



Glyph Dwellers

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The Stone Tenoned Heads from Quirigua Structure 1B-1

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Structure 1B-1 is an imposing edifice that dominates the south side of the Acropolis at Quirigua (**Fig. 1, 4**). Facing northward, the three wide doorways of the building lead to three rooms, the central room flanked by two smaller rooms, and the eastern and western rooms flanked by one room each, on the east and west. The building was first explored archaeologically by the School of American Archaeology (now the School of Advanced Research) of the Archaeological Institute of America, under the direction of Edgar Lee Hewett (Hewett 1911; Morley 1935:9–12). In 1912, it was cleared and excavated, and restoration was undertaken, the details of this work being described in several articles and books, mainly by Sylvanus G. Morley, the eminent Mayanist who served as project epigrapher (Hewett 1911; Morley 1912, 1913, 1935, 1937-38). Morley numbered the rooms 1-7, east to west (**Fig. 1**). That is, the main chambers have even numbers, and the secondary rooms have odd numbers.

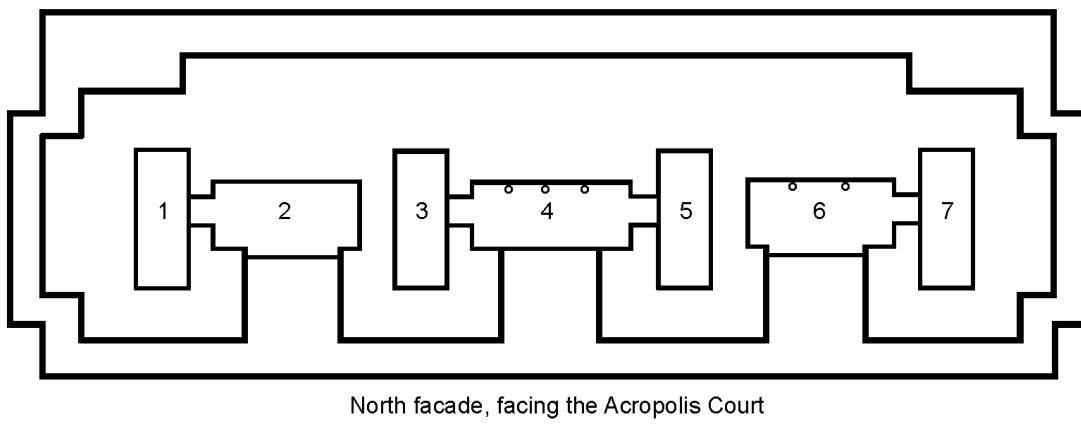


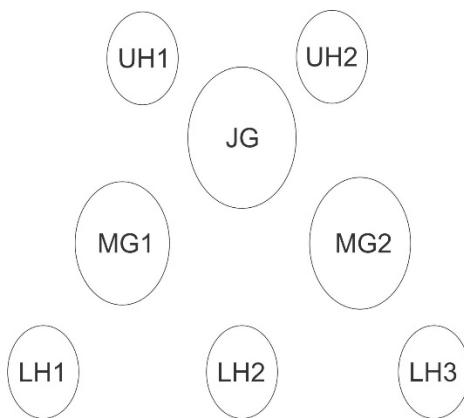
Fig. 1. Sketch of plan of Structure 1B-1 showing three main chambers (2, 4, 6) fitted with benches. Small circles against the rear walls of Chambers 4 and 6 represent approximate original locations of tenoned heads depicting aged deities, two of which are now lost.

Among the most important discoveries of this project were the building's hieroglyphic texts, inscribed on the three benches¹ located in each of the main chambers, as well as on its cornice (Looper 2003:186, 196; 2007:172; Luín et al. 2011; Morley 1913; 1935:123–134; 1937-38:vol. 4, 229–241; Sharer 1990:82–83). These provide not only the date of dedication of the building in 810 CE but also detail the rituals conducted by its patron, the local ruler Jade Sky, together with the contemporaneous ruler of Copan, Yax Pasaj Chan Yop'aat. In addition to its extensive hieroglyphic texts, Structure 1B-1 featured sculptural adornments including a number of tenoned sandstone heads. Photographs of 8 of these heads appear in various publications and archives; unfortunately, none of the photos show the sculptures where they were found. The main photo of the heads has them arranged upon a stepped platform or stairway draped with a striped blanket (**Fig. 2**). While the photo of the heads published by Morley in *National Geographic* and the *Guide Book* (Morley 1913; 1935:fig. 35) were based on the photo shown in **Figure 2**, a different shot with a somewhat lower viewpoint, but the same arrangement of heads, was reproduced in Morley's *Scientific American* article (Morley 1912:fig. 5).

