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Contents

mexicon XXXII (5)

Cover: Three Maya unprovenanced Tikal Dancer plates	98–102
Research Notes	102–105
News	105–107
Conferences and Exhibits	107–108
Obituaries	108–109
Contributions	
Carleen D. Sanchez Monumental Architecture and Preclassic Occupation at La Unión in Western Honduras	109–114
Michelle Rich, David Freidel, F. Kent Reilly III, and Keith Eppich An Olmec Style Figurine from El Perú-Waka', Petén, Guatemala: A Preliminary Report	115–122
Recent Publications – Books	122–125
– Periodicals	125–128
Imprimus	128

Cover

Three Maya unprovenanced “Tikal Dancer” plates

In 2009 I inspected and photographed in a private collection in Guatemala City a polychrome ceramic tripod plate which can be published here for the first time, using photographs provided anonymously (front cover, Fig. 1). This vessel has a diameter of 36 cm, and a maximum height of 8 cm. The plate is in almost pristine condition and also its three hollow supports, or rattle pedestals, are complete. The center of the interior painting is partially eroded and effaced. The excellently preserved underside of the object shows a cut step-fret motif design, the tree oval-shaped supports have two air-holes each (Fig. 1). This artifact has been analyzed in the course of a chemical and stylistic project conducted by Ronald Bishop and Dorie Reents-Budet, and received there the project number MS1511 (Reents-Budet and Bishop 2003; Looer 2008: 9).

The center interior design of the plate's flat interior bottom depicts on an orange or tawny background a standing anthropomorphic figure, commonly interpreted as the Maya Maize God, with the elongated head turned to the left, as seen by an observer. Both arms are held gracefully outward. The right foot of the personage is on the ground line, and his left leg is bent and the left foot is slightly lifted from the ground border, obviously implying a dynamic dancing pose. The body of this individual is painted overwhelmingly in a solid red, with a few minor black elements. The figure is decorated with wrist bands and anklets rendered in fine black lines, wears a headdress and a difficult to recognize textile waist belt from which hang long and narrow sashes. The deity holds in his hands some fabric bands.

Encircling the deity image are three double lines in black. The interior rim section is painted in red. The buff or cream-colored space between the two double lines contain four



Fig. 1. Underside of the polychrome ceramic plate (front cover).

separate panels in black, composed of repetitive distinctive elements.

The provenance of this ceramic vessel is unknown, but it is a typical example painted in the so-called style or tradition of the “Tikal Dancer Plate” corpus of the Late Classic period, ca. 600 – 900 AD, or more specifically ca. 600 – 650 AD. Its presumed place of origin is very probably the Guatemalan Department of Petén.

In October 2005 and July 2006 I was shown two polychrome unprovenanced tripod dancer plates displaying the same iconographic style and theme in an art gallery in Vienna, Austria, which are part of an Australian private collection. Both vessels are hitherto unpublished and I was permitted to inspect them and to take measurements and color photographs of both specimens. One piece (Fig. 2), has a diameter of 34 cm, and is 8 cm high. The vessel is in a good condition and the three rattle legs are well preserved. In the middle of the vessel is a small drilled hole. The interior design of the plate's bottom is portraying on a cream or orange colored background the dancing Maize God, encircled by a single line and a double line in black. The space between these lines contain repetitive points and geometric motifs in black and red on a creamy background. The outer rim area of the plate is divided into two halves: the right space is a red band, the left section shows on a creamy background a pseudo-glyphic design in red and black. The seven glyphic blocks are accompanied by four bar-and-dot signs, imitating numerals. The standing deity figure is painted in red and black in a dynamic pose, with the profile head, accentuated with a thin black line, turned to the left. The feet are close together and point outwards. Both arms are fully outstretched.

The second vessel documented in Vienna (Fig. 3), is generally also well preserved. It has a diameter of 32.2 cm, and a height of 8.4 cm. Approximately in the center of the vessel is a irregularly shaped small hole. The center design depicts in red and black, on a cream-colored background, the standing Maize God with the head turned to the left and with the feet pointing outwards. The scene is encircled by three thin red lines and tiny elements on top, then follow above another two

An Olmec Style Figurine from El Perú-Waka', Petén, Guatemala: A Preliminary Report

Michelle Rich, David Freidel, F. Kent Reilly III, and Keith Eppich

A greenstone figurine finely crafted in the Olmec style was recently discovered in a Late Classic Maya tomb at the archaeological site of El Perú-Waka', located in the southern Maya lowlands. Artifacts in the Olmec style have been encountered in many regions of Mesoamerica, and although we cannot know where this particular figurine was carved and incised, its worn condition suggests long, perhaps continuous, use. This report briefly outlines the archaeological context from which the figurine was scientifically excavated, and then focuses on its description and preliminary interpretation. The figurine is the subject of ongoing examination, particularly in its meaning as an heirloom object strengthening the notion of symbolic themes that persevered across various regions of Mesoamerica from the Preclassic period onward. These include, for example, the cult of the maize god, the sacred act of ritual bundling, divine kingship and its symbolic representations. A tangible representation of the past in the past, the figurine embodies ideas that can be read in the related symbol systems of each of these Mesoamerican cultures.

