Gulf Coast Influence at Moxviquil, Chiapas, Mexico

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This article presents evidence for the shifting economic networks and cultural relationships between the Jovel Valley of highland Chiapas, and the Gulf Coast lowlands. In particular, we examine material culture of Gulf Coast origin or influence at the hilltop monumental centre of Moxviquil during the Late Classic (AD 600–900) and Early Postclassic (AD 900–1250) periods. These artifacts include a fine orange cylindrical pedestal vase, two examples of 'portable sculpture', two anthropomorphic incense burner lids and a whistle (ocarina) in the shape of a kneeling woman. The patterns of curation and disposal of these objects at Moxviquil suggests differences in the way that Gulf Coast-referencing objects were incorporated into social memory and ritual behaviour.

Introduction

The Jovel Valley is located in highland Chiapas on the western frontier of the Maya cultural area, a region of interregional and intercultural contacts, influences and exchanges. Its position on the edge of the Tzotzil and Tzeltal Mayan-speaking highlands, to the east of the traditionally Zoquean-speaking occupants of Western Chiapas and the Central Depression and the Chiapanec-speaking occupants of the Middle Grijalva during the Postclassic period, made this region an economic and cultural crossroads. As such, its inhabitants developed numerous exchange relationships with distant polities and cultural groups and served as intermediaries within multiple trade networks.

In this study, we identify artifacts that reflect long-standing relationships between Jovel Valley residents and Gulf Coast polities. Significant differences in the ultimate depositional contexts of these objects illustrate the evolving nature of interventions of Gulf Coast and Central Mexican ideas and objects into highland Maya material culture during the Postclassic period, as well as differences in how Jovel Valley residents curated or discarded Gulf Coast-linked objects.

We also observe the diversity represented in the Gulf Coast region itself, with implications for shifting influences and exchanges over time. The western Gulf Coast spans the area that is currently associated with modern Veracruz, from the Sierra de los Tuxtlas northwest through the Sierra de Otontepec (Martínez de León Mármol 2011, 35). During the Classic and Postclassic periods, this area was associated with the Teeneks (Huastecs), the descendants of a Maya group that arrived to the western Gulf Coast (Zaragoza Ocaña 2015, 59). During the same period, the eastern Gulf Coast of northern Tabasco and southwestern Campeche was associated with the Putun or Chontal Maya (Scholes & Roys 1957; Zaragoza Ocaña 2015, 59), and also had strong stylistic ties with the northwest Maya area of northeast Chiapas and Tabasco, particularly sites such as Palenque.

Material culture, style, and social memory

The identification and interpretation of objects of non-local style and/or provenience is central to innumerable archaeological inquiries regarding the meanings of objects, their use in constructing political arguments and the degree to which these meanings and arguments were contested within societies (Schortman & Urban 2011, 6). For example, artifact styles actively or passively communicate information about cultural identities, sociopolitical boundaries

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and the class/status of their owners (Conkey & Hastorf 1993; Golden *et al.* 2008; Reents-Budet *et al.* 2000; Sackett 1982; Wiessner 1983; Wobst 1977) and/or the artists and crafters who produced them (Inomata 2001). Particular artifact styles have also been used to identify economic organization more broadly, with respect to the degree and nature of craft specialization (Blackman *et al.* 1993; Costin 1991); elite control over exchange (Brumfiel & Earle 1987; D'Altroy & Earle 1992); the identification of market exchange (Hirth 1998; Minc 2006; 2009; Stark & Ossa 2010); the identification of elite gift-giving and alliance-building (Foias & Bishop 1997; LeCount 1999; Reents-Budet & Bishop 2012; Schortman *et al.* 2001); and political complexity more broadly (Clark & Parry 1990). The creation of hybrid styles and decorative motifs, and their deployment in ways that suggest syncretism of different traditions and belief systems, can identify items designed to manifest non-local innovations for a local audience (Lightfoot & Martinez 1995, 485), or that were designed to resonate with multiple types of viewers across transportation routes and exchange networks (Boone & Smith 2003).

Numerous interpretive challenges hinder the interpretation of inter-polity dynamics from material culture, including the identification of polity boundaries, ethnic boundaries and/or linguistic boundaries (Hall 2009, 27; Parker 2006). Political and social identities are constantly negotiated and renegotiated, changing through space with time (Hall 2009). This is particularly associated with sites located in frontier zones, which represent cultural interfaces with cross-cutting and overlapping social networks that can be defined and recombined at different spatial and temporal scales (Lightfoot & Martinez 1995, 472). As such, the material culture of frontier zones frequently exhibits blurred and hybridized material expressions of cultural identity, as goods, ideas and people are transported and translated across the frontier over time. Cross-cultural exchange relationships can also serve to hybridize material culture assemblages, through gift exchange among elites, and/or commercial exchange among elites and commoners alike. Schortman and colleagues (2001, 313) note that aspiring elites frequently draw on exotic objects and ideas in their rise to power, and distinguish themselves from the rest of the population. To do so, they may develop a shared elite identity that cross-cuts political frontiers, accompanied by mutually beneficial trade and gift exchange (Schortman *et al.* 2001, 313). Elites in political capitals may also use particular types of goods and styles to project their power into or through borderlands (Parker 2006, 88).

The translation of cross-cultural materials can occur in multiple archaeologically visible instances. In the moment of *creation*, translation can occur when a crafter creates an object that mimics or hybridizes the stylistic attributes of a non-local object that has caught their attention (Lightfoot & Martinez 1995). In moments of *acquisition*, a cross-cultural item is acquired through exchange and is adapted into a specific context of use by its new owner(s). In moments of *modification*, new owner/crafters may modify the appearance of a cross-cultural object in ways that further hybridize its cultural meaning and use. Finally, in moments of *removal*, the meaning of the cross-cultural object is translated again when it is taken out of circulation; this may be done in two principal ways (Schortman & Urban 2011, 6). Removal may serve as a *dedicatory act*, linked to processes of offering, commemoration and celebration, that serves to enhance the connections represented by the object, and place it among a group of inalienable objects used to legitimate identity and authority (Kovacevich & Callaghan 2014; Weiner 1992). Dedicatory acts related to the preservation of memory may also include fabricating or restoring buildings, repairing or reworking valuable objects and interring objects in sacred spaces (tombs, caches, caves); these actions can provide physical frames for teaching and performing the past (Hendon 2000; 2010; Meskell 2003). In contrast, removal can take the form of an *erasure act*: that is, the destruction or obstructing the use of materials previously used to invoke memory and political connections (Canuto & Andrews 2008; Elsner 2003; Flower 2006; Joyce *et al.* 2001; Mills 2008). In pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican contexts, certain acts of destruction are identified as 'termination rituals', linked to ritual belief systems and aimed at destroying the supernatural power of ensouled objects, buildings and individuals (Ambrosino *et al.* 2003) through the intensive burning, smashing, or battering of architecture, monuments and material culture, the purposeful disturbance of preexisting burials or caches, and the scattering of material remains over wide areas (Pagliaro *et al.* 2003, 79). However, other acts of erasure were more casual and subtle, such as depositing once-valuable objects into architectural fills and middens.

