
Lineage Patrons and Ancestor Worship Among the Classic Maya Nobility: The Case of Copán Structure 9N-82

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The practice of ancestor worship has been ably documented by numerous ethnographers of the twentieth-century Maya. Largely because of the ethnographic literature, ancestor worship among the Classic Maya is widely assumed, especially since the discovery of dynasties and parentage statements in the inscriptions of the Classic Period. The burial chambers and accompanying inscriptions found in the excavated pyramid temples of Tikal, Palenque, and other sites showed that kings were revered even after death. Recently, epigraphers have shown the importance of lineage perpetuation by documenting the lengths to which rulers went to ensure it by means of sacrificial rituals. Given the overwhelming evidence for ancestor worship among the ruling lineages of the Classic Maya realm, and the equally strong evidence for ancestor worship among the peasant-class twentieth-century Maya, one could predict that supernatural lineage patrons, ancestor worship, and lineage perpetuation lore would all have been pervasive among the gamut of social classes existent during the Late Classic Period. Here I present data and interpretations derived from recent excavations at Copán that support this thesis.

Copán Structure 9N-82 and Its Sculpture Facade

The present case material derives from a Late Classic residential compound of the noble class from Copán, Honduras. The site in question is the largest extended household compound in the residential sector located directly east of the Main Group or site core, known as "Las Sepulturas." Group 9N-8 has been shown to be a very elaborate and complex set of interrelated structures with its apogee in the late eighth century A.D., but with occupations stretching back to the beginning of the second millennium B.C. (Fash, Agurcia, and Abrams 1981; Webster, Fash, and Abrams 1986). Dominating the central part of the multiple-plaza Late Classic site is a raised platform, representing the accumulation of the living sites of the previous two millennia. Seated prominently

at the south end of the elevated platform is Plaza A, which contained the largest and most ornate structures during the eighth century (fig. 1). In the center of the south side of Plaza A was Structure 9N-82, a sumptuous vaulted edifice ornamented with a mosaic sculpture facade and an elaborate hieroglyphic bench in the central room (Webster 1989). This particular structure was to give the archaeologists of the Proyecto Arqueológico Copán (William Sanders, director, Phase II) a unique and explicit example of lineage patrons and ancestor worship. This paper touches upon those aspects of the investigations and archaeological remains that bear directly on these questions, referring the interested reader to other writings covering these and other facets of the Plaza A and other Group 9N-8 investigations.¹

After being cleared of vegetation, Structure 9N-82 appeared as a long, linear construction with a raised central portion. In the center of this higher central sector was a notable depression, marking the doorway and inner chamber of what turned out to be the central room of the central superstructure (9N-82 Central, or C). During the initial excavation of the building in 1980, David Webster and Elliot Abrams discovered a magnificent sculpted bench in the central room, complete with hieroglyphic inscription and complex iconography (Webster and Abrams 1983). Flanking the three-roomed central superstructure on either side were the east and west superstructures (9N-82E and 9N-82W), each with two rooms. Two other rooms were built into what had originally been a corridor between the central and west superstructures, and a tenth room was built into the east side of the substructure, directly beneath the eastern room of the east superstructure. On the front side of this array of rooms ran a continuous stairway with five risers, which united at its eastern and western extremities with the continuous frontal stairways of Structures 9N-83 and 9-81, respectively (fig. 1).

Both the superstructures and substructure of 9N-82 were built of finely dressed blocks of the local green volcanic tuff. Unfortunately, the mud mortar used in the

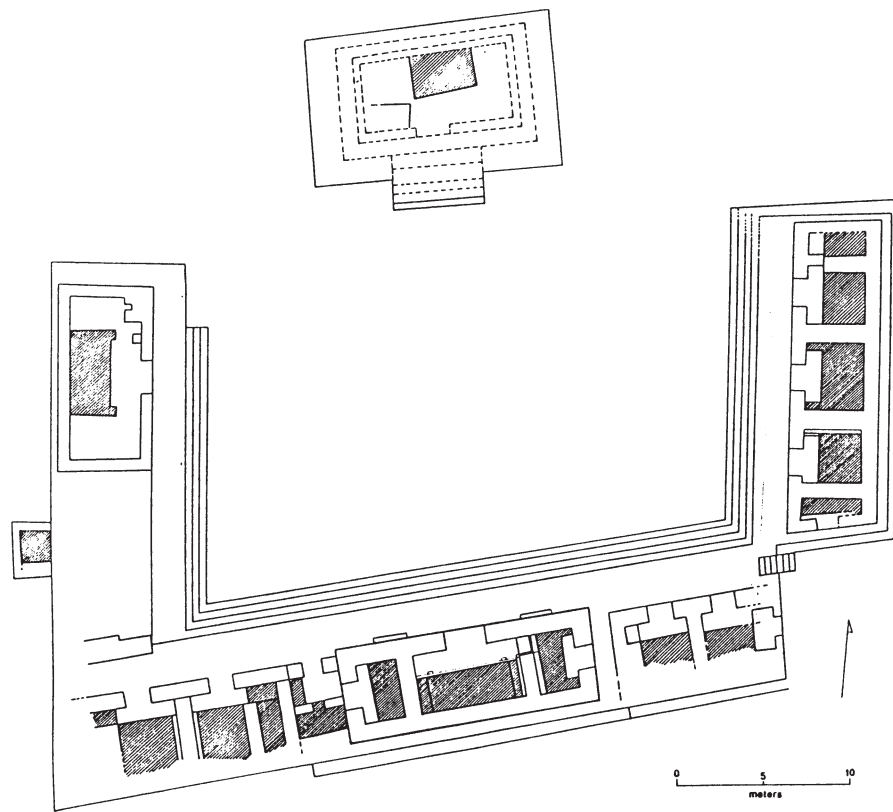


Fig. 1 Plan of Plaza A, Group 9N-8, Copán (after Larios and Fash 1985; courtesy Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia).

original construction resulted in severe collapse of the upper portions of the superstructures (including all of the vaulted roofs), with the best-preserved superstructure walls standing ca. 2 m high, and most conserved only a little over a meter in height. In addition to the innumerable dressed tuff blocks, large slabs of roof plaster were found in the clearing of the superstructures and north side of Str. 9N-82, as well as many beveled, tenoned vault stones, and tenoned sculpture fragments.

The tenoned mosaic sculpture fragments discovered by Webster and Abrams in their 1980–1981 clearing of the top and front side of the structure were concentrated on the substructure terrace, steps, and adjacent plaza area in front of the central superstructure (82C). Provenience points for all of these pieces were dutifully recorded on a map, and each fragment was given a field number and subsequently fully cataloged. This methodology had already given outstanding results in Copán when applied to the 1978–1979 excavations at Ball Court B, where it was possible to make a number of behavioral inferences based on the provenience of the sculpture fragments found at that court (Fash and Lane 1983). Once the back side of the structure was excavated by the author in consultation with Rudy Larios in 1982, we had a complete excavated sample with good provenience data from which to proceed with our reconstruction of the form and content of the 9N-82C building facades.

Methodology of Facade Reconstruction

Given the fact that the all four entablatures plus the vaults had completely collapsed, our reconstruction of the upper portions of the facade of this building was based on the position of the fallen fragments and internal evidence from the sculpture pieces themselves. The excavations of the back (south) side of the building provided us with a clear pattern of fall. There three discrete clusters of tenoned sculpture fragments were discerned during the excavation, which stand out in the composite plan map (figs. 2, 3a). Upon cleaning and cataloging of the pieces from each of these three back side sculpture clusters, it became obvious that each of these three groupings contained the same basic element. These were a long-tenoned base, carved in the form of a T23 (*na*, or “house”) sign, a human figure shown seated cross-legged and with its hands palms outward against the chest, a plumed headdress similar in style and layout to those of structure 10L-18 (fig. 3b), and iconic elements from the central headdress. A small feathered dais was also found with the east and west figures, which was in fact custom-fitted to line up with the bottom of the seated figures’ loincloths (fig. 3c).

