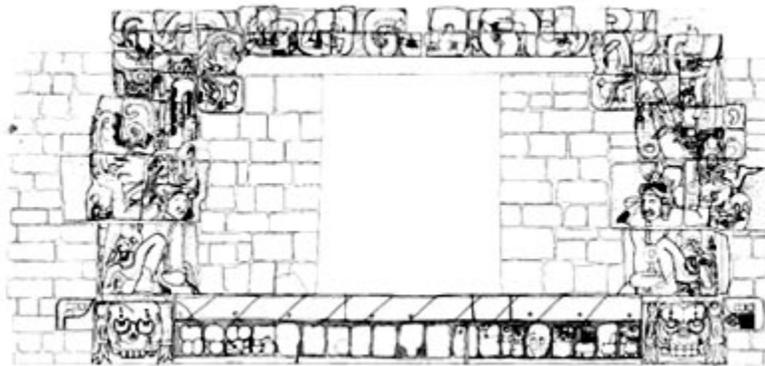


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## **Structure 10L-22 Sculpture Reconstruction Project, Copán, Honduras**



**Research Year:** 2002

**Culture:** Maya

**Chronology:** Late Classic

**Location:** Honduras

**Site:** Copán

### **Table of Contents**

[Abstract](#)

[Resumen](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Results of the 2002 Field Season](#)

[Sculpture Drawings](#)

[Continued Motif Analysis](#)

[Drawings of Interior Sculpted Doorway](#)

[Profile Views of Interior Proscenium](#)

[Summary](#)

[List of Figures](#)

[Sources Cited](#)

### **Abstract**

This report covers the 2002 Field Season of the Structure 22 Sculpture Reconstruction Project, an ongoing effort to reconstruct and reinterpret the eighth-century Maya building, Structure 22, at Copán, Honduras. The current reconstruction is preliminary;

the first stage of a project to catalogue, conserve, restore, analyze, and digitally reconstruct the full corpus of stone façade sculpture recovered from excavations of this monument over the last century. The reinterpretation assembles recent archaeological, architectural, epigraphic, and ethnohistoric data for Copán and the Maya area to reframe the building within its eighth-century context and to consider its functions and meanings within the architectural campaign of its patron, *Waxaklajun U'bah K'awil*, the thirteenth ruler of Copán. As an historical inquiry, the study addresses Structure 22 as a significant event in the history of Maya architectural design. The study demonstrates the value of performance theory and semiotic and phenomenological analyses for understanding the contexts of the production and reception of the building, as well as its communicative modes.

While the report below discusses only the results of the 2002 Field Season, rather than the conclusions of the entire project (Ahlfeldt 2004), it is worth summarizing the research results here briefly. Research to date indicates that Structure 22 should be considered within the dual contexts of the construction of monarchy and the experiential aesthetics of eighth-century Maya religion. Structure 22 was designed as a performance space for asserting social order during state ritual, most likely commemorations of royal accession. Erected during a period of political consolidation throughout the Maya realm, the building was designed to be competitive and conversant with the architectural campaigns of contemporaneous Maya kingdoms. The builders of Structure 22 tested the limits of sculptural skill and engineering technology at Copán while masterfully expressing the complexity and animism of Maya state religion. In commissioning this structure, *Waxaklajun U'bah K'awil* presented an expanded vision of divine kingship—one that emphasized his persona, situating it within historical, mythic, and cosmic frameworks. All available data confirm Miller's hypothesis (1999) that this monument functioned as the royal throne room of Copán. It was here that the ruler was transformed into, and subsequently dwelled as, a deity. As such, Structure 22 was both a physical and conceptual extension of the royal body.

