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Erratum

P. 112 first column; P. 113 Note 10:

For "feline paw" or "jaguar paw", read instead "bird talon"

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The Monuments of Laguna de los Cerros and Its Hinterland

Stone sculpture has played a prominent role in the interpretations of Olmec culture and society. The quantity, size, technology, and style of stone carvings have been used to reconstruct the Olmecs' social and political complexity, the origins and legacies of Olmec culture, and the extent of Olmec influence beyond the Gulf Coast heartland. The Olmecs have been judged Mesoamerica's first "civilization," in large part because they were the first to sculpt monumental images in stone on a grand scale (Coe 1968). The presence of so many huge stones moved over long distances is taken to indicate that the Olmec people were divided into social ranks or classes, with a small elite group able to control the labor of hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals (for example, Coe 1968: 109–111; Coe and Diehl 1980, 2: 147; Drucker 1981: 30–31, 45; Velson and Clark 1975: 22). The emphasis on the human form and the presence of portraiture among the monuments—which Beatriz de la Fuente (1981: 86; this volume) characterized as "homocentric art"—have led scholars to suggest exactly how the elite members of society (thought to be portrayed in stone) gained and exercised their political power (see Gillespie 1999).

The monuments have been especially critical in determining sociopolitical relationships among the various Gulf Coast Olmec polities. A concentration of monuments, together with mound architecture, was the original basis for identifying the primary Olmec centers: San Lorenzo, La Venta, Laguna de los Cerros, and

Tres Zapotes (Drucker 1981: 38–39), although this last site actually has very few Olmec-style stone carvings (Grove 1984: 16; 1994: 227; Pool, this volume). The carvings' stylistic characteristics have been used, with little reliability, to date the occupations of the centers and secondary sites within the Olmec and post-Olmec periods (for example, Clewlow 1974; Medellín 1971; Milbrath 1979). Differences in the sculpture from the three centers have been characterized as denoting distinctive "styles" or "schools" of art (Clewlow 1974; de la Fuente 1977, this volume); these differences have also been taken as evidence of these centers' political independence (Drucker 1981: 43). At the same time, the majority of the carvings from all these sites share the recognizable canons of Early and Middle Formative Olmec sculpture. In some cases, very similar monuments have been found at distant sites, indicating a high degree of cultural contact and some chronological overlap. Finally, the presence of smaller sites with one or a few carvings has been used to define a "hinterland" around each center and to speculate on possible relationships whereby the hinterland or secondary sites were integrated into a larger political organization with the primary centers (Grove 1994).

The sculpture from La Venta and San Lorenzo, the two centers that have had a long history of excavation, is fairly well known to scholars and becoming more familiar to the general public because of exhibitions in museums in Mexico and other countries. But for the

third center with numerous Olmec-style monuments, Laguna de los Cerros, very little is known, especially the degree to which it compares to San Lorenzo and La Venta in terms of overall size, construction of mound architecture, sociopolitical complexity, and hegemony over a surrounding area during the Early and Middle Formative periods. Limited test excavations were carried out at Laguna de los Cerros by Alfonso Medellín Zenil in 1960, and the brief publications that resulted from them concentrated on descriptions of only some of the monuments (Medellín 1960, 1971), so we still lack complete information on the monument corpus and the archaeological (and hence social and chronological) contexts for the monuments.

My objective in this essay is to summarize briefly what is known about the Laguna de los Cerros monuments (commenting on general sculptural themes with less emphasis on technical details), providing information on more recent discoveries and unpublished carvings. This summary takes a regional perspective, incorporating monuments from within the Laguna de los Cerros hinterland. Newer information on stone carvings from the hinterland comes from the 1991 Proyecto Arqueológico La Isla-Llano del Jícara (Gillespie 1994; Grove 1994). This project involved excavations at La Isla, a secondary center with several known monuments, and at Llano del Jícara, a monument quarry-workshop previously investigated by Medellín in 1960 (1960, 1971). As part of this project, we investigated a few carvings that had been discovered by inhabitants in the area (Grove et al. 1993). The monuments from the hinterland not only add to the total Laguna de los Cerros corpus for comparative purposes but also shed light on how the distribution and placement of monuments outside the main center may have integrated the hinterland with its center. In addition, recent excavations at San Lorenzo (see Cyphers 1993, 1995, 1996, 1999) have yielded more monuments and augmented our knowledge of Olmec stone-carving traditions in general, which may change our assessment of how similar or different the Laguna de los Cerros corpus is from its counterparts elsewhere. Finally, previous comparative analyses have failed to deal explicitly with the *absence* of major monument types at Laguna de los Cerros, but this is an important point to consider when attempting to demonstrate the degree of cultural contacts and contempo-

raneity among the three Olmec centers. I discuss this factor in the final section of the essay.

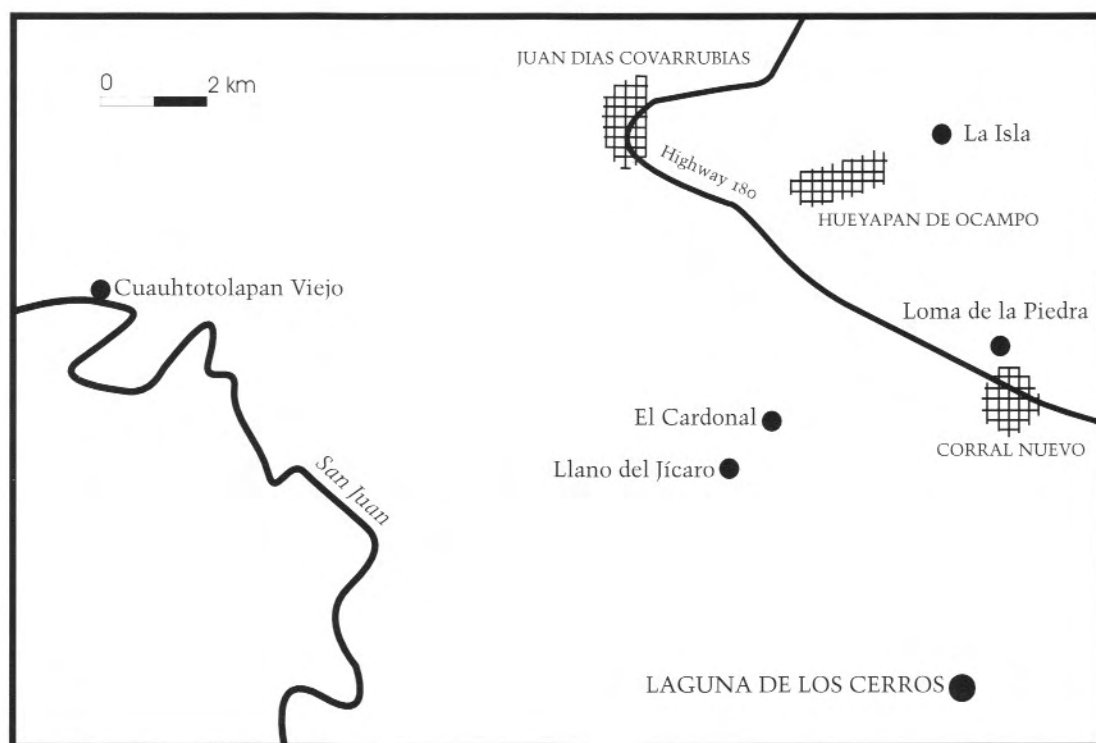
Laguna de los Cerros and Its Monuments

One reason why more information is greatly needed from Laguna de los Cerros in terms of determining how the different primary centers may have interacted with one another is that this site provides important data on the environmental variability within Olmec culture. It is an "upland" Olmec site (Grove 1994), a term referring to a major distinction in Olmec ecology and settlement patterns between the uplands and the lowlands, the latter region being the location of both San Lorenzo and La Venta (Arnold, this volume). Laguna de los Cerros commands a large area of rolling hills, upland plains, and plateaus broken by valleys that extend outward from the southwestern flank of the Tuxtla Mountains, whose foothills begin about 20 kilometers to the north (Bove 1978: 6). The Tuxtlas are the source of Cerro Cintepec basalt, a stone type used to make many of the San Lorenzo and La Venta carvings that were transported to the lowlands, as well as those from nearby Laguna de los Cerros (Williams and Heizer 1965).¹ Within Laguna de los Cerros' hinterland is the only known Olmec monument quarry-workshop, Llano del Jícara, where surface boulders of Cerro Cintepec basalt were readily available to stone carvers. Because of its easy accessibility to the raw material, it is quite possible that Laguna de los Cerros provided preformed monuments or simple boulders from this and other outcrops to San Lorenzo and La Venta, adding an important economic aspect to the interrelationships between or among these centers (Gillespie 1994; see also Drucker 1981: 29).

Problems concerning Our Knowledge of Laguna de los Cerros

Laguna de los Cerros is about 5 kilometers south of Corral Nuevo, a town located between Juan Díaz Covarrubias and Acayucan on Highway 180 (fig. 1); its location is worth noting because Laguna de los Cerros and nearby Llano del Jícara are often mislocated on maps of the Olmec region. Medellín (1960: 86) conducted test excavations (pits and trenches) at Laguna de los Cerros during the short period from 13 March to 8 May 1960. He described the site as

1. Map showing sites in the Laguna de los Cerros hinterland; cross-hatched areas are modern towns on Highway 180



a major ceremonial center surrounded by five smaller mound groupings. The site map that was produced at that time shows ninety-five mounds, ranging in height from 1 to 30 meters, extending over an area of some 40 hectares (Bove 1978). It is uncertain whether that map includes the five smaller mound sites together with the main ceremonial center, as described by Medellín (Bove 1978: 9). Frederick Bove cited a personal communication from Medellín (in 1975) indicating that these secondary mound groups extended from 1 to 1.5 kilometers from the site center in various directions, so it seems unlikely that they are part of the map.