Place and Time: The Archaeological Setting

El Perú-Waka' is an ancient Maya city in present-day northwestern Petén, Guatemala, favorably positioned near the major riverine route of the San Pedro Mártir (Fig. 1). This location provided a central communication and transportation route between Tikal and Uaxactun to the east, and the Usumacinta River kingdoms of Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan to the west. The El Perú-Waka' Archaeological Project initiated field investigations at the site in 2003 under the co-direction of Drs. David Freidel and Héctor Escobedo. Ceramic chronology indicates occupation at El Perú-Waka' from the Late Preclassic through the Terminal Classic period, approximately 400 BCE – 1000 CE (Eppich et al. 2005; Pérez Robles 2005; Pérez Robles et al. 2008).

During the 2006 field season, Rich discovered the masonry vaulted tomb chamber of a previously unknown ruler of El Perú-Waka' in Structure O14-04 (Fig. 2). This building is located in the Mirador Group, where she conducted fieldwork from 2003 to 2006 (Rich 2004, 2005; Rich et al. 2006, 2007). The tomb, called Burial #39, was placed directly on top of an earlier substructure buried inside the pyramid's *adosada*, or frontal platform. A wide array of impressive artifacts signifying the wealth of Classic Maya elite and nobility comprised the mortuary assemblage, and many members of the El Perú-Waka' Archaeological Project, as well as other specialists, are participating in ongoing interdisciplinary analysis of the tomb chamber's contents. These include, but are not limited to, 33 ceramic vessels – ten of which are either painted or incised with hieroglyphic texts; a distinctive tableau of 23 ceramic figurines depicting members of a royal court; three sets of greenstone earspools; a miniature greenstone mosaic mask and a greenstone pendant. Evidence supporting the presence

of perishable organics, such as fabric, jaguar pelts and painted organic objects (Beaubien and Snyder 2010; Beaubien and Weber 2007; Rich 2008) was also discovered. Osteological analyses of the skeletal remains conducted by project bioarchaeologist Jennifer Piehl proved inconclusive in regard to sex due to poor preservation, but it was determined the individual was of advanced age and enjoyed a life of generally good health (Piehl 2008:195–197). Various elements of this lavish mortuary assemblage, coupled with its location in one of the grandest temple-pyramids at El Perú-Waka', suggest this individual was an unknown ruler of the ancient city.

While this is not the first noble interment to be discovered in the structure (see Rich et al. 2006), it is the first dating to the Late Classic. The date range most likely falls between 600–650 CE, based on the number of ceramic attributes correlating to both Uaxactun's Tepeu 1 phase, 600–700, as well as Tikal's Ik Complex (see Culbert 2003:60–61; Smith 1955:162–169). These attributes include bright and lustrous design elements placed on glossy cream and orange base slips, as well as design elements executed in dark red and in reserved portions of a dark black exterior slip. Some of the ceramic type-varieties represented include the Huisquil variety of Palmar Orange Polychrome (Adams 1971:38; Ball 1977:76), Juleki Cream Polychrome (Smith and Gifford 1966:159), Chimbote Cream Polychrome (Ball 1977:77–78), Petkanche Orange Polychrome (Ball 1977:72–75), as well as the more common ceramic types of the Late Classic, the Palmar Orange Polychromes and Tinaja Red. Furthermore, some Early Classic attributes occur, such as a creaminess and yellowish tint to the monochrome reds, more suited for Early Classic Aguila Orange than Late Classic Tinaja Red. The vessels are predominantly “stout” cylinder vases and “barrel” forms associated with the Intermediate Classic (550–700), being tripod cylinders that have lost their podal supports but are not yet the tall, narrow-waisted, slender forms of the famous Late Classic Maya vases (see Culbert 1993). Finally, vessel forms from Burial #39 closely match those of Tikal's Burial 195, thought to be the interment of that site's 22nd ruler, K'inich Waaw, who was buried sometime after his last epigraphic mention in 628 (Culbert 1993: fig. 50–51; Freidel and Guenter 2006:70). Consequently, placing the interment closer to the beginning rather than the end of the Intermediate Classic seems appropriate.