¹ Ward and Rice (2022:69–70, fn. 31) provide a helpful discussion of why "bench" is a more appropriate term for these structures than "step," as Morley sometimes referred to them (e.g. Morley, in Ward and Rice 2022:86). Even though the structures provide access to the secondary rooms or vestibules of Structure 1B-1 (Chambers 1, 3, 5, 7), their protruding ledge and approximately 61 cm height suggest a similarity to "benches" at other Maya sites. See also Cresson (2005).



Fig. 2. Stone tenoned heads from Quirigua Structure 1B-1. EHM07.05_003_058, Earl Morris papers at the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History.



Key to **Fig. 2.** "UH" = upper head; "JG" = Jester God; "MG" = Maize God; "LH" = lower head.



While the project's reports provide some information about the building, they are often lacking in detail, contradictory, and sometimes even misleading. For example, in the *Guide Book* (1935:128-129), Morley states: "*With the exception of one head which was acquired by the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York City, and another now in the National Museum at Guatemala City, these heads were left in the United Fruit Company Hotel at Quirigua Station and were destroyed when that building burned to the ground in 1929.*" Nevertheless, for some time, it has been clear that this statement is incorrect, as there are in fact two heads from this building in the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC, which evolved from the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation. Two more are in the collection of the Hood Art Museum at Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH, and a fifth head is in the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University (see below). At present, I have been unable to confirm the current location of the head that Morley asserts is in Guatemala City.

The recent publication of Morley's field notes relating to his excavations at Quirigua provides an important opportunity to review the data concerning this building and its sculptural program (see Ward and Rice 2022). In this note, I present the information that is available on the original context of these heads, as reported in various sources, and then attempt to identify these with the physical sculptures that are currently accounted for. Because it provides the most complete record of the heads at their time of discovery, I will use the photo in **Figure 2** as the main visual reference, referring to depicted heads using the following designations: UH1 and UH2 ("upper heads") for the heads on the topmost row (numbering left to right), JG for the large Jester God head placed on the second step from the top, MG1 and 2 for the Maize God sculptures below this, and finally LH1-3 for the "lower heads" located at the bottom of the photo.

Excavation of the Exterior Heads

The first set of tenoned heads associated with Structure 1B-1 to be found was collected from the debris in front of the building (its north side). Hewett (1911:122) writes: "*A number of small human heads, beautifully sculptured in the gray and red sandstone of the region, were uncovered in this area [the Acropolis Court].*" He refers to a set of images (his Plate XIX) which show three heads: MG1, MG2, and JG (**Fig. 3**). The same photos are reproduced in rearranged format in Morley's *Inscriptions of Peten* (1937-38, vol. 5:pl. 177).²

² These photos were taken by Jesse Nusbaum, matching the Palace of the Governors Photo Archive (New Mexico History Museum, University of New Mexico) negatives 060999, 061000, 061001, 061002, 061003, 061004 (<https://econtent.unm.edu/digital/collection/nusbaum>).



PLATE XIX



SCULPTURES: FRONT AND PROFILE

Fig. 3. Stone tenoned heads photographed by Jesse Nusbaum and published in Hewett (1911). Public domain image.

The next year, Morley reported the discovery of a fourth façade head:

Morley Field notes 1912-Mar. 12: "At a point 57' W of the NE corner there was uncovered in the N trench another human head exactly like the two found further to the E in the same trench. ... The two uncovered last year with a third, a grotesque head, were found near the E doorway in such a way as to indicate that



the grotesque head was flanked by the two human heads. It is possible that the head uncovered today may be one of a similar trio, particularly since it is exactly like the human heads of last year, and since it too is near the second, or middle doorway in this facade." (Ward and Rice 2022:77)

This passage indicates that MG1, MG2 and JG were originally associated with the eastern doorway and that a head similar to MG1 and 2 was found in association with the central doorway. However, contrary to Morley's expectations, this was the sole head found near the central portal. This information is consistent with the description of the excavation of the building by Earl H. Morris, a member of the SAA expedition in 1912, which states that a sculpted human head was found on the terrace in front of each of the three doorways of the building (Ward and Rice 2022:97). This information suggests that UH1 and 2 might correspond to the heads found in front of the central and western doorways of the structure, although we cannot be sure which pertained to a particular doorway, because Morley's field notes do not provide details about the discovery of the head from the western doorway, and descriptions of the heads in the photos are incomplete. Further, because the photos of the two upper heads are always frontal, it is not possible to determine the configuration of their tenons.

The accounts by Morley and Morris are not entirely consistent with later publications by Morley. For example, the captions for the photos on page 354 in Morley's *National Geographic* article on Quirigua (1913), state that the upper five heads were found in front of the building, but that JG was installed over the central doorway, while MG1 and 2 were placed above the eastern and western doorways. Somewhat later, in his *Guide Book*, Morley (1935:128) seems to return to the assertion of his field notes, stating that the JG, "flanked by two of the human heads," was associated with the eastern doorway, not the center. But only a couple of years later, Morley (1937-38, vol. 4:234; vol. 5:pl. 177 caption) changed his mind again in *Inscriptions of Peten*, stating that the trio of heads were associated with the central doorway. Unfortunately, because no photographs of the heads are known to have been taken during excavations, we cannot be sure of the exact distribution of the five upper heads in Fig. 2. We can only infer that they were associated with the exterior of the building, probably installed somewhere above the three doorways, assuming that the heads fell directly from the façade of the building when it collapsed (see Morley, in Ward and Rice 2022:110).