The dating of occupation at Laguna de los Cerros has been a contentious issue. Medellín (1971: 17) was convinced that the site's monuments dated to the Classic period and that Olmec culture flourished during that period, an opinion not shared by other archaeologists working in the region. His reasons for making this chronological assessment were (1) his interpretations of the style of Olmec monuments, for which he found Classic and Postclassic analogues (see also Medellín 1963), and (2) the finding of Classic period pottery and other artifacts at Laguna de los Cerros in association

with many sculptures.² Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1968: 126) made note of this latter fact when she suggested a comparison between two sculptures from Laguna de los Cerros (Mons. 3 and 19) and two remarkably similar carvings from Toniná of the Classic Maya culture a thousand years later. However, Terence Griener, in 1966, and Bove, in 1975, reanalyzed the ceramics excavated by Medellín's 1960 project (Bove 1978: 10; Proskouriakoff 1968: 133). Both concluded that the site experienced a long occupational history, extending from the Early Formative to the Early Postclassic. According to their analyses, early ceramic sherds and figurine heads found in the deepest excavations are comparable to the San Lorenzo phase artifacts (1150–900 B.C.) at San Lorenzo. The Early Postclassic fine orange pottery (equivalent to Villa Alta phase at San Lorenzo, A.D. 900–1100, and Tres Zapotes Superior) occurs in the upper layers of mound fill. This later pottery is found over much of the site, especially in the northern mound groups, which Bove suggested were probably constructed at that time (Bove 1978: 10, 23, 32–33).³

Bove (1978: 9) concluded that "whatever the original placement of these sculptures, many

of them had been reset by a Late Classic-Postclassic reoccupation of the site, accounting for the preponderance of Late Period pottery types found in association with the sculptures and almost always from the upper levels of the site." This was the opinion expressed earlier by Michael Coe (in Proskouriakoff 1968: 134) and Ignacio Bernal (1969: 69)—that at least some of the monuments were of definite Olmec style and must have been reused by later peoples (see also de la Fuente 1977: 259). Beyond that generalization, however, opinions differed as to the dating of the individual monuments. For instance, Bernal (1969: 65) and Tillie Smith (1963: 133) argued that the atypical standing figure, Monument 19, postdated the Olmec occupation, while Coe (in Proskouriakoff 1968: 132), commenting specifically on this carving, declared that in its smallest details it demonstrated that the Laguna de los Cerros monuments "belong to the full corpus of 'classic' Olmec sculpture" (of the Formative period). De la Fuente (1977: 259) concluded that the majority of known artworks are Olmec in style, including Monument 19, but doubted the Olmec attribution of three others—Monuments 4, 17, and 26 (de la Fuente 1973: 271–272).

In addition to attempts to date individual pieces, there were also variable results from studies that strove to place the Laguna de los Cerros monument corpus in its entirety in a chronological context by comparing it to those from the other centers. Thus Susan Milbrath's (1979: 48) stylistic seriation placed the Laguna de los Cerros statues in the Early Formative, contemporary with some of the sculpture from San Lorenzo (and La Venta), while C. William Clewlow's (1974: 147) study dated many of them even earlier than their counterparts at the other two centers (pre-San Lorenzo phase). These conclusions matched an expectation suggested earlier by several scholars that the origins of monument carving should be found in the Tuxtla Mountains, the source of the basalt stone (in Milbrath 1979: 44; also Clewlow 1974: 147–148). Laguna de los Cerros is the closest of all three centers to the mountains.

A major reason why the chronological placement of the Laguna de los Cerros monuments has been difficult to resolve is that so little information is available concerning them. The sculpture has never been completely published; in fact, a list of the entire monument sequence is not available in print, so a fundamental prob-

lem is determining precisely which objects belong to the corpus of artworks. What few data were collected concerning their archaeological contexts and proveniences have been only minimally reported. Some monuments numbered in the Laguna de los Cerros sequence actually originated from surrounding sites. The monuments themselves are in generally poor condition, having suffered a high degree of mutilation, perhaps because so many of the ones that Medellín encountered were reused by later peoples.

The Laguna de los Cerros Monuments

Medellín reported twenty-seven carvings from Laguna de los Cerros in his 1960 publication, and a Monument 28 appears in his 1971 work. However, he published information and photographs for only fourteen of them, those that were the least mutilated and had the most distinct forms. Unfortunately, most of these fourteen are very incomplete (which suggests that the unpublished monuments are even more fragmentary or shapeless). The anthropomorphic statues are headless and often lack arms and legs. Brief descriptions or labels are provided for a few more of the Laguna de los Cerros numbered monuments by de la Fuente (1973, 1977), but about one-half of the numbered sequence lacks full descriptions or illustrations.⁴

Table 1 provides information I obtained on the Laguna de los Cerros monuments and those from nearby sites thought to lie within its hinterland to the north and west.⁵ The published carvings, which will not be considered in detail here, include two large heads of "supernaturals"—non-naturalistic anthropomorphic faces—with shallow cavities ground into their top surfaces (Mons. 1, 2); four seated anthropomorphic statues (Mons. 3, 6, 8, 11); one standing anthropomorph (Mon. 19); two or three small altars (Mons. 5, 28; Mon. 4 shows two eroded seated figures in shallow niches and has also been called an altar fragment [Winfield Capitaine 1987: 13], but its original form is impossible to determine [de la Fuente 1977: 277]); a figure seated on a block of stone (Mon. 9); a bird or man-bird sculpture (Mon. 13); a kneeling figure atop a supine figure (Mon. 20); a disk with a bas-relief of a face (Mon. 27); and the bas-relief of a standing figure later reworked into a stair cover (Mon. 26).

Only some of the monuments excavated by

Table 1. Laguna de los Cerros Area Monuments

Site	Description	Height (cm)	Weight (tons)	Location	Sources
Laguna de los Cerros					
Monument 1	supernatural head with cavity	75	0.81	Xalapa 00422	Medellín 1960: 86–88, pls. 14–15; 1971: 33, pl. 32; de la Fuente 1973: 135–137, fig. 98; 1977: 261–263, color pl. 18, pl. 70
2	supernatural head with cavity	80	0.79	Xalapa 00324	Medellín 1971: 33, pl. 33; de la Fuente 1973: 137–138, fig. 99; 1977: 263–265, pl. 71
3	seated statue	59	0.04	Xalapa 04025	Medellín 1960: 89–90, pls. 16–17; 1971: 35, pl. 34; de la Fuente 1973: 138–139, fig. 100; 1977: 268–269, pl. 74
4	sculpture with 2 seated humans	50	0.4	Xalapa 10956	de la Fuente 1973: 271; 1977: 276–277
5	altar	61	0.2	Xalapa 00334	Medellín 1960: 90–91, pl. 19; 1971: 35, pl. 35; de la Fuente 1973: 140–141, fig. 101; 1977: 270–271
9	seated human on block of stone	38	0.3	Xalapa 10935	Medellín 1971: 39, pl. 44; de la Fuente 1973: 145–146; 1977: 276
10	disk with bas-relief			?	de la Fuente 1973: 146
11	high-relief seated statue	72	0.55	Xalapa 00332	Medellín 1960: 94, pl. 23; 1971: 37, pl. 37; de la Fuente 1973: 146–147, fig. 106; 1977: 269–270, pl. 75
13	“bird” or man-bird statue	36	0.15	Xalapa 00323	Medellín 1971: 39, pl. 43; de la Fuente 1973: 148; 1977: 275–276
16	flat block with central depression			?	de la Fuente 1973: 149
17	oval stone with relief design			?	de la Fuente 1973: 271–272
18	U-shaped stone with convex sides			? ¹	de la Fuente 1973: 149
19	standing statue	160	2.2	Xalapa 00333	Medellín 1960: 94, pls. 24–25; 1971: 37, pl. 38; de la Fuente 1973: 149–151, fig. 110; 1977: 273–274, pl. 78
20	kneeling human on prostrate human	80a		?	Medellín 1960: 95, pls. 27–28; de la Fuente 1973: 151; 1977: 274–275
23	stone with projections on flat surface			?	de la Fuente 1973: 152
24	rectangular slab with depressions			?	de la Fuente 1973: 152
26	relief reworked into stair step			Xalapa?	Medellín 1960: 95–96, pl. 29; 1971: 37, pl. 39; de la Fuente 1973: 272; 1977: 276
27	disk with relief of face	15a		Xalapa?	Medellín 1960: 96, pl. 30; 1971: 37, pl. 40; de la Fuente 1973: 152; 1977: 260–261
28	altar	82	0.3	Xalapa 10909	Medellín 1971: 39, pl. 41; de la Fuente 1973: 153–155; 1977: 271–272
(A)	high-relief seated statue	43	0.2	Xalapa 10947	Winfield Capitaine 1987: 12
(B)	box with jade symbols	42	0.62	Xalapa 10925	Winfield Capitaine 1987: 19
(C)	statue?	30b		on site ²	
(D)	altar	>115b		on site	
(E)	“throne” raised on four legs			on site	
(F)	lidless box			on site ³	

