

# 1. HISTORIA PRECOLOMBINA

## C. CALENDARIO Y MATEMÁTICAS

Coordinadores: *George Kubler* (E.U.A.)  
*Horst Hartung* (E.U.A.)  
*Anthony F. Aveni* (E.U.A.)

## OAXACA DEITY IN ESCUINTLA, COCJO IN GUATEMALA

NICHOLAS M. HELLMUTH

In 1966 I noticed in the Kidder, Jennings, and Shook publication on Kaminal Juyu two strange faces on a stucco covered bowl (1946: Fig. 186c). The faces were unlike anything either Maya or Teotihuacan and looked out of place with the rest of the ceramic art found in Mounds A and B. Over the years each time I used this book as a reference in my studies of Teotihuacan influence on Maya art I kept noticing the strange features of these faces and wondering when new information would make their identification possible.

The authors themselves make hardly any comments on the faces; they write more on the technological features of the pot itself. They do mention though that "a black bowl from Monte Alban (Period III) in the Mexican National Museum" was similar to the Kaminal Juyu pot. The Monte Alban example even had the same indented edge "to produce a trefoil orifice as is that of one of our specimens and it bears three human faces in relief, which, again as in our specimen, have triple hair 'bobs' and curling 'mustaches'" (Ibid., p. 234). I checked the monumental 500 page opus of Caso, Bernal, and Acosta (1967) on Monte Alban ceramics and did not notice the piece illustrated.

Not until 1972 did I by coincidence notice a face similar to the Kaminal Juyu one in the Caso and Bernal publication on urns (1952: Fig. 42). This must be the pot referred to by Kidder; why it is not illustrated also in the Monte Alban ceramic report I do not know. In the urn volume Caso and Bernal comment that their face is similar to the one found at Kaminal Juyu. The Mexican archaeologists identify the face as that of Cocijo, the Monte Alban god of water.

At first the Cocijo on the bowls does not look at all like the obvious Cocijo on the urns. The urn Cocijo had a bifurcated serpent tongue, a blunt ended greatly protruding nose, and exaggerated protruding fangs. The Kaminal Juyu "Cocijo" had none of these features. Likewise the Guatemalan face lacked the fancy Oaxacan headdress with Glyph C. Looking more closely and comparing the Guatemalan with the Oaxacan faces though, I slowly came to accept Caso and Bernal's identification. The bowl faces have a pronounced curl emanating from the nose, curls which are just under the eye and which unwind on the cheek. This identical form of curl is found on the Cocijo urns from Oaxaca. These below-eye curls are hard to see on the urns because there they are hidden by lots of other ornate decorations.

The mustache on the Guatemalan specimens and on the non-urn Oaxacan specimen is peculiar to non-urn pottery. I cannot find this feature on a significant number of urns. Perhaps the omission of the protruding snout and fangs occasioned the special emphasis of the mustache in replacement. A second characteristic of the non-urn variety is the diagonal slant to the eye, more pronounced in some cases than in others. I do not detect this feature on many urns.

The eye-curl itself though, is occasionally depicted on the urns (Caso & Bernal, 1952: Figs. 19, 32). Apparently we are dealing with a deity possessing multiple distinguishing features of clothing, headdress, and facial ornamentation. The few



square centimeters of a cylinder tripod, especially a slab foot, may not have been deemed enough space to show all the items of traditional costume; or more probably the large, three dimensional urns must have served specific rituals which called for the protruding nose and fangs; the smaller cylinder tripods and bowls may have served another purpose calling for different manifestations. Let us now look at several previously published but unidentified Cocijo faces.

#### FACES ALREADY PUBLISHED

The Carnegie Institution of Washington (CIW) published an illustration of a Cocijo face in 1950 (Kidder, 1950: Fig. 3g). That report is one of the CIW "Notes", as in most cases just a several page little article illustrating a number of unrelated ceramic objects. The extreme value of such miscellaneous publications is that ceramic artifacts are made available for later generations of scholars to study. In 1950 the author of the Note could not identify the face at all. His description is entirely of the technological features of the thing as a piece of fired clay. The provenance is given as "purchased at Kaminal Juyu" (Ibid., p. 50).