Additional data indicate Burial #39 was reentered through the top of the chamber. After the reentry event, the western side of the tomb's vault and the capstones appear to have been intentionally collapsed into the chamber, which was then infilled with matrix and large quantities of stucco sculptural elements, faunal remains, chert bifaces and flakes, obsidian polyhedral blade cores and debitage, and ceramic sherds. Sherds in this fill date from the Terminal Preclassic through the Terminal Classic periods, most likely placing the reentry

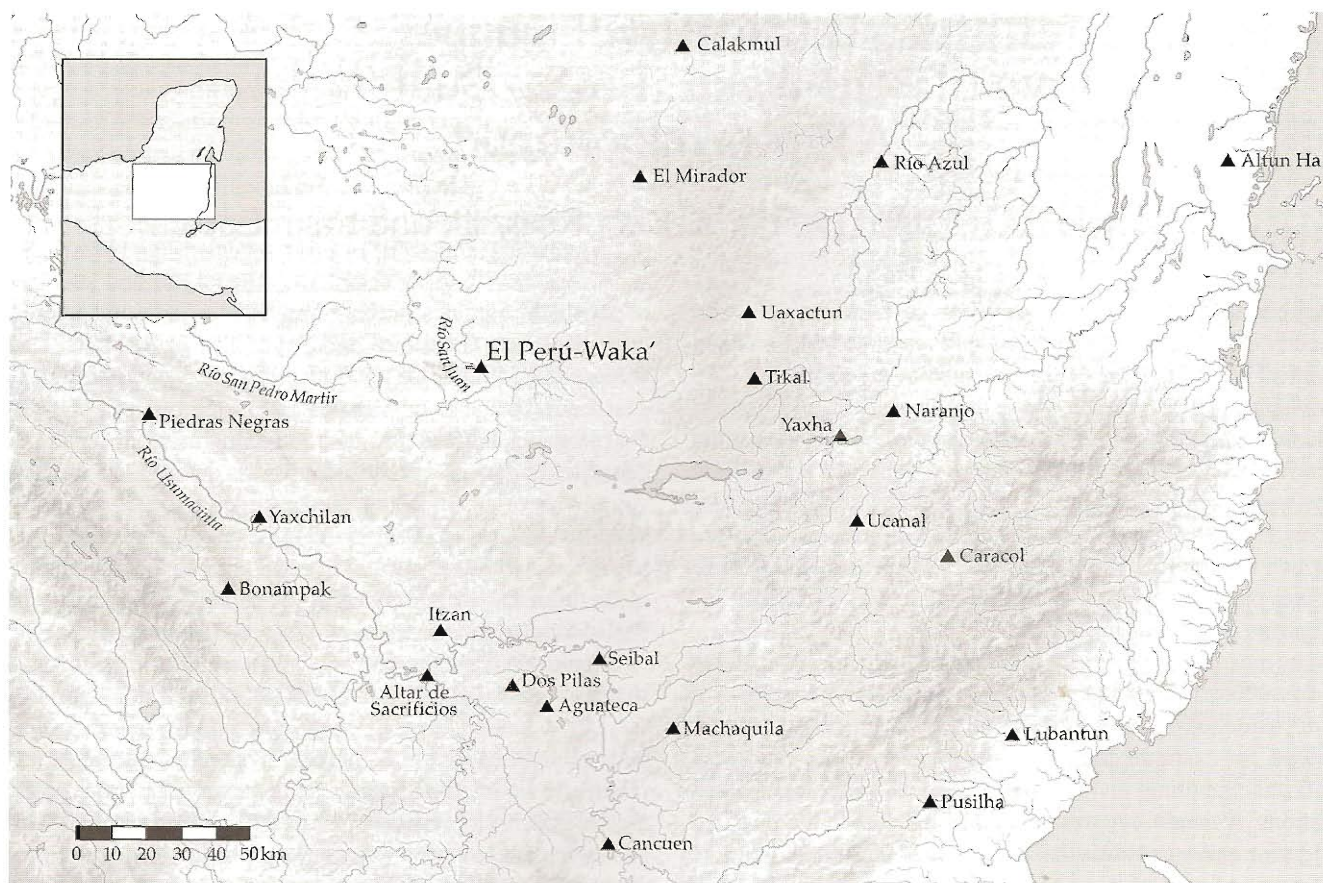


Fig. 1. Map of Guatemala showing location of El Perú-Waka'. Map Credit: Mesoweb Maps