Table 1, continued

Site	Description	Height (cm)	Weight (tons)	Location	Sources
Near Laguna de los Cerros center					
Monument 6	seated statue	65	0.25	Xalapa 00329	Medellín 1971: 39, pl. 42; de la Fuente 1973: 141–142, fig. 102; 1977: 270, pls. 76–77
Llano del Jicaro					
	worked stones of defined shape				
Monument 8	seated statue	195	4	Xalapa 00341	Medellín 1960: 92–93, pl. 22; 1971: 35, pl. 36; de la Fuente 1973: 143–144, fig. 103; 1977: 265–267, pls. 72–73
Monument 12	“jaws of jaguar”?			?	Ortiz 1986; Medellín’s (1960: 93) “Mon. 21”?
WS 1	tabletop altar	128 <i>b</i>		on site	Gillespie 1994: 233–234, figs. 3–4
WS 3	rectangular block	120 <i>b</i>		on site	Gillespie 1994: 235, fig. 6
La Isla					
Monument 1a	seated statue with knuckle-dusters	72	0.47	Xalapa GOB094	Grove et al. 1993: 93
1b	supernatural head of Monument 1a	56 <i>b</i>		Hueyapan ⁴	Grove et al. 1993: 94
2	supernatural statue head	67	0.48	Xalapa GOB093	Grove et al. 1993: 93
3	skeletal face with cavity	69	0.4	Xalapa GOB098	Winfield Capitaine 1987: 14
Rancho El Cardonal					
	seated statue on pedestal	95 <i>b</i>		on site	Grove et al. 1993: 93
Loma de la Piedra					
	seated statue	95 <i>b</i>		on site	Grove et al. 1993: 92
Cuahtotolapan Viejo					
	seated statue	151	3	Xalapa 10960	Medellín 1971: 23, pl. 6; de la Fuente 1973: 129–130; 1977: 311–312, color pl. 21, pl. 90

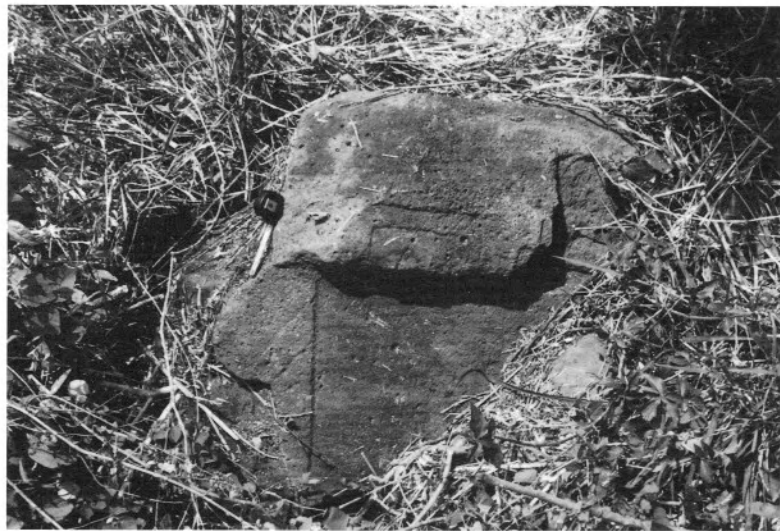
Notes: Measurements from the *Guía de monumentos* (Winfield Capitaine 1987) except where noted: *a* = Medellín (1960, 1971), *b* = Gillespie. The registration number is provided for monuments on display in the Xalapa Museum of Anthropology (from Winfield Capitaine 1987).

1. Description may indicate a trough or drainage stone.
2. Resembles description of Monument 17.
3. Resembles description of Monument 16.
4. Last seen in private hands in the town of Hueyapan de Ocampo.

2. Monument "C," headless torso of an anthropomorphic figure wearing a banded cape, Formative period, basalt
 Photographed in the main plaza at Laguna de los Cerros, 1989:
 David Grove



3. Monument "D," fragment of an altar, Formative period, basalt
 Photographed in the main plaza at Laguna de los Cerros, 1989:
 David Grove



the 1960 project at Laguna de los Cerros were removed from the site and taken to the museum (now the Museum of Anthropology in Xalapa). Michael Coe (in Proskouriakoff 1968: 132) reported "a lot of sculpture" still at the site in the mid-1960s. Some of the carved objects found and not formally reported were trough-shaped stones similar to those from San Lorenzo and La Venta and presumed to have

been used as drain stones (Medellín, 1975 personal communication to Bove [1978: 9]); these are said to have been "dumped and buried in a plaza" at the site (Michael Coe in Proskouriakoff 1968: 134). On trips to the site in 1989 and 1991, Ponciano Ortiz, David Grove, and I observed at least four large fragments of carved objects among the vegetation in the main plaza. (Some or all of them, we presume, were exposed by Medellín's 1960 project.)

At least two of these sculptures appear stylistically to be Olmec, including an oval fragment (Mon. "C") that I interpret as the headless torso of a figure wearing a banded cape that extends along the curvature of the back (fig. 2). The estimated height of this fragment is 30 centimeters. This carving might be Medellín's Monument 17; it resembles de la Fuente's (1977: 277) description of Monument 17 as a "gran piedra de forma oval con diseño de ondulaciones en relieve" ("a large oval-shaped stone with a design of undulations in relief"), and she indicated (1973: 329) that its location in the 1970s was at Laguna de los Cerros.⁶ The other probable Olmec monument is Monument "D," a section of an apparent tabletop altar partially buried with only the upper front corner exposed (fig. 3). Carved in bas-relief on the tabletop ledge is the "upside-down-U-bracket" or "caiman jaw" design, similar to the motif that decorates the ledge of La Venta Altar 4 (de la Fuente 1973: 25). The estimated height of the visible portion of the altar is 115 centimeters.

Two other monuments we saw on the plaza seem to be post-Olmec in date, based on stylistic comparisons with other sculptures. Monument "E" lies on the surface, upside down. It is a "throne" or seat raised on four square legs, one at each corner, of which only three are intact (fig. 4). The legs have incised designs (we did not move the stone to determine whether the seat area has designs). It is similar in overall form to the Late Formative Throne 1 at Izapa on the Pacific coast of Chiapas (Norman 1973: pl. 63) and to the Incensio Throne from Late Formative Kaminaljuyu, Guatemala (Kaplan 1995: figs. 1, 2). Monument "F" is a fragment of what appears to be a rectangular box (fig. 5) that somewhat resembles a plain stone box from Tres Zapotes (Mon. B; Stirling 1943: pl. 7a). The Laguna de los Cerros box is shorter and has thicker walls and a more shallow concavity than its Tres Zapotes counterpart. This

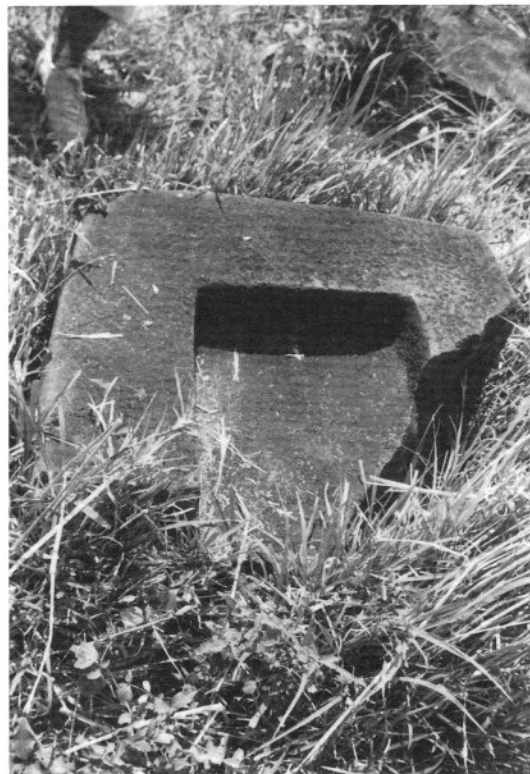
carving may match the description of Monument 16 in the Laguna de los Cerros sequence, a flat block with a central depression (de la Fuente 1973: 149).

In addition to these and possibly other excavated monument fragments that were left at Laguna de los Cerros, there are at least two sculptures attributed to Laguna de los Cerros in the Xalapa Museum of Anthropology that have no monument numbers attached to them. One (Mon. "B") is described as a box with jade symbols (Winfield Capitaine 1987: 19). The other, Monument "A," is more definitely Olmec in style. This decapitated statue depicts an individual sculpted in high relief against a flat, plain background that connects the space between the torso and the arms (that is, the entire back of the sculpture is flat). The person is seated cross-legged on a low platform. The entire figure, with background, tilts slightly forward. The person wears a belt and a cape tied at the neck with a looped cord. His right arm is raised, bent at the elbow with the hand at the shoulder. The left arm is broken, but the left hand rests on the right knee. The right leg is gone, but the toes of the right foot show beneath the left knee. This combination of high relief against a flat background and the use of a low (6 cm high) platform also characterizes Monument 11, another decapitated seated figure (Clewlow 1974: 52). Monument 19, the unique standing statue, has also been described as a high-relief sculpture in which the full-length cape functions as both a back-drop and a technical device to prevent the statue from toppling (Clewlow 1974: 74); compare this sculpture to the caped seated figure from La Venta, Monument 77 (Benson and de la Fuente 1996: 172–173).

As noted above, the Laguna de los Cerros monument sequence includes sculpture that was found at secondary sites. One of these is Monument 6, a torso fragment said to come from "a site near the ceremonial center" (Medellín 1971: 39); this was presumably one of the five secondary sites that lie a short distance from Laguna de los Cerros. In addition, at least four monuments were located at another site approximately 5 kilometers to the northwest, Llano del Júcaro (Ortiz 1986; Gillespie 1994), which was also investigated by Medellín's 1960 project (Medellín 1960: 92–93). Of these four monuments, only one was taken to the Xalapa museum and subsequently published—the



4. Monument "E," four-legged "throne," Formative period, basalt
Photographed in the main plaza at Laguna de los Cerros, 1989:
David Grove



5. Monument "F," fragment of a plain stone box, Formative period, basalt
Photographed in the main plaza at Laguna de los Cerros, 1989:
David Grove

seated statue labeled Monument 8 in the Laguna de los Cerros sequence. Monument 12 also came from this site (Ortiz 1986); this may or may not be the same one briefly referred to as "Mon. 21" by Medellín (1960: 93). The Llano del Jícaro carvings are described below as part of the hinterland group.