With regard to actually fitting the pieces together, in Copán one has the advantage that the sculpture blocks were not actually carved until the constituent blocks had been assembled on the building. This happy circum-

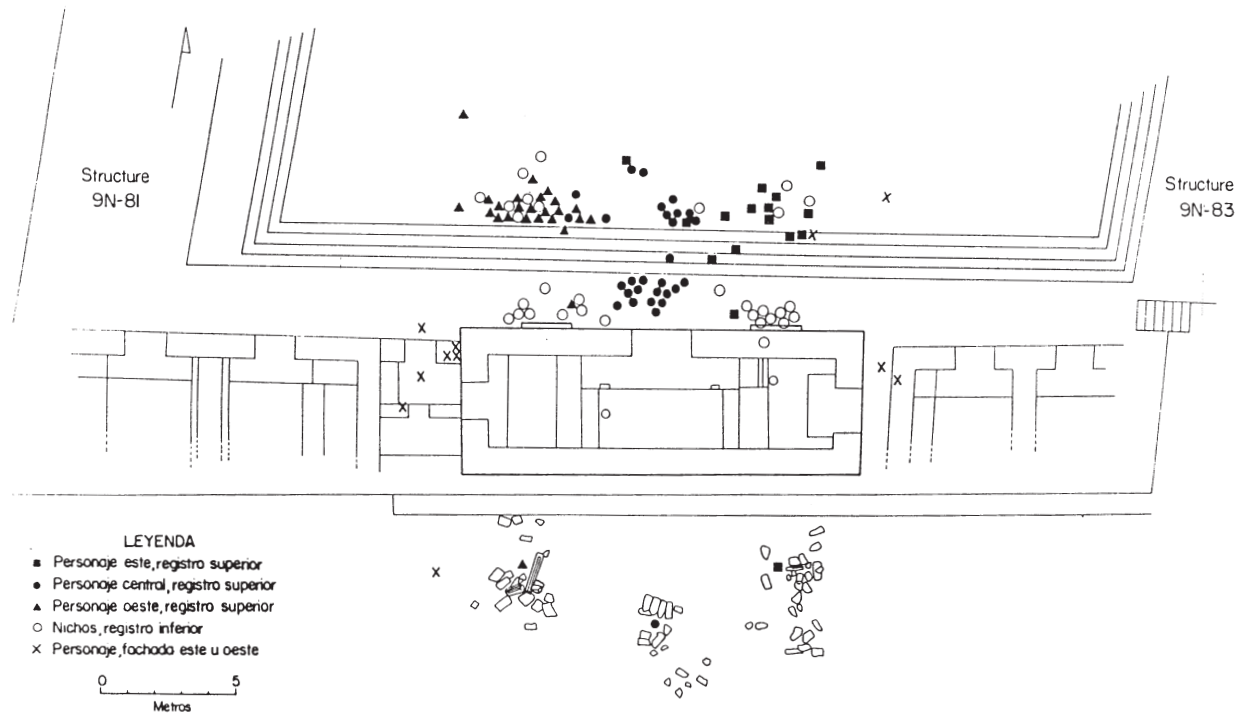


Fig. 2 Plan of Structure 9N-82, showing the distribution of the fallen fragments of tenoned mosaic facade sculpture (after Larios and Fash 1985; courtesy Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia).

stance means that lines join up on adjacent blocks sharing the same motif. For example, when joining feather pieces, one lines up the edges and the central spines from one block to another, with the direction of curvature serving as a guide for which blocks are most likely to go together. In other cases, lining up of high-relief blocks can be done by vertical courses. For example, the belt pieces always fit perfectly on top of the leg pieces, and the central headdress pieces articulated with the head of the east figure (the only one found on the back side).

The fitting and rearticulation of the blocks on both the back and front sides of the building could be done with ease, once the basic patterns had been established with the south facade east figure. In fact, it was also possible to rearticulate several fragments that had been collected from the site by local representatives of the Honduran Institute of Anthropology in previous years, simply by checking the fit of lines, height of course, and tenon length in the case of feathers, and vertical alignment and proper proportion in the case of body parts. One particularly compelling case was that of the bust fragment of the south facade east figure. During the excavations in 1982, we recovered the (viewer's) left half of the bust with the hand, and the right hand, but found no traces of the right bust. In searching through the sculpture fragments stored by the IHAH, I found a right bust fragment that was missing an arm. Upon rearticulation, not only did the bust fit perfectly with the arm recovered in the excavations, but the lines of beads

corresponded perfectly with those of the companion left half of the bust. The fittings offered here are presented with complete confidence.

It remained only to determine the height at which the three figures on the south facade were tenoned into the entablature. As luck would have it, a major section of the central portion of the south facade fell intact, as a unit, apparently at the time the vault of the central room of Str. 82C collapsed. Both courses of the medial molding were preserved intact for a distance of 4.2m (fig. 3d). Directly above the medial molding were found the still articulated pieces of the sculpted base (the T23 sign) of the central figure, indicating that the throne or seat of each figure was tenoned into the facade directly on top of the medial molding, with the figure and its headdress placed on top of the base. All of these data enabled us to produce a methodologically sound hypothetical reconstruction of the south facade (fig. 4).

For the north facade, the entablature was relatively easy to reconstruct once the south facade had been figured out. Here again there were fragments of three T23 bases, three seated figures, three sets of headdress feathers, three sets of central headdress motifs, and feathered daises for the east and west figures. The distribution map enabled us to separate the fragments of the three figures with relative ease. Of further help was the fact that the long-tenoned base fragments were very distinctive from one figure to the next. The eastern base is divided into two courses above the circular elements of the *na* sign, whereas the western base's division falls below the cir-