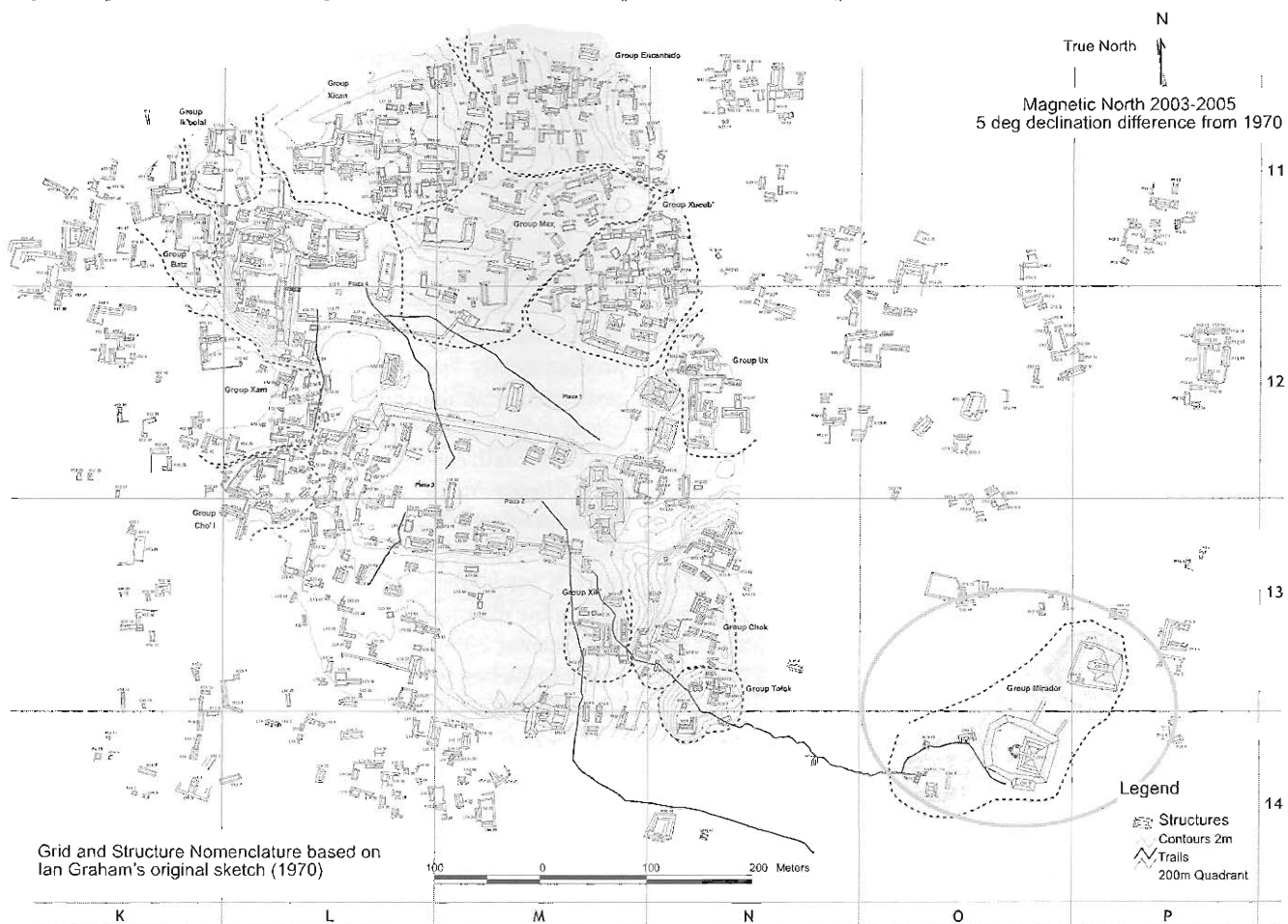


Fig. 2. Map of El Perú-Waka' highlighting the location of the Mirador Group and Structure O14-04. Survey data collected by Evangelia Tsescmeli, Damien Marken, Edwin Roman, Melissa Knight and Juan Carlos Melendez. Map compiled by Evangelia Tsescmeli.



Fig. 3. Figurine *in situ* in the Burial #39 vaulted tomb chamber, after the sherds of the broken upper cache bowl were removed. Photo Credit: Michelle Rich

during the site's transition from the Late-to-Terminal Classic, roughly 770–820. We acknowledge that reentry of the tomb calls into question the original contents of Burial #39, as one frequent component of revisitation is manipulation of the deceased's remains and the associated mortuary assemblage. Spatial arrangement of the materials, however, implies much of the original intentional patterns were left in place by the people reentering the tomb.