One reason for the lack of agreement on how to date the monuments stylistically, to the point that several have been considered non-Olmec, is the unusual degree of formal variation within the Laguna de los Cerros monument corpus (de la Fuente 1977: 259). According to de la Fuente's (1977: 259–281) analysis, the majority of the monuments *are* assignable to the Olmec period by their stylistic and technical qualities, but local variation, developed to the highest degree at Laguna de los Cerros, makes it difficult to create a single chronological seriation applicable to all the monuments found within the Olmec heartland (such as attempted by Clewlow [1974] and Milbrath [1979]). She suggested (de la Fuente 1977: 280–281) that the monuments known for the site likely represent a long temporal sequence, but there is as yet no objective (nonstylistic) evidence to place individual sculptures within that sequence as being earlier or later.

In addition to showing internal formal variation, the entire corpus has been said to represent a sculptural "school" distinct from that of La Venta and San Lorenzo. In particular, the Laguna de los Cerros monuments have been noted for their "dynamic quality" (de la Fuente 1977: 259, 273, 280; see also Clewlow 1974; Medellín 1960, 1971); dynamism was earlier considered not to characterize the general Olmec style (Smith 1963: 143). The posture exhibited by the anthropomorphic figures from Laguna de los Cerros is most often asymmetrical, with arms and legs positioned at different angles, as if frozen in movement. The seated figures are also exceptionally well modeled, with delicate and realistically proportioned necks and other body parts and with great attention to representing musculature (Clewlow 1974: 53). These qualities were also considered not to be well represented in the sculpture from other Olmec sites.

However, a new monument from San Lorenzo does compare favorably in these respects with the Laguna de los Cerros corpus. A mutilated torso from the Xochiltepec *ejido* (Potrero Nuevo, near San Lorenzo) portrays a well-

costumed seated figure lacking head, arms, and legs. Enough remains to show that the arms and legs were asymmetrically positioned, the right leg hanging down vertically while the left leg was bent under the body. The left arm extends forward, and the right arm appears to have been raised. In addition to its dynamic quality, this sculpture is well modeled with realistic body proportions (Cyphers 1993: 48–49).

Several earlier comparative studies linked individual Laguna de los Cerros monuments with those from elsewhere in the Olmec realm (for example, Clewlow 1974; de la Fuente 1977; Drucker 1981; Milbrath 1979). They include the following items, and I have added additional comparisons with some of the newer sculpture from San Lorenzo.

(1) Monument 27, a disk with the relief of a supernatural Olmec face, may be compared with a disk of unknown provenience in the Santiago Tuxtla museum (de la Fuente 1977: 260). Clewlow (1974: 91) reported that the unprovenienced disk was said to come from the vicinity of Tres Zapotes.

(2) The human figure on the Monument 5 altar has a close counterpart in the figure on the front of the larger altar from San Lorenzo, Monument 14 (Coe and Diehl 1980, 1: 321), who wears the same collar and pectoral (de la Fuente 1977: 271).

(3) The wing motif on Monument 13 has a correspondence with the paw-wing motif on the back of La Venta Altar 1 (de la Fuente 1977: 276; Milbrath 1979: 16). In both cases the paw-wing is accompanied by a spiral motif. Monument 13, though sometimes characterized as a bird (de la Fuente 1973: 148), even a duck, and hence compared to the duck-shaped drain stone at San Lorenzo, Monument 9 (Clewlow 1974: 108), has also been described as a crouching human figure with added paw-wings on each side (Milbrath 1979: 16), perhaps as a kind of disguise. The paw-wing motif is not uncommon on Early Formative ceramics (for example, Joralemon 1971: 40–41; Milbrath 1979: 16), so its presence on monuments from La Venta and Laguna de los Cerros need not indicate a direct tie between those two centers.

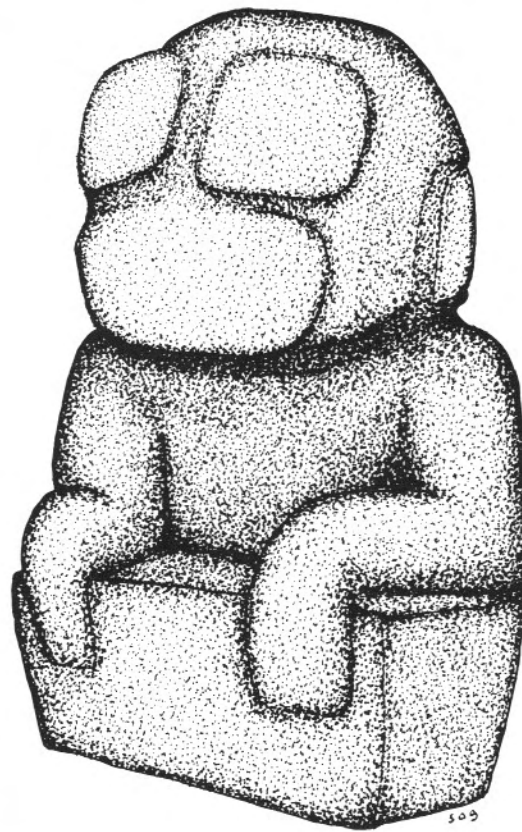
(4) Laguna de los Cerros Monument 20 and Tenochtitlan (near San Lorenzo) Monument 1 (Coe and Diehl 1980, 1: 371) both depict a human figure with the right leg bent up and the left leg tucked under in a kneeling position atop a supine second figure (Clewlow 1974:

83; de la Fuente 1977: 275; Drucker 1981: 41; Milbrath 1979: 12). The upper figures on the monuments from the two sites differ most notably in their clothing.

(5) Monument 9 and San Lorenzo Monument 15 (Coe and Diehl 1980, 1: 322) have a remarkable similarity. They both depict human figures (mostly destroyed) seated atop a rectangular block on which has been carved knotted cords, as if each block were a stone tied up to be moved (de la Fuente 1977: 276).⁷ The cords are tied in a similar fashion on both blocks, but the design is repeated on the Laguna de los Cerros monument. The remains of the two legs are barely visible on the more destroyed San Lorenzo monument.

(6) On the large supernatural heads, Laguna de los Cerros Monuments 1 and 2, the mouths are covered with dissimilar, fanged buccal masks, and the eye areas are covered with rectangular plaques with carved designs. The buccal mask of Monument 1 is similar to that found on La Venta Monument 11. The left eye of Monument 1, which has a clear "X" or St. Andrew's cross in bas-relief, is like that of San Lorenzo Monument 30 (Coe and Diehl 1980, 1: 339), a profile serpentine figure carved in very low relief whose right eye also has an "X" within a squarish plaque (de la Fuente 1977: 263). David Joralemon (1971: fig. 125) suggested that the right eye of Monument 1 has a U-shape with a dot in the center, a motif that frequently is paired with the "X" in the eyes (for example, on a mask of unknown provenience [Joralemon 1971: fig. 153]) or above the eyes (for example, on a large supernatural severed head from La Venta pictured in Benson and de la Fuente [1996: 176]).

Another unusual feature of the two heads is their curly or "kinky" hair, created by drilling depressions at irregular intervals into the top, sides, and back of the head. Clewlow (1974: 27) suggested that this was an experimental technique indicative of the precocious beginnings of stone carving at Laguna de los Cerros. However, the technique for making the hair compares to that used on a carving discovered in 1995 by the San Lorenzo project. Referred to as a "mutilated head" (Cyphers 1996: 58), it is a composite sculpture consisting of the right half of a human head juxtaposed with an amorphous mass created by drill holes and perforations like the hair on the Laguna de los Cerros heads. In addition, the projecting quad-



6. Drawing of Monument 8, Llano del Jicaro, unfinished statue of a seated anthropomorph probably intended to have supernatural features

angular eye plaques and a well-defined mouth area with protruding outcurving fangs occur on a rather delicately carved feline sculpture also found at San Lorenzo in 1995 (Cyphers 1996: 57); the feline's outstretched front legs touch a column on which a descending, helmeted human figure is sculpted in bas-relief. There are no bas-relief designs on the feline's eye plaques, however.

In sum, despite the stylistic differences noted for the Laguna de los Cerros monument corpus, there are quite a few similarities of sculptural themes and individual motifs between some Laguna de los Cerros monuments and those of other sites, especially San Lorenzo.