## Resumen

Este informe cubre el trabajo hecho durante la temporada de campo llevada a cabo en 2002 para el Proyecto de Reconstrucción de la Escultura del Templo 22, un esfuerzo en curso para reconstruir y reinterpretar este edificio maya del siglo octavo en Copán, Honduras. La reconstrucción actual es preliminar; y se trata de la primera etapa de un proyecto que va a catalogar, conservar, restaurar, analizar y construir digitalmente todas las piezas de escultura de la fachada recuperadas durante las excavaciones de este monumento, efectuadas durante el siglo pasado. La reinterpretación reúne los datos arqueológicos, arquitectónicos, epigráficos y etnohistóricos recientes para Copán y el área maya, a fin de ubicar al edificio dentro de su contexto durante el siglo octavo, y para considerar sus funciones y significados dentro de la campaña arquitectónica de su patrón, *Waxaklajun U'bah K'awil*, decimotercer gobernante de Copán. Como investigación histórica, el estudio trata al Templo 22 como un acontecimiento significativo en la historia del diseño arquitectónico maya. El estudio demuestra el valor

de "teoría de ejecución" (performance theory) y de los análisis semióticos y fenomenológicos para entender los contextos de la producción y de la recepción del edificio, así como sus modos comunicativos.

Mientras que el informe que sigue discute solamente los resultados del trabajo hecho durante 2002, y no las conclusiones del proyecto entero, vale resumir brevemente aquí los resultados de esta investigación. La investigación hasta la fecha indica que el Templo 22 se debe considerar dentro de los contextos duales de la construcción de la monarquía y de la estética experimental de la religión maya del siglo octavo. El Templo 22 fue diseñado como espacio de ejecución para afirmar el orden social durante los rituales del estado, en ceremonias tales como la accesión real. Erigido durante un período de consolidación política a través del reino maya, el edificio fue diseñado para ser competitivo y versado en cuanto a las campañas arquitectónicas de los otros reinos mayas contemporáneos. Los constructores del Templo 22 pusieron a prueba los límites de la tecnología escultórica así como la ingeniería en Copán, a la vez que expresaron la complejidad y el animismo de la religión del estado maya. Al encargar esta estructura, Waxaklajun U'bah K'awil presentó una visión más amplia del reino divino – la cual acentuó su personaje, situándolo dentro de marcos históricos, míticos, y cósmicos. Todos los datos disponibles confirman la hipótesis de Miller según la cual este monumento funcionó como el salón del trono de Copán. Fue aquí que el gobernante fue transformado y subsecuentemente, tratado como un dios. Como tal, el Templo 22 era una extensión física e imaginada del cuerpo real.

*Submitted 12/18/2004 by:*  
Dr. Jennifer F. Ahlfeldt  
Department of Art and Art History  
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque  
[ahlfeldt@unm.edu](mailto:ahlfeldt@unm.edu)

## **Introduction**

This report summarizes the second season of research on Structure 10L-22, Copán, Honduras, that was funded by FAMSI. This consisted of eight weeks of lab analysis between April and August of 2002. While a finished reconstruction of the structure is still far from complete, the work enabled a preliminary study of the building as offered in my Ph.D. dissertation: *On Reconstructing and Performing Ancient Maya Architecture: Structure 22, Copán, Honduras (A.D. 715)*. This text contains the most thorough accounting of my research and conclusions to date, while the following report addresses the more narrow objectives that were achieved in 2002 with the help of FAMSI Grant 01040:

Those objectives were:

1. To continue the completion of line drawings of sculpture motifs known to date.
2. To continue the analysis of individual sculpture motifs.
3. To complete a more accurate line drawing and reconstruction of the sculptural designs of the famous interior doorway of Structure 10L-22.

## **Results of the 2002 Field Season**

### ***Sculpture Drawings***

While we are still in the process of determining how all of the motifs were arranged on the building, we can say with certainty what motifs were on the structure and therefore can make conclusions about the messages of the sculpture program. A full catalogue of the motif drawings executed to date (funded by FAMSI, and executed by Project Artist Edgar Zelaya) as well as a more recent digital model of the building (executed by architect, Laura Ackley), have been published in my dissertation (Ahlfeldt 2004). Because the analysis of Structure 10L-22 sculpture motifs is ongoing, this catalogue is still far from complete.