What we can deduce from these varied analyses is that the individual interred in Burial #39 would have reigned sometime after Muwaan Bahlam (ca. 550) and before the Wak dynasty king K'inich Bahlam II acceded to the throne ca. 657 in the presence of ruler Yuknoom Ch'een the Great of Calakmul (Guenter 2005). The Intermediate Classic at El Perú-Waka' was marked by a one-hundred and three year epigraphic hiatus from 554–657. The erection of Stela 1 in front of Structure O14-04 brought this hiatus to an end. The text on the monument is not well preserved, but a date of 657 is legible (*ibid.*:371). The approximate contemporaneity of Burial #39 and Stela 1, as well as the location of the stela, suggest the interred may have had a relationship with the person depicted on the monument. Additionally, Yuknoom the Great attacked Tikal in 657 (Martin and Grube 2008:108–109) – a maneuver which resonated throughout the southern lowlands. It is unlikely the correlations between Burial #39, Stela 1 and political events in the larger Maya world are coincidental, and are under examination as a component of Rich's dissertation research.

The Olmec Style Figurine: Specific Context

Among the objects discovered in the Burial #39 mortuary assemblage was an Olmec style figurine found inside two lip-to-lip cache vessels north of the deceased individual's head (Fig. 3). This figurine is approximately 11.7 cm in height, and has iconographic characteristics associated with the Olmec Maize God (Joralemon 1971; Taube 1996), as well as others associated with the Olmec Rain God (Taube 1995), imbuing the figurine with sacred meaning. Only several such Olmec style artifacts are known to have been found in secure archaeological contexts dating to the Classic period in the Maya lowlands, making this discovery one of great scientific importance. The

others include an Olmec jade pendant discovered in Burial 36 in Structure 50-a at the site of San Gervasio on Cozumel Island (Rathje et al 1973; Gregory 1975), and the Chacsinkin jades discovered near Peto, Yucatan (Andrews 1986).

The figurine cache was paired with an additional set of cache vessels located slightly further east, containing the remains of a small, square pyrite mirror on what appears to be a slate backing. All four vessels are unslipped, flat-bottomed outslipping bowls, and can be considered part of the overall ceramic assemblage belonging to the site's Intermediate Classic potting tradition. In both cases, the interior surface of the lower cache vessel was dusted with pinkish-reddish pigment, consistent with a concentration of pigment collected from the north end of the tomb chamber. Neither the figurine nor the mirror show any traces of the reddish pigment. Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR) analysis conducted by James Martin of Orion Analytical, LLC, a materials analysis and consulting firm, confirmed the pigment concentration was an inorganic calcite/clay/cinnabar compound. The ancient Maya, like the Olmec before them, prized cinnabar, which is typically bright scarlet to brick-red in color. Cinnabar evidently symbolized living blood and the holy soul-force, or *ch'u'lel*, embodied in it (Schele and Miller 1986; Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993:244). In addition to covering the bodies of important deceased individuals, cinnabar occurs in cached offerings symbolizing the resurrection of rulers and the maize god.



Fig. 4. The frontal image shows the tapping right foot, the fleshy legs and the bent left arm of the figurine. Photo Credit: Michelle Rich

Figurine Description and Interpretation

An inventory of the Burial #39 Olmec style figurine's characteristics is critical in order to understand what it represents. To this end, the previous interpretive and analytical efforts of many other researchers are brought to bear on this object. The comparative examples, while not exhaustive, represent a selection of similar artifacts to illustrate the attributes of the figurine and the associated symbolism. An examination of the body and limbs (Figs. 4 and 5) is followed by an analysis of the complex details of the head and face (Figs. 6 and 7).

The figurine's fleshy legs are reminiscent of those of a toddler. The right foot is uplifted in a manner suggestive of dancing, an activity often undertaken not merely as entertainment, but one which was deep-seated in *ancient Maya* social, religious, and political identity, and also linked to creation (Grube 1992;Looper 2009). As Freidel, Schele and Parker (1993:257–292) explored in *Maya Cosmos*, dance was as central to most of the public rituals of the ancient Maya as it is to their modern descendants.