Moxviquil

Moxviquil is a small urban centre located on the northern edge of the Jovel Valley, the location of the modern city of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico (Fig. 1). The Jovel Valley is the largest

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Figure 1. *The Maya cultural region with sites mentioned in the text. (Map: Elizabeth Paris, from base map by Wikimedia Commons.)*

intermountain valley in the Central Plateau of highland Chiapas, making it a strategic location for pre-Hispanic settlement. While archaeological projects in the central highlands (Adams 1961; Blom & Weiant 1954; Culbert 1965; Lee 1985; McVicker 1969; 1974; Weiant 1954a,b), including our own (Paris 2012; Paris & López Bravo 2013; 2017) have identified numerous sites in the valley, Moxviquil is the largest and best-documented. Frans Blom and Clarence Weiant conducted excavations at the monumental centre in 1952–53, while our own project, the Proyecto Económico de los Altos de Chiapas (2009–present), has focused on the survey and excavation of outlying residential areas.

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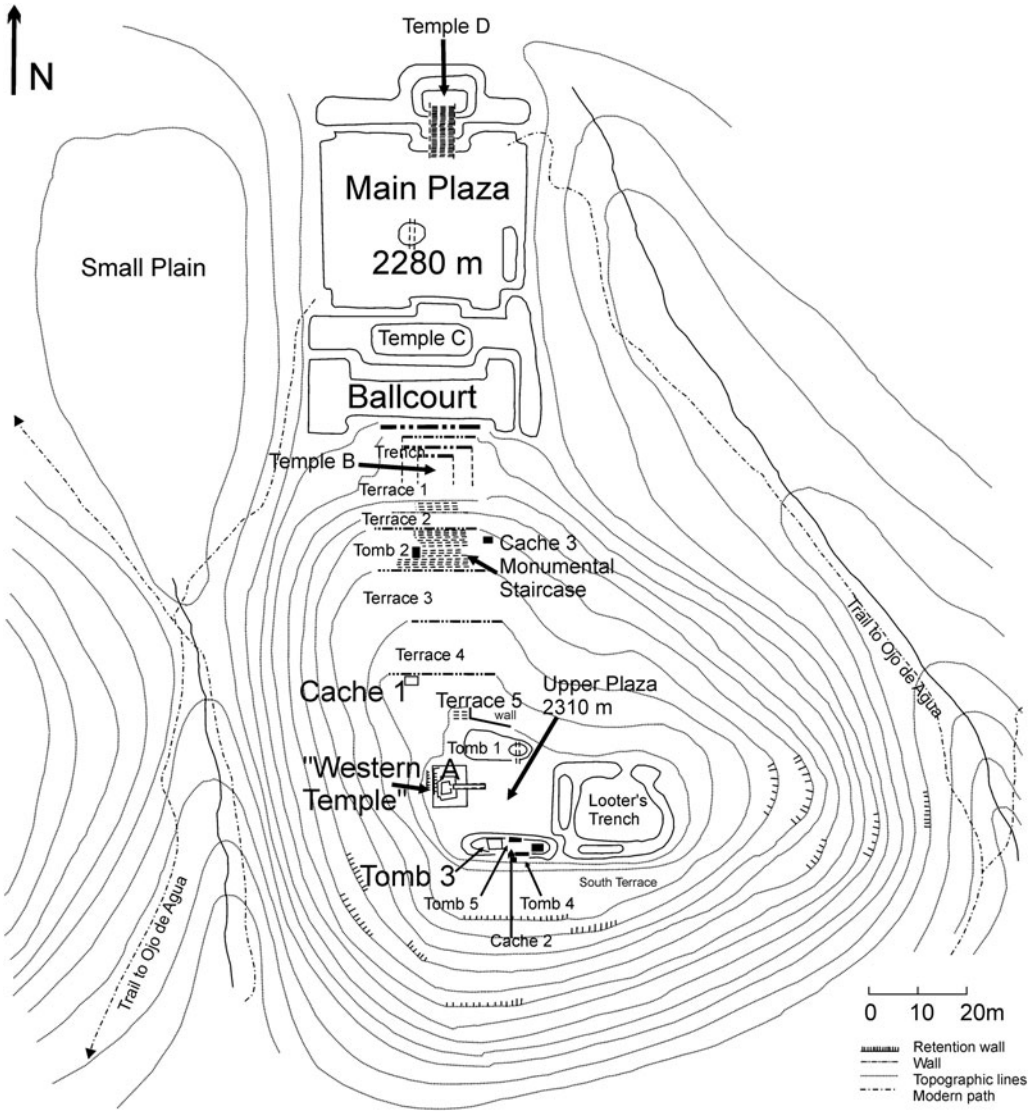


Figure 2. *The Moxviquil monumental centre with the marked location of Cache 1, Tomb 3 and the Western Pyramid. (Map: Elizabeth Paris, from the original by Frans Blom, courtesy of the Museo Na Bolom.)*

The monumental centre was constructed during the Late Classic period (Fig. 2), a period of prosperity in highland Chiapas. Like other civic precincts in the region dating to this period (see Adams 1961; Culbert 1965; McVicker 1969; Paris *et al.* 2011; 2015), Moxviquil was built on the apex and slope of a large hill, with a north–south axis that is characteristic of many Late Classic Maya monumental zones (Ashmore & Sabloff 2002). The Upper Plaza, a small quadrangle group at the apex of the hill, likely was the residence of the local ruling family (Blom 1952a,b; Weiant 1954a,b). Descending the slope to the north of the plaza were five artificial terraces connected by a large monumental staircase. The terraces supported residential structures consisting of low stone foundations surrounded by household midden refuse and lithic production debris. The saddle at the base of the hillside contained spaces and structures that served important public and religious functions: an I-shaped ball-court, a large main plaza and three small temples.