### ***Continued Motif Analysis***

During seven weeks Eliud Guerra (sculpture conservator), Santos Rosa and Pancho Canan (masons), and I analyzed just a few of the dozens of sculpture motifs that remain to be analyzed. We continued to identify fits from the broken and dispersed sculpture; these were restored by sculptor conservator, Ruffino Membreño.

Working at the warehouses of sculpture at the Copán Lab, and with sculpture in unprotected piles out at the archaeological park, I continued to collect MNI (minimum number of individual) counts of each motif as well as lists and group photographs. These sculptures were plotted on fall plan maps of the structure to determine how the sculpture was arranged on the building.

I worked on four motifs specifically, as shown below:

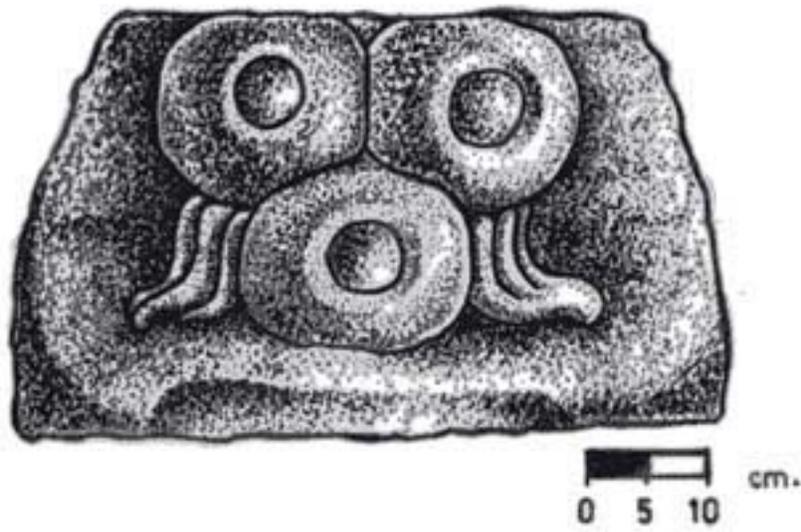


Figure 1. Tun motifs that probably belonged in four giant witz monster heads.

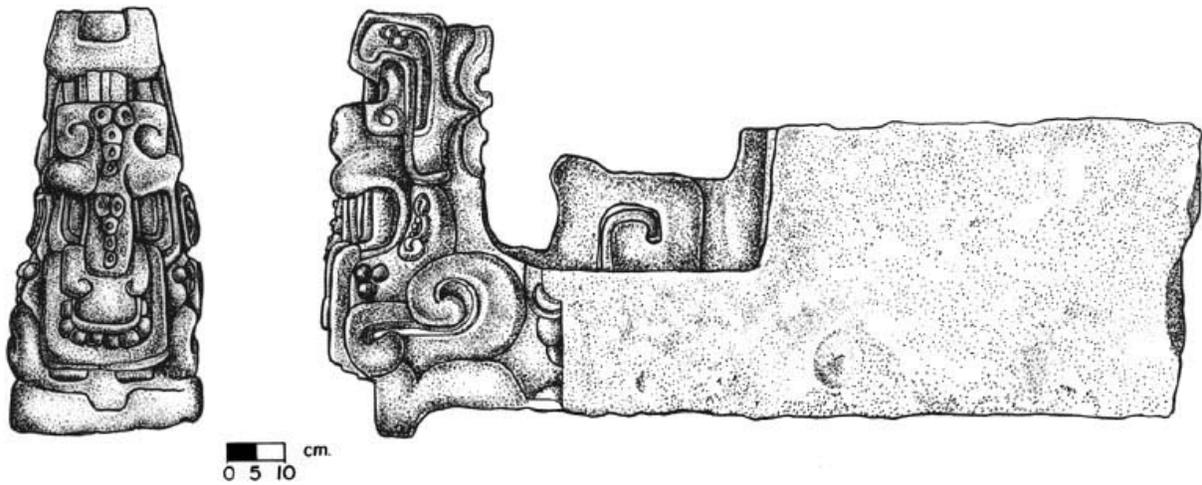


Figure 2. Eyelashes and this massive snout, probably from the same monster.