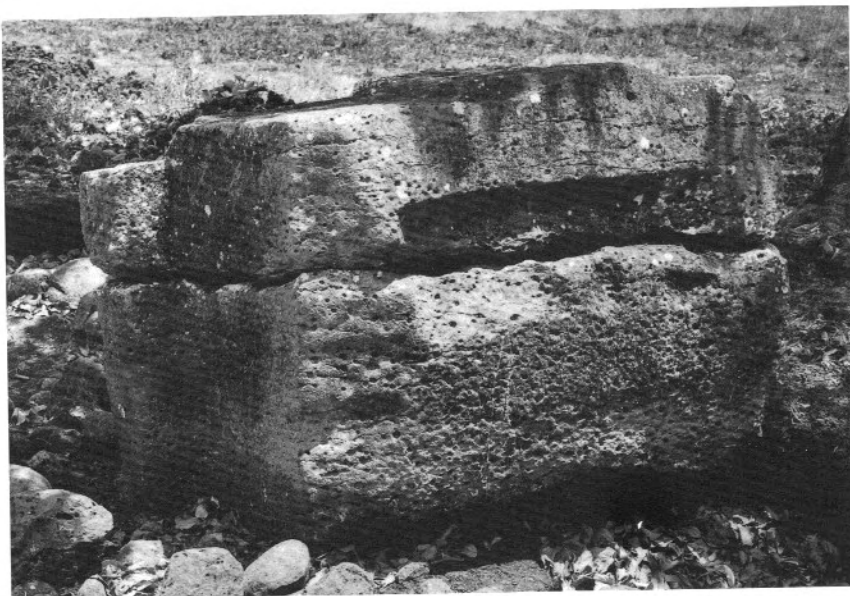
Hinterland Monuments

Another unique member of the Laguna de los Cerros numbered series is Monument 8, a massive intact statue of a seated personage almost 2 meters tall (fig. 6). What makes it so very different from other Olmec sculpture is that the entire body is represented by three great geometric forms: the oversized rounded head, the

upper torso, and a rectangular lower portion representing the area of presumably crossed legs and arms atop them. Details such as hands, legs, and facial features are merely hinted at. Scholars have disagreed as to whether this work represents some achievement of abstract art among the Olmecs (for example, de la Fuente 1977: 265, pls. 72, 73; Medellín 1971: 35; Smith 1963: 133) or is an unfinished piece, probably planned as a composite creature with a face like that of Monuments 1 and 2, in a seated cross-legged pose with the hands near the knees (for example, Clewlow 1974: 52; Medellín 1960: 93; Gillespie 1994: 232). The head of Monument 8 is approximately the same size as the Monuments 1 and 2 heads, and like them has eyes marked by two projecting rectangular plaques, with a similar projection covering the mouth area, as if in anticipation of sculpting a buccal mask.

One reason this sculpture appears to be a finished work is that the entire outer surface is well smoothed by fine pecking; that is, it does not bear the scars of stone flake removal that one might expect for a sculpture that was halted in progress. However, an argument for its unfinished state is its original location. As mentioned, this is one of the four monuments in the Laguna de los Cerros sequence that were found at Llano del Jícaro, the monument workshop located northwest of Laguna de los Cerros in the *municipio* of Hueyapan de Ocampo (Medellín 1960: 92; 1971: 35; Gillespie 1994).

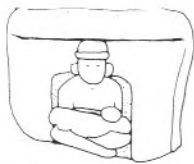
7. Worked Stone 1, an unfinished tabletop altar at Llano del Jícaro, Formative period, basalt
Photographed after excavation, 1991



Other carvings still at this site reveal the same smoothed surfaces on their unfinished portions. Survey and excavations at this site in 1991 revealed nine unfinished carved or worked stones still in situ (Gillespie 1994).⁸ Two of them were previously noted by Medellín, according to Ponciano Ortiz (1986), who had access to Medellín's unpublished field notes, but we were unable to locate the third one that should still have been there, Monument 12. This carving was interpreted by Medellín as an attempt to sculpt the open jaws of a jaguar. Ortiz could not find it when he visited the site in 1979 (Ortiz 1986), nor did our 1991 project reveal the presence of a stone that fit this rather specific description.

The other two carvings reported by Medellín are probably among the worked stones located by the 1991 project, although I am unaware of what monument numbers they were given in 1960. One was described by Medellín as a large rectangular stone with trimmed sides; this is probably the unfinished carving we labeled Worked Stone (WS) 3 (Gillespie 1994: 235). It is a very large rectangular slab with a flattish upper surface, 3.3 meters long and 2.6 meters wide. It had been dragged up onto other boulders to raise it so that the carvers could work on the sides. Our investigations revealed great quantities of debitage in the form of large and small flakes, as well as a hammerstone and fragments of other stone tools immediately adjacent to the worked stone. The carvers had nicely shaped one short side but were still in the process of removing stone from the other sides and smoothing the top surface when work was abandoned. In its unfinished state, WS 3 compares with San Lorenzo Monument 51, which Coe and Diehl (1980, 1: 360) called a "flat altar."

The other unfinished carving reported by Medellín is one he called the "split stone," our WS 1 (Gillespie 1994: 233–234). It is a recognizable tabletop altar or "throne" whose top half had broken off the base sometime in the past (fig. 7). It was apparently tipped up and lying on its back, the two halves split apart, when found in 1960. Medellín's workers righted the altar onto its base, placed the top portion onto the base half, moved the monument slightly in so doing, and then excavated for ceramic artifacts in the place where it had stood. The carvers had removed large portions of stone from all four sides and the top, by per-



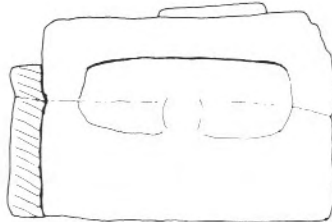
LA VENTA ALTAR 2
(ht. = 99 cm)



LAGUNA DE LOS CERROS MONUMENT 5
(ht. = 61 cm)



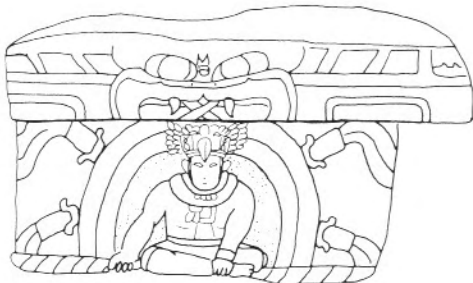
LA VENTA ALTAR 5
(ht. = 154 cm)



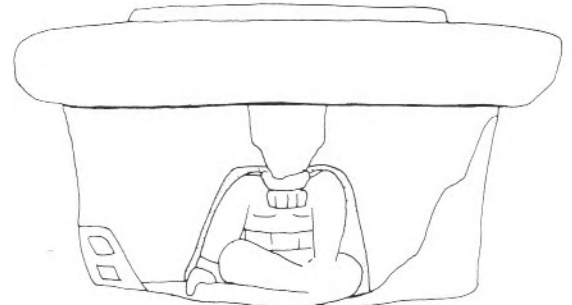
LLANO DEL JICARO
(ht. = 130 cm)



SAN LORENZO MONUMENT 20
(ht. = 167 cm)



LA VENTA ALTAR 4
(ht. = 160 cm)



SAN LORENZO MONUMENT 14
(ht. = 183 cm)

cussion, and were in the process of straightening and smoothing those surfaces by pecking and grinding in small delimited areas. This work left raised rectangular projections that were destined to be removed, but the process gave even those projections a smooth surface that might appear to us to be "finished." On what we recognize as the front, they had begun to remove stone to form the area below the tabletop ledge. A curious feature is a rectangular tab projecting from one back corner of the altar the entire height of the stone. It is very smoothed and well shaped, but we suspect it was intended to be completely removed at a later time, possibly after the altar reached its final destination, because no other altar has such a tab.

Scholars (for example, Clewlow 1974: 123; de la Fuente 1977: 272) have commented on the "atypically" small size of the two reported altars (Mons. 5 and 28) from Laguna de los Cerros.

Monument 5 is just under 50 centimeters high in its fragmentary state, while Monument 28 is only slightly taller at 66 centimeters. However, adding WS 1 from Llano del Jicaro, which is 128 centimeters tall, to the total corpus of the Laguna de los Cerros area sculpture yields a better comparison in terms of altar size with the other two Olmec centers, whose altars also exhibit quite a range of sizes (fig. 8). As noted above, there is also the large portion of another altar still in situ in the main plaza at Laguna de los Cerros. Interestingly, the Monument 28 altar lacks a niche for the figure to sit within, unlike Monument 5, which has this more typical trait; thus Monument 28 compares to a late altar at La Venta, Altar 6, which also lacks a niche. It is unknown whether WS 1 was intended to have a niche, or whether one appears on the altar still in the plaza.

Another important hinterland site that has

8. Comparison of sizes of altars from San Lorenzo, La Venta, and the Laguna de los Cerros area

yielded several Olmec carvings is La Isla, which may have been a secondary center (it has several earthen mounds) under the hegemony of Laguna de los Cerros. Sculpture fragments were recovered from the site by people living in the area, and several of these are now in the Museum of Anthropology in Xalapa, Veracruz, with their proveniences labeled “Hueyapan de Ocampo” (Winfield Capitaine 1987), the town adjacent to La Isla. In addition, we were shown a carved head from the site which is in private hands. Informants told us that all these carvings were recovered from the river, which has cut into La Isla Mound D. The brief excavations carried out at La Isla yielded no new sculpture but did provide evidence to suggest that the Olmec monuments had likely been redeposited in Classic period constructions (Grove 1994: 226), of which Mound D is one,

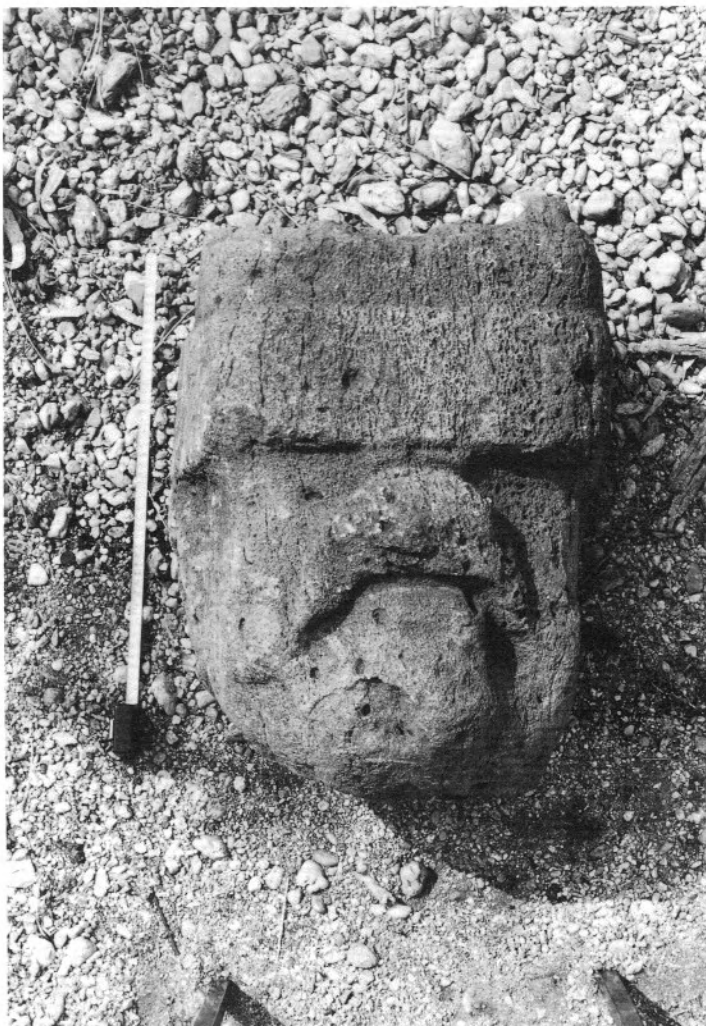
a situation similar to that which Medellín encountered in Laguna de los Cerros.