Now, 24 years later we can identify the face as the same as others from Kaminal Juyu and similar to the face identified by Caso and Bernal as of Cocijo. It helps to have this little CIW Note to demonstrate that this foreign deity was present in the Guatemalan highlands. Its presence in identical form also in the Guatemalan Department of Escuintla is indicative of close contact between highland Kaminal Juyu and low, coastal Escuintla—not surprising since only about 50 miles separate the two places (see maps of this region in the Handbook of Middle American Indians, in articles by Borhegyi and especially by Shook).

A second Cocijo on a slab foot detached from a cylinder tripod was published in another CIW Note (Kidder, 1943: 91, j). This artifact fragment had been found near Texcuaco on the Rio Coyolate, Dept. of Escuintla. Kidder labeled it as a "Tlaloc face" (Ibid., p. 84).

M. Louise Baker illustrated in full color at full size a buff cylinder tripod with an elaborate rendition of Cocijo's face (Gordon & Mason, 1925-1943: Plate LX). The pot is labeled as from Utatlan, Guatemala and is now in the Peabody Museum, Harvard University (Museum No. C-1918). Utatlan was the 16th century capital of the Quiche Maya; the cylinder tripod is though of Teotihuacan style and time, though a regional rendition. Either the pot or the mold from which the pot was made could have been from Escuintla. Art historians interested in the iconography of Monte Alban deities should study the original, lifesized, color reproduction in the Gordon and Mason book, for this particular Cocijo is an attractively decorated cylinder tripod.

From the black-and-white copy reproduced with this article though, you can notice that this Cocijo has certain features not found on others, and other characteristics which although present elsewhere are more developed on this example. The nose is human-like but under it is a thin protrusion which reminded me at first of the thin types of fungi which grow in rubbery masses on fallen trees. Nothing quite identical is noticeable on the other Guatemalan Cocijos. The three dimensional Cocijo head to be discussed later has unidentifiable lines under the nose, but nothing sticking out. I note nothing identical to the Utatlan "upper lip" on the Monte Alban urns, unless a thing from over the bifurcated tongue and under the lip on the "Dios con Mascara bucal de Serpiente" is a related appendage (Boss, 1966: Lams. LXXXII, LXXXIII). This same Monte Alban urn type also has two prominent round tipped "fangs", possibly longer forms of the two residual bumps on some of the Guatemalan faces. More examples of different Cocijos need to be located in private collections. Each new specimen tells us more about the symbols associated with this deity.

#### COCIJO OF ENRIQUE MAGERMANS

Sr. Magermans has on several occasions kindly allowed me to photograph the Teotihuacan-Escuintla pottery in his collection. He has one particularly fine pot with



a Cocijo face sticking out from the vase. Edwin Shook photographed this a number of years ago. Learning of the pot from Shook, I made a special trip to Chichicastenango with my portable photographic studio with lighting equipment, background paper, close-up lenses, etc. to get the photograph reproduced in this article.

Two facial types are molded, each twice, on the exterior of the cylinder tripod. The other face is the same general kind as with the Cocijo face on the Kaminal Juyu pot. The Cocijo face itself has small round earplugs, a feature not always included. The nose is a simple human type; the eyes have only a hint of thick outlines or diagonal orientation. The nose-level face curls go up over the level of the eye as they do on the three dimensional specimen. Perhaps because the nose cheek curls cover the eye there is no separate eye curl. In the mouth region are two tear shaped things. They do not look particularly like fierce fangs or a bifurcated tongue.

