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MESOAMÉRICA

Beards on Kings and Deities at Copan

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Sculptures from Parque Arqueológico Copan, Honduras

FLAAR (USA) and FLAAR
Mesoamerica (Guatemala)

Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras,
Publication Number 4

FLAAR Photo Archive
Publication Number 6

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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 as soon as we have found more. We also photographed during the day (when no rain protection roof kept out the sun).

We sincerely appreciate the assistance of the park rangers and local guides during our many visits to Copan Ruinas.

Parque Arqueológico de Copán 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 achieve higher resolution.

I thank the capable team of FLAAR Mesoamerica who assisted with setting up the portable photo studio, lighting, etc.

The present FLAAR Report is to make photos available to IHAH, Tegucigalpa headquarters, to IHAH, Parque Arqueológico de Copán, to Asociación Copán and 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. The goal is to help the world see what is at Parque Arqueológico de Copán.

There are probably thousands of photos of these sculptures. 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. I use higher than usual page height so narrow sculptures can be shown at better resolution.

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.

Introduction to Beards of the Maya and other Civilizations of Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica

Although not all these beards are on portraits of kings, the best-known beards, on deep-relief carved stone stelae, are indeed portraits of the kings of Copan during the Late Classic. The other bearded individuals are royals or (on the Sky Band Bench) are supernatural portraits allied with the ruling class. To list all these in the title would make it too long, so I stick with *Beards on Kings and Deities at Copan*.

I am not going to delve into the question of whether these beards are makeup to show off for ceremonies; what counts is that the sculptors are showing kings and colleagues as clearly having beards.

Other Maya Kings and elite also showcase their beards:

- nearby Quirigua also show beards.
- Jaina figures from Campeche show beards

Lots of rulers of non-Maya areas also show beards, especially:

- Bilbao and surrounding sculptures of Cotzumalhuapa area (inland from Pacific Ocean coast)
- Veracruz area of Mexico (inland from Caribbean coast)

Even occasional Olmec statues show elite men with a beard (MET museum). So would be a great student thesis or PhD dissertation with a goal to find at least 100 deep-relief ceramics (incensarios, cache vessels, etc.) or painted scenes that show men or deities of Mesoamerica with beards. The goal of the present FLAAR Report is to show the beards at Copan, Honduras.



Photo by Nicholas Hellmuth circa 1999, FLAAR Photo Archive. CPN 60, you can see the beard better in the drawing by Barbara Fash in Bauzez Fig. 98.