Moxviquil underwent significant population growth during the Early Postclassic period. Numerous structures were built on a hilltop to the west of the civic precinct, including a large, sub-royal elite residence and numerous smaller structures suggestive of commoner houses associated with high densities of utilitarian items. While the occupation

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at the monumental centre (as reflected in diagnostic ceramics) was roughly equivalent for the Late Classic (32.17 per cent) and the Early Postclassic (34.99 per cent) periods, new settlements on neighbouring hilltops were mostly constructed and inhabited during the Early Postclassic period (96.69 per cent: see Paris 2012; 2014; Paris & López Bravo 2018; Paris *et al.* 2015).

The Moxviquil *hacha* and *yugo*

The earliest-known Gulf Coast-linked objects at Moxviquil are two ground stone artifacts traditionally associated with the western Gulf Coast region of Central Veracruz. These include an *hacha* depicting a human face and a large basalt ball-game *yugo* [yoke] (Fig. 3). Both items are stylistically associated with the *yugo-hacha-palma* complex, which originated in the sculptural traditions of Late Classic central Veracruz (Ekholm 1946; 1949; Shook & Marquis 1996, 63). While they represent a type of portable sculpture, their exact purpose is uncertain (Shook & Marquis 1996, 2). Scholars have suggested uses for *yugos* ranging from actual ball-game paraphernalia (Lothrop 1923; cf. Thompson 1941) to ceremonial representations of ball-game paraphernalia (Ekholm 1946) to moulds for leather *yugos* (De Vries 1988); and have suggested uses for *hachas* including handstones (Borhegyi 1964; 1967, cf. Clune 1963) and belt ornaments (Ekholm 1949). *Yugos* are most commonly interpreted as stone representations of the yoke-shaped hip padding worn by players of the pre-Columbian ball-game, as depicted on carved lintels and ceramic figurines (Hellmuth 1987).

Both the *hacha* and *yugo* were recovered from the monumental centre. The *hacha* was recovered in the fill beneath the stairs of the 'Western Pyramid' of the Upper Plaza (Weiant 1954a, 31), actually a small, three-tiered structure topped by a rectangular building with low masonry walls that supported *bajareque* [wattle-and-daub] walls and a thatched roof. The rear portion of the structure contains a large bench, the only one at the site, which may have served as a throne for the rulers of the site. We still lack an exact provenience for the *yugo*, but it is part of the collection of artifacts recovered by Blom and Weiant from the monumental zone.

Notably, the *hacha* was deposited within the fill of the Western Pyramid during an earlier phase of construction; this suggests that it was terminated and discarded prior to the structure's final building phase, relatively early in the monumental centre's history. Archaeometric dates for the deposit are unavailable, but the ceramics of the Upper Plaza



Figure 3. *The* hacha *and* yugo *from the Moxviquil monumental centre. (Photographs: Elizabeth Paris.)*

depositional contexts (Paris 2014; Paris *et al.* 2015) suggest a transitional Late Classic to Early Postclassic period date. Similarly, Shook and Marquis (1996, 11) hypothesize a temporal provenience for *hachas* and *yugos* found in southern Mesoamerica from the Terminal Late Classic period to the beginning of the Early Postclassic period (AD 800–950), which suggests that the items at Moxviquil were discarded after this period. Additionally, both the Moxviquil *hacha* and *yugo* were discarded with seeming intent towards termination. The anterior portion (the face) of the *hacha* was severely cracked and chipped, while the *yugo* is broken in two places (medially, and at one distal end, which is missing); although we cannot confirm it, we suspect that this happened in antiquity, since the distal end section is not present in the Na Bolom collection. The damage to these items would have taken deliberate effort, due to the highly durable nature of the raw materials, suggesting a specific objective of erasure.

Stone sculptures from the *yugo-hacha-palma* tradition have been identified at sites throughout southern Mesoamerica (Shook & Marquis 1996, 2). Many specimens were likely traded into the region from the Gulf Coast, while others show Maya stylistic influence, such as hieroglyphics and stylistic features, and may have been carved locally (Shook & Marquis 1996, 2). Stone yokes are common in the Basin of Veracruz, although few have been recovered from controlled excavation (Daneels 1997, 238). In both the western Gulf Coast (Veracruz) and in southeast Mesoamerica (Pacific Coast and highland Guatemala), these items were often deposited into elite tombs and caches (Daneels 1997; Shook & Marquis 1996, 6). Other specimens have been recovered as surface debris and

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excavation fill, such as the fragments of approximately 15 *yugos* from the palace at Palenque (Cruz Romero 2012; Shook & Marquis 1996, 7).

While *hachas* and *yugos* are less common in Chiapas when compared to highland Guatemala, a number of examples are known. Edwin M. Shook recorded an *hacha* fragment in the Othon Schlie Collection in San Cristóbal de las Casas in 1951, of unknown provenance (Shook & Marquis 1996, no. H65). Other examples from central Chiapas have been documented at Ocozocouautla and Maravillas in the Central Depression; from Tablón and Santa Inés in the western Sierra Madre range; from Paredón on the western Pacific Coast; and from Preciosa in the Tzeltal-Chol-speaking portion of northeast Chiapas (Cruz Romero 2012; Shook & Marquis 1996). Shook and Marquis (1996, 45) also recorded three other unprovenienced examples (Y90, Y91, Y92) in the collections of the Museo Regional de Chiapas in Tuxtla Gutierrez. Sheseña and Lee (2004) also report three *yugos* from a private collection, said to be from Bolonk'in in northeast Chiapas, including two plain *yugos* and a third with a hieroglyphic inscription linking it to the dedication of a ball-court at Toniná around AD 696.

The Moxviquil *hacha* was made of fine-grained limestone and is carved in the shape of a human head, with a 'rear tenon'-style mounting area in which the mounting area is approximately perpendicular to the orientation of the face, which may have permitted it to be inserted into portable mounts (Shook & Marquis 1996, 66). As with most other *hachas*, the face is carved on both surfaces of the stone, with the front axe-edge forming the profile. The specimen lacks macroscopically visible evidence of paint or inlays. Unfortunately, the geological provenience of the *hacha* has not been identified; given the karstic geography composing much of the Maya area, it could include any number of sources.