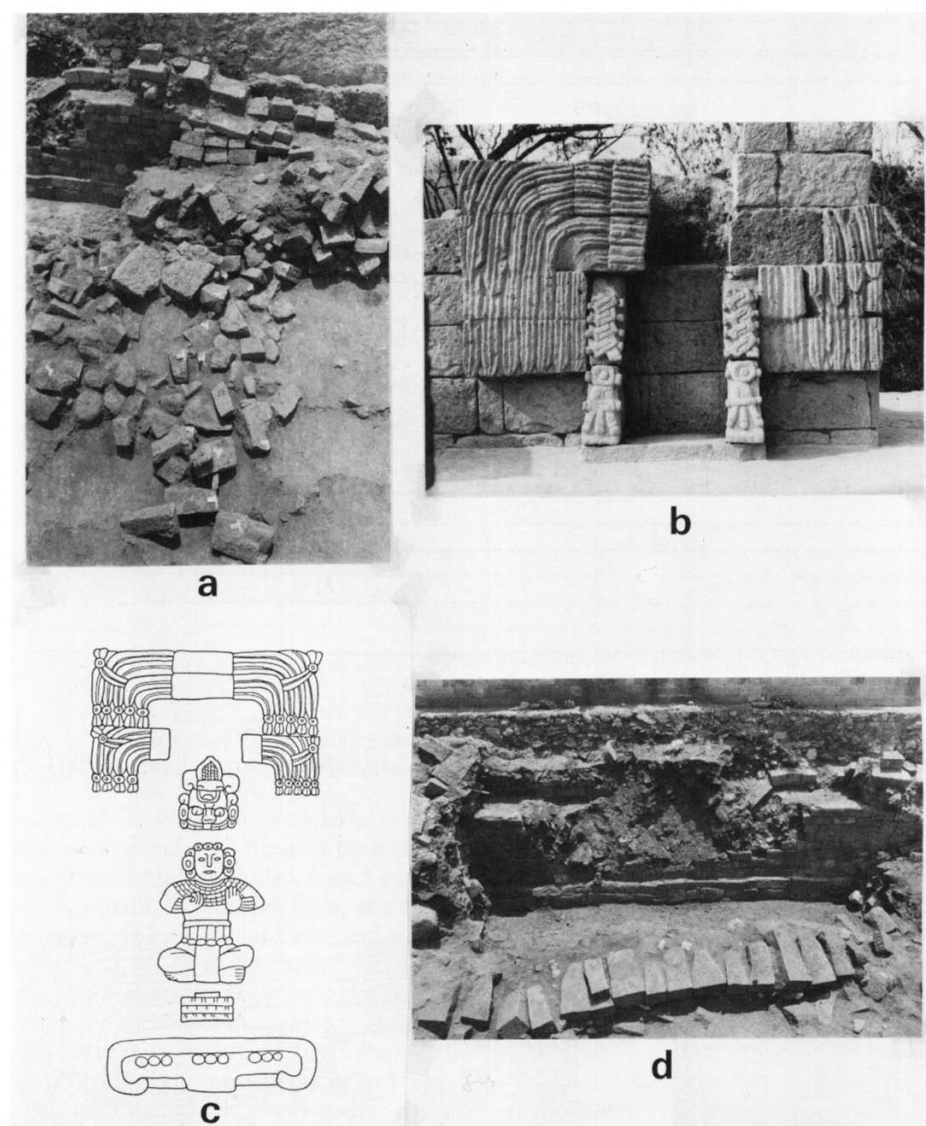


Fig. 3 (a) Photo of the fallen fragments comprising the east figure of the south facade of Structure 9N-82C-1st; (b) photo of the feathered headdress of the eastern figure in the interior chamber of Temple 18, Copán; (c) drawing traced from a photograph of a composite reconstruction of the fragments of the east and west figures of the north and south facades of Structure 9N-82C-1st; (d) photo of the medial molding as it fell in back of the central part of the south side of Structure 9N-82C-1st (photos after Fash 1986a:377, 378, 347, 378; courtesy Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia).

cular elements, and the central base's division occurs exactly in the middle of these same rounded elements. Also, the central figure in fact turned out to be rather distinctive, having a wider base, a wider feathered headdress, a different set of central headdress elements, and a unique body posture (fig. 5). The head of the central figure was also unlike those of the south facade east figure or north facade west figure, being more distinguished in its cast and with finer treatment of the hair and adornment.

For the lower register of the facade (below the medial molding), there was a good deal of internal and excavation evidence to facilitate our reconstruction of the fallen elements, combined with the information derived from the entablatures. The resulting reconstruction is reproduced here as figure 6.

Two elements had been partially preserved on either

side of the north side doorway, and these were dutifully restored by the Phase II restoration director, Carlos Rudy Larios. Study of the map of fallen sculpture demonstrated a strong concentration of pieces that were demonstrably not like the rest of the sculptures from the entablature on the terrace directly in front of the two motifs preserved *in situ*. In working with these fragments, Barbara Fash was able to articulate four serpent heads. Close examination of these demonstrated that one of the heads from the front of the east sculpture element had burn marks. In fact, burn marks covered the west half of the *in situ* eastern element, and the basal block of the burned serpent head fit exactly in the space left by Larios between two stones of the same course that were still in place when he restored the building. Furthermore, the two fragments of a bust and the left hand of a figure that, due to its lack of tenon, was obviously

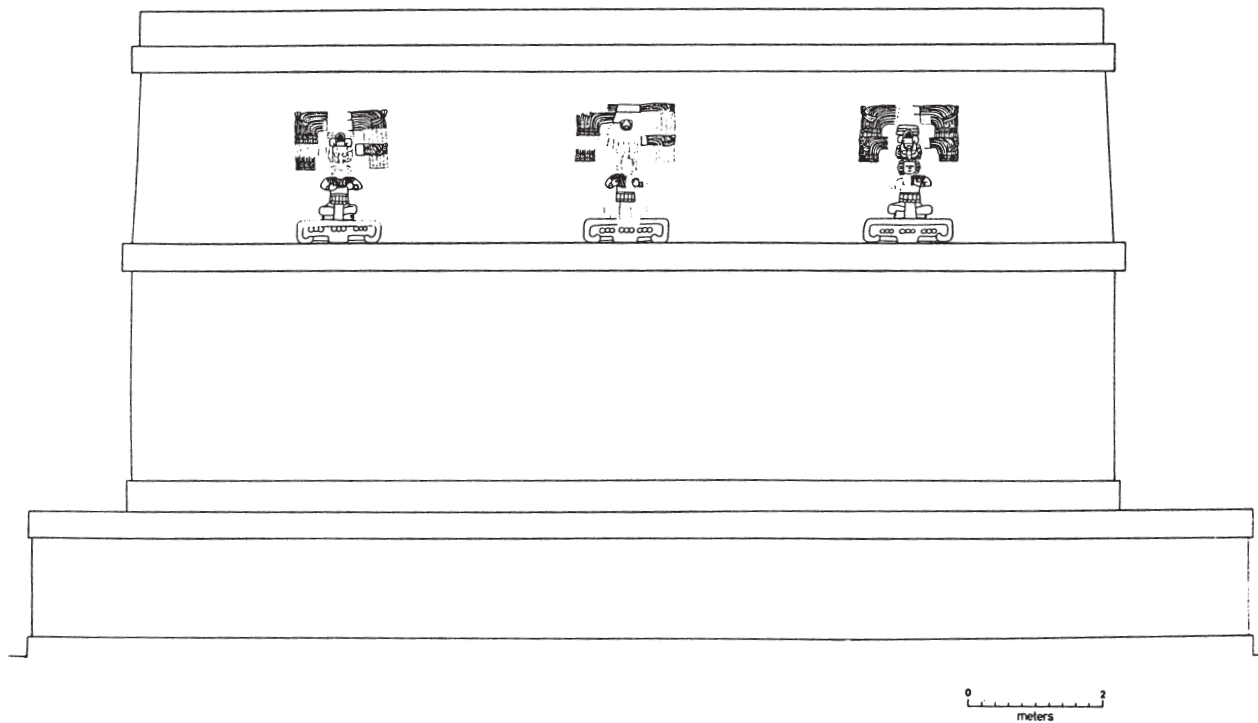


Fig. 4 Hypothetical reconstruction drawing of the south facade of Structure 9N-82C-1st (after Larios and Fash 1985:125; courtesy Instituto Hondureno de Antropología e Historia).

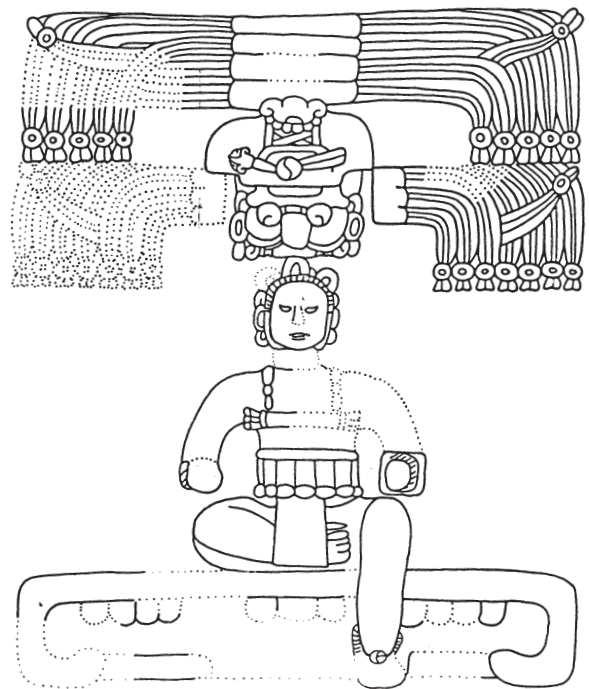


Fig. 5 The central figure of the north facade of Structure 9N-82C-1st (after Larios and Fash 1985:131; courtesy Instituto Hondureno de Antropología e Historia).