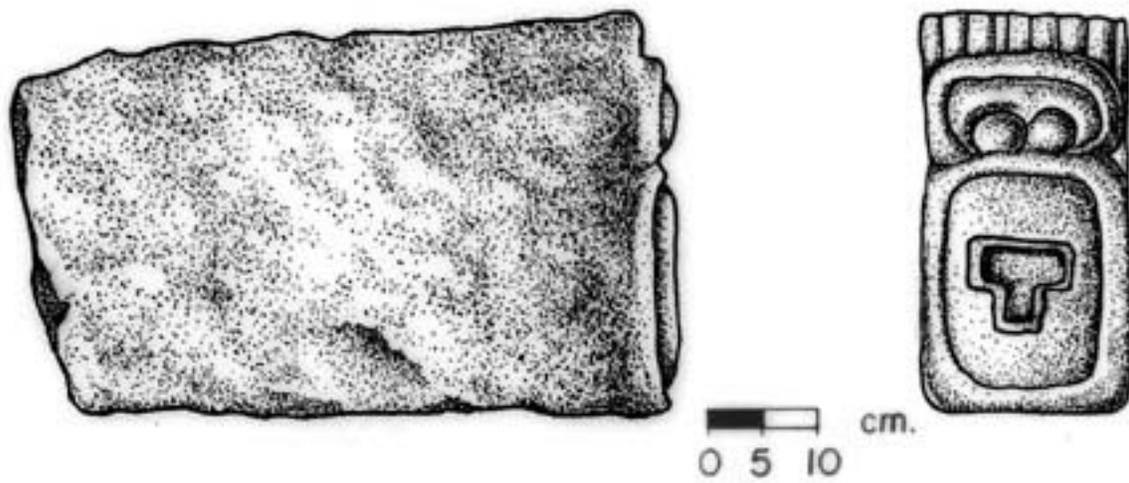


Figure 3. Four IK glyphs, which probably were placed in the mouth of these witz monsters.