We renumbered all the sculpture from La Isla to properly indicate its provenience. The ones we designated La Isla Monuments 1 and 2 (Grove et al. 1993) are two supernatural statue heads severed from their bodies.⁹ Monument 1 (in private hands) is eroded and lacks visible eyes, and its rectangular ear pieces are broken (fig. 9). The mouth area is the most distinct feature: a prominent downturned upper lip meets a bulbous and broken nose area. What looks like a projecting “tongue” reaches down to the chin and defines the lower corners of the mouth which were created by drilling circular holes. The blocky shape’s cleft head, broad headdress band just above the eyes, and general snarling mouth resemble the features on the heads of Estero Rabón Monument 5 near San Lorenzo (Medellín 1960: 75–76, pl. 1), several monuments from La Venta—Monuments 9, 64 (de la Fuente 1973: 65–66, 111), and the large unnumbered head that has the X- and U-shaped motifs above the eyes (Benson and de la Fuente 1996: 176)—and also the head of San Lorenzo Monument 10 (see Symonds, this volume, fig. 10). Monument 10 (Coe and Diehl 1980, 1: 317) is a more intact sculpture in which the head is shown to belong to a stocky seated figure with arms bent and held in front of the body, each hand holding a “knuckle-duster.”

The resemblance to Monument 10 is even more significant when another La Isla monument from Mound D is considered—a torso fragment of a seated individual holding two knuckle-dusters (now in the Xalapa museum), virtually identical to Monument 10 (fig. 10). The legs are missing. Like Monument 10, this figure wears a very wide band worn above the waist to mid-chest, and it also has what appears to be a narrow loincloth showing between the buttocks. My analysis of the size and shape of fracture areas and the pattern of irregularities in the stone for both La Isla pieces indicates that the Monument 1 head belongs to this torso (fig. 11). We accordingly numbered the head Monument 1b and the torso as Monument 1a (Grove et al. 1993: 93–94). This carving is yet another instance of sharing of a very specific sculpture type between Laguna de los Cerros and San Lorenzo.

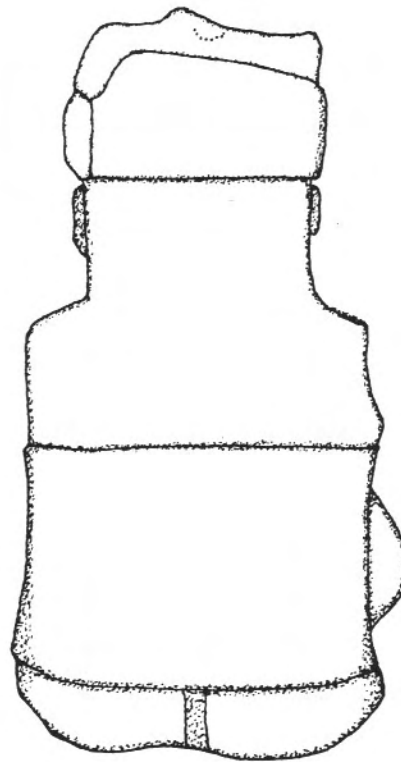
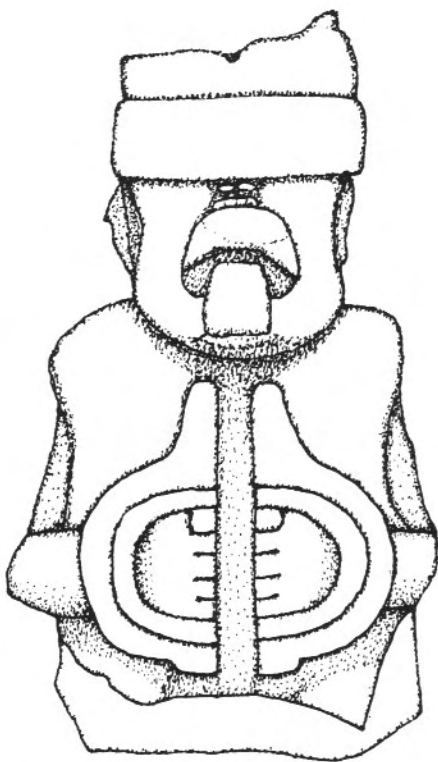
The other Olmec-style head from La Isla, Monument 2, has a flattish rounded top with no visible headdress, heavy projecting brow

9. La Isla Monument 1b, head of a supernatural being, Formative period, basalt. Photographed in Hueyapan de Ocampo, 1991: David Grove

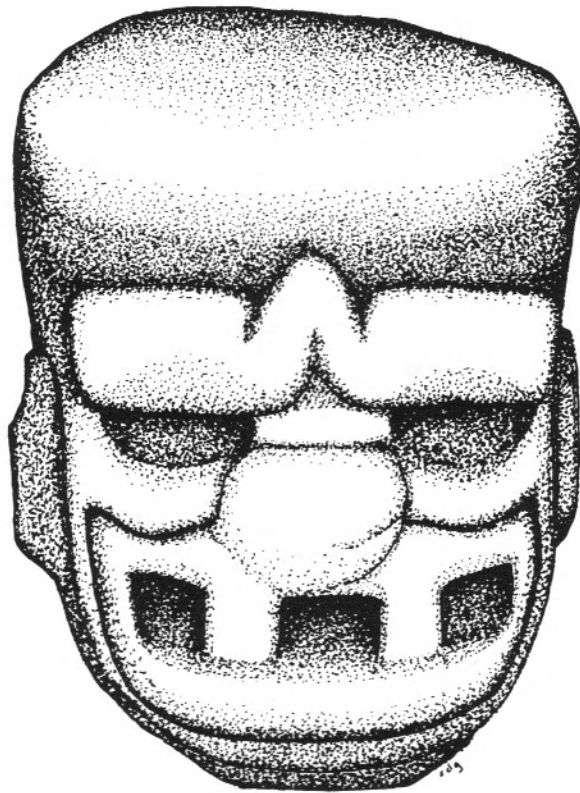




10. La Isla Monument 1a, torso of an anthropomorph holding two knuckle-dusters, Formative period, basalt
Photographed in Hueyapan de Ocampo, 1984; David Grove



11. Tentative reconstruction drawing uniting the two known fragments of La Isla Monument 1



12. La Isla Monument 2,
head of a supernatural being
Drawing based on photographs
taken in Hueyapan de Ocampo, 1984

ridges, a bulbous eroded nose area, and a buccal mask with two widely spaced rectangular teeth projecting down from the upper mandible (fig. 12). The rectangular ear pieces are broken (Grove et al. 1993: 93). The brow treatment compares to La Venta Monument 8 (de la Fuente 1973: 64), but the face is otherwise dissimilar.

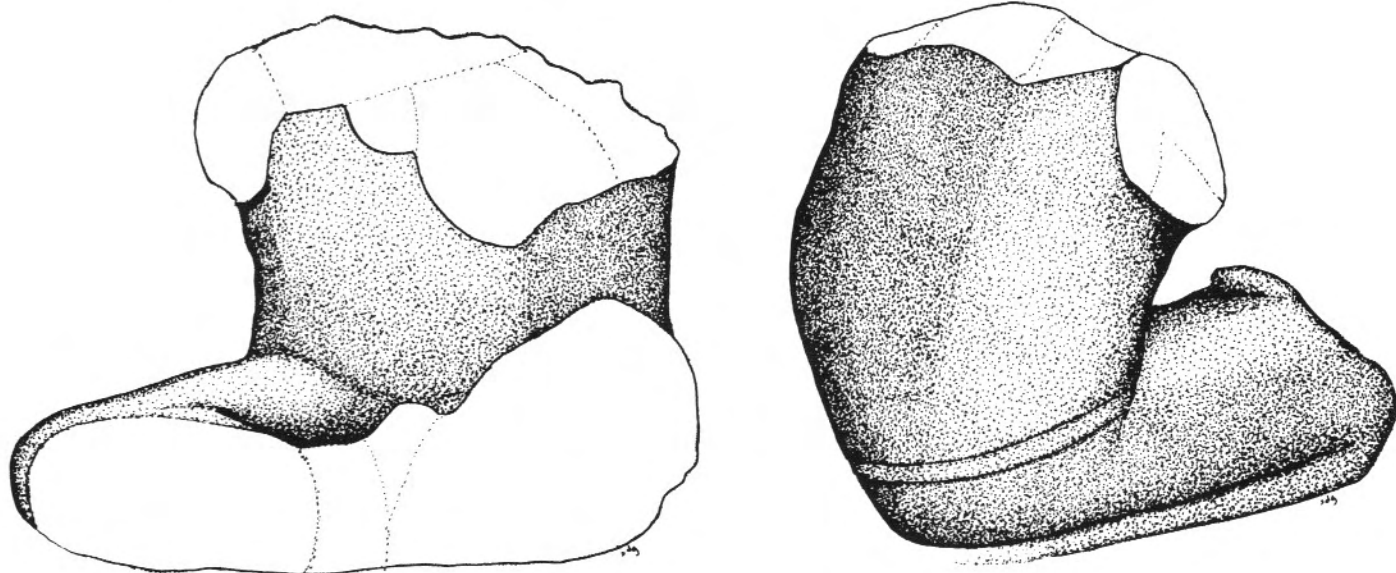
In addition to finding these figures from secondary sites in the Laguna de los Cerros hinterlands, we were also shown two other carvings, both highly mutilated seated statues (Grove et al. 1993). The first, designated the Loma de la Piedra carving, was found on a low hill north of the town of Corral Nuevo, while the other, from the Rancho El Cardonal, was recently discovered by the landowner at a location not far from Llano del Júcaro. Both monuments were mutilated in the past, like all the other finished carvings from the Laguna de los Cerros area.