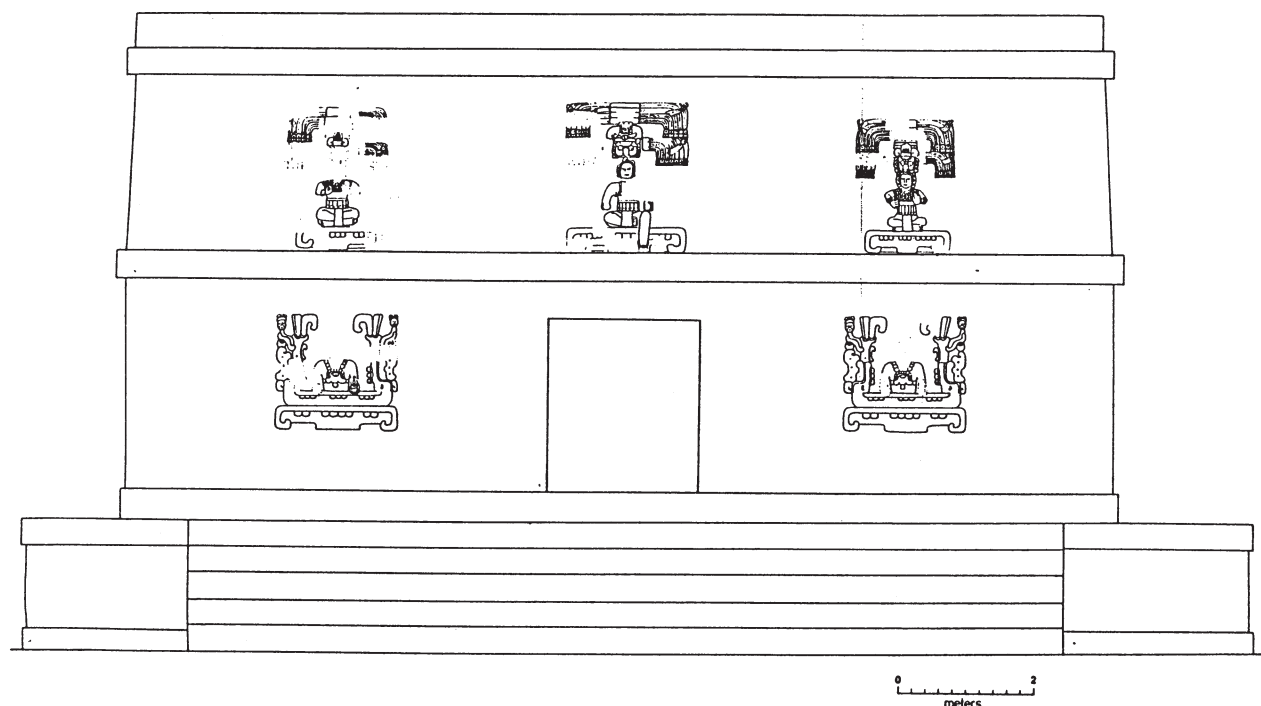


Fig. 6 Hypothetical reconstruction drawing of the north facade of Structure 9N-82C-1st (after Larios and Fash 1985:130; courtesy Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia).

meant to be placed in a niche also showed burn marks that corresponded to those of both the *in situ* part of the *na* element and the fallen pieces in question. Based on the fits made by Barbara Fash, the correlations of burn marks made by William Fash, and the letter-perfect restoration done by Rudy Larios, it was possible to restore the fallen elements back onto the facade. Using the example of the restored east niche and figure (fig. 7a), it was possible to rearticulate and restore the bust and serpent heads of the west niche as well (fig. 7b).²

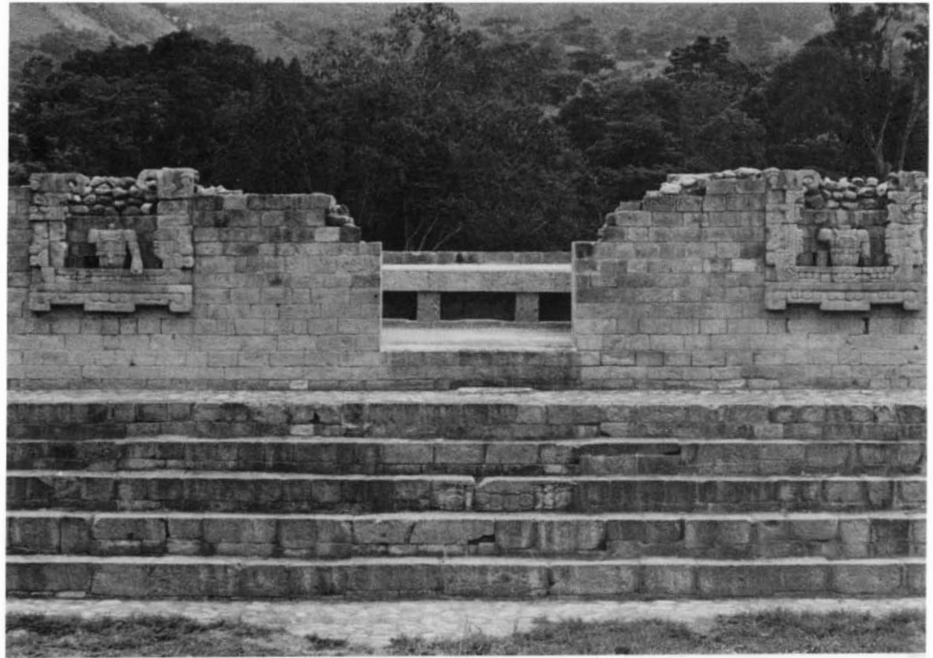
In addition to the south and north facades, the east and west entablatures were also adorned with tenoned mosaic sculptures. In the case of the west facade, many fragments were in fact found directly in front of the doorway on the west side of 82C, whereas others had fallen due north or south of the west plane of the central superstructure. For the east facade, most of the pieces recovered in the excavation were found north of the plane of the east facade of Str. 82C. The east figure was the more complete, containing (after fitting with pieces previously recovered by the IHAH staff) the seated legs, belt, and torso of a figure, at least part of both hands, and feathers from the headdress. No traces of any T23 sign base were found, in either the excavations or searches through the IHAH collections, nor was either of the two heads recovered. For the central headdress, it is possible that a large *k'in* sign formed a part of the composition (fig. 7c). One such *k'in* sign was found in the vicinity of the other fragments of the east and west facade figures, north of the building.

Structure 9N-82C-2nd and Associated Sculpture

The extensive trenching into the substructure and subsequent restoration work established that Str. 9N-82C-1st (discussed above) was originally a freestanding building. Internal structural evidence demonstrates that this central structure was built first, followed by the addition of 9N-82 West (1st), with 9N-82 East added last. Prior to the construction of the freestanding structure 9N-82C-1st, another building had existed at this locus.