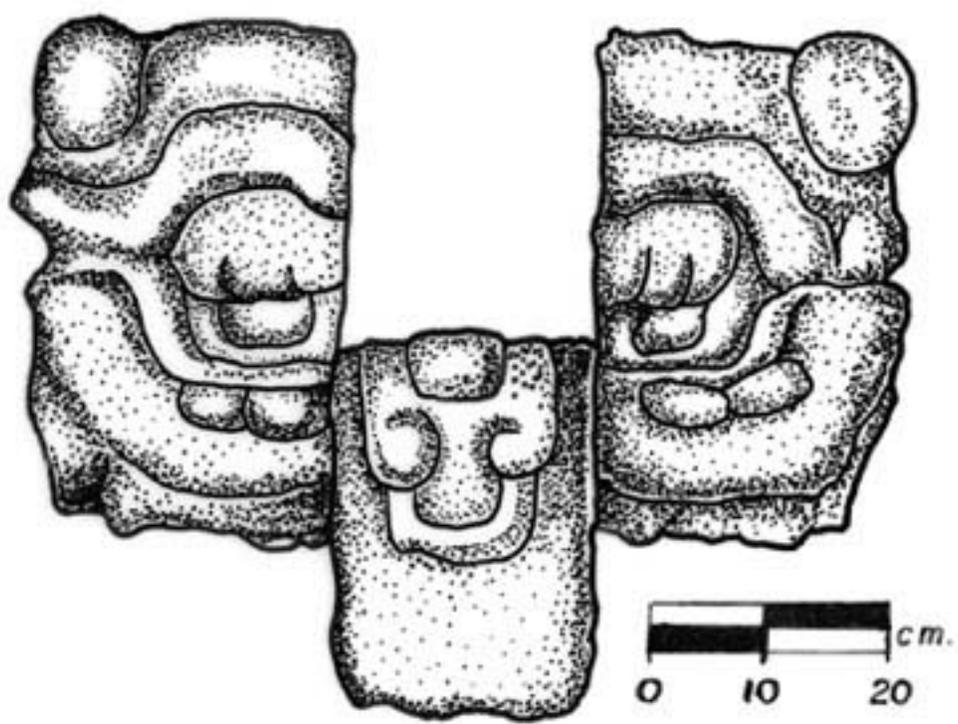
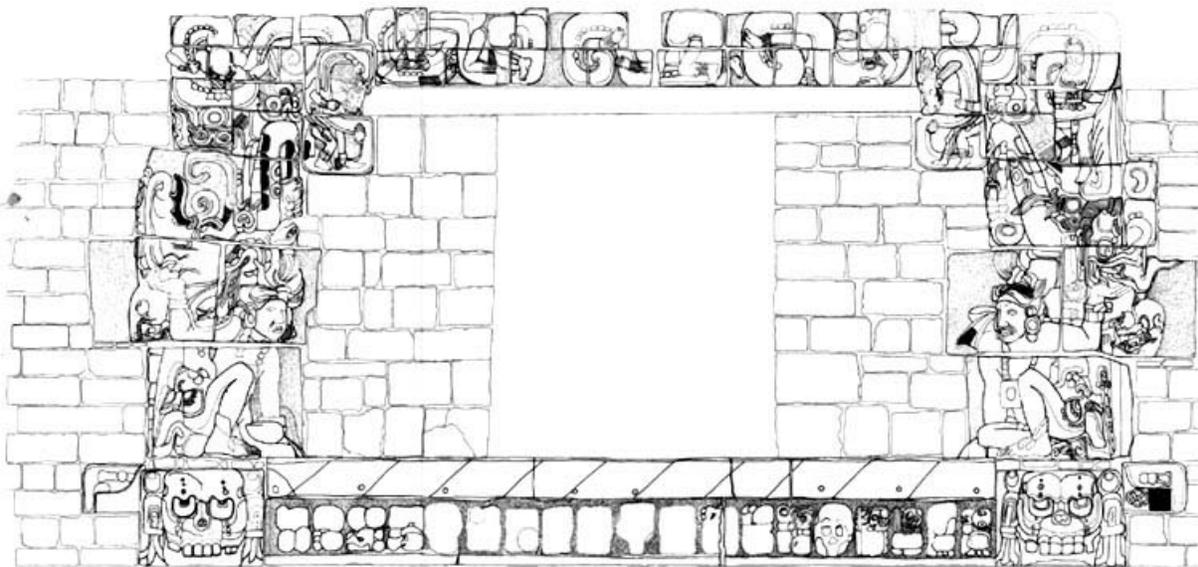


Figure 4. Eight small masks, probably from a headdress.