The *hacha* has a number of traits that are commonly associated with the deity Xipe Totec in Classic Period Veracruz artwork. The Moxviquil example possesses characteristics of Xipe Totec that represent flayed skin stretched over a human face: flaring cheeks; a large ear carved in low relief which sits flat against the head; an open mouth with a well-defined circumferential line around the lips; thin, arched eyebrows; short, cropped hair; and small, round, hollow eyes. Xipe Totec is one of the most represented deities in *hachas*, and examples are known from at least 26 *hachas* from El Salvador and the Pacific coast of Guatemala (Shook & Marquis 1996, 189), although this is the only currently identified example from Chiapas. Although several authors (Hosler 1995; Roskamp 2010) have suggested a West Mexican origin (Guerrero or Jalisco) for Xipe Totec, the widespread worship of this deity in central Veracruz (Mencos 2010), combined with the central Veracruz origin of the *hachas* themselves, suggests a Gulf Coast origin for the introduction of both the *hacha* and its iconography into the material culture of Moxviquil.

The *yugo* is made of fine-grained basalt; it is almost pure black in colour, and is heavily polished on the dorsal surface, while the lateral surfaces are finely pecked, but remain unsmoothed and unpolished. It is completely plain, with unbevelled edges, and is broken in two places; one distal end is missing completely. The plain style is common among the forms described by Shook and Marquis (1996, 37). Provenience studies have not yet been carried out to identify the source of the basalt used to manufacture the *yugo*; however, it appears to be non-local, because basalts and andesites from the Chiapanecan Volcanic Arc are generally light grey or brown, with coarse-grained textures (Mora *et al.* 2007).

The Moxviquil incense-burner covers

Blom and Weiant's excavations in the monumental zone revealed a number of tombs and caches; among the offerings from Tomb 3 are two anthropomorphic incense-burner covers. These objects display stylistic influences from the eastern Gulf Coast, particularly lowland northern Chiapas and eastern Tabasco, and reflect the motifs of Late Classic period Maya iconography from this region (Lee 1985; Paris *et al.* 2015). The lids were found together in the tomb, along with an anthropomorphic figure with a bird headdress, a Provincia Plano-relief (Balancán/Z Fine Orange) annular base bowl, a ball-player figurine in full regalia (missing its head), five olive-shell tinklers and a small ground stone *mano*, along with a juvenile tibia and human skull fragment, likely representing a secondary interment. The tomb itself was a rectangular masonry structure, located below a plaster floor in the South Mound of the Upper Plaza of the monumental centre. The South Mound was a large rectangular structure that was likely the residence of Moxviquil's ruling elites, and sits adjacent to the Western Pyramid (see Fig. 2). Based on the temporal provenience of Balancán Fine Orange (Smith 1958), the tomb's final offering was dedicated no earlier than the Late Classic–Early Postclassic period transition (see below). Along with the other tomb offerings, the lids were objects of veneration. During their use life, they were transformed from incense-

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Figure 4. *Anthropomorphic incense-burner cover from Tomb 3, depicting (a) a human face emerging from the mouth of a serpent with hybridized features and (b) a human face emerging from a band of swirling elements, likely smoke or clouds. (Photographs: Elizabeth Paris.)*

burner lids that likely served in sacred rituals for the living to their final role as funerary objects dedicated as part of a second type of sacred ritual; along with the tomb's occupant, they served a commemorative ritual function, and were probably not entirely forgotten. The tomb's location below the floor of a likely residence of the ruling elite, and the other rich offerings it contained, suggest that its occupant may have been a young member of the ruling family.

The two lids are highly similar in size and style; both depict human faces emerging from a band of swirling elements (likely smoke or clouds). At the bottom of the band, emitting the scrolls from its mouth, is a stylized Imix monster, as has been observed on the Palenque incense burners (Cuevas García 2007, 168). One of the anthropomorphic faces emerges from the mouth of a hybridized animal (Figs. 4a & 5): the scroll motif beneath the eye and the superior portion of the snout are characteristic of the portrayals of snakes in Maya art, specifically the fer-de-lance with its upturned snout and large nostrils; the square incisors of the dental arcade and ridged palate are characteristic of Baird's tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*). Tapir species are associated with warm, tropical lowland forests rather than the Central Highlands; however, they are represented in faunal assemblages of lowland regions immediately to the west and east, in the Central Depression at Chiapa de Corzo (Flannery 1969, 210) and in the Comitán Plateau at Tenam Puente (Zúñiga-Arellano 2008, table 1). The mandibles of the snake and tapir are not depicted; the lower edge of the 'jaw' is formed by the rectangular motif with cloud scrolls. The second one depicts an anthropomorphic face emerging from a rectangular band of swirling elements that may represent smoke or clouds (Fig. 4b).

Both of the faces have sloping foreheads, suggesting tabular oblique cranial deformation (Tiesler 2012), and large, square earspools. They have identical rectilinear designs, which may be facial tattoos, paintings or scarring, with a horizontal band across the cheeks and lips and a vertical band from the hairline to the tip of the nose. The hairstyles are depicted as straight across the forehead and down to the ears, suggesting that the hair was pulled back under a headdress. The lids contain traces of Maya Blue (e.g. Arnold 2005; Shepard 1962), suggesting that they were originally painted with the colour on most or all of the anterior surface.

The faces and rectangular band elements on the lids were made using open moulds. Both objects are hollow, with multiple perforations in both the front and rear surfaces to allow smoke from burning incense to escape. The bases of the lids are small and ellipsoid, measuring 12.7×11.4 and 9.0×7.0 cm. The only incense-burner body elements identified at Moxviquil to date are frying-pan style, but the incense-burner lids were likely associated with stationary braziers. No body sherds have been recovered at Moxviquil that match the lids in terms of their distinctive light-red paste (rare at the site, and in highland Chiapas generally: Paris 2012) which could plausibly have formed the body of the incense burner itself.