### THREE DIMENSIONAL COCIJO HEAD

In a fine private collection in Guatemala City is the remarkable vessel. On the cylinder tripod itself the personage with upraised arms is identical to personages on two other pots which I have photographed on other occasions. This full figure individual is not Cocijo and will be the subject of a separate article because I cannot offhand identify its origins.

The feature of immediate interest of this pot is the three dimensional head on the lid. This face has the nose-cheek level curls, the thick lines over the eye, and an incised mustache of Cocijo. The mouth itself and the headdress differ from the normal mold-made Cocijos on slab feet.

This finely sculpted head is a remarkable piece of pre-Columbian art. Aside from its uniqueness — the only three dimensional Cocijo head in Guatemala — the format permitted the Escuintla (?) artist more liberty to depict all the important features of Cocijo. We note though that the large protruding nose and fangs of the Oaxacan urn types are still not shown even though space existed.

I cannot identify the two bumps at the lower corners of the mouth nor other features of the mouth. More examples will need to be discovered in order to compare several examples to determine what was meant. Two vestigial bumps (actually dots) are visible on the Monte Alban example and two tear shaped things protrude from the mouth of the Cocijo of the Magermans collection.

### LA DEMOCRACIA MUSEUM COCIJOS

The curator of the Casa Cultura museum of La Democracia, Dept. of Escuintla kindly made special arrangements for me to photograph a Cocijo cylinder tripod and two detached tripod supports in his museum. These museum specimens show that an artifact can be totally devoid of aesthetic value yet still be important for scientific research. The museum tripod is incomplete, badly broken, and was sloppily made to begin with 14 centuries ago. Nonetheless its mold impressed decoration shows a definite Cocijo face, in fact the nose is quite prominent and is of the blunt Oaxacan urn variety, not the naturalistic human nose as on other Guatemalan specimens. Archaeologists and art historians could learn a great deal from photographing, studying, and publishing artifacts in small regional Mexican and Guatemalan museums. Articles currently appearing traditionally refer to the same old monograph illustrations of ceramic art which is already quite well known. Museums and private collections have a great wealth of material which can substantially contribute to scientific knowledge of man's past in the New World.

### COCIJO ON DETACHED TRIPOD SUPPORTS

Altogether more than 30 detached feet with Cocijo could be found in antiquities stores in Guatemala, all from cylinder tripods dug up by grave robbers in the Escuintla region. Normally decorated supports are so numerous that I do not have



enough film to shoot them all. This is a shame because some of the larger tripod feet exhibit complex scenes with full figure humans or bird-jaguars. I am appreciative of the individuals who have saved some of the more elaborately decorated slab feet so that they could be photographed and studied.

I am not familiar with any representations of Cocijo on tripod supports from Teotihuacan, but then less than 10% of the known ceramics excavated at that site have ever been published. No Cocijo supports are illustrated for Monte Alban itself. The center of their popularity was clearly the Escuintla region.

The frequency of Cocijo faces on cylinder tripods from the Escuintla region should prompt an investigation into the significance this deity may have played in pre-Columbian religious thought and ritual.

### SUMMARY

The literature available to date shows only two Cocijo faces which were obtained under professionally recorded excavation situations, one from Monte Alban, a second from Kaminal Juyu. Of the two faces published in CIW Notes both were not found in situ. This present paper shows that little known art motifs can be studied more effectively when examples from private collections or obscure regional museums are utilized. The printed sources gave no indication that Cocijo was a common occurrence in Guatemala. Of the four published faces, one was misidentified as Tlaloc, two were not identified at all, and only Caso and Bernal recognized the face as a variant of Cocijo of the Oaxacan urns.

A more thorough study of other collections in Guatemala would undoubtedly reveal other representations of Cocijo. Museums and private collections in the U. S., France, and Belgium (where much of the Escuintla pottery was shipped in the years 1972-1974) probably contain a few striking works of ceramic art from Guatemala with the Cocijo face shown. This article will have served one purpose if other individuals with knowledge of other Cocijo representations will either publish them or send photographs to me so that they can be analyzed and included in subsequent revisions and updated reports on this Oaxacan deity.