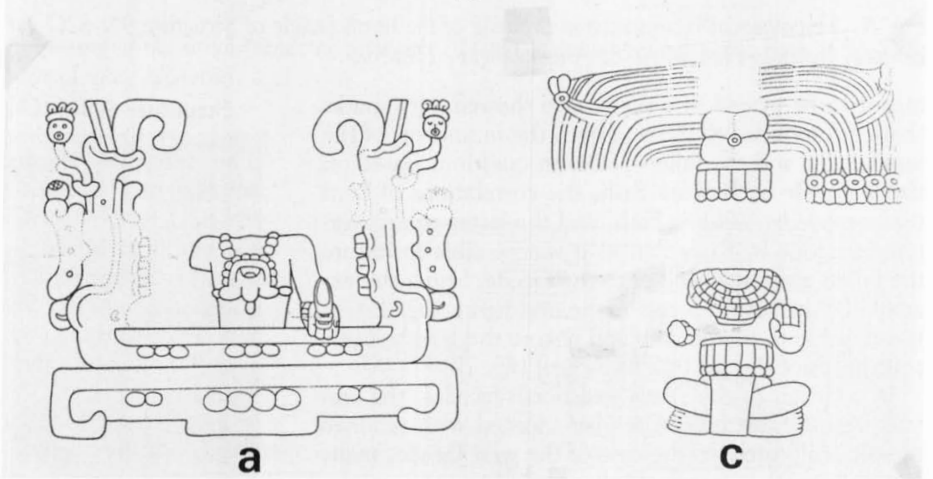
Fragmentary sections of this earlier edifice—Structure 9N-82C 2nd—were found during the stabilization process, prior to the restoration of the (later) central room of Str. 9N-82C-1st (fig. 8a). The two pieces of the full-round, complete Pauah Tun sculpture were both found in the fill of Str. 9N-82C-1st, though separated by 9 m. This slightly smaller than life-size figure (fig. 8b) was decapitated and the head burned, with both pieces thrown into the fill during the construction of 9N-82C-1st. This suggests that this sculpture was originally in use in the now-destroyed earlier building and ritually killed and buried when that building was abandoned.

The figure wears a necklace whose pendant is a finely executed example of the beaded water-lily motif found on the busts in the 9N-82C-1st niches, and also found (inverted) in the headdresses of the central figures in the entablatures of the north and south facades. The figure is shown cross-legged, with a sectioned conch-shell inkpot in the left hand and a stylus in the right. The deity is phonetically identified by the netted cap (*pauah*) and



b

Fig. 7 (a) Drawing of the east niche of the north facade of Structure 9N-82C-1st (drawing by G. Stanley Matta); (b) photo of Structure 9N-82C-1st, after restoration by Larios (after Larios and Fash 1985:126; courtesy Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia; (c) drawing of a photograph of the composite reconstruction of the figure fragments from the east and west facades of Structure 9N-82C-1st (drawing by Barbara W. Fash).



a

c

Cauac (*tun*) body markings. These same identifiers are found on the easternmost pillar under the hieroglyphic bench in the central room of Str. 9N-82C-1st, signaling that he and his colleagues are also Pauah Tuns (underworld cousins of the Bacabs). The continuity through time and space of Pauah Tun worship led us to hypothesize that this deity served as a lineage patron, or minimally the patron of the lineage or titular head of the group, through time (Webster and Abrams 1983:295, Larios and Fash 1985; Fash 1986a).³

Interpretation and Comparative Study of Str. 9N-82 Sculpture

The north facade of Structure 9N-82 faced onto Plaza A of Group 9N-8 and as such was the most ornate and sym-

bolically explicit side of the building (fig. 6). This facade was divided into two fields, the lower one (including the doorway and decorations on either side of it) relating to the supernatural world, the upper one (the entablature) relating to the living, surface world. The serpents on either side of the doorway are characterized by fleshless, bony snouts, and by an *ahau* glyphic element capped by a *sak* ("white") sign, shown at the end of their nose-plugs. This glyph has been interpreted by Tatiana Proskouriakoff to have a meaning of "soul" or "spirit." From the split serpents' jaws emerge anthropomorphic deities: each wears a beaded, trilobed water-lily motif as a necklace pendant. The eastern deity clearly depicts a patron of scribes and artists by virtue of the conch-shell inkpot he carries in his left hand. By analogy with the earlier figure found associated with the earlier version of Struc-

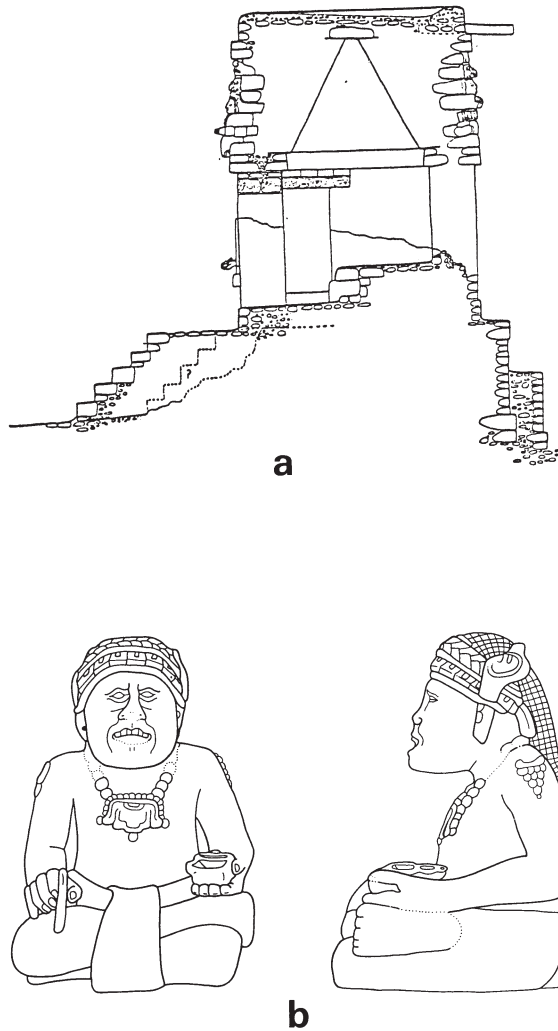


Fig. 8 (a) Section of Structure 9N-82C, showing reconstructed facade and conserved portions of 82C-1st, and preserved parts of 82C-2nd (after Fash 1986a:369; courtesy Instituto Hondureno de Antropología e Historia); (b) drawing of the Pauah Tun/Scribe (by Barbara W. Fash).

ture 82 (2nd), in all probability it represents a Pauah Tun/Scribe. The upper register, in contrast, contains human figures in rich garb, whose clothing, faces, and headdresses indicate that they are dwellers of the surface world. Analogy with stelae, lintels, and ceramic vases of the Classic Maya world indicates that these figures depict actual historical individuals. Given this basic framework, we can analyze the significance of the symbols and figures depicted in the two fields represented.

For the entablatures, the east and west figures of both the north and south facades are so similar as to be virtually identical to each other. The sharing of the (inverted) beaded water-lily motif by the central figures on the north and south facades implies that the two facades are two sides of the same coin, as it were: each side depicts the same three individuals. The virtual identity of

the east and west figures on both sides of the building leaves one with the impression that these individuals were of equal stature and less important than the distinctive central figures. Their headdresses have what Linda Schele (personal communication) refers to as the “personification head,” with maize as the element in the forehead, which is to be understood as the being or object being given life. Abundance and sustenance of life seem to be the principal attributes of these side figures; their identity as historical individuals can only be speculated upon at this point.

The north facade central figure is distinguished from his two entablature companions by a number of features: a distinctive central headdress complex, different body position, more finely detailed facial treatment, different clothing details, a wider base or throne, and possibly items held in the hands (fig. 5). Of particular interest are the central headdress elements, which should be the diagnostic indicator of the supernatural aspects being assumed or emulated by their wearer.