The Loma de la Piedra sculpture depicts a seated person wearing a narrow belt (fig. 13). The head and most of the arms and legs have been broken off. The legs were asymmetrically positioned, the right leg apparently horizontal, the knee bent, while the left leg may have been raised or with the knee up (compare to Laguna

de los Cerros Monument 11). Unlike the Laguna de los Cerros seated figures, the torso is larger than life-size and very blocky, rather than delicate and rounded, and the personage leans strongly forward (perhaps to distribute the weight of the stone [see Drucker 1981: 39]). The height of the sculpture fragment, including a shallow platform on which the person is seated, is 95 centimeters (Grove et al. 1993: 92). The general posture, size, and massive quality compare to another, previously published Laguna de los Cerros hinterland monument also located in the *municipio* of Hueyapan de Ocampo: the seated statue from Cuauhtotolapan Viejo (Medellín 1971: 23, pl. 6), retrieved from the river bottom in two pieces. With its head restored to the body, this sculpture has a total height of 163 centimeters. The Loma de la Piedra and Cuauhtotolapan Viejo monuments are similar in overall appearance to other large, forward-leaning seated figures with crossed legs and arms in front of their knees, such as the Cruz del Milagro, Sayula, Monument 1 sculpture (Medellín 1971: 41, pl. 48) and La Venta Monument 10 (de la Fuente 1973: 68). The Loma de la Piedra monument differs from these others in the asymmetrical placement of the limbs.

In contrast to these two hinterland monuments, the Rancho El Cardonal carving is smaller than life-size and more delicately modeled, which is typical of the finished anthropomorphic statues from Laguna de los Cerros (fig. 14). The legs are only loosely crossed, and the toes of the right foot are well defined. The upper torso and head were removed, as were the arms, which rested on the legs. The only vestige of costume is what appears to be a single narrow ribbon cascading down the center of the back, as if from a headdress (compare to the wider and more elaborate headdress ribbons on the back of Laguna de los Cerros Mon. 6). This carving is unusual because it is seated upon a very tall pedestal that is oval in cross section. The base of the pedestal has been mutilated, and it has a slightly projecting flange around the perimeter near the bottom edge. The broken height of the figure is only 29 centimeters, while the height of the entire fragment is 95 centimeters (Grove et al. 1993: 93).

The El Cardonal monument is similar in position and size to decapitated carvings of seated personages on rounded pedestals from the site of Sin Cabezas, Escuintla, Guatemala,



most especially to Monument 1 (total height of Mon. 1 is 105 cm; height of the seated figure is 35 cm [Parsons 1986: fig. 15]). Lee Parsons dated this site's monuments on stylistic grounds to the late Middle Formative, 700–500 B.C. (the time when La Venta and Chalcatzingo both flourished), which he considered a transitional period between “Olmec” and later monument carving traditions (1986: 14). Nevertheless, he considered the naturalistic, full-round pedestaled figures of Monuments 1 and 2 to “reflect prior Olmec canons,” and Sin Cabezas Monument 1 is further characterized as “the most Olmec-looking” (1986: 20).

A significant fact concerning these two hinterland carvings is that they were placed in locations where surface indications failed to show any evidence of prehistoric occupation. We have suggested (Grove et al. 1993: 94) that, assuming these monuments were placed there during the periods when Laguna de los Cerros was a regional power, they may have served as a form of boundary marker, delimiting sacred or political space. The Loma de la Piedra statue sits on a low hill several kilometers north of Laguna de los Cerros, while the El Cardonal carving is a few kilometers to the northwest. This sculpture sits at the edge of the same plateau where the monument workshop is located, and from El Cardonal one can look down into the valley toward Laguna de los Cerros.

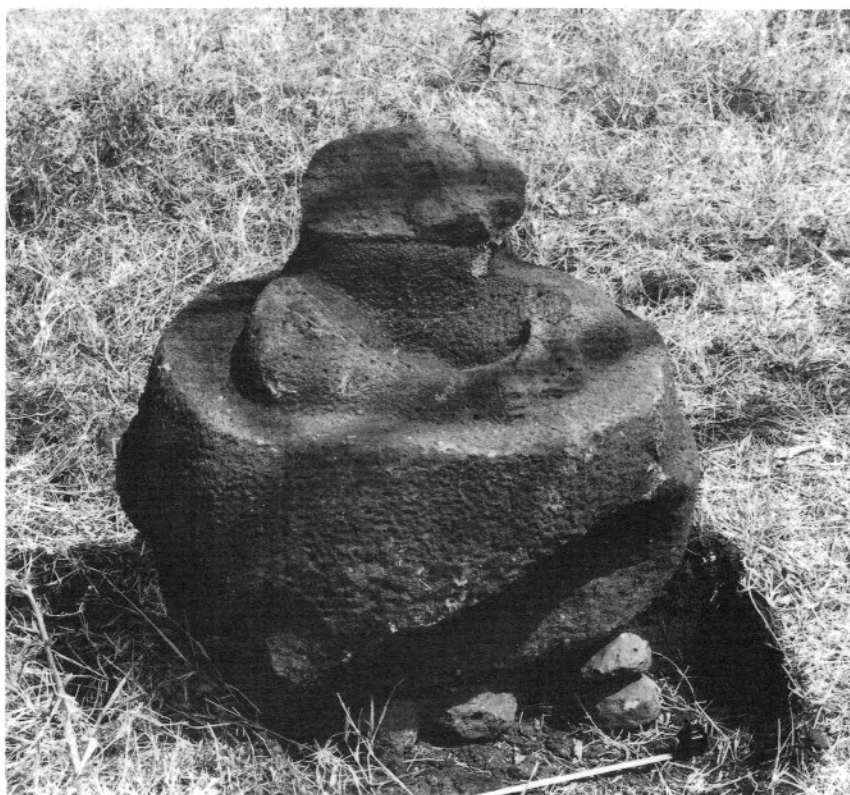
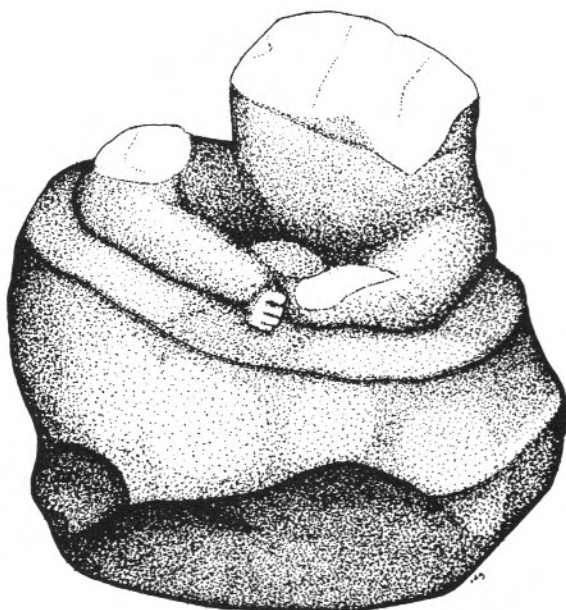
Grove (1999) has shown for San Lorenzo and

La Venta that the spatial positioning of monuments within a center conforms to recognizable patterns. The carvings were part of a symbolic system activated in ritual practices that integrated the center as a unity and defined its relationship to its hinterland or periphery. So, too, the monuments assigned to the hinterland should not be considered in isolation from their possible relationship to the patterning at the larger center. They should be seen as part of the greater spatial unity defined, in part, by monuments that extended far beyond the center itself. Therefore, just as much more work needs to be done at Laguna de los Cerros to understand better how it functioned as a primary Olmec center—an assessment thus far based entirely on the number of battered Olmec monuments it has yielded—so, too, a fuller understanding of its role as a center in a complex settlement hierarchy depends on investigations of its hinterland sites and monuments.

Implications of Comparative Studies

The recent findings of monuments in the Laguna de los Cerros hinterland and elsewhere in the Olmec area, especially at San Lorenzo, have increased the number of similarities that can be described between the upland and lowland sites since the earlier comparative studies of the 1970s, revealing further and often striking correspondences. The closest similari-

13. Two views (a and b) of the Loma de la Piedra monument of a seated anthropomorph
Based on field observations and photographs, 1990



14. Rancho El Cardonal monument of an anthropomorph seated on a pedestal

Drawing (a) based on field observations and photographs (b) taken in 1991

ties between centers are noted for Laguna de los Cerros and San Lorenzo, which lies approximately 65 kilometers to the southeast. This fact has implications for both the dating of Laguna de los Cerros' Olmec occupation and the degree of cultural contact between the two sites, including the possibility, as yet unproven, that Laguna de los Cerros provided basalt boulders or unfinished monuments to San Lorenzo during the San Lorenzo phase (1150–900 B.C.). The monuments also demonstrate, through stylistic links, occupation in the Middle Formative (some similarities to La Venta and the El Cardonal pedestaled statue like those of Sin Cabezas) and into the early Late Formative, with resemblances to Tres Zapotes carvings (Mon. 27, and the four-legged throne and plain stone box still in situ at Laguna de los Cerros). This continuity of settlement generally matches the preliminary evidence from the ceramic artifacts as analyzed by Bove (1978: 23), although the emphasis in the ceramic reanalyses has been on the affinities to the San Lorenzo phase and not to these later periods.