Excavation of the Interior Heads

Several tenoned heads were also found in the interior of Structure 1B-1. In his field notes, Morley reports the finding of three heads, partly coated with plaster, in the central room interior on March 23, 1912. This information is consistent with published accounts by Morley, and he consistently identifies the LH1-3 as these heads (1912:97; 1913:347, 350, 351; 1935:125; 1937-38, vol. 4:234). However, on March 28, when excavating the western room (Chamber 6), he found another head:

Morley Field notes 1912-Mar. 28: "...another head like the two side heads in Chamber 4 was found. This was on the floor level just against the bench, as was the case with the heads in Chamber 4." (Ward and Rice 2022:88).

The next day, when continuing excavations of the western room and its annex (Chambers 6 and 7), Morley found a second head:



Morley Field notes 1912-Mar. 29: "*In the former [Chamber 6] there was recovered in the SW corner another head exactly like the one taken out yesterday in Chamber 4*" (Ward and Rice 2022:88). The mention of Chamber 4 is erroneous, as the day before, he excavated Chamber 6, not 4. He also found the tenons for these heads 1.7 m above the bench. Morley (1912:97; 1937-38:vol. 4, 234) confirms the information about finding these two heads in Chamber 6. These passages, then, suggest the existence of two heads similar to LH1-3, but which were not photographed. Morris (see Ward and Rice 2022:97) also mentions five "grotesque sculptured heads" associated with Chambers 4 and 6.

In conclusion, a total of 10 tenoned heads were likely found in association with Structure 1B-1 (see also Sharer 1990:83-84 for a summary). LH1-3 were installed in the interior of the center room (Chamber 4) above the bench. Two heads similar to LH1-3 that were installed in the western room (Chamber 6) above the bench are missing from the "group" photo and all other photos. The remaining upper 5 heads in the photo were likely associated with the building's exterior. If Morley's field notes, together with the report by Morris, are taken as authoritative, the simplest conclusion would be that the two upper heads in the photo were found in association with the central and western portals of the building, while MG1, 2 and JG were from the eastern portal. These seem likely to have been installed somewhere above the doorway, visible from the Acropolis Court. Because this reported distribution is asymmetrical, it is possible that additional heads, never recovered in excavations, may have been located above the central and western portals. Complete symmetry would require a minimum of four additional heads. As the doorways are very wide (about 3 meters), there would have been plenty of space above each doorway for a triad of heads, each measuring about 20-25 cm wide. Further, as the excavators failed to note any additional fragments representing body parts, it is possible that these heads were presented disembodied, like the heads found inside the structure. No necks are visible, and the sculptured portion of the Maize Gods' hair extends along the tenon for a few centimeters, suggesting that they must have protruded strongly from the wall in which they were installed.

It is worth noting, however, that numerous sculptures representing other body parts, such as hands, feet, and a partial torso with a belt rendered with a sky-band, seem to have been associated with Structure 1B-1. These appear in the foreground of a photo of Structure 1B-1 published in *National Geographic*, stated to be by Morley (**Fig. 4**; Morley 1913:357). The belt fragment, as well as a various hand, arm and limb fragments were housed in the Quirigua bodega when I was conducting fieldwork at the site in the early 1990s (**Fig. 5**). However, because none of these fragments was recorded in excavation reports, it is not certain that they were part of the Structure 1B-1 program. Moreover, at least two other tenoned fragments depicting human heads were documented in the bodega (**Fig. 6, 7**). The tenon on one of these heads extends across the entire back of the block, and the sculptured portion of the head is mostly confined to the front of the block, suggesting that it did not protrude much from the wall as did the other heads discussed above (**Fig. 6**). The rear of the other head is sheared off (**Fig. 7**). It is possible that these heads, along with the other fragments representing body parts, may have pertained to full-figure anthropomorphic mosaic sculptures mounted on the upper zone of some building in the Acropolis, possibly Structure 1B-1.



Fig. 4. Quirigua Structure 1B-1 during reconstruction, 1912. Note sculpture fragments in lower left foreground. EHM07.05_003_053, Earl Morris papers at the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History.



Fig. 5. Miscellaneous stone sculpture fragments possibly pertaining to Structure 1B-1, Quirigua bodega. Photos by Thomas Tolles.



Fig. 6. Stone sculpture fragment, Quirigua bodega. Photos by Thomas Tolles.



Fig. 7. Stone sculpture fragment, Quirigua bodega. Photos by Thomas Tolles.