I have already noted the close association between the beaded water-lily motif and the Structure 9N-82-1st (facade) and 2nd (full-round figure) Pauah Tuns. The same association is found on Princeton Vase 16 (Coe 1978). In his consideration of the patrons of Maya scribes and artists, Coe illustrates figure 2 of this vessel, without including a beaded element and pendants as part of that figure (Coe 1977b: figure 11). This element would thus pertain to the deity pictured immediately in back of that figure, labeled figure 1 in Coe’s 1978 book and here represented as figure 9a. This individual also clearly represents a god of writing, by virtue of his “extra” ear with T7 infix, “computer print-out” with bar and dot numerals, and conch-shell inkpot in the right hand (for a Copán equivalent, see fig. 9b). The beaded water lily here is shown front on, but half of it is obscured behind the back of figure 2, as is the left hand. Even if we were to consider the motif here as associated with figure 2 (the “Monkey Man” God of Writing: Coe 1977b, 1978:106), this would only serve to strengthen the association between this motif and the Pauah Tun of Structure 9N-82C-2nd, which has decidedly simian facial features (fig. 8b). Indeed, one is led to wonder whether the oft-repeated association of one of the four Bacabs/Pauah Tuns with the conch shell at Copán, Chichén Itzá (Morris, Charlott, and Morris 1931: vol. 2), and other Classic Period sites and on painted ceramics may be in part derived from the association of this particular deity with a conch-shell inkpot, in his guise as a patron of Maya scribes and artists.

From the above, it may be suggested that the Pauah Tun, tied water-lily, and beaded water-lily motifs in the headdress of the central figure of the north facade of Str. 9N-82 are used to associate that individual with his supernatural patron, the Pauah Tun as patron of scribes and artists. This association finds support in the text of the hieroglyphic bench of the central room of 82C (1st), which according to Berthold Riese (cited in Webster and

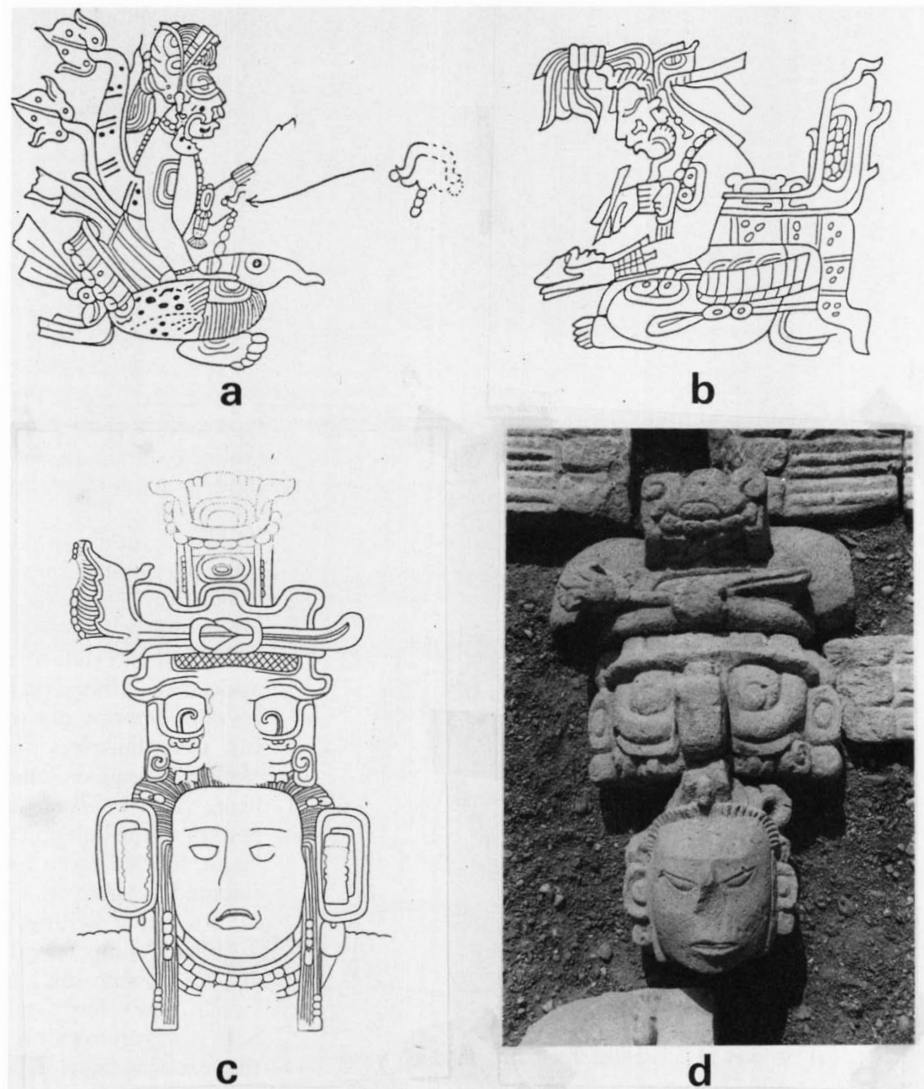


Fig. 9 (a) Princeton 16 (after Coe 1978); (b) inscribed figure on vessel from Tomb 37-2, Copán (drawing by Jose Humberto Espinoza, after Fash 1986a:373; courtesy Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia); (c) detail of face and central headdress elements of north side figure of Copán Stela N (drawing by Barbara W. Fash); (d) detail of the face and central headdress elements of the central figure on the north side of Structure 9N-82C-1st (after Larios and Fash 1985:131; courtesy Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia).

Abrams 1983) refers to the protagonist of the inscription (who also dedicates the temple) as “Ahau Kin,” which Riese infers to mean that he was an astronomer and calendar specialist. Such an individual must, of course, have been an accomplished scribe in order to practice such an esoteric trade. It is my belief that the distinctive features and prominent placement of the central figure of the entablature signify that this figure depicts the bench protagonist. That the bench protagonist was not the ruler of Copán is itself quite clear in the inscription, which refers to Yax-Pac in a secondary clause, following the initial clause, which refers to the date of commemoration of the temple, the act of commemoration itself, and the protagonist of that action, whose name is clearly different from that of any of the Copán dynasts.

In this context it is interesting to note that the central headdress elements found on the central figure of the Str. 9N-82C-1st facade are quite similar to the most

prominent central elements in the headdresses of both sides of Copán Stela N (cf. figs. 9c, d). A curved element found with the south facade central figure fragments also appears in the headdress of Stela N. Thus, the long-nosed god (personification) head, tied water lily, and inverted beaded water lily can be considered important elements in the Copán royal line’s own symbolism.

The emphasis of Pauah Tun/Bacab iconography can be seen in the works of the fifteenth ruler (“Smoke-Squirrel,” depicted on the south side of Stela N), but almost certainly reaches its climax in the reign of the sixteenth ruler, Yax-Pac. Examples of Pauah Tun/Bacab iconography datable to the reign of Yax-Pac include those of Temple 21 (first discovered by the author in 1984), Temple 11 (the famous “Old Man” head, and his little-remarked upon twin brother; figs. 10a, b), CV 43 Structure A (Willey, Leventhal, and Fash 1978), and the Str. 9N-82 facade and bench.