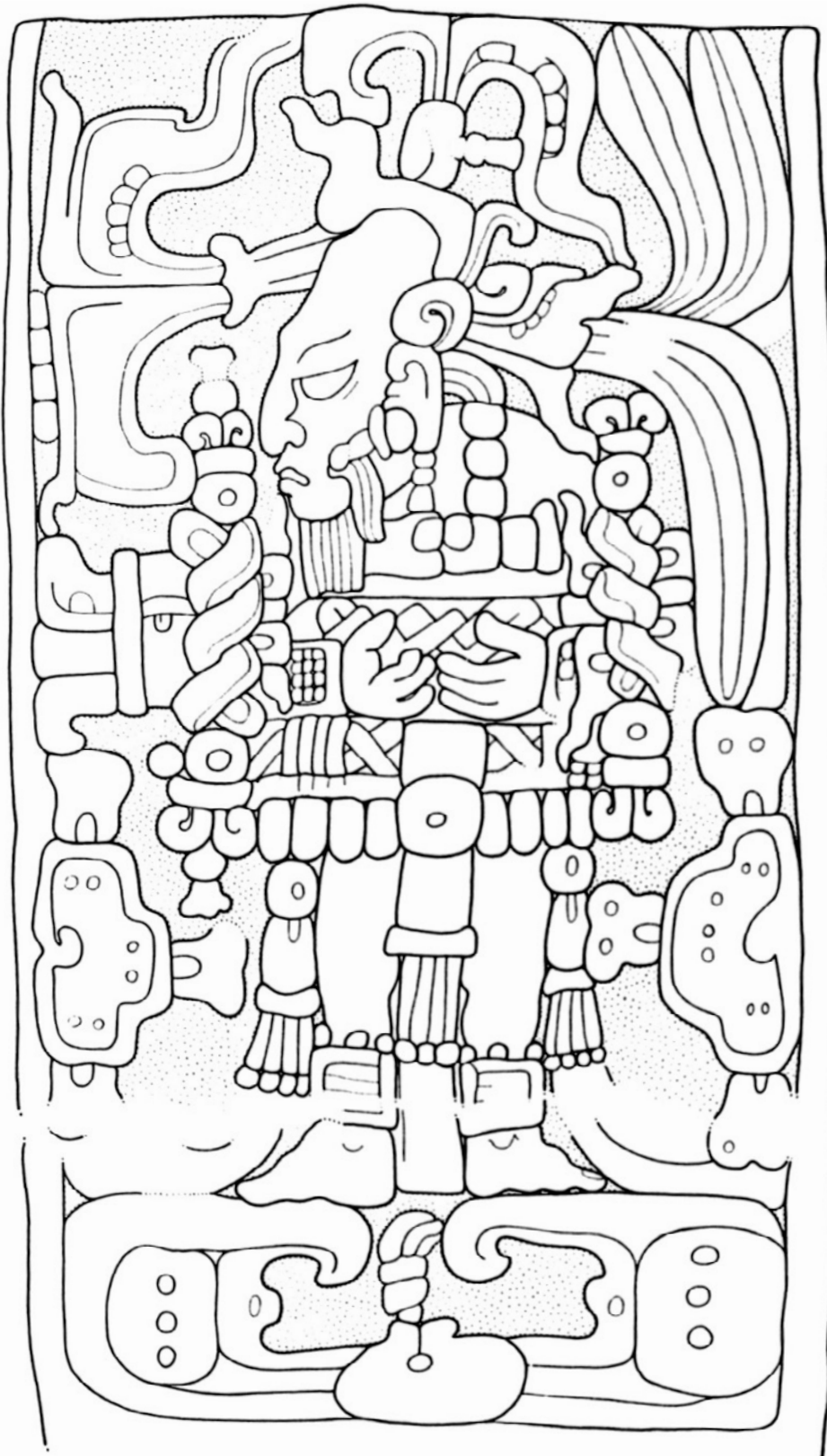
Bearded royal at Copan on carved incised bone, Copan museum. FLAAR Photo Archive.



I am curious whether these obvious whiskers have been listed in previous studies of facial hair of the Classic Maya. As we will see on the coming pages, there are at least two common positions for facial hair on the Maya kings, nobles, and portraits of deities at Copan:

- beard under the chin
- hair sticking out of the middle of the cheek

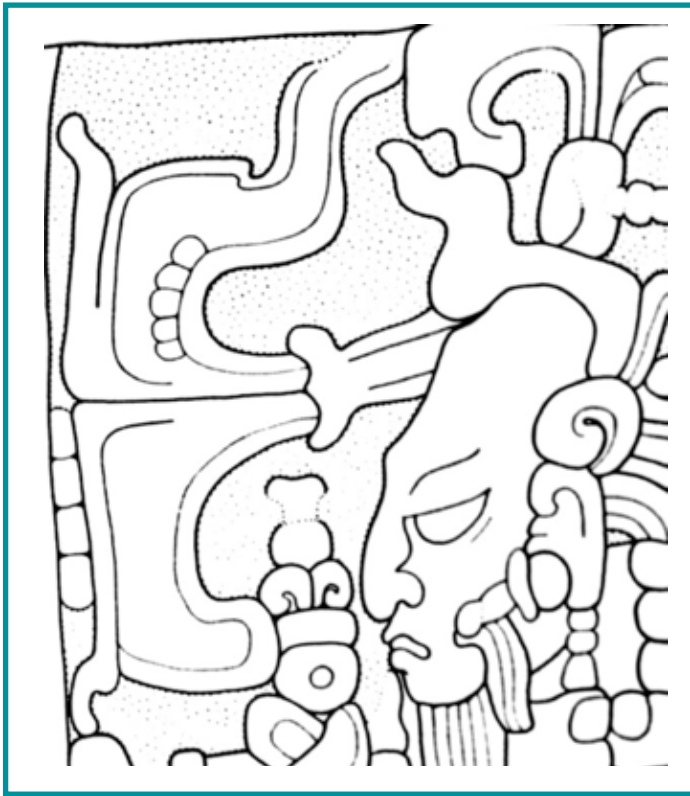
A few portraits at Copan have hair in both positions; the Old Man God head here has just parallel masses of hair coming out of his lower cheek. I am curious how many other God N's have such hair. I name him God N because he's an elderly male and has a water lily stem tied around his head with a water lily flower at top left.