### ***Drawings of Interior Sculpted Doorway***

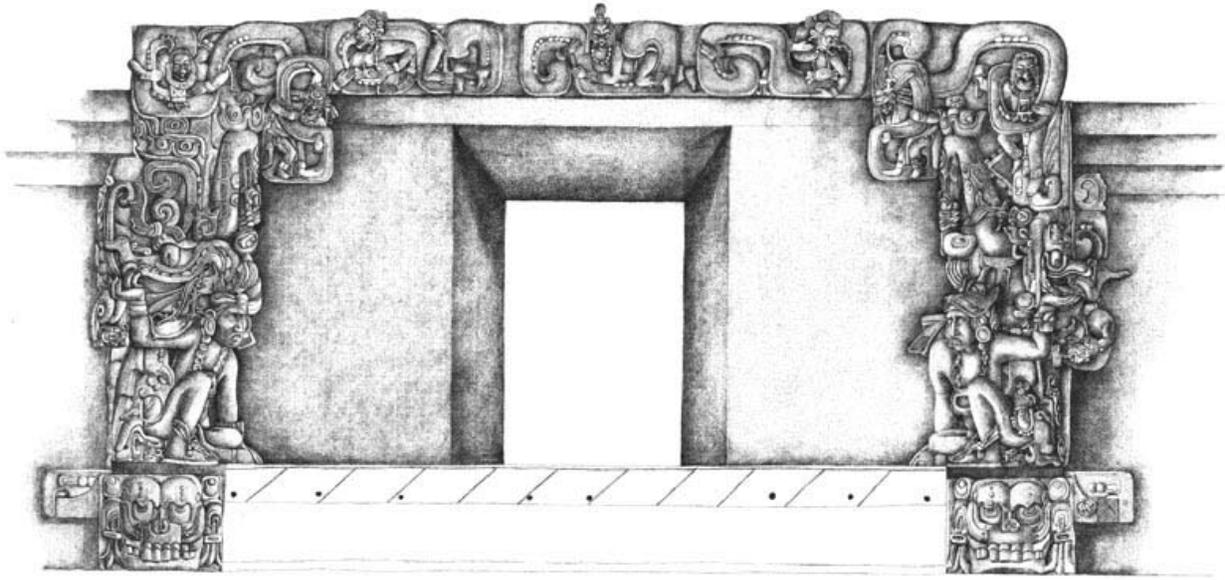
Over the last century, at least four different scholars made drawings of the interior sculpted doorway—or, as I prefer to call it, "proscenium" (Annie Hunter in Maudslay 1889-1902; Trik 1937; Hasso Hohmann 1986; Linda Schele 1993). Unfortunately, none is entirely accurate and all are missing important details, including the interior and exterior profiles of the sculpture that have never been published.

Under my direction, E. Zelaya completed an excellent line drawing of how the proscenium appears today, in its rather decayed state ([Figure 5](#)). He measured the actual stone, now in the sculpture museum in Copán, and rendered it on graph paper in pencil on a 1:10 scale. He then used black and white photographs we'd taken of the sculpture with raking light to add in various details. This drawing also indicates the size of the individual sculpted blocks, which shows that the sculptors would have clearly carved this masterpiece *in situ*, as Fash has suggested (1991).



**Figure 5. Drawing of ornamental proscenium of Structure 10L-22 as it appears today (Drawing by E. Zelaya).**

This line drawing is useful for comparison with a second, stippled reconstruction drawing that he completed under my direction. The reconstruction drawing ([Figure 2](#)) is a rendering of the proscenium as it appeared in the eighth century. Our reconstruction is based on: (1) Maudslay's 19th century photos of the proscenium in a more preserved state, (2) similar sculpture programs found on Waxaklahun U'baah K'awiil's stelae, and (3) the expert advice of Karl Taube.