Despite these similarities, the Laguna de los Cerros carvings, as a corpus, are distinctive for various reasons, in terms of both style and of how representative the corpus is of the entirety of Olmec monumental art (see also de la Fuente, this volume). While earlier claims that the Laguna de los Cerros carvings were different in being more dynamic, delicate, and realistically proportioned now may not have as much validity, thanks to some of the newer finds at San Lorenzo that also have these qualities, Laguna de los Cerros still has some unique pieces, including Monument 19, the statue of a standing human figure. Furthermore, in order to evaluate the relationships Laguna de los Cerros may have had with other primary and secondary centers on the basis of its known monuments, another issue must be addressed, namely, what typical Olmec monument types are missing? Monument 19 is so far the largest Olmec sculpture known for the site of Laguna de los Cerros itself, at 160 centimeters tall and weighing 2.2 tons. What this implies is that, despite its location close to the source of basalt boulders, Laguna de los Cerros thus far *lacks* the massive stone carvings found at San Lorenzo, La Venta, and also Tres Zapotes.

Especially significant is the absence at Laguna de los Cerros of colossal heads, one of the most distinctive Olmec sculpture types.

Ten heads are known from San Lorenzo, four from La Venta, and three from the Tres Zapotes area. Many scholars believe that the colossal heads are giant portraits of rulers or their ancestors, who were portrayed wearing headdresses that further signaled their identity (for example, Clewlow 1974: 150; Coe 1972: 5; Cyphers 1995: 45; de la Fuente 1992: 14; Grove 1981: 61; Stirling 1965: 733). I suspect that the lack of colossal heads, along with any other unmutated naturalistic or "portrait" heads (except on the two small altars), is one reason why the Laguna de los Cerros monuments seem less familiar to us. We are drawn to the massive and compelling faces that we believe depict individual Olmec personages, but at Laguna de los Cerros the paramounts of Olmec society remain faceless and anonymous (see Pasztory, this volume).

Heads are important beyond the emotional responses they may evoke. David Grove (1981) has suggested that colossal heads and other representations of faces and headdresses can provide evidence of the interaction of important individuals between the various centers. He noted the similar facial features and headdress of La Venta Colossal Head Monument 4 (de la Fuente 1973: 55–57) and the person depicted in bas-relief on the side of the great San Lorenzo altar, Monument 14 (Coe and Diehl 1980, 1: 321); both have slightly projecting upper teeth and a headdress with a big "feline paw" on top. If both carvings are meant to represent the same person, then this constitutes evidence of personalized interrelationships between these two centers.¹⁰

It is possible that future excavations will finally add colossal heads to the Laguna de los Cerros corpus, with the potential to provide valuable comparative data with other sites. This was the opinion optimistically expressed by Michael Coe in 1967 (in Proskouriakoff 1968: 134): "There must be big heads there. Most of the monuments must still be underground just as most of the monuments of San Lorenzo must still be underground" (as his and later excavations have shown true). Furthermore, it was from the deepest excavation units at Laguna de los Cerros that the late Early Formative ceramic artifacts were recovered (especially Trench 14, excavated to a depth of 6.3 meters [Bove 1978: 16]).

It is nevertheless interesting to note that in addition to the absence of colossal heads, Laguna de los Cerros has no other large monu-

ments, no stelae (like those of La Venta), and no large altars like San Lorenzo Monument 14 and La Venta Altar 4 (see fig. 8). In fact, the few large carvings in the Laguna de los Cerros area all come from the hinterland sites—the large unfinished statue (Mon. 8), the altar (WS 1), and the great rectangular slab (WS 3) from Llano del Jícaro, and the Cuauhtotolapan Viejo and Loma de la Piedra seated statues. If this absence of large monuments is real and not a product of limited excavations at Laguna de los Cerros, then it suggests that the paramounts of the site may have purposely limited themselves to smaller monuments. Their counterparts at San Lorenzo and La Venta imported the largest stones over the longest distances to their home sites, where such stone is completely absent and its inherent value was correspondingly very high. In contrast, in the Laguna de los Cerros area, where massive boulders are close by and abundant, perhaps the huge size of the stone itself was less important for conveying the meanings or fulfilling the functions of the monuments there.

NOTES

The 1991 archaeological investigations at Llano del Jícaro and La Isla were undertaken with the permission of Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. The Llano del Jícaro project was funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and the work at La Isla by the National Science Foundation. Ponciano Ortiz lent invaluable assistance in the field, and David Grove helped me enormously, both in the field and with the writing of this paper. John Clark and David Webster provided valuable insights on comparisons of some of the monuments. I gratefully acknowledge the help and cooperation of these persons and institutions.

1. "Cerro Cintepec" as a type of stone refers to a coarsely porphyritic, olivine-augine basalt of Plio-Pleistocene age resulting from volcanic flows in the southern and eastern area of the Tuxtla Mountains. It appears on the surface in various places, eroded into large boulders (Williams and Heizer 1965: 3, 5).

2. Medellín (1971) frequently reported as associated ceramics the artifacts from test excavations placed where he *suspected* that the carvings were originally positioned, namely, on top of mounds, even though he actually recovered the monuments from other locations, such as the plazas below.

3. As for the earthen mound architecture that is present at Laguna de los Cerros, it is difficult to say how much of it dates to the Olmec period. Bove (1978: 32) noted that the main mound group was oriented to 8 degrees west of north, like the Formative ceremonial centers of La Venta and also San José Mogote, Oaxaca.

4. Furthermore, there was some early confusion concerning the numbering system, so reports such as those of Clewlow (1974) and Bove (1978) refer to Mon. 1a (= Mon. 2), Mon. 3a (= Mon. 6), and use no numbers when describing Monuments 9 and 28, although de la Fuente's 1973 catalogue lists the correct numbers for all these sculptures.

5. Table 1 does not include the "small, crouched jaguar on boulder from Laguna de los Cerros" reported by Clewlow (1974: 101). According to de la Fuente (1977: 277), the provenience of this eroded sculpture, which was in the Museum of Anthropology in Xalapa, is unknown.

6. Ann Cyphers (personal communication, 1996) informed me that this monument fragment has since disappeared from the site.

7. David Webster (personal communication, 1996) brought to my attention a fascinating similarity between these two monuments, each showing a person atop a block of stone seemingly tied with cords (carved on its surface), and a photograph taken before 1939 from South Nias, Indonesia, showing a large stone tied up with real cords, in order to be dragged a great distance, upon which two men were standing (in Bellwood 1979: 225). Such stone-dragging events are not unusual in Indonesia (Bellwood 1979: 226) and have been described

ethnographically, for example, in Kodi, West Sumba, where certain "big men" engaged the labor of thousands to haul huge stones to mark their graves (Hoskins 1986). More attention should be paid to these ethnographic analogues to help explain how, as well as why, the Olmecs may have transported huge boulders and carvings, and whether an advanced chiefdom or archaic state organization is necessarily indicated by the presence of large imported monoliths, as is usually assumed for the Olmecs.

8. Five of the worked stones from Llano del Jícaro were rectilinear blocks in which a lengthwise channel or groove was being cut in the upper surface. While in their general form they appeared to resemble the making of trough or drainage stones, such as are known for La Venta and San Lorenzo, and which Medellín indicated were present at Laguna de los Cerros (see above), their dimensions do not match any of the published drain stones (Gillespie 1994: 235).

9. A third head from La Isla, Monument 3, is post-Olmec in style: a crude "skull" face on a tall, almost cylindrical form, with a shallow cavity ground into the upper surface. Its overall form and the carving of the eyes—circular depressions surrounded by shallow channels that extend to the sides of the face—strongly resemble the stone "mask" from Medias Aguas, Sayula, Veracruz (Mon. 1; Medellín 1960: pls. 4, 5; 1971: pl. 10). The latter object is larger and has a feline mouth with projecting fangs instead of exposed human teeth that give the La Isla face a skeletal appearance. Medellín (1971: 25) dated the Medias Aguas monument to the Late Classic period on the basis of associated ceramics.

10. The bas-relief on the San Lorenzo altar shows better than the colossal head what the headdress worn by this individual actually looked like—a tall, broad-brimmed hat with the big "jaguar paw" on top. On La Venta Head 4, this headdress is reduced and depicted in very low relief, like the ear ornaments, while the facial features are shown in higher relief to give a more realistic three-dimensional representation. Scholars have long commented on the round, close-fitting helmetlike headdress worn by virtually all colossal heads (for example, Covarrubias 1957: 65; Cyphers 1995: 45), somewhat resembling old-fashioned American football helmets (Covarrubias 1957: 65; repeated by Diehl 1996: 32). In fact, the headdress as "helmet" is not naturalistically represented; instead, it is a product of the technique used to carve the colossal heads, made from rounded boulders that were only minimally modified (Drucker 1981: 40). To try to duplicate realistically on such a massive scale the elaborate headdress actually worn by the head would have required the removal of a great quantity of stone, starting with a much larger boulder, and would have been technically very difficult to achieve (Stirling 1965: 733–734). We must therefore rely on the bas-reliefs and some smaller three-dimensional representations of headdresses to realize the nature of Olmec headgear as worn by the persons depicted on the colossal heads.

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