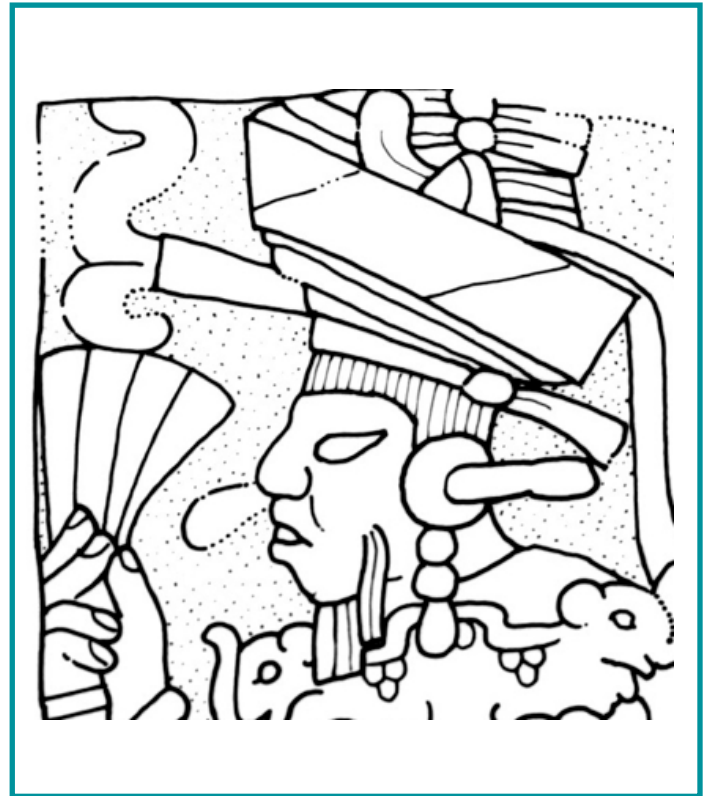
Notice that most of the beards at Copan are from under the chin, so not on the front of the chin. Plus several portraits of Copan show the beard in two segments: under the chin and a separate segment featured on the side of the face. Surely they are trying to send a message with this atypical location of facial hair.

Beard plus whiskers. Copan Stela 11, CPN 60, drawing by Linda Schele, SD-1073 in Schele database at FAMSI.

Curiously, the “moustache” is nowhere near the lips; it is a beard on the side of the face. So these Maya royals took very careful care of the size and shape of two segments of their beard. Most web sites say some Maya beards are “fake” but obviously they are beards but just not in the style of recent and current centuries.



Beard and “Moustache”



Beard and “Moustache”



Beard only from below the chin and on the side but not higher up on the cheek.



Copan Stela B, CPN 3, photo by Nicholas Hellmuth half-a-century ago.
FLAAR Photo Archive.



Copan Stela B, CPN

Different photo, different lighting (at night with portable electric generator), by Nicholas Hellmuth in the previous century. By showing several photos students and professors can select which ones they prefer to use.