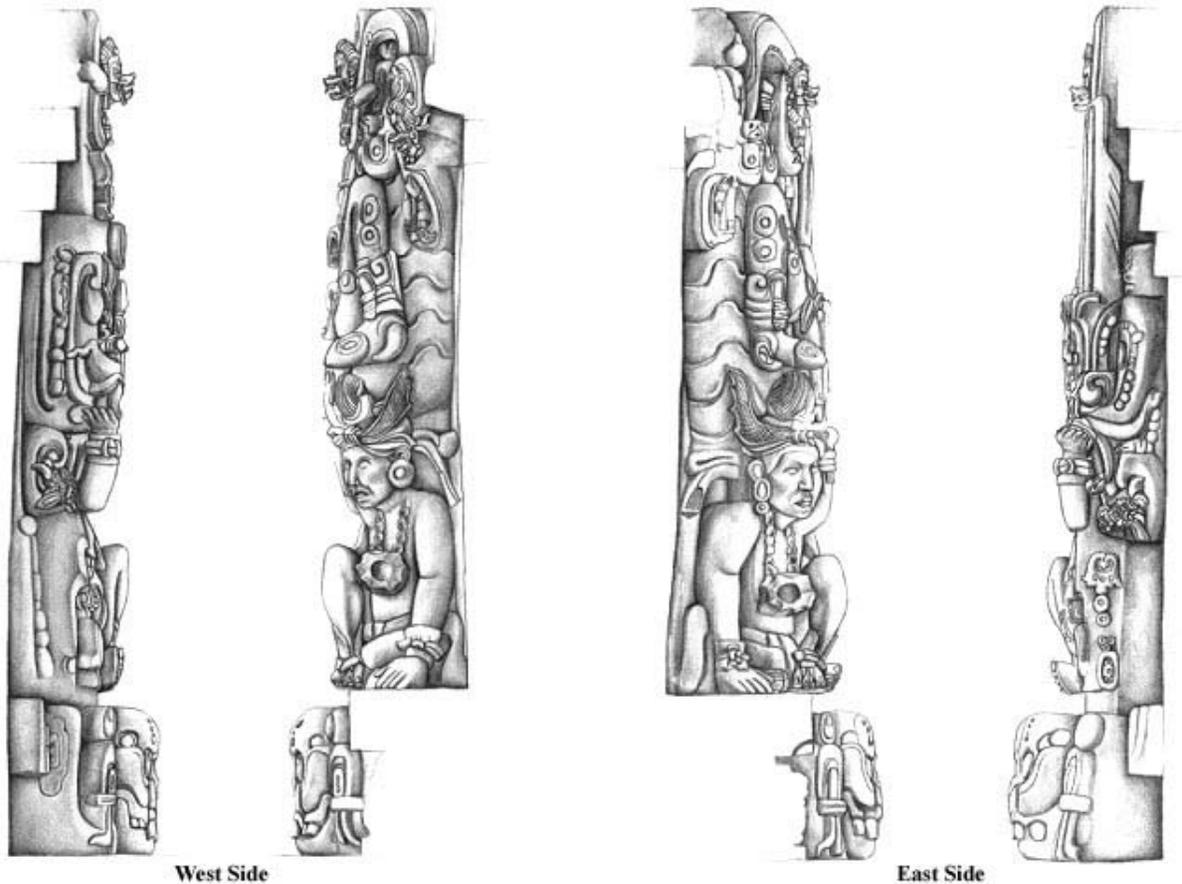


**Figure 6. Reconstruction drawing of ornamental proscenium of Structure 10L-22 (Drawing by E. Zelaya and J. Ahlfeldt).**

This drawing is far more accurate than other such reconstruction drawings to date; the new information we have gleaned from a close analysis of this sculpture has modified my understanding of Structure 10L-22 considerably, and a discussion of these insights is included in the dissertation.

### ***Profile Views of Interior Proscenium***

Interestingly, the profile views of the right and left sides of this proscenium were never published. Any rendering of this masterpiece of Maya sculpture must include these views as well, for they contain important iconographic information that lead to a fuller understanding of the building. Zelaya also completed a line drawing and stippled reconstruction of these four profiles, which took him three months.



**Figure 7. Reconstruction views of the profiles of the West and East Sides of the Ornamental Proscenium of Structure 10L-22 (Drawing by E. Zelaya).**

## Summary

Research on Structure 22 during the 2002 season allowed for continued sculpture conservation, restoration, documentation, and analysis, as well as the production of drawings of sculpture motifs and various views of the interior sculpted proscenium. The generosity of the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., (FAMSI), has thus enabled: the creation of a catalogue of Structure 10L-22's sculpted façades, a revised examination of the significances of this major monument, and ongoing efforts to conserve the exquisite masterpieces of Copán's eighth-century sculptors.

## List of Figures

[Figure 1.](#) *Tun* motifs that probably belonged in four giant *witz* monster heads.

[Figure 2.](#) Eyelashes and this massive snout, probably from the same monster.

[Figure 3.](#) Four *IK* glyphs, which probably were placed in the mouth of these *witz* monsters.

[Figure 4.](#) Eight small masks, probably from a headdress.

[Figure 5.](#) Drawing of ornamental proscenium of Structure 10L-22 as it appears today (Drawing by E. Zelaya).

[Figure 6.](#) Reconstruction drawing of ornamental proscenium of Structure 10L-22 (Drawing by E. Zelaya and J. Ahlfeldt).

[Figure 7.](#) Reconstruction views of the profiles of the West and East Sides of the Ornamental Proscenium of Structure 10L-22 (Drawing by E. Zelaya).

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