The position of the bent left arm is reminiscent of, although not identical to, postures represented in Middle Formative Olmec style imagery depicting items cradled in the crook of the left arm. These include the Xoc, Chiapas



Fig. 5. The profile of the figurine clearly illustrates the shark fin motif on the head. Photo Credit: Michelle Rich



Fig. 6. The face and head possess complex symbolic attributes including a were-jaguar stylized mouth with a protruding shark tooth, a trefoil diadem between the celtiform eyelids and incising above the eyes and on the cheeks. Photo Credit: Erin Sears

relief carving portraying a standing figure holding what is most likely a miniature stela bundle (Ekholm-Miller 1973); a statuette cradling a scepter (Navarrete 1971:74, fig. 4); and finally, another figurine from Ocozocoautla, Chiapas also possessing a bent left arm, but in this case the hand is supporting and simultaneously presenting a maize fetish (Navarrete 1971:lámina 2). The posture of the Olmec figurine's left arm is also akin to half of a posture of both arms crossed with hands to the shoulders, that later Maya would have read as one of penitence or supplication.

There are several fundamental differences between the Burial #39 Olmec style figurine and the previous comparative examples:

1. In all of the above examples, Olmec and Maya, the bent arm or arms are tucked in close to the body. The Burial #39 figurine's left arm is lifted up and extends away from the body.
2. The Burial #39 figurine isn't actually holding *anything*, but is in a *gesture* permitting an item to be held. The 3-dimensionality of the carving, with the left elbow extended away from the body, allows for an object to be cradled in the crook of the left arm. It is possible an item made of a perishable material may have been inserted here.
3. The right arm is missing. Because of the trajectory of the shoulder and upper arm, it is clear it would not have been in a complementary bent position mirroring the left arm, but that it would have been hanging straight down, at least to the elbow joint. Many figurines, including those crafted in the Olmec style, have missing limbs. This may be a practical matter because limbs of figurines break off more easily. It is possible in certain cases that missing limbs could symbolize offerings, be related to the concept of

(auto)sacrifice or suggest the figurines are representations of mythical or actual beings. For example, in the *Popol Vuh*, hero twin Hunahpu's arm was torn off by Seven Macaw (*Vucub Caquix*), hinting at parallels between the missing arm of this and other figurines and the K'iche Maya creation story. In the case of this figurine, the arm break is not fresh, and the surface is rather smooth, suggesting the limb had been absent for some time prior to the figurine's deposition in Burial #39.

The fin on top of the head of the Burial #39 figurine evokes shark or fish imagery (Fig. 6). This motif is also found, for example, on San Lorenzo Monument 58 (Joralemon 1976: fig. 5d) or the headdress of the ruler depicted on the La Mojarra Stela (Stross 1990). The Mayan word *Xok* has long been associated with sharks or other fish (e.g. Jones 1985, 1991, 1996; Thompson 1944), and sharks were deified early in Mesoamerican society (Miller and Taube 1993:152). Previous research highlights linkages between shark or fish motifs, maize imagery, human creation, resurrection and royal identity (e.g. Martín 2003:38; Quenon and Le Fort 1997; Sachse 2008; Sachse and Christenson 2005; Stross 1990, 1994; Taube 1986:52–58), underscoring the complexity of this iconographic message. Additionally, the were-jaguar stylized mouth contains a protruding tooth similar to a shark tooth. This is reminiscent not only of actual shark teeth recovered at Olmec sites, but also the central protruding tooth depicted on Olmec monuments, including San Lorenzo Monument 30 (Coe 1968a: fig. 9), San Lorenzo Monument 58 (Joralemon 1976: fig. 5d), Laguna de los Cerros Monument 1 (Joralemon 1971: fig. 125), and the incised head on the left knee of the Las Limas figurine (Coe 1968b:114). Further comparisons can be made to Kaminaljuyu's Stela 10, on which the main personage dressed as the Sacrificer Rain God is also depicted with a shark tooth (Mora-Marín 2005:82). In the pantheon of Maya gods we can draw parallels to God GI of the Palenque Triad, who also possesses a shark tooth. This watery deity also has a fish barble and a shell ear flare, and Stuart (2005: 168–170) proposes GI is a watery aspect of the sun emerging from the underworld. The water references no doubt allude to rain vital to maize growth. As Taube (1995:99), following Grove (1989), observed, versions of the *huunal* Jester God image have water drops or a piscine aspect, conflating the maize sprout and the water which sustains it.