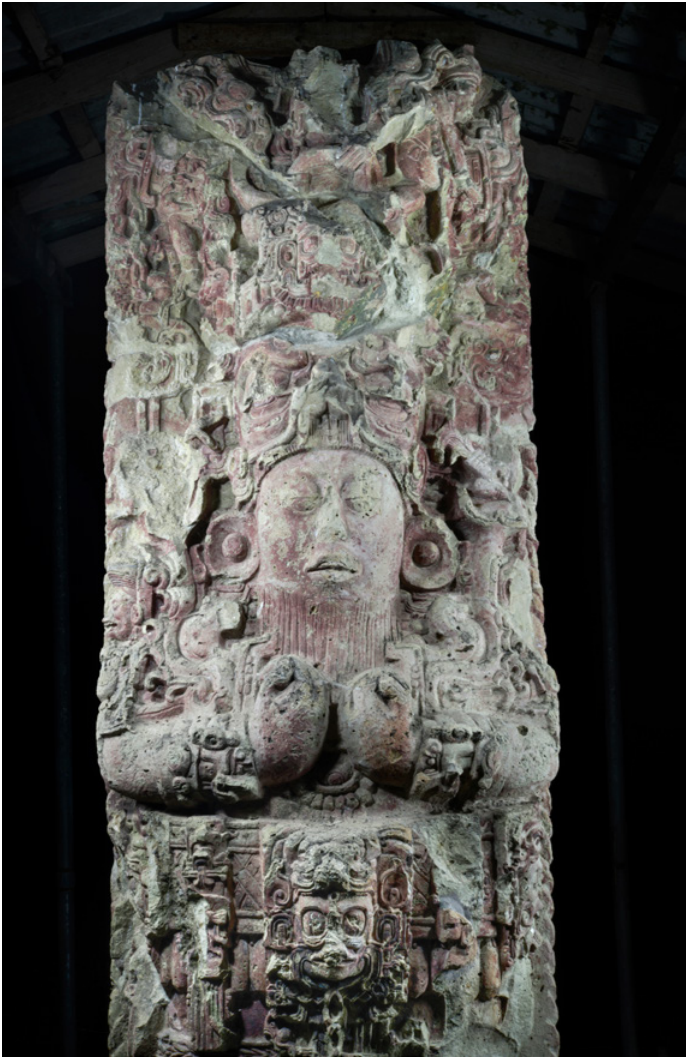








Yes, many Maya sculptures were painted red. Same with temples and palaces; many were painted red.



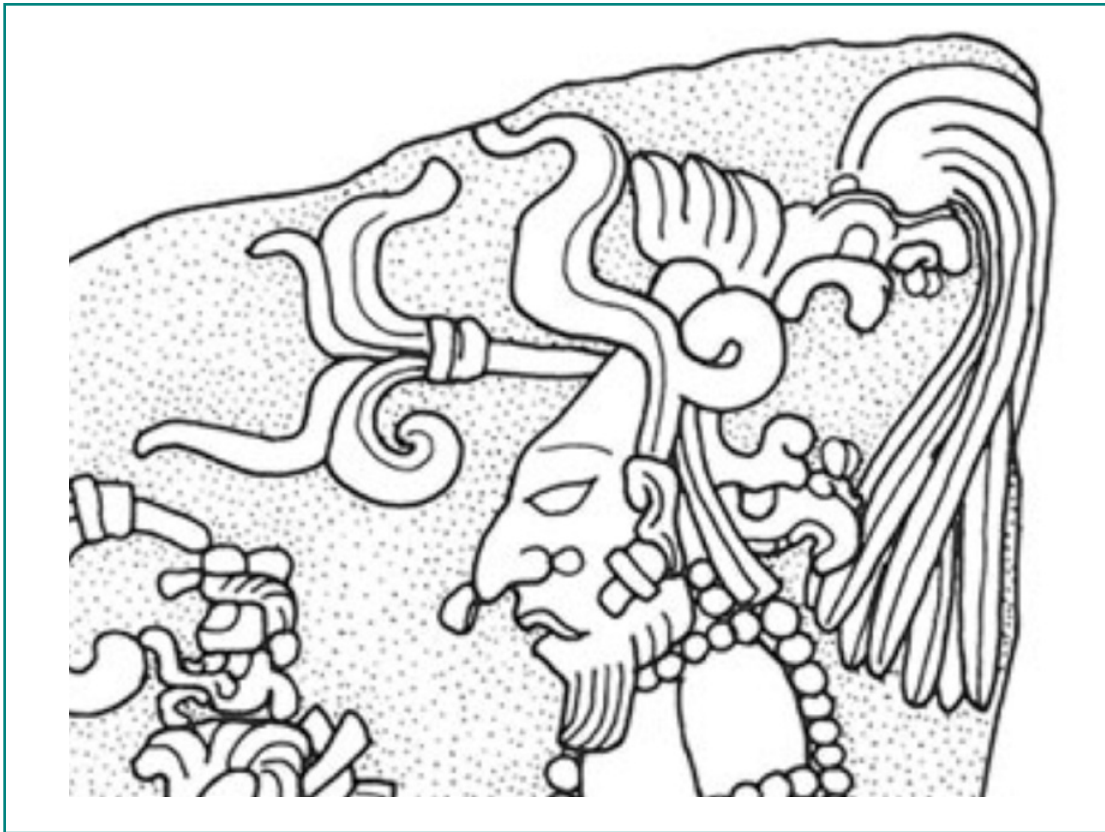
**Photographed during the day
with natural sunlight; not even
using reflectors.**