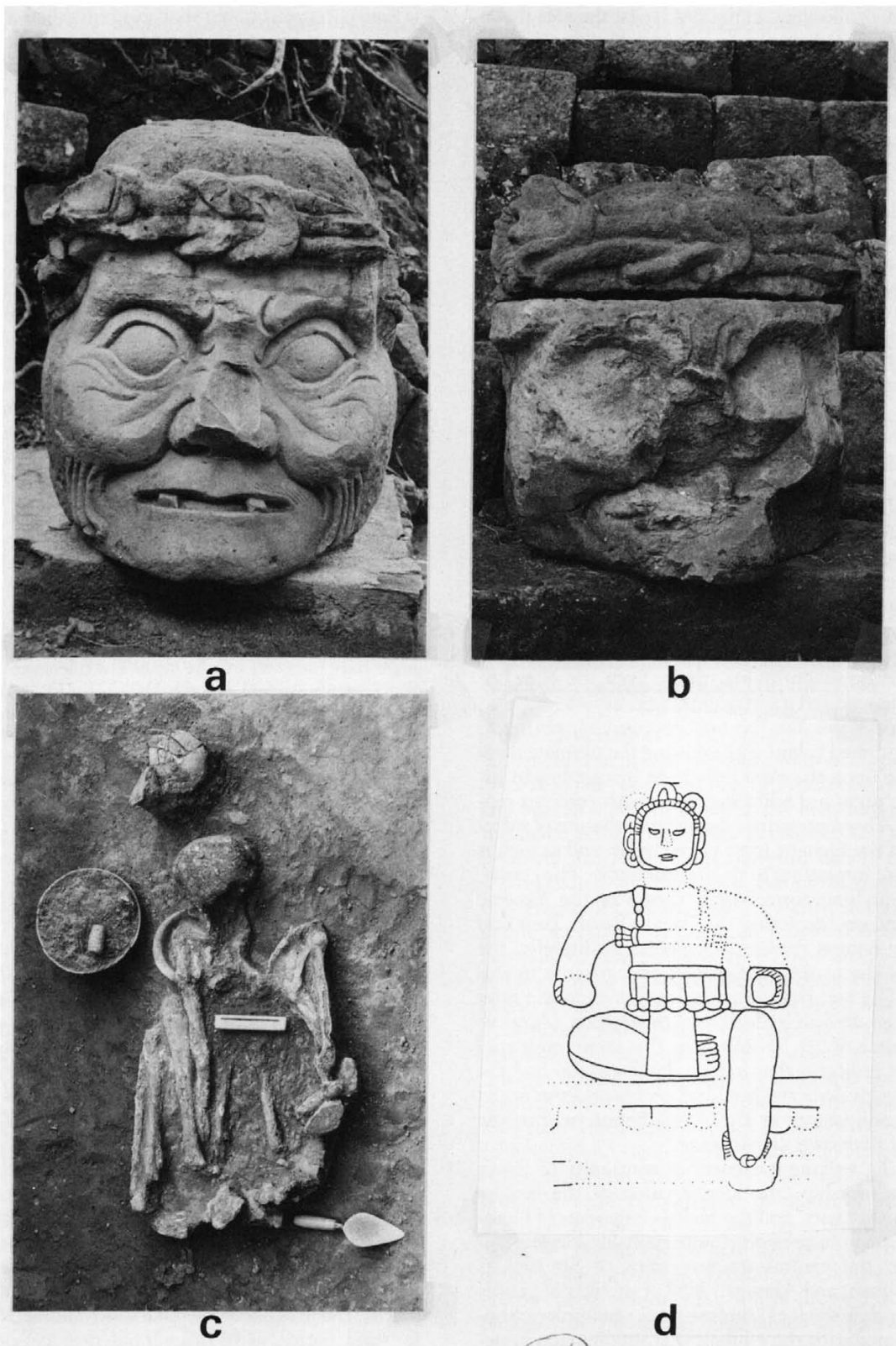


Fig. 10 (a) Photo of the "Old Man of Copán" (after Fash 1986a:382; courtesy Instituto Hondureno de Antropología e Historia); (b) photo of the "Old Man's" companion figure from the facade of Temple 11 (after Fash 1986a:382; courtesy Instituto Hondureno de Antropología e Historia); (c) photo of Burial VIII-6 (after Fash 1986a:382; courtesy Instituto Hondureno de Antropología e Historia); (d) drawing of the central figure, north facade, Str. 9N-82C-1st (after Fash 1986a:363 courtesy Instituto Hondureno de Antropología e Historia).

Two of my colleagues on the PAC resist the idea that a local lineage head would be allowed to “manifest so much pride and independence by placing his image in such imposing situation” and prefer to view the central facade figure as a portrait of Yax-Pac (Baudez in press; Riese in press). In part this may stem from their adherence to traditional models of the nature of Classic Maya art and sociopolitical organization.⁴ Elsewhere, I have developed a multivariant model to explain the sudden and explosive proliferation of elite stone art during the reign of Yax-Pac (Fash 1983:258–260). The model is rooted in the demographic and environmental conditions during the reign of this last, seemingly most creative and beneficent ruler. It was argued that the requirements of the Maya socioreligious and political system had devastating effects in Copán when it developed within an ecologically maladaptive settlement system. Therein the agriculturally richest, most centralized land in the Copán Valley was given over to a series of urban wards, forcing subsistence agriculture and cash-cropping upslope. This in turn entailed deforestation, shorter fallow cycles, soil exhaustion and erosion, and eventually long-term precipitation loss. These conditions were exacerbated by factional politics among the oldest and/or most powerful lineages not only of Copán, but apparently of Quiriguá, as well. It is my contention that the whole political system would have collapsed quite abruptly without continuing tribute from the elite lineages who supported it.

This model sees Yax-Pac and his court as seeking to ensure continued tribute by bestowing the ultimate royal prerogative upon the most important lineage heads: hieroglyphic texts and relief sculptures with complex iconography. This represents a significant “sharing of information” of the highest, most sacred order, and as such is all the more interesting in theoretical terms. The consistent, overarching cosmological theme of the Yax-Pac era monuments, depicting the Bacabs/Pauah Tuns and other supernatural patrons as supporters—literally, the pillars—of the world order, makes perfect sense in this context. The fact that individuals other than the ruler Yax-Pac are cited in at least two other texts (Altar W and the frieze of Str. 9N-69) from this same residential compound indicates that local individuals also had the prerogative to dedicate inscribed and iconographically complex monuments in their own honor, within the context of their own sacred space.

Given the striking evidence for continuity of Pauah Tun/Scribe worship, the identification of the lineage head with this deity, and the broken fragments of hieroglyphic texts from previous (quite probably local) monuments in the central stairway steps of Str. 9N-82 (Webster, Fash, and Abrams 1986), it should not greatly surprise us that the local lineage head would place himself—adorned with the symbols that simultaneously signify his supernatural patron, royal patron, and lineal ancestors—in the most prominent, public position on the structure.

Riese (in press) noted that this individual was labeled “second in the sequence” of Ahau Kins in the inscribed bench text, and that the initial verb of the inscription referred to Yax (“new”) Pauah Tun as well as the locative statement “in the house or temple.” This indicates that both 9N-82C-1st and its predecessor, 9N-82-2nd, were houses (or “temples”) of Pauah Tuns—both the supernatural deity and his flesh-and-blood followers—a conclusion bolstered by the presence of the full-round Pauah Tun/Monkey Man in association with the earlier building. Peter Mathews (personal communication) pointed out to me that this would provide a possible explanation for why the westernmost support of the bench, which structurally should show a Pauah Tun/Bacab figure, instead shows a human figure carrying the “*sak ahau*” (spirit or soul) glyphic element on a rope that connects him with the surface of the bench. This figure may represent the “first in the sequence”—the apotheosized ancestor of the Structure 9N-82C-1st protagonist. In this context, one is reminded of Coe’s thoughts (1973b:7) on the nature of Maya residential compounds *cum* holy places:

Who, then, might have been worshipped in a Maya temple? A god or the dead ruler for whom it was raised? Here we have an example of the false use of categories derived from our own culture, for in prehispanic Mexico and Central America these might have been one and the same. The rulers were descended from the gods, and a king probably became identified with his lineage god after death. By paying homage to the man, one was also paying homage to the god. Finely-made masonry tombs lavishly equipped with grave goods have often been found underneath the floors of the palaces as well. In other words, an ancient Maya center might have been as much a necropolis for rulers as a seat for the Maya administration.

This strikes a familiar chord for the present case material. Below and in front of the northeast corner of Structure 9N-82-2nd was the grave of an adult male. Labeled Burial VIII-6, this individual had been interred in a tightly flexed position and provided with three Late Classic polychrome pots and a single, 16 cm-long, greenstone pectoral (fig. 10c). Judging from the ceramics, flexed position (generally confined to the Late Classic, in Copán), and stratigraphic context and position of this burial, it probably dates to the time of use of Structure 9N-82-2nd, and the early, full-round Pauah Tun/Scribe statue. The most compelling thing about this burial is the greenstone pectoral, which is virtually identical in size to the one depicted on the chest of the central figure of the north facade of Str. 9N-82C-1st (fig. 10d). I believe that the burial and central facade figure provide further evidence for ancestor worship and lineage perpetuation lore, with the new lineage head proudly displaying the insignia of the same supernatural patron worn by (and buried with) his scribal predecessor and ancestor. Considering the demonstrated importance of ancestor worship among the Maya and other cultures sharing a similar level of sociopolitical complexity (Sanders

in press), I believe these data from Structure 9N-82 provide us with solid comparative evidence for the practice among the nonroyal elites of the Classic Period.

