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SO-CALLED JAGUAR-HUMAN COPULATION SCENES IN OLMEC ART

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Three Olmec sculptures are frequently thought to represent copulation between human beings and jaguars, an important element in what we are able to reconstruct of Olmec belief, but evidence and parallels discussed here suggest that this interpretation of the sculptures is incorrect. Alternate explanations which are consistent with a new view would assign an aggressive, ritual, or allegorical meaning to these sculptures and to certain other related Olmec representations.

It is generally thought that the ancient Olmec believed "they sprang from a union of man and jaguar" (Grove 1973:133). Scholars who have studied the Olmec jaguar myth (for instance, Stirling 1955:19; Coe 1965a:751-752; Grove 1973) have suggested that this belief was embodied in works of art. Although many works of art have been introduced into the discussion, there are perhaps none so crucial to the analysis as the small number of Olmec works that supposedly depict the act of copulation itself. Yet a close study of these "copulation" scenes, as I shall attempt to show here, does not fully substantiate the prevailing interpretation. My conclusion is unfortunately negative but still, of course, substantive.

There are 3 Olmec sculptures which could conceivably be interpreted as representing copulation: Monument 1, Rio Chiquito (Stirling 1955:Pl. 2; Fuente 1973:No. 192); Monument 3, Potrero Nuevo (Stirling 1955:Pls. 25, 26a; Fuente 1973:No. 121); and Monument 20, Laguna de los Cerros (Medellin 1960:Pls. 27, 28; Fuente 1973:No. 111). Only the second of these possesses a figure with jaguarlike features; it shows a supine human figure with arms pulled into and knees pulled up to the chest, over which is standing or leaning another figure with jaguarlike feet. These feet bear 4 large claws, with a fifth slightly above the heel. On the jaguars in Relief IV, Chalcatzingo (Gay 1971:Fig. 24), 3 claws with a fourth above the heel appear, while on crouching jaguarlike creatures from Nexcaca (Covarrubias 1946:Fig. 6) and the Yucatan peninsula (Metcalf and Flannery 1967:Fig. 1), we are able to see only 4 claws facing outward. But the parallels are definite enough for us to classify the figure on Monument 3, Potrero Nuevo, as "jaguar," even though it shows nothing similar to the crouched haunches of naturalistically rendered felines—for example, Monument 37, San Lorenzo (Fuente 1973:No. 162); Monument 2, Rio Chiquito (Fuente 1973:No. 192); or on Relief III at Chalcatzingo (Gay 1971:Fig. 22). Perhaps the figure is to be understood as rearing up on its hind legs.

Clewlow feels that the act represented in Monument 3, Potrero Nuevo, is not a sexual one (1974:85), but the difficulties of this monument (not the least being its fragmentary condition) are such that one might readily interpret it as showing copulation, as indeed Stirling and others have argued (Stirling 1955:19). Nevertheless, neither of the other 2 works most similar to Monument 3, Potrero Nuevo, suggests the sexual act or even the presence of the jaguar. Monument 20, Laguna de los Cerros, seems to represent "la humillacion del vencido por su vencedor" (Medellin 1960:95), as might Monument 1, Rio Chiquito; both sculptures show one figure sitting upon or straddling another figure, in positions which are anatomically possible, but notably uncharacteristic of the sex act. No genitals are shown; the loin cloths are in place. Clewlow (1974:84)

has examined Monument 1, Rio Chiquito, carefully to determine if it represents copulation. He suggests that the left hand of the superior figure may be grasping the right breast (?) of the inferior figure, and that this lower figure is seemingly nude, its legs perhaps gripping those of the upper figure. But no genitals can be discerned (in fact, those of the upper figure are covered by a loincloth); it is not definite that the lower figure is even a woman; and the pose of the group is not a sexual one. We may follow Clewlow in saying that "it is difficult to state for certain that the scene depicted is a sexual one." What seems to be represented in both Monument 20, Laguna de los Cerros, and Monument 1, Rio Chiquito, is an act of triumph or victory. I think that the primarily nonsexual, and perhaps aggressive, nature of these sculptures is further demonstrated by comparing them with certain well-known Olmec reliefs.

Relief IV at Chalcatzingo (Gay 1971:Fig. 24) is related to Reliefs III and V (Gay 1971:Figs. 22, 25, 26) and represents 2 jaguars, or men or shamans in jaguar guise, attacking 2 human beings. The jaguars are similar to the jaguar on Relief III (the evidence of Joralemon 1971:88 contradicts the identification of this figure as a tapir by Cook de Leonard 1967:62); they exhibit the same long tail, feline haunches, body-markings, and fangs. The human figures are similar to the figure being eaten or attacked on Relief V (Cook de Leonard 1967:67). It is difficult to decide whether the human figures in Relief IV are supposed to be dead or dying, fighting or fleeing, or just acting a ritual role; they are, however, certainly not copulating. The evidence, in my view, favors dead or dying, whether real or allegorical death, especially in view of the contention of Gay (1966:60) and Grove (1968a:489) that the orientation of the rock should not be such that the human figures are upright (as per Cook de Leonard 1967:Fig. 3) but rather such that they are fallen. If the human actions are ambiguous, it is nevertheless quite clear that the "jaguars" are menacing or attacking the fallen men. If Relief IV finds any parallel at all, it must be Monument 56, San Lorenzo (Fuente 1973:No. 181), a relief panel on which a beast with feline head and claws seems to do battle with a man wearing legbands like the legband on the upper human figure in Relief IV. The same scene just possibly appears on Monument 63, La Venta (Heizer and Williams 1965:Fig. 5), a relief panel on which a bearded and dressed man—to be contrasted with the naked figures on Relief IV—"hugs" or battles with an unidentifiable creature. The eye of this creature is reminiscent of the extended eye of the upper "jaguar" on Relief IV, and its jaw is like that of the jaguarlike beast on Painting 1-d, Oxtotitlan, Guerrero (Grove 1970:Fig. 13), but the "jaguar" identification is actually not at all certain. How are the Chalcatzingo scenes of jaguars or jaguarlike creatures and men related to the so-called "copulation" sculptures?

On Relief IV at Chalcatzingo, the fallen human figures draw up a knee toward their bodies, and we note that the position of the legs of the upper jaguar in the relief is similar to the position of the legs of the superior figure in Monument 1, Rio Chiquito; one leg is extended back and the other leg directly bears down upon the prone figure. The position of the legs of the lower jaguar in Relief IV is similar to that of the standing "jaguar" figure in Monument 3, Potrero Nuevo; both paws are planted firmly on the ground, while the creature itself seems to lean over the fallen figure and menace it. I think it quite possible, on this evidence, that Monument 1, Rio Chiquito, and Monument 3, Potrero Nuevo, depict the same event that appears on Relief IV at Chalcatzingo. The relief artist did not have an opportunity to place his figures as close together as did the sculptor(s); instead, so that the representation would be clear, he disentangled the figures, although their orientations to one another are strikingly similar to the orientations of the figures sculpted in the round. A relief or graphic artist who cannot use or who does not choose to use complex overlapping will often "separate out" the elements of his composition, while still preserving the orientations of his figures and thus the unity and meaning of his representation (see, for example, Davis 1976:404-412).

If my analysis of the artists' arrangements here is correct, then, neither the sculptural nor the relief representations showing jaguars in association with human figures should be interpreted as showing a sexual act. The jaguar, as represented in naturalistic works like Monument 28, La Venta (Clewlow and Corson 1968:Pl. 9a; Fuente 1973:No. 39), is clearly a