Photo by Nicholas Hellmuth, half a century ago, probably with Leica camera, 35mm Kodachrome film. FLAAR Photo Archive. This 35mm slide was scanned many decades ago and is not good quality scan. We will try to find the original slide and re-scan it.

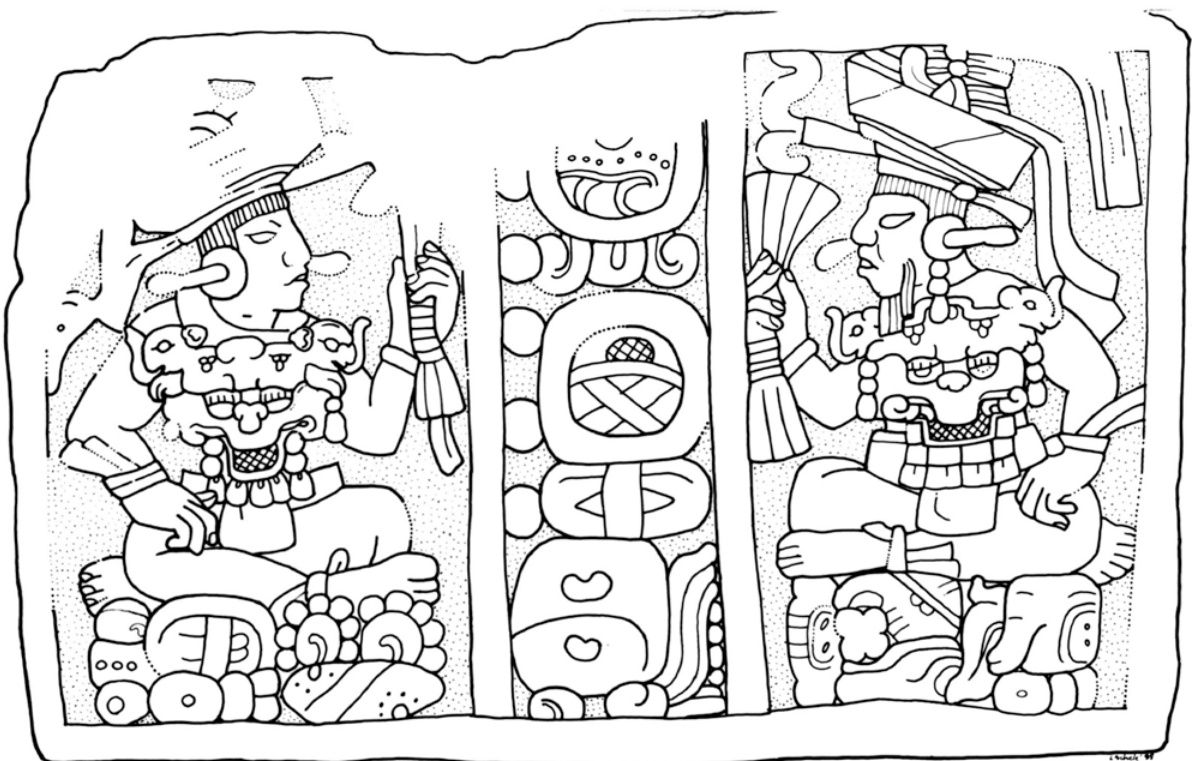
At Palenque the kings put a fake profile area on the nose between the eyes. But that aspect is rare outside Palenque.