On the Burial #39 figurine's forehead we see a complex composition combining heavy eyelids and a furrowed brow with an Olmec royal crown of a central trefoil diadem jewel flanked by two celts. The central trefoil is the sprouting seed proto-type of the later Maya *huunal*, as identified by Fields (1989). Three-dimensional imaging of the figurine conducted by Travis Doering and Lori Collins of the University of South Florida hints at a badly-worn snarling face etched below the trefoil. The central trefoil element is flanked by what may at first glance appear to be merely heavy eyelids but are cleft celts, outlined by incised grooves and notched in the manner of the celtiform element incised on the face of the incised maskette depicted in *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership* (1995:153–154). Similar celts are also found on the crown of the seated Olmec lord, known as the Rio Pesquero statuette, in the Dumbarton Oaks Library collection (Taube 2004: fig. 48). The resemblance to that particular crown extends to traces of almond-shaped eyes, more visible in the

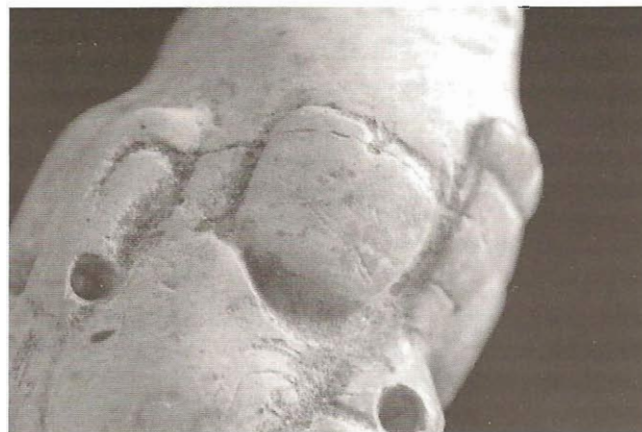


Fig. 7. The cross-band motif on the celtiform eyelid, double-line incising emanating from the nose like breath or spirit and scroll incising associated with the ear are visible in this image. Photo Credit: Erin Sears

celt over the Burial #39 figurine's left eye, which also contains a U-bracket. The celt over the right eye clearly depicts cross-bands (Fig. 7). This same asymmetrical motif is also evident in the eyes of the Laguna de los Cerros Monument 1 (Joralemon 1971: fig. 125). Both the cross-bands and the U-bracket are elements typically incorporated by the Olmec into avian serpent sky band imagery; the cross-bands are also associated with Olmec feather bundles (Taube 1995:88). The U-bracket was also used by the Olmec, Teotihuacanos, the Classic Maya and Postclassic Aztec to surround depictions of the maize cob, representing the husk (Taube 2004:27). Together these features of the crown allude to the maize god and symbolize kingship.

Below the figurine's celtiform lids, deep semi-circular grooves mark the eyes. It is possible these were originally inlaid with some other material such as obsidian or shell, but in their current state they seem to represent a crescent-shaped eye identified by Coe (1973:5) and associated with a particular elementary Olmec death god which also has a prominent triangular incisor. Joralemon (1971, 1976) elaborated this basic image as part of his Fish Monster deity complex. It may be relevant that these characteristics are depicted on the bundled mask on an incised vessel from Chalcatzingo, also illustrated in *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership* (1995:288–289). Additionally, there is a small Middle Formative mask at the Cleveland Museum of Art which depicts a bundled human head that has such crescent eyes below bulging lids (ibid.: 253). Crescent eyes, for the later Maya, are characteristic of severed heads following decapitation sacrifice.

Like many other Olmec figurines, the septum of the nose and the earlobes are pierced, although nothing was inserted in these perforations at the time of discovery. Scroll incising associated with the ear looks as though it would have complemented an earflare, and additional incising emanates from the nose like breath or spirit, an idea probably already important in Middle Formative times and well attested in the Classic-era Maya religion (Taube 2005). The double-line motifs emerge from the nostrils then curve across the face, and down the neck, chest and legs. These motifs can also be interpreted as serpentine as well as alluding to cordage, and the connection between cords and snakes in Formative times is well established iconographically (Miller 1974). This fine-line incising may represent conveyance and emergence, as well as a model

of the creation mountain. Perhaps most importantly, one of the ways in which to demarcate sacredness is through wrapping or binding (Guernsey and Reilly 2006), a ritual act in which cordage is essential.

Other instances of incising and wear are also present on the figurine. These include three triangular elements on the stomach and a quatrefoil on the figurine's back (Fig. 8). The quatrefoil motif was recognized by both the Olmec and Maya and establishes the figurine as a portal to the supernatural



Fig. 8. The quatrefoil incised on the figurine's back suggests it symbolizes a portal to the supernatural world. Photo Credit: Michelle Rich

world of gods and ancestors. It is possible the quatrefoil was a later addition, based on relative crudeness of the etching, as well as the appearance of being less worn than the other incisions. Grooved wear zones near the hips and around the neck suggest the figurine may have had something tied to it, hanging on it or positioned

such that wear would become evident. Many seemingly unintentional nicks and scratches indicate extensive use-wear and handling. Lastly, additional examination of recent photographs indicates more incising is present on the figurine than has been securely documented and discussed above, therefore, analysis of this object is ongoing.