The figures have forms of body modification suggestive of elite status, and they may represent the ancestor spirits. The theme of the face emerging from the mouth of a serpent is well known in Maya art, perhaps most famously in the Yaxchilan lintels in northeast Chiapas (Schele & Freidel 1990). The features and proportions of the faces have some similarity to those of human figures depicted on cylindrical censer stands at Palenque and its

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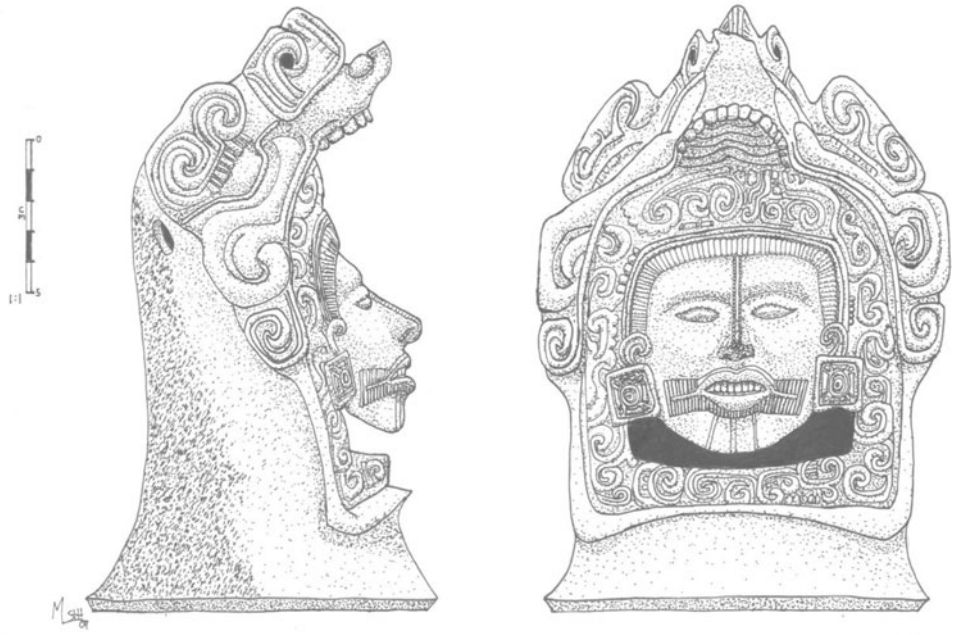


Figure 5. *Anthropomorphic incense-burner cover from Tomb 3, depicting a human face emerging from the mouth of a serpent with hybridized features. (Drawing: Maxime Lamoureux-St. Hilaire for the Proyecto Económico de los Altos de Chiapas.)*

region (Cuevas García 2007, 59), and also some Jaina Island figurines (McVicker 2012, figs 5a & 7b). This suggests that the incense-burner lids from Moxviquil may have had stylistic influence from the eastern Gulf Coast or Middle Usumacinta, as represented in Palenque or Yaxchilan, which is also consistent with the presence of a Balancán Fine Orange bowl in the same tomb (see below).

The Moxviquil K'awiil vase

One of the most striking vessels from Moxviquil's monumental zone is a fine orange vase discovered in Cache 1, a small, square, masonry 'box' discovered in the northwest corner of Terrace 4, just below the Upper Plaza, associated with architectural remains suggesting the residence of a non-royal but highly-ranked elite family (see Fig. 2). The vessel is a cylindrical vase with an annular pedestal rattle base with a mat impression (Figs. 6 & 7). The paste is fine, hard and light orange in colour and is covered with a medium-orange slip with a post-slip, post-firing incised design. The mouth of the vase was covered with an inverted dish with round, hollow tripod supports. Within the vase were two puma canines, two peccary tusks, two carved bone *atlatl* [spear-thrower] finger loops and an obsidian prismatic blade (Weiant 1954a, 34). Although archaeometric dating has not been performed on any of the objects from the cache, the stylistic attributes of the vase situate it within the transition period from the Late Classic to the Early Postclassic, generally considered to be around AD 900–1000, for reasons explained below. Excavation records suggest that the vase was a reverential offering made by high-ranking elite residents of the monumental centre, with no indication that it represents a late intrusive offering (Weiant 1954a,b). Although the vase and its contents would have been hidden from everyday view, it was dedicated as a sacred, memory-rich object within the political context of Moxviquil as a seat of local rulership.

The Moxviquil K'awiil vase is quite likely imported or imitated from well-documented Gulf Coast fine orange traditions, as first observed by Robert E. Smith (1958). Smith visited Frans Blom and examined his collection of fine orange vessels from Moxviquil while developing his typology, and his article illustrates many of the vessels from Moxviquil's tombs, including the K'awiil vase, whose cylindrical form, tall pedestal base and orange slip are more typical of Silho. The square, graphic, carved-incised technique is visually striking, and diverges from the more fluid and curvilinear Balancán designs. It is also wider in diameter relative to its height than most Silho vases and lacks the

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white exterior slip and bowl/dish forms that characterize Balancán. Furthermore, it uses a square cartouche design that is more typical of Y Fine Orange (Smith 1958), now classified as Altar Fine Orange or Pabellón Modeled-Carved in the Usumacinta River region and Petén (Bryant *et al.* 2005), and as locally produced Chanal Modeled-Carved in the highlands of Chiapas (Culbert 1965, 69). Sherds of Chanal Modeled-Carved have been recovered at Moxviquil (Paris 2012; Paris *et al.* 2015), but the paste is light grey and much softer than the hard, compact, light orange paste of the K'awiil vase. While Balancán, Pabellón/Chanal and Silho are all generally associated with the Late Classic–Early Postclassic transition, Balancán is generally thought to be earlier in date than Silho, and thought to originate in the Middle/Lower Usumacinta areas of Tabasco, at sites such as Jonuta and Tecolpan (Berlin 1956), while Silho is generally attributed to the Lower Usumacinta/Laguna de Terminos region and the Early Postclassic period (Bishop *et al.* 2012).