Most Maya rulers had traditional deformed heads from childhood. All these aspects deserve more research.





Drawing by Linda Schele, SD-7620, FAMSI database.



Drawing by Barbara Fash in Schele archives, SD-1017, FAMSI database.

Tabulation of Beards at Copan and at Quirigua

Since Quirigua is not far from Copan, it is helpful to study both sites. But our first report will focus on Copan. For Quirigua the drawings by Matthew Looper are essential.

Beards at Copan that are known (there may be other sculptures that are not the main stelae; if you know of additional examples, please let us know).

| Sculpture | Helpful drawings | One published reference | Notes by Nicholas |
|---|---|--|---|
| Stela B, CPN 3 | Drawing by Anne Dowd | Baudez 1994: Figs. 5 and 6 | Stack of Cauac Monsters on each side |
| Stela C, CPN 4 | Drawing by Barbara Fash | Baudez 1994: Fig. 8. | |
| Stela D, CPN 7 | Drawing by Anne Dowd | Baudez 1994: Figs. 11, 12, 13 | Full-figure personified hieroglyphs |
| Altar L, CPN 23, south side | Drawing by Barbara Fash | L. Schele And D. Freidel, A Forest Of Kings: The Untold Story Of The Ancient Maya 1990:344, Fig. 8:26 | |
| Baudez calls the head a Bacab (1994: Fig. 83a). | Surely there must be line drawings but I have not found one yet since the head is photogenic so most books use a photo. | On front cover of Robicsek's 1972 book on Copan. 3D image in https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/head-of-pauhtun-copan- | Whisker-like parallel lines are on the left cheek (or right cheek if you are looking at the face). With the water lily flower stem tied around his forehead, this is probably a God N (often called Pauhtun). |
| Incised bone | Drawing by Linda Schele | SD 7620 | |
| Rastrojón | Photo by Ned Brown | Walsh 2013 | |

Surely there are other sculptures of Copan elite with beards.
Please let me know so I can improve this list.

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Stela A, south | Matthew Loofer | Looper 2003: Figs. 5,13 |
| Stela C, south | | Looper 2003: Fig. 5,12 |
| Stela D, south | | Looper 2003: Fig. 4,29 |
| Stela E, north | | Looper 2003: Fig. 4,37 |
| Stela E, south | | Looper 2003: Fig. 4,36 |



Plus there are bearded Maya lords pictured elsewhere, on pottery and 3-dimensional Jaina style figurines. On one of the Rio Usumacinta area throne backs, shown above, the male protagonist has a beard identical to the narrow style at Copan. BUT, he also wears a true moustache. So we have a lot to show.

Drawing by Marc Zender in Helmke 2012: Fig. 14a shows the throne from the Rio Usumacinta area (Chiapas and Peten), Late Classic (not Terminal Classic so a long time before Pabellon Modeled-Carved beard scenes of Tepeu 3). Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico.

More to come

Since I lived in Europe during the 1970's-1990's, I made at least two visits to the museum in Berlin where the sculptures from Bilbao are exhibited. Lots of bearded faces there. I brought a complete photo studio there, with helpful permission of the hospitable museum curators. The Bilbao people unlikely spoke a Mayan language.

In Guatemala in the 1970's-1980's I knew the hospitable owners of the finca/hacienda where the Bilbao sculptures were in situ. They kindly provided permission to do photograph outside and in the museum.



I have never seen a thousand year old Etruscan soldier, but I would not be surprised if they looked like this Bilbao area person.

But Etryria is near Rome so not on the Asia side.

Museo Cultural Cotzumalguapa.

Lots of bearded kings on the Mexican coast of Veracruz (Bilbao is inland from the Pacific Coast; Classic Veracruz is inland from the Caribbean coast). So we have a lot of high-resolution photographs to show in the coming year. We photographed in most of the major museums of Mexico many decades ago.