### CONCLUSIONS

Apparently the fertile coastal Escuintla plain was the center of a cult of Cocijo. The Cocijo which was venerated was a different manifestation than that of Oaxaca itself. The Guatemalan Cocijo lacks certain nose, mouth, and serpent tongue features of the Oaxacan type. Cocijo is almost always shown as just head, except for a rare example carefully stored in the Jorge Castillo collection (not yet photographed or analyzed). The Escuintla artists did make three dimensional full figure human and deity effigies. Some Escuintla female figurine incense burners share foot and skirt characteristics with Monte Alban urns. It is worth commenting upon the fact that no full figure urn or incensario rendition of Cocijo is known for Escuintla. The Escuintla people thus definitely used the Cocijo image in a manner possibly significantly different than that of Monte Alban.

The function of Cocijo in native Escuintla religion is unknown. Tlaloc from Teotihuacan was worshipped by the same Escuintla people. Tlaloc is a god of rain and a second, Oaxacan rain god would hardly seem needed. There is not yet any indication that Cocijo was venerated by one particular social, political, or ethnic segment of the population and Tlaloc by another. Representations on pottery of the two are fairly evenly distributed. Tlaloc was depicted associated with a multitude of other supernatural beings or symbols; Cocijo was shown alone or with the simple face companion of the Magermans pot.

Cocijo-on-the-lid's relationship to the as yet unidentified personage with upraised hands on the cylinder tripod has not yet been established. I hope that the publication of this illustration will enable someone else to identify features of this personage with Oaxacan, or Veracruz, or Central Mexican individuals.



We can certainly credit the inhabitants of Escuintla with being international in their outlook. They had Teotihuacan and Veracruz symbols in their art as well as a few Oaxacan traits. Surprisingly, although Oaxaca is the closest of the three foreign regions, Escuintla had more ties with distant Teotihuacan. Symbols shared with Veracruz were many, but not of the common incidence as symbols shared with Teotihuacan.

Ceramic specialists can look at other more technological aspects of this interregional phenomenon. The distribution of buff colored "Tiquisate Ware" needs to be plotted. Actually, since only one bowl-Cocijo is known at Monte Alban and more than a dozen examples in Guatemala, the proof of a definite Monte Alban origin is a little weak, especially since the bowl-Cocijo is significantly different from the urn one.

#### RESEARCH STILL NEEDED FOR THE FUTURE

This article is intended to draw attention to a native Guatemalan representation of a probable deity of Oaxacan origin. The next step is to locate, both in obscure publications and in private collections, other examples of Cocijo. The goal would be somewhere to find a Cocijo on a bowl which is closer to the presumed ancestral urn prototype. It would also be nice to find a Guatemalan Cocijo face with a bifurcated tongue and other serpent characteristics of the Monte Alban urns. In Oaxaca perhaps other examples of Cocijo on non-urn bowls will reveal additional prototypes.

Once additional examples are available, a detailed study of the iconography of the urn Cocijos of Monte Alban should be made. Most available photographs in the major monographs on urns of Oaxaca have the faces in partial shade or in fuzzy focus or on a type of printing and paper where the facial decoration is not clear enough to study. Roll out drawings in two dimensions of the three dimensional urn faces would reveal possible prototypes for most of the features of the cylinder tripod Cocijos.

Monte Alban was a large important center in ancient Mesoamerica and quite close to Guatemala. Monte Alban influence on the rest of southern Mesoamerica has never been thought to have been strong. Apparently Teotihuacan simply overwhelmed Mesoamerican art styles during the 6th to 8th centuries A. D. Why Oaxacan Cocijo found a niche in the art of Escuintla when other Oaxacan features did not is a question which has yet to be answered. Let us hope that additional art and ceramic analysis will enable this present brief report to be revised and updated in the future in the light of new information.

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