Conclusions

After careful examination, our current assessment of the Burial #39 Olmec style figurine is that it depicts a dancing young boy. He is wearing a deity mask and shark-fin headdress. The mask has a crown symbolizing the maize god as a trefoil sprout flanked by two cleft and almond-eyed celts representing aspects of infant maize. The face of the mask alludes to the watery underworld, the shark-like Water Monster, death god imagery, and the severed head of the sacrificed maize god. In this conflation, it is similar to the bundled mask on the incised vessel from Chalcatzingo discussed earlier. The boy may have cradled a perishable bundle in his left arm, possibly a maize fetish (Navarette 1974, Taube 1996, 2000). He is dancing as reborn maize, and we propose the Maya mourners who arranged the ruler in Burial #39 during the Intermediate Classic also understood this figurine to be symbolic of resurrection. The enduring symbolism of the figurine's attributes, coupled with the evident wear, likely mark it as an heirloom object that may have been curated for centuries (*sensu* Joyce 2000:189–212).

Schele (1995:115) stated, "The Olmec and their contemporaries... created an array of symbols to define the sacred nature of the cosmos and the relationship of political authority and the human community to it." These persevering symbols represent physical manifestations of the concept of social memory, which has been described as "the creation of a collective notion about the way things were in the past" (Van Dyke and Alcock 2003:2). This notion can extend to the symbolic and layered meaning embodied in objects, and in our view, the Burial #39 figurine discovery strengthens the trend in evidence affirming the continuity in the cult of the maize god as well as divine kingship spanning Olmec and lowland Maya civilizations. The murals at San Bartolo, dating to approximately the 1st century BCE (Saturno et al. 2005:7),

provide another secure archaeological context confirming the Maya were familiar with representations of the Olmec style Maize God, who is depicted on the north wall of the mural (ibid:25). As such, we propose it is possible the ancient Maya understood the multivalency of the Burial #39 figurine within a semantically fluid symbol system that crosscut southeastern Mesoamerica, both temporally and geographically. If this is the case, local creation of this Olmec style figurine in the southern Maya Lowlands is a possibility, particularly within the context of a broad-based Mesoamerican Middle Formative Ceremonial Complex (Reilly 1989, 1994). The ongoing analysis of the figurine, and the discovery of additional examples of such objects in scientifically secure contexts, will surely enhance our understanding of Classic Maya cognition and manipulation of earlier religious traditions.

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RESUMEN: Una figurilla tallada en la tradición Olmeca fue descubierta en la tumba fechada entre los siglos sexto y séptimo d.C. de un gobernante de la antigua ciudad Maya del Perú-Waka'. La figurilla posee características legibles tanto en el sistema simbólico de los Olmecas como en el de los Maya, apoyando el argumento de que estos elementos estilísticos que representan una tradición religiosa del sudeste Mesoamericana se preservaron y permanecieron desde el inicio del periodo Preclásico. Esto sugiere que los Mayas del periodo Clásico conocieron y manipularon las expresiones más tempranas de esta tradición antigua. Utilizando varias líneas de evidencia y a través de investigaciones arqueológicas e interpretaciones basadas en la historia del arte, proporcionamos interpretaciones preliminares sobre la figurilla reliquia y su contexto arqueológico, así como de las implicaciones para la conceptualización de la memoria social y la perseverancia de las tradiciones religiosas.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG: Eine sorgfältig skulptierte Figurine in einem typischen olmekischen Stil wurde in einem Grab, datiert in die Mitte des sechsten und Mitte des siebten Jahrhunderts n. Chr., eines Herrschers der antiken Maya-Stadt El Perú-Waka' im guatemalteckischen Petén entdeckt. Die Figurine besitzt Charakteristika die dem Symbol-System sowohl der Olmeken als auch der Maya entsprechen. Der Fund unterstützt Argumente, die sich für einheitliche stilistische Elemente aussprechen, welche einer religiösen Tradition entstammen die im Südosten Mesoamerikas bestand und von der Präklassik an vorherrschte. Die rezente Entdeckung lässt auf eine Fortführung dieser alten künstlerischen Tradition durch die klassischen Maya schließen. Unter Berücksichtigung diverser Belege, einschließlich archäologischer und kunsthistorischer Daten, wird eine vorläufige Interpretation der Figurine als Erbstück in ihrem archäologischen Kontext vorgeschlagen, wie auch Folgerungen gezogen, die das Konzept des sozialen Erinnerungsvermögens und der Bewahrung religiöser Traditionen betreffen.

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