The vase depicts K'awiil, the Maya patron deity of lightning and royal lineages (Taube 1992). The execution of the post-slip, post-fired, carved-incised design uses a blocky, highly conventionalized representation of anthropomorphic form that is more characteristic of Early Postclassic period art from Tula or Chichen Itza than the fluid, curvilinear forms generally associated with Late Classic Maya art from the southern Lowlands (Coe 1992; Coe *et al.* 2015). The deity is placed in a square cartouche, in a kneeling position, with an elaborate headdress with *quetzal* tail feathers descending down the back. Personal ornaments include an elaborate jewelled collar, wrist cuff, round ear spools with a dangling element (possibly shell), loincloth, and thigh band. Under his arm is a rectangle with diagonal cross-hatching, likely depicting a woven *petate* mat. The face has three small cross-hatched areas, and a fourth appears on the headdress; this decorative technique is used in Maya art to represent black, or darkness (Bassie 2002, 15). A characteristic axe emerges from his forehead, and an elaborate spiralled element emerges from the front of his body, which is conventionally interpreted as speech, song, or breath (see Barber & Sánchez 2012), but could also be smoke or clouds (see Tedlock 1996, 153). Unusually, the artist illustrated the spiralled element as emerging from the figure's nose, rather than the open mouth, which has prominently illustrated teeth. The spiralled element also bears small cross-hatched designs, and a lobed element suggesting of flowers or foliage. His eye is a glyph that resembles the cross-section of a gastropod shell (Montgomery 2007; Thompson 1966, 84–5). Underneath the glyph is a curved element that is generally interpreted as a serpent eye in Maya iconography (Taube 1992).



Figure 6. *The Moxviquil K'awiil vase, a fine orange cylindrical pedestal vase recovered from Cache 1. (Photograph: Elizabeth Paris.)*

Similar representations of K'awiil are known from two other Silho Fine Orange ceramic vessels: one from Utatlán (Q'umarkaj), in highland Guatemala (Tedlock 1996, 153), and one that is housed in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in México City (MNA; Cat. No. 05.0-04556: mna.inah.gob.mx/colecciones 2018). The portrayals of the deity on these vessels also use a relatively blocky style of carved-incised design, use a shell glyph to represent the eye, depict prominent teeth, and have similar items of dress and adornment, although there are notable differences in body position. The proportions of the vessels are slightly different between the Moxviquil vase (20.5 cm tall; 13 cm in diameter) and the MNA vessel (19.2 cm tall; 10.9 cm in diameter), but the broad similarities between them suggest that the Moxviquil vase was part of a

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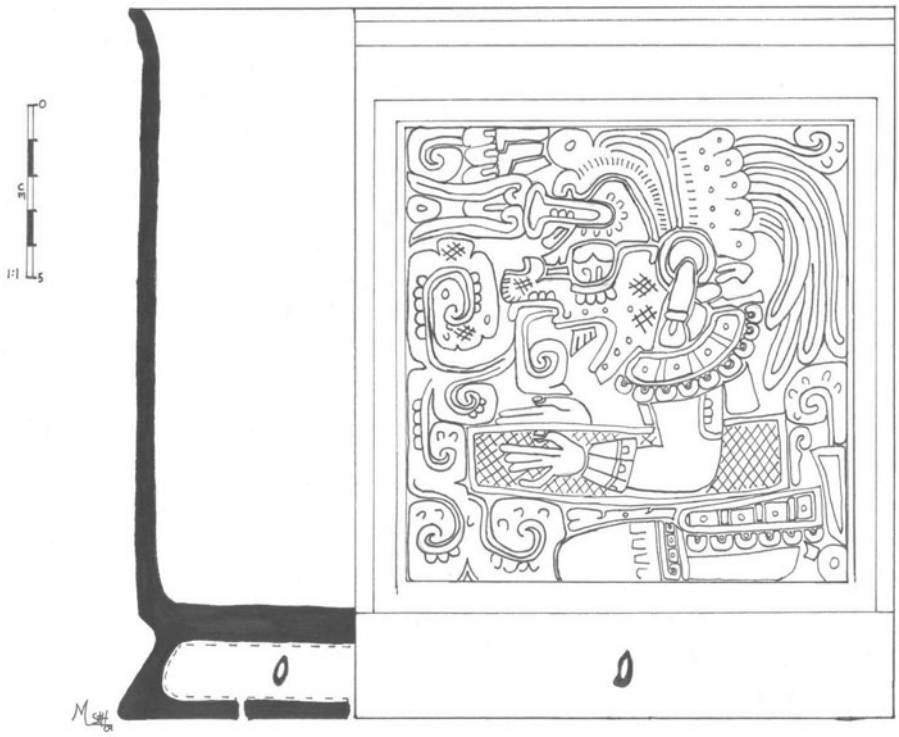


Figure 7. *The fine orange cylindrical pedestal vase from Moxviquil Cache 1. (Drawing: Maxime Lamoureux-St. Hilaire for the Proyecto Económico de los Altos de Chiapas.)*

larger corpus of Silho-style vessels with representations of K'awiil. Several researchers have previously hypothesized exchange routes for Silho Fine Orange extending from the Petexbatún down the Usumacinta River and its delta, and along the eastern Gulf Coast as far as Xcambó and Dzibilchaltún (Ancona *et al.* 2009; Foias & Bishop 1997); we suggest that fine orange vases from this exchange network may also have been traded to more distant highland political centres, including Moxviquil and Utatlán. The K'awiil vase would thus have been most stylistically legible to Moxvquil's rulers and residents as an eastern Gulf Coast object associated with the area near Laguna de Terminos.

As Taube (1992, 69) has observed, the K'awiil depicted on the Moxviquil vase has similar proportions and stylistic attributes to the two K'awiil figures depicted in the Grolier Codex on pages 1 and 4 (Coe 1992, 4, col. L; Coe *et al.* 2015). The Grolier versions of K'awiil lack the characteristic forehead axe and the glyph element in the eye itself, and the cross-hatched motifs. The Grolier Codex has been attributed to the region near the Sierra de Chiapas not far from Tortuguero, which is also near many of the likely production sites of Gulf Coast fine orange (Coe 1992). The calibrated radiocarbon date of AD 1212 ± 40 obtained for the manuscript (Coe *et al.* 2015, 127) is consistent with the hypothesized Early Postclassic (AD 900–1250) date of Silho Fine Orange ceramics and the maximum expansion of settlement at Moxviquil.