Regarding the status and duties of Classic Maya scribes, and the link between noble lineage and the scribal office, our best source of analogy is with sixteenth-century and Colonial Period Yucatán. In his analysis of the Titles of Ebtun, Ralph Roys wrote:

There was also the town clerk, or *escribano*, who drew up papers. Only rarely do we find his Maya title, *ah əib huun* or *ah əibul hun* (he who writes a document). In pre-Spanish times contracts were oral, and probably the only civil documents were the land maps. These may have been written by either the priests or certain nobles, to whom the knowledge of hieroglyphic writing is said to have been confined

The governors and town clerks seem to have been restricted to a small number of lineages. During the entire seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we find only seven different names in the governorship, and of the twenty governors who appear in our records during this long period fourteen were confined to three names, the Camals, Nauats, and Nohs

Although no governor of the name appears in our records, the Xuls appear to have been the second lineage of the town in number and importance. Except for the Camals, they show the most *alcaldes* and *regidores* and twice as many town clerks as any other name. [Roys 1939:45, 47, 50]

The sixteenth-century data support the idea derived from the excavations of Structures 9N-82 1st and 2nd (and the analysis of the sculptures associated with each) that the successive scribes who occupied those buildings were members of the same patriline. Indeed, the Copanecs living there seem to have deliberately belabored the continuities in lineage, office, and the supernatural patron of their profession. This is precisely what one should expect, given that important offices were passed down the male line (Landa, in Tozzer 1941:122), and that lineage was such a fundamental tenet of Maya social organization. It is ironic, in this context, that Roys could never know that genealogy was such an important, indeed primordial, concern of the Classic Period stone inscriptions. Again, from *The Titles of Ebtun*, we read:

The Maya had always considered genealogy seriously. Landa tells us: "They made much of knowing the origin of their lineages, especially if they came of one of the houses of Mayapan. The knowledge of this they obtained from their priests, which was one of their sciences; and they boast greatly of the men of their lineage who have been famous." That this pride of ancestry continued in the colonial period, is indicated by the questionnaire for the *batabs* in the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel. Here we read: "So also, these are the nobility, the lineage of the *batabs*, who know whence come the men and the rulers of their government." Not only do we find references to native nobility in the earlier Maya documents, but also the Ebtun papers continue to cite such nobles (*almehenob*) down to the middle of the second decade of the nineteenth century." [Roys 1939:51]

Conclusions

The excavation, documentation, and analysis of Structure 9N-82 and its associated remains have provided a solid base from which to answer some of the sociocultural questions posed by anthropologists. Aspects of religion and social organization are often among the more difficult problems on which to gain direct, irrefutable evidence. Lacking living informants, archaeologists are very much dependent upon the preservation, explicitness, and methodologically sound interpretation of the relics of belief systems. In order to be credible to our anthropologist colleagues, these analyses should be congruent or otherwise complementary to comparative materials, preferably documented sources. The inspirational aspect of the Str. 9N-82 case is that it is both congruent and complementary to emic written records of its day, and to documented sources of the colonial and modern records concerning the fundamental nature of Maya supernatural (and living) patrons, ancestor worship, and lineage perpetuation lore. More compelling yet, there is an association between those cited in the inscriptions and portrayed in the symbolism of the building and the only contemporaneously buried individual found in the thorough excavation, reconsolidation, and restoration of this multifaceted structure.

Comparative study has revealed some associations between the beaded water-lily motif, the Pauah Tun/Bacab, and other gods of writing in other works of Maya art, an association most clearly shown and conflated in the full-round Pauah Tun-Monkey Man sculpture of Str. 9N-82C-2nd. The presence of Pauah Tun/Bacab tied and beaded water-lily motifs in the headdress of the central figure on the north facade cements the association between the Room 1 hieroglyphic bench protagonist ("Ahau Kin") and the Pauah Tun in his guise as patron of Maya scribes, artists, and, apparently in this case, calendric specialists. It has been proposed here that this centralized, most public figure in the Plaza A compound of Group 9N-8 represents the protagonist of the initial, dated, locative clause of the hieroglyphic inscription.

Structure 9N-82 was constructed at a nonroyal locus and should be appreciated as a monument to the local lineage, both its contemporary head and his lineal ancestors. This conclusion is based on the good evidence for Pauah Tun/Scribe worship in successive generations (the full-round statue of 9N-82-2nd, and the facade and bench motifs on 9N-82C-1st), the fragments of earlier, probably local hieroglyphic monuments incorporated into the 9N-82C-1st stairway, the commemoration of Altar W' at this site (which does not cite the reigning dynasty), and the single pectoral worn by the central figure on the facade in emulation of the one worn by and buried with the lineage head buried in association with Structure 9N-82-2nd.

It bears noting that the practice of incorporating previous monuments in the steps of later buildings was undertaken by the royal line as well. Both 18-Rabbit (in

the frontal stairway of Structure 10L-2) and Smoke-Squirrel (in a reused block in the Hieroglyphic Stairway of Structure 10L-26) incorporated broken glyptic monuments that sited their predecessors into the steps of their important buildings, in honor of their ancestors. In sum, localized lineage ancestor worship was tied into worship of that lineage's supernatural patron, just as was the case for the royal line. Replication of structures and concepts in Maya social organization and cosmogony is a well-accepted fact among ethnographers and archaeologists; the present case material provides us with a unique opportunity to examine the phenomenon on a local level and scale.

The foregoing analysis has sought to draw out the interrelatedness of the supernatural world of deities and ancestors and the living world of their supplicants and descendants. From ethnohistoric and hieroglyphic data, we know that lineage ties were the ultimate determinants of Classic Maya social and political organization, and Coe (1973b) argued that only the elite lineages had any chance of escaping the underworld after death. He further surmised that scribes and calendric specialists were held in great esteem among the Classic Maya, just as they were among the later Mexica (Coe 1977), and that these occupations were restricted to elite noble lines. The facade and bench of Structure 9N-82C-1st

and the burial and statue associated with Structure 9N-82C-2nd provide solid archaeological evidence for these arguments.

Notes

1. See references cited herein. The excavations at Patio or Plaza A of Group 9N-8 were financed by the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia as part of the Proyecto Arqueológico Copán, Segunda Fase, directed by William T. Sanders. Thanks are due to the institute and its representatives, to the project director, and to colleagues who helped in the excavation and study of the Structure 9N-82 sculpture: Barbara Fash, Rudy Larios, David Webster, Elliot Abrams, Stanley Matta, and Celio Villeda.

2. Although we can be sure of the horizontal positions of the various figures from the entablature, we are unable to say what the original height of the medial molding (and therefore the figures) was, since neither said molding nor the vault spring was preserved *in situ* on the structure. For this reason, Larios restored the north facade only as high as the top of the split serpent niches, as appears in figure 7b. Larios arrived at the heights of the moldings and entablature in the hypothetical reconstruction drawing on the basis of ratios of doorway width to height in other Late Classic Maya structures.

3. Unlike my colleagues, I do not consider this interpretation to be "highly speculative," perhaps owing to the fact that I was the first to suggest it.

4. The interested reader is also referred to Sanders's contribution to the 1989 monograph on Str. 9N-82 (Sanders 1989) for a thorough examination of this theoretical issue.