

Title:

Paleogenomic insights into Classic Copan

Authors:

Shigeki Nakagome^{1,2}, Seiichi Nakamura³, Madeleine Murray¹, Melvin Fuentes⁴, Rolando Canizales⁵, Omar Talavera⁵, Salvador Varela⁴, Zoila Madrid⁴, Carlos Carbajal⁴, Masahiro Ogawa³, Minoru Yoneda⁶, Lara M. Cassidy⁷, Takashi Gakuhari²

¹School of Medicine, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

²Institute for the Study of Ancient Civilizations and Cultural Resources, Kanazawa University, Kanazawa, Japan

³Research Centre for Next Generation Archaeological Studies, Komatsu University, Komatsu, Japan

⁴Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History, Copan Ruinas, Honduras

⁵Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History, Tegucigalpa, M.D.C, Honduras

⁶The University Museum, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan

⁷Smurfit Institute of Genetics, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

Abstract:

Copán, located at the southeastern edge of the Classic Maya world, was a key urban centre that connected regions of Central and South America. In 426/427 CE, a royal dynasty was founded there, lasting nearly four centuries. While the city is well-documented through archaeological and historical sources, little is known about the genetic makeup of its ancient inhabitants. In this study, we present genomic data from Classic Copán, including a possible royal family member and a person buried in a sacrificial context. Our findings reveal that the people of Classic Copán form a distinct genetic cluster closely related to the Late Archaic population from Belize, as well as Terminal Classic Maya from Chichén Itzá, Colonial-era Maya from Campeche, and modern Maya groups in Mexico. Tracing ancestry to the Late Archaic Belize population, we also detect genetic contributions from highland Mexico beginning in the Early-to-Middle Classic period, highlighting the importance of gene flow in shaping the Classic Maya civilization.