Stone Heads in the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)

As mentioned above, two stone heads from Structure 1B-1—rather than only one as stated by Morley—are in the collection of the NMAI in Washington, DC. These include 098198.000 (Fig. 8), which represents the Maize God and corresponds to MG2 in Fig. 2. It was published in the catalog *Die Welt der Maya* (Eggebrecht 1994:466, cat. 133); however, the catalog entry for the item does not mention its archaeological context. The second head from Structure 1B-1 in the NMAI collection is 098199.000 (Fig. 9), a sculpture of an aged deity that was previously published in the *Indian Art in Middle America* catalog (Dockstader 1964:cat. 104). In this source, the caption notes that the head was tenoned into the wall of the "great palace" at Quirigua; Marshall H. Saville collected it in 1920; and James B. Ford gave it to the museum. James B[ishop] Ford [1844-1928] was a member of the board of trustees of the Heye Foundation. Marshall H. Saville was professor of American archaeology at Columbia University and curator of the Museum of the American Indian. He was also the author of "Bibliographic Notes on Quirigua, Guatemala" (Saville 1919). According to documents in the Marshall Saville papers (Box 3, Folder 9) in the American Museum of Natural History (New York) Division of Anthropology Archives, Saville acquired the heads from an unknown source between February and May 1917, long before Morley commented on them in his *Guide Book* (Ann McMullen, personal communication, 2022).³

The head (NMAI 098199.000) shown in Fig. 9 does not seem to correspond to any of the heads shown in the Fig. 2 photo. As discussed below, LH3 is accounted for in another collection, and the coiffure of the central head (LH2) is damaged. The expression of the NMAI head is more "scowling" than LH1; its mouth is narrower; and its hairstyle appears in front view as a horizontal hair "slab" topped by another slab that is divided vertically by two cuts. In the photo, LH1 seems to lack the lower "slab." Because the three heads

³ Both heads also appear (cropped) in a photo found in the online database of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University obj. no. 58-34-20/71452. There also plaster casts of 098198.000 in the Peabody Museum collection: obj. no. 40-61-20/7827 and 49-2-20/17895 (collections.peabody.harvard.edu).



in the photo are said to be from Chamber 4 of Structure 1B-1, it is reasonable to conclude that the NMAI head pertained to Chamber 6.



Fig. 8. Stone head from Quirigua Structure 1B-1 in the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC. 098198.000. Collected or purchased from local residents during MAI's Marshall Saville Guatemala Expedition (1917-1920), which was led by MAI staff member Marshall H. Saville (1867-1935) and sponsored by MAI trustee James B. Ford (1844-1928).



Fig. 9. Stone head from Quirigua Structure 1B-1 in the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC. 098199.000. Collected or purchased from local residents during MAI's Marshall Saville Guatemala Expedition (1917-1920), which was led by MAI staff member Marshall H. Saville (1867-1935) and sponsored by MAI trustee James B. Ford (1844-1928).



Stone Heads in the Hood Museum of Art

The NMAI is not the only US museum to house two tenoned heads from Structure 1B-1. Two more are held in the collection of the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College. One, corresponding to MG1 in the Fig. 2 photo, is 38.12.5538 (Fig. 10). This sculpture was previously published in Kelemen (1946:pl. 88b). The other, 38.12.5537 (Fig. 11), is aged but again is unlike any of the heads in Fig. 2. It seems, therefore, that this head was paired with NMAI head 098199.000, which it closely resembles, and would have been installed in Chamber 6. Both Hood Museum heads were gifts of Mrs. Victor M. Cutter in 1938. Victor M. Cutter [1881-1952] was a Dartmouth graduate, eventually becoming president of the United Fruit Company from 1924-1933. In 1910, when the AIA project began working at Quirigua, he oversaw the establishment of the archaeological preserve at the site, which eventually became Quirigua Archaeological Park.



Fig. 10. Stone head from Quirigua Structure 1B-1 in the Hood Museum of Art. Unidentified Maya maker (Guatemala), *Architectural Element from Quiriguá*, about 810, sandstone, $11\frac{13}{16} \times 8\frac{1}{8} \times 9\frac{11}{16}$ in. Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth: Gift of Mrs. Victor M. Cutter, Class of 1903W; 38.12.5538.



Fig. 11. Stone head from Quirigua Structure 1B-1 in the Hood Museum of Art. Unidentified Maya maker (Guatemala), *Architectural Element from Quiriguá*, about 810, sandstone, $9\frac{3}{8} \times 5\frac{9}{16} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ in. Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth: Gift of Mrs. Victor M. Cutter, Class of 1903W; 38.12.5537.