Hachas and yokes are common in Veracruz and Costa Sur of Guatemala.

Palmas are better known for late Veracruz and Chichen Itza. This individual clearly has the straight-combed Mesoamerica style beard rather than the bushy curly Santa Claus beard of today.



The Terminal Classic is when “foreigners” arrive at Ceibal (Seibal).

The Terminal Classic (Tepeu 3) is when you get lots of modeled-carved ceramics frequently featuring bearded individuals. We show one example because we are preparing separate FLAAR Reports on these dozens of molded-carved ceramics.

Digital rollout by Nicholas Hellmuth with cross-lighting in “Hellmuth style” to bring out all the detail. FLAAR Photo Archive. We show here half the circumference; the other half has one bearded “foreigner” with one Maya of traditional Classic Peten facial profile (totally different than the foreigners).

Museo Popol Vuh, UFM.

Summary and Conclusion

This FLAAR Report will help document that beards were worn by Maya kings when they wished to showcase this aspect.

This FLAAR Report documents that “the indigenous people of Mesoamerica had no beards” is only true when they did not want to show beards.

And clearly here is material for a PhD documentation on “Beards in Mesoamerica: Genetics & Cultural Preferences”.

References Cited and additional Suggested Reading

BAUDEZ, Claude-François

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

CLARKE, Louis C. G.

1915 Note on a Maya Stone Figure from Copan, Honduras. *Man*, Vol. 15 (1915), pp. 1-2. Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.

Describes an artifact from Copan showing a bearded male.

HELLMUTH, Nicholas

1978 *A General Introduction to Maya Art, Architecture, & Archaeology*. Tikal Copan, Travel Guide. A Complete Guide to all the Maya Ruins of Central America. Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research. 2nd edition. 214 pages.

This is one of the few guide books to Copan (and other sites of Mesoamerica) that features full-page photos. So even a half-century ago, that was already my preference (to show photos in a manner that you can see the details). Copan is covered on pages 128-159. Beards are shown in full-page size on pages 128 and following.

HELMKE, Christophe

2012 *Mythological Emblem Glyphs of Ancient Maya Kings*, *Contributions in New World Archaeology* 3: 91–126.

Fig. 14,a, page 115, shows the throne back in Museo Amparo that is pure Cauac Monsters; drawing by Marc Zender. This throne back is most likely from a Maya site in the Rio Usumacinta area.

ROBICSEK, Francis

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

The front cover shows the giant head at Copan; this angle suggests that a beard or fish barbels were intended on the cheek.

WALSH, Colleen

2013 Unraveling Maya mysteries. The Harvard Gazette.

Sculpture of the head of the Maya ruler 12, K'ahk' Uit' Ha' K'awuil, recovered at Rastrojón in the Copán Valley, Honduras. Photo by Ned Brown, Harvard Staff Photographer.

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2013/09/unraveling-maya-mysteries/>

Web pages that show Copan artifacts with bearded faces

<https://es-la.facebook.com/Belizeyucatecmaya/photos/a.877906005599140/1924808900908840/?type=3>

Shows a 3-dimensional ceramic of a man with a beard.

Additional Books that we recommend for Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras

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 248-264 in Understanding Early Copan, edited by Ellen E. Bell, Marcello A. Canuto & Robert J. Sherer. 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 revised edition.

Work in Progress, lots more to come in 2024

List of FLAAR Photo Archive reports that are being prepared during autumn-winter 2023 and January-February 2024

Cauac Monster, Cosmic Monster with Quadripartite Badge Headdress, Crocodile & 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

Full-Figure Personified Hieroglyphs on front of Bench in Str. 9N-82 (House of the Bacabs)
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

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 and/or Frogs in Art and Iconography 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 Hieroglyphs: Bench Front inside Copan Structure 9M-146

FLAAR Photo Archive Publication Number 16
Maya Sculptures of Copan, Honduras, Publication Number 10

Iconography of Incense Scattering and Face-Variant Long-Count Maya Hieroglyphs 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 Maya 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