemala)

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 27  
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 19

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**Nicholas Hellmuth**  
February 2024

# 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 have donated these photos to IHAH.

Parque Arqueológico de Copán, the Museo de Escultura de Copán and museum in the town of Copan Ruinas, Honduras are all great places 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.

We also appreciate the hospitality by the archaeologists working at Copan over decades.

The IHAH team at their headquarters initiated discussions with the FLAAR and FLAAR Mesoamerica team. We sincerely appreciate the initial reunion we had digitally with them.

The IHAH team at Copan provided cooperation and coordination. Manuel Espinoza was assigned to be with the FLAAR team each day; we sincerely appreciate his assistance.

During our early visits to photograph at Copan (1980's onwards), Oscar Cruz was the Regional Representative of IHAH. He was very helpful on each of our field trips. He is now retired, but we went to say hello to him on our February 2024 field trip.

There are probably thousands of photos of this sculpture with cacao pods. I would estimate that the various Copan projects have plenty of photos, perhaps 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.

It will help children in Honduras and neighboring countries to learn about Maya cultural heritage.

One long-range goal is to "translate" iconographic, epigraphic, and archaeological documentation into Mayan Toons books by FLAAR (USA) and FLAAR Mesoamerica (Guatemala) to help school children around the world learn about the Classic Maya of Honduras with reliable archaeological and iconographic documentation (rather than copy-and-paste from normal websites).

But the first step is to find all the photos, scan them if done before digital cameras; process them so you can see the details at high resolution, and provide references in a bibliography to help professors and university students and the general public. But it would be great if primary and secondary school children also had this information in a format appropriate for their early years.

Our material for university students and professors is on:

[www.maya-ethnobotany.org](http://www.maya-ethnobotany.org)  
[www.maya-ethnozoology.org](http://www.maya-ethnozoology.org)  
[www.maya-archaeology.org](http://www.maya-archaeology.org)

Our material for school children is [www.MayanToons.org](http://www.MayanToons.org)

[www.digital-photography.org](http://www.digital-photography.org) shows our camera equipment over the years.

# Credits

## **Photographers**

Nicholas Hellmuth  
David Arrivillaga  
Edwin Solares

## **Photography Assistants**

Norma Estefany Cho Cu  
Karla Esperanza Cho Cu  
Luis Molina

## **Illustrator**

Luis Molina

## **Organizer and Manager of the Field Trip**

Vivian Hurtado

## **Driver of the two 4WD Pickup trucks that carried the equipment**

Anibal Gabriel  
David Arrivillaga

## **We sincerely thank the IHAH team in Copán for the cooperation and coordination provided**

Ms.c Salvador Varela, regional representative of the West  
Lic. Zoila Madrid, Head of World Heritage Site  
Manuel Espinoza, Head of Security and Maintenance of the  
Mayan Site of Copán  
Hilario Vásquez, maintenance  
Rita Martines, vigilant

**The Stone Incensario with cacao pods all the way up and down and all around the sides**



Most captions call this a stone incensario (stone incense burner). 90% of incense burners elsewhere are ceramic.

Most of the cacao pods are eroded (from a thousand years of abandonment). But on the other side the pods have enough detail to document that they are of the tree *Theobroma cacao*, the chocolate tree.





To my knowledge this open-mouth, long-snouted 3-dimensional monster has never been analyzed or studied iconographically.



When we return in mid-March 2024 to accomplish additional photography, it is essential to photograph this parallel (so at the angle of the camera parallel to what looks like a water lily flower at the far right).

Photograph by Nicholas Hellmuth, Nikon D810 with portable studio lighting, 2:44pm, February 3, 2024, FLAAR Photo Archive

# References Cited and Suggested Additional Reading

## **FASH, William L.**

2001 *Scribes, Warriors and Kings, The City of Copan and the Ancient Maya*. Thames & Hudson. 192 pages.

The cacao pod sculpture is not in a photo or drawing in this book.

## **FASH, Barbara W.**

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

On page 92 is a photograph of a "companion piece" (same size, shape, and with some cacao-like pods but also has other designs on its sides). We did not notice this sculpture during February 2024. The actual cacao pod sculpture is pictured on Figure 104, page 90

## **ROBICSEK, Francis**

1972 *Copan, Home of the Mayan Gods*. The Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation. 168 pages.