The Moxviquil ocarina

The Moxviquil ocarina was recovered from the horizontal excavation of a large residence on a hilltop to the west of the monumental centre by us in 2015, designated Operation 4. The ocarina is a small whistle, with a flat, mould-made anthropomorphic figurine-like image on the anterior surface, tapering into a whistle with an elliptical mouthpiece towards the posterior end (Fig. 8), a style common in the Peten during the Late Classic (Halperin 2009, figs 13.5 & 13.6), and at Jaina and the eastern Gulf Coast during the Late/Terminal Classic (Jaina Group R: Corson 1976, fig. 21). The paste is a fine-textured, soft-fired fine orange paste that is distinct from local types (Paris 2012; 2014). It strongly resembles the pastes used in fine orange vessels in the eastern Gulf Coast (Jonuta and southern Campeche: Smith 1958), and we hope to complete provenience studies in the near future.

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The ocarina was discarded in an act of seeming casual erasure, mixed into the rubble fill of an artificial terrace underlying several residential structures (Fig. 9). It was casually mixed with other domestic refuse, predominantly Early Postclassic period utilitarian ceramic vessel fragments, chert flakes, and ground stone artifacts but also a few other likely valuable items including a miniature effigy greenstone axe and figurine fragments. The refuse was not spatially concentrated in the manner of a waste dump, but was dispersed among the rubble fill. The ocarina was stratigraphically positioned below fill with no evidence of disturbance such as a late intrusive deposit or offering, suggesting that it was discarded in a non-reverential manner as refuse.

The decorative element of the ocarina is mould-made, while the posterior surface is smooth and undecorated, with the exception of the hand-modelled whistle element. The posterior surface has two small, round, perforated apertures. The anterior surface also has two small, round, perforated apertures positioned just below the ear spools, located superior to the apertures on the posterior surface. The player can cover the four apertures (stops) singly or in combination to produce a wide range of pitches.

The moulded human image of the ocarina portrays a kneeling figure in a headdress, large round ear spools, beaded necklace, and a large, draping cloth garment. The garment is a *huipil*, a traditionally female garment that is found in both the Maya region and central Mexico, rather than the triangular *quechquemitl* favoured by high-status women in many central Mexican cultures (Diel 2007, 236); the figure's hands emerge from under the *huipil*, resting on its knees. Kneeling figures on mould-made ocarinas are known from the Motul de San Jose region (Halperin 2009, fig. 13.6; see also Sears 2016, 330) and Jaina (Corson 1976, fig. 21); however, the most similar examples with regard to shape and style depict male (often bearded) nobles wearing a War Serpent headdress. In contrast, kneeling women depicted on ocarinas from these sites tend to depict serving-women carrying bowls or baskets, rather than royal women (Halperin 2009); the Moxviquil example may thus represent a noblewoman. The headdress of the figure is large and fan-shaped, with erect fan-shaped feathers emerging from near the head out to the edge of the headdress, crossing two bands with a punctated design that likely signifies spots. The spots could indicate beads, or more likely the use of strips of jaguar skin. A thinner, striped band representing hair frames the upper portion of the face and is similar to the style depicted on the incense-burner lids (see above). The hemispherical shape cross-cut by erect groups of feathers is similar to headdresses in Jaina Group O, while the lack of a War Serpent element may suggest that the depicted individual lacked a rulership role.



Figure 8. *The Moxviquil ocarina from Moxviquil Operation 4. (Photographs: Nathan Parrott for the Proyecto Económico de los Altos de Chiapas.)*

Discussion

These Gulf Coast-style objects ended their use lives at Moxviquil in very different stages of remembrance and forgetting, reverence and desecration. The *hacha* and *yugo* were damaged, likely terminated with intent, and tossed into architectural fill within a high-status context, likely early in monumental centre's history; the ocarina was not damaged, but casually discarded into terrace fill in a non-royal elite/wealthy commoner context, likely later in the site's history. The incense-burner lids, some Balancán vessels and the K'awiil vase ended their use lives as revered, dedicatory objects, in funerary and offertory contexts respectively; as Balancán is thought to be earlier in temporal provenience than Silho Fine Orange, we can also hypothesize that the dedicatory acts occurred at different moments in time, perhaps as much as a century apart.

These crafted ceramic and stone objects include items that reference the stylistic canons of both the western Gulf Coast (Central Veracruz) and eastern Gulf Coast/Usumacinta River area of Tabasco/southern Campeche/northeast Chiapas. Some objects may represent hybridized materials, like the K'awiil vase which shows a fusion of iconographic content, figure styles and vessel proportions from multiple fine orange stylistic canons. Similarly, the

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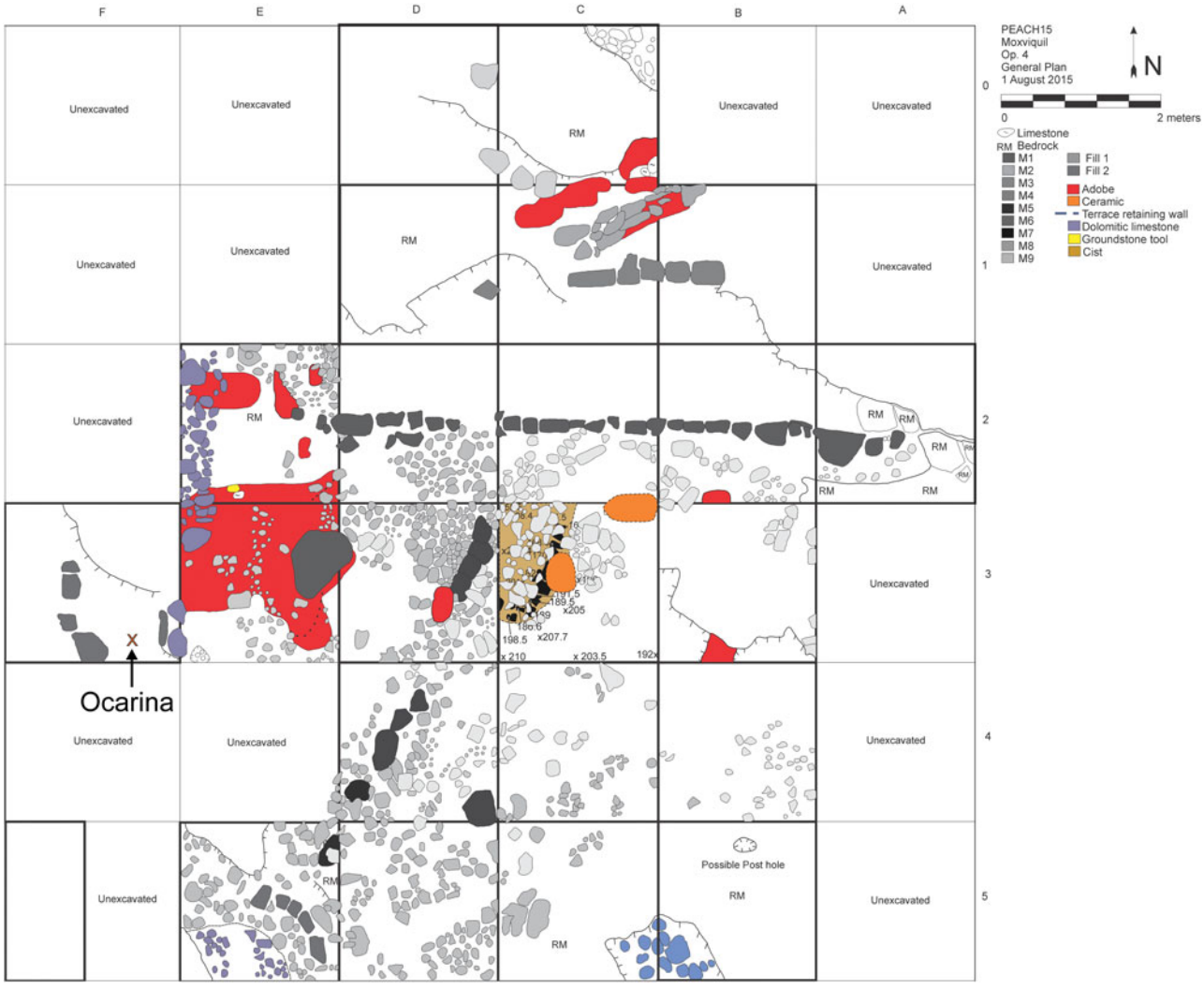