Stone Head in the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology

The Peabody Museum at Harvard also houses one of the interior heads from Structure 1B-1 (**Fig. 12**). This head (accession number: 40-17-20/7828) is similar to the two aged heads discussed above but has a strongly sunken lower jaw. Its excellent preservation of coiffure, prominent smile, and high cheekbones suggest a match with LH3 from **Fig. 2**, indicating that it was likely one of the three heads installed in Chamber 4. According to Peabody Museum records, the head was obtained in Guatemala under unknown circumstances by Thomas Ozro Nowlin of Nashville, TN, who gave it to his relative George Wyeth Ewing, of Lewisburg, TN, ca. 1922, and was subsequently acquired by the Peabody Museum in 1940.⁴

⁴ 40-17-20/7828, Accession Records, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.



Fig. 12. Stone head from Chamber 4, Structure 1B-1, Quirigua, now in the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. **a, b.** Front and side views of stone head (38-5-764), Gift of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1958. © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 58-34-20/38828 and 58-34-20/38827; **c.** Stone head, Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 40-17-20/7828.

The Iconographic Program: A House Commemorating Royal Accession

While our understanding of the iconographic program of these tenoned doorway heads is limited by lack of data, a few comments can be made about it, based on the featured images of Maize Gods and the Jester God. The Maize Gods (MG1, 2) have idealized youthful faces, stylized ears with pendant ornaments, and mostly shaved heads with backwards-projecting crania, hair crests, and inverted 'U'-shaped bands of hair framing their faces. This conforms to the representation of the so-called "tonsured Maize God," which embodies the spirit of young, growing maize (see Taube 1985). For example, various painted vases show Maize Gods wearing the same hairstyle (**Fig. 13**).

The iconographic identification of UH1 and 2 is more problematic. They are very similar to each other but clearly distinct in style from MG1 and 2. Although photographic documentation of them is not ideal, they seem to have hairstyles and forehead ornaments similar to the Maize God sculpture shown in **Fig. 21** and may therefore depict the same god.



Fig. 13. Tonsured Maize Gods from two Late Classic painted vases. Note hair framing face and crest of hair atop head. Photos by Justin Kerr (K6997 and 7268).

On the north side of Quirigua Stela H, the Maize God has the same band of hair framing his face, while the hair crest transforms into flowing corn silk or foliage (**Fig. 14a**). Similar hairstyles are also worn by the Maize God sculptures that decorated Structure 10L-22 at Copan, dedicated in 715 (**Fig. 14b,c**). While the prominence of these Maize God heads on the Structure 1B-1 façade may indicate an association with agriculture or fertility in general, it is more likely that they explicitly signaled kingship and royal accession, as the Maize God was a principal divine counterpart for the king, especially during rituals of royal accession (see Estrada Belli 2006; Saturno, Taube, and Stuart 2005; Schele 1976; Schele and Mathews 1998; Taube 1985). In fact, Copan Structure 10L-22 was decorated with a program of no fewer than twenty Maize God busts, corresponding to the twenty-year reign of the king Waxaklaju'n Ubaah K'awiil (Ahlfeldt 2004; Fash 2012; Morales 1997; Von Schwerin 2011). It therefore seems plausible that Structure 1B-1 at Quirigua was modeled specifically on Copan Structure 10L-22, in that it employed nearly three-dimensional Maize God sculptures as a metaphor for royal accession. As discussed elsewhere, the sculptural programs at Quirigua owe a considerable conceptual debt to those of Copan (see Looper 2003).



Fig. 14. Maize Gods at Quirigua and Copan. **a.** Quirigua Stela H (751 CE). Photo by Thomas Tolles; **b-c.** Stone fragment from façade of Copan Structure 10L-22 (715 CE). Photos by Justin Kerr.

The Jester God that appears on the façade is also an important icon of rulership in the Classic period, being an embodiment of the royal bark-paper crown (Stuart 2012). In the Quirigua example, the deity has large eyes and "X" markings in the forehead (Fig. 15a).⁵ Unlike the other heads in the Quirigua program, this being has full earflare assemblages. The same deity head appears frequently in Maya texts, representing the morpheme *huun* '(bark paper) headband' (Fig. 15b). In various texts at Quirigua, as at other Maya sites, royal accession is sometimes commemorated through an expression that refers to the act of binding the king with this headband (*k'al-huun*; e.g. Quirigua Altar O' M1; Zoomorph G N'04). Therefore, the placement of a Jester God image on the front of Structure 1B-1 reinforces the Maize God imagery, suggesting not only royalty in general, but specifically royal accession. In fact, the cornice text of the building mentions a 'K'awiil-taking' by an individual who might be the king Jade Sky (Fig. 16a). In other texts at Quirigua, this phrase is used to describe the accession of rulers (Fig. 16b, c). The exterior tenoned head program of this building, therefore, seems to specifically commemorate the king's accession, even though it was dedicated in 810, which was probably long after Jade Sky had acceded to power. Although no accession date is preserved for him, Jade Sky is mentioned as the patron of both Stela K (805 CE) and Stela I (800 CE), and therefore must have taken power sometime between 795 and 800. The upper zone of Structure 1B-1 also included a band depicting stylized roof thatching (Fig. 17). This motif, which Morley (in Ward and Rice 2022:74, 81) termed a "feather" or "leaf" pattern, is a representation of the thatched roof of a house (Fig. 17a). The same motif appears as part of the (Y)OTOOT "house" glyph (T614), thus identifying the building as a symbolic "house" (Fig. 17b). In Morley's (1937-38, vol. 4:232, fig. 146) reconstruction of the elevation of Structure 1B-1, he erroneously renders this band upside down.