So far, I have not found any photo or drawing of the cacao pod sculpture in the book by Francis Robicsek.



**The present photo album on the cacao pod stone incensario sculpture is one of a dozen works-in-progress on Copan. Following is a list of the other sculptures and architecture and artifacts that we are working on to make available as high-resolution photos albums**

*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, Vertical 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

*Full-Figure Personified Maya Hieroglyphs on front of Bench in Copan Str. 9N-82, House of the Bacabs, Sepulturas Group*  
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 5,  
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 3

*Beards on Kings and Deities at 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

*Copan Maya Ballgame Players,  
Maya Outfits: Chest Protector & Deflector and Thigh Protector  
Mexican Ballgame Outfits: Yoke, Hacha and Ballgame Handstone*  
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 9,  
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 7

*Copan Maya Ballcourt Architecture & Scarlet Macaw Logo Goal Stones  
Stepped Areas were as important as Playing Field down the Center*  
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 10,  
Maya Architecture of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 1

*Maya Ballcourt Architecture  
3-Dimensional Architectural Reconstruction Drawings by David Morgan*  
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 11,  
FLAAR Drawings Archive Segment, Publication Number 1.

*Toads, Iconography as Bufo Toad, Epigraphy as Uinal Hieroglyph of Copan, Honduras*  
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 12,  
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 8

*Bats in Sculpture and Hieroglyphic Inscriptions of Copan, Honduras*  
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 13,  
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 9

*Samples of Classic Maya Ceramics of Copan, Honduras*  
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 14,  
Maya Ceramics of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 2

*Jade and Greenstone Craftsmanship of Copan, Honduras  
Finished Jade Ornaments plus Documentation of Jade Working on Raw Stone*  
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 15  
Artifacts of Jade, Obsidian, Flint (Chert) and other Materials of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 1.

*Full-Figure Personified Maya Hieroglyphs: Bench Front of the "Harvard Bench" inside Copan Structure 9M-146 of Group 9M-18*  
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 16  
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 10

*Iconography of Incense Scattering and Maya Hieroglyphs,  
Face-Variant Long-Count Glyphs on Nim Li Punit Stela 15, Belize*  
FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 17  
Maya Sculptures of Belize, Publication Number 1

*The Story of the Blom Plate: a Masterpiece of Mayan Iconography and Primary Standard Sequence, PSS, Hieroglyphs, Chetumal, Quintana Roo, Mexico*

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 18

Iconography of Maya Ceramics of Mexico, Publication Number 1

Primary Standard Sequence, PSS, Maya Hieroglyphs in the FLAAR Photo Archive, Publication Number 1

*Tlaloc, Yearsign and other Teotihuacan Motifs in Classic Maya Art at Copan, Honduras*

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 19

Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 11

*Full-Figure Personified Hieroglyphs, Tlaloc, Yearsign, Calendrical Deities, Birds, Mammals, Copan Structure 26, (Temple 26, façade overlooking the Hieroglyphic Stairway below)*

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 20

Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 12

Full-Figure Personified Hieroglyphs on Copan Stela 63,

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 21

Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 13

*Copan Stela D, CPN 7, Full-Figure Personified Hieroglyphs*

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 22

Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 14

*Crocodiles in Stone Sculpture of Copan: Altar T, CPN 25 (Altar of Stela M), Los Sapos*

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 23

Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 15

*Loincloth Apron Face on Stelae, Bench Fronts and other Sculptures at Copan, Honduras and Profile/Half Frontal Deity Face on Altars at Copan, Honduras; Hieroglyph T1017*

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 24

Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 16

*Quadripartite Badge Headdress and Cosmic Monster at Copan, Honduras*

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 25

Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 17

*Skulls and SKULL RACK, Copan, Honduras*

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 26

Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 18

*Theobroma cacao Pods on Copan Stone Sculpture, Copan Sculpture Museum*

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 27

Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 19

*White Male Pelican eating a Fish, 3-Dimensional Copan Stone Sculpture, Copan Sculpture Museum*

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 28

Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 20