Figure 9. *Moxviquil Operation 4, showing the location of the ocarina with respect to selected excavated structures and artificial terraces. (Map: Elizabeth Paris.)*

ocarina combines with a moulded design technique commonly used on figurines in the Maya region, with a non-standard stylistic portrayal of an elite woman.

These objects reference both northeast- and northwest-facing communication and exchange routes between the Central Highlands of Chiapas and the Gulf Coast (Navarrete 1978). We suggest that there is a slight geographic shift in stylistic influences emphasized at Moxviquil over time. The *hacha* and *yugo*, which show an affiliation with the western Gulf Coast, were terminated and discarded early in the site's history. The incense-burner lids and other Balancán Fine Orange vessels (probably earlier) reflect a Middle Usumacinta influence, and the K'awiil vase and ocarina (probably later) reflect a Lower Usumacinta/Campeche coast influence. More broadly, patterns of acquisition, veneration and discard reflect a bias, unconscious or otherwise, towards the eastern Gulf Coast and northwest Maya cultural zone and exchange networks.

The pre-Hispanic exchange relationships between the Gulf Coast and the Maya Highlands are mentioned in several colonial period documents, and in several cases are related to pilgrimages and migration. For instance, the *Probanza de Votan* (Núñez de la Vega 1702, 9–10; see also Calnek 1988, 9) relates the activities of Ghoxvotan (3 Votan), said to have been born on a large island off the coast of Yucatan called Valum Chivim (likely Cozumel Island); travelled with his followers up the Usumacinta River via Laguna de Terminos; and

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established a capital called Nachan (meaning 'House of the Chan lineage', of which 3 Votan was said to be a member) at the base of the Tumbalá Mountains (see Calnek 1988, 10–12). The document suggests that Votan's jurisdiction extended over nearly all of highland Chiapas, a part of highland Guatemala and some sector of the Soconusco, and references territorial disputes and later alliances with '*mexicano*' lords (Brasseur de Bourbourg 1857, 69; Calnek 1988, 12). Documents collected by bishop Núñez de la Vega (1702) suggest that many of the noble lineages in the Chiapas highlands claimed to trace their ancestry back to the leaders of these migrations through the seventeenth century (Calnek 1988, 12). Similar claims featuring rulers born on (and/or conducting pilgrimages to) Cozumel Island and migration to (or through) the Usumacinta were made in the *Relación* of Pablo Paxbolonacha, cacique of Acalan-Tixchel (Scholes & Roys 1957), and the *Popol Vuh* of the Quiché Maya of highland Guatemala (Tedlock 1996, 15) as a basis for legitimating sovereignty. The common elements in the three ethnohistoric accounts are particular notable in light of similar Silho Fine Orange vases depicting K'awiil recovered at Moxviquil and Utatlán.

Numerous pre-Hispanic trade and transportation routes existed between the Gulf Coast and highland Chiapas that included both northeast- and northwest-facing routes and a complex network of roads and trails traversing the difficult terrain between them (Navarrete 1978; Viqueira 1999). Viqueira (1999; 2006) highlights the bellicose relationships between the Zinacantecos, who controlled the Jovel Valley and intermediate areas, and the Chiapanecs, who controlled the Central Depression itself. At some point during the Postclassic period, the Central Depression trade routes became difficult to access for Zinacantecos and their highland Maya allies; they responded by conducting a series of military expansions west via Tecpatán to the ports of Quechula and Chicoasén, and by forming alliances with the kingdom of Pontehuitz, which enabled them to access the Lower Grijalva River trade routes (Viqueira 2006, 141). However, the relative scarcity of western Gulf Coast materials and the predominance of eastern Gulf Coast materials suggests that the relative accessibility of these routes may have shifted over the course of Moxviquil's occupation; it is similarly plausible that the *hacha* and *yugo* were obtained from the same trade routes that supplied Palenque. Other items were likely imported from and/or influenced by groups from the Lower and Middle Usumacinta, and they represent the cultural syncretism between Maya and non-Maya groups that was historically characteristic of the Gulf Coast region itself; the *hacha* and *yugo* found at Moxviquil were most likely imported as commodities from non-Maya groups in Central Veracruz, while other items were likely created by Maya groups, influenced by Early Postclassic international styles representing a blend of cultural traditions. These items speak to the diversity of objects that were transported along highland–coastal exchange networks, and the importance of hybrid cultural identities and lineages for ruling families.

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