⁵ The "X" motif also appears in place of the usual arching "shiny" motif as an eye infix on T1030o on Copan Stela C B6.

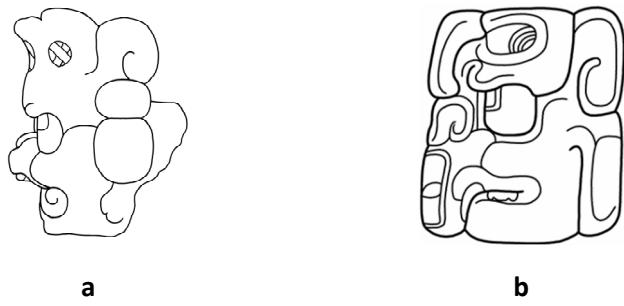


Fig 15. a. Jester God head from Quirigua Structure 1B-1; b. SM1 (T1030o) **HUUN** (Palenque Palace Tablet J15). Drawings by Matthew Looper.

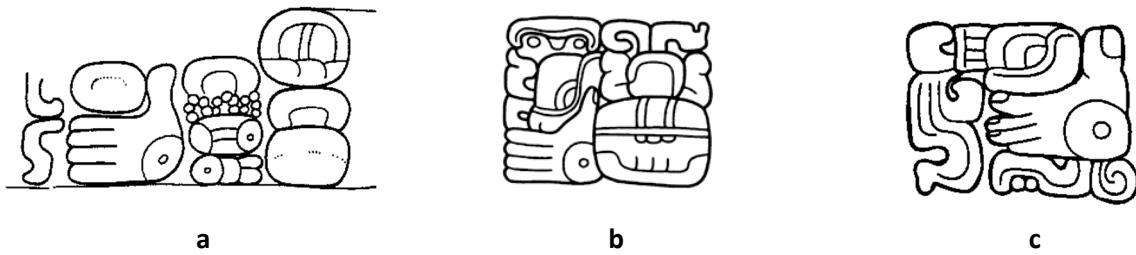


Fig. 16. Accession (*ch'am/k'am k'awiil*) expressions at Quirigua. a Structure 1B-1 cornice 02-03; b. Stela E A8; c. Stela F B6. Drawings by Matthew Looper.



Fig. 17. Iconographic identification of motifs from upper zone of Quirigua Str. 1B-1 façade. a. Stones inscribed with thatched roof motifs, originally from Quirigua Structure 1B-1 upper zone. Photo by Thomas Tolles; b. T614 (Y)OTOOT glyph, Copan Structure 9N-82. Drawing by Matthew Looper.



The heads originally installed inside Chambers 4 and 6 have furrowed brows, large eyes, and sunken lips suggestive of great age. However, like the Maize Gods, they also have stylized human ears with pendant beads, and their luxuriant hair extends upward above their heads. A lock of hair appears at the base of their necks. The hairstyles of these aged personages may indicate that they are intended to represent God D, a celestial deity who sometimes is shown with a Maize God-like hairstyle (see Hellmuth 1987:303–312; Martin 2015:197; Taube 1992:31–41). For example, in many images from painted vases (**Fig. 18**), God D's head has a band of hair above the forehead and is shaved above, with a crest of hair on top of the head. Further, in Maya art, God D is frequently shown enthroned, and this seems to be indicated at Quirigua through the installation of the deity heads directly above inscribed benches. At Quirigua, the inscription of Stela C mentions the setting of three stone-thrones by the gods as an act of cosmic ordering (**Fig. 19**; Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:64–67; MacLeod 1991). The last of these thrones, a "water throne-stone" was set up by God D and is materialized in the form of Zoomorph B, which is also a commemorative accession throne for the king who erected it, K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yop'aat (**Fig. 20**; Looper 1995; 2003:11). It is plausible, then, that the benches of Structure 1B-1, surmounted by tenoned heads representing God D, symbolize a ceremonial accession throne for Jade Sky. Seated on one of the benches in Chambers 4 or 6, the ruler would present a physical embodiment of the deity. The theme of royal accession is therefore expressed both in the exterior and interior sculptural programs of the building.



Fig. 18. Enthroned God D from painted vases (K7727, K1183). Note hair crest, similar to the Tonsured Maize God. Photos by Justin Kerr.

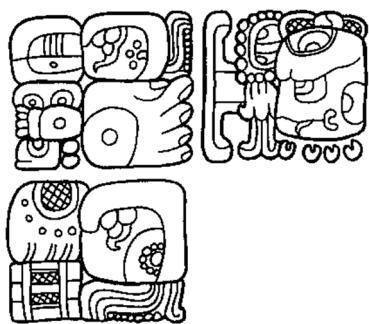


Fig. 19. Quirigua Stela C, east, detail of text describing setting of "water throne-stone" by God D. Drawing by Matthew Looper.

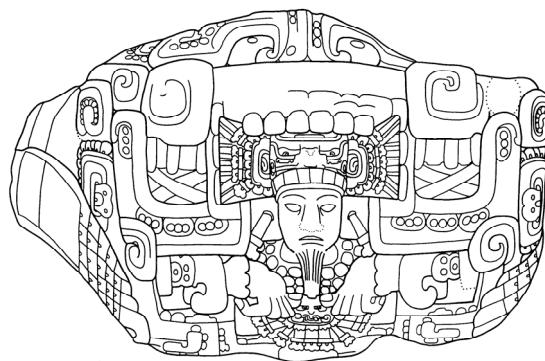


Fig. 20. Quirigua Zoomorph B, south, showing K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yop'aat emerging from mouth of cosmic crocodile. Drawing by Matthew Looper.

Relationships to Other Architectural Sculpture Programs

While Structure 1B-1 bore the most elaborate architectural stone sculpture program at Quirigua, it was not unique. Across the Acropolis Court from it, Structure 1B-5, which dates to the same building phase as 1B-1, was also extensively decorated with sculpture, though in stucco modeled over roughly cut stone, rather than finely-cut stone (Jones, Ashmore, and Sharer 1983:7–8). Unfortunately, as it was the last phase of construction, its decorative program was almost completely destroyed after site abandonment. An earlier Acropolis sculpture program was uncovered by the University of Pennsylvania Quirigua Project in the 1970s: the "K'inich Ahau" wall (Coe and Sharer 1979:17; Sharer et al. 1979:50–51). This program consists of carved stone busts of a solar deity emerging from portals. Even earlier than this, however, is the carved stone façade of Structure 1B-2, dating to the early eighth century (Morley 1913:354–358; 1935; Sharer 1990:86). This program consists of mountain masks on the structure's corners and wall mosaics depicting the "Five Flower place" supernatural location (Looper 2003:66–71). Thus, the carved-stone decorative program of Structure 1B-1 was not a new development but represents an expansion of local architectural design.

The concept of "disembodied" tenoned heads represented by the Structure 1B-1 program at Quirigua is unusual. Tenoned human or deity heads have been found throughout the Maya area; however, because most examples are unprovenanced or are otherwise were not found *in situ*, not only is their site of origin unknown, but they may or may not have been associated with larger figures (see Mayer 1991:24). In addition, the tenons originally attached to the heads have often been shortened or detached. Tenoned heads are found throughout the Maya area, from the highlands/Pacific slope (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2009; 2014:fig. 6; Chinchilla Mazariegos, Bove, and Genovez 2009; Chinchilla Mazariegos and Luin 2022; Mayer 1991:65, cat. 118, pl. 232; Parsons 1986:84–86, fig. 200), through the southern lowlands (Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981:103, fig. 28; Graham 1967:59, fig. 40; Mayer 1987:25–26, cat. 40, pl. 108; 1991:14, pl. 8, 60; 1995:pl. 16), to the northern lowlands (Pollock 1980:271, fig. 476b,c,d; 337, fig. 576c; 454, fig. 762d).⁶ In the southeastern region, where Quirigua is located, tenoned human heads are well represented

⁶ Numerous unprovenanced examples of tenoned heads from the Puuc (or Northern Yucatan, generally) are catalogued by Mayer (1987:19, cat. 15, pl. 77; 19, cat. 16, pl. 78; 1989:23, cat. 8, pl. 120; 25, cat. 14, pl. 129; 35, cat. 47, cat. 48, pl. 157; 35, cat. 49, pl. 158; 42, cat. 73, pl. 179; 1991:23–24, cat. 3, pl. 134; 31,



at Copan, but are usually associated with full figures or torsos (Ashmore 1991:215; Fash 1992; Fash 2001; Fash 2011). They are also found at southeastern sites like Playitas (Berlin 1952; Mayer 1995:pl. 41), El Abra (Mayer 1995:pl. 2), Las Cañadas (Mayer 1995:pl. 22b), and Palma Real (Mayer 1995:pl. 38) as well as the La Entrada region (Mayer 1995:47-48, cat. 44, 45, pl. 184, 185), as well as unprovenienced examples (**Fig. 21**; Kelemen 1946:138; Mayer 1987:22, cat. 27, pl. 89, 90; 30, cat. 57, pl. 124; 1989:26, cat 16, pl. 131).



Fig. 21. Unprovenienced tenoned Maize God head, published by Kelemen (1946:138) and Mayer (1989:26, cat. 16, pl. 131). EHM07.05_003_059, Earl Morris papers at the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History.

cat. 16, pl. 150; 43-44, cat. 50, pl. 180; 50, cat. 72, pl. 197; 51, cat. 75, pl. 200; 54, cat. 90, pl. 205; 1995:55-56, cat. 64, 67, 68, pl. 208; 57, cat. 72, pl. 210b; 57-58, cat. 73, pl. 211a; 69, cat. 117, pl. 241, 242; 69-70, cat. 120, pl. 245a).



Dos Pilas Miscellaneous Sculptured Stones (MSS) 5 and 6 provide examples of *in situ* disembodied tenoned human heads from the southern lowlands (Houston 1987:208–210, 254, 255, figs. 32, 33). These were tenoned into northwest and southwest corners of the basal platform of Structure L5-49. Houston (1987:208–209) suggests that the bulging eyes and grimace of MSS 5 depict a captive trophy head. *In situ* examples of anthropomorphic heads without associated figures also appear at Labna (stone) from the exterior lower story (Pollock 1980:16, fig. 15) and Sayil Structure 1B2 (stucco) from the exterior upper wall zone (Pollock 1980:88, fig. 167). However, isolated heads that project strongly from the interior wall of a building, as in the heads from Quirigua Structure 1B-1 Chambers 4 and 6, are unknown elsewhere. In sum, the tenoned head program at Quirigua seems to be highly original, probably inspired by general concepts expressed first at Copan, but presented in a novel format and carved in the local sculptural style.

Conclusion

Despite incomplete documentation of excavations and contradictory statements by their excavator, a total of 10 tenoned stone heads originating from Structure 1B-1 at Quirigua can be identified. Of the 8 heads appearing in the early photo shown in [Fig. 2](#), three of the heads are known from US museum collections (see [Fig. 22](#)). The upper three heads in the photo likely pertained to the building's exterior. The first two heads on the lowest row in the picture came from Chamber 4 of this building, but their current location or even their existence is unknown. The head in the lower right in the photograph may be the sole surviving head excavated from Chamber 4. Two more heads not appearing in the photo are documented in museums, both of which probably pertained to Chamber 6 of the structure. In sum, the photographic documentation of the Structure 1B-1 sculptures partially overlaps with the data provided by museum collections, though additional heads may have originally been associated with this program, the overall iconographic theme of which was royal accession.

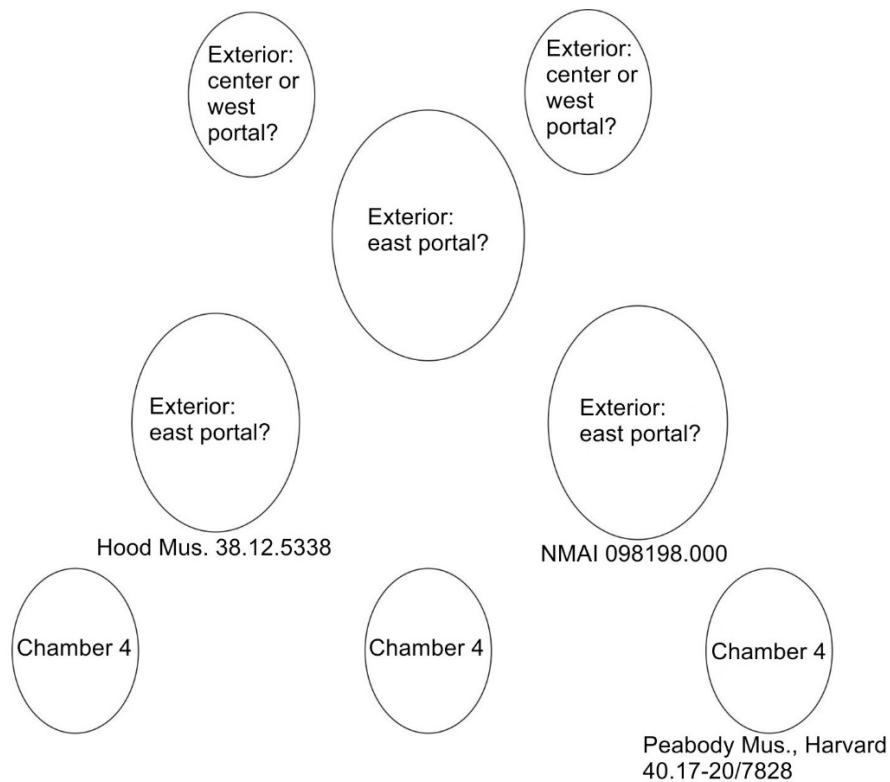


Fig. 22. Key to heads appearing in photo shown in Fig. 2, with suggested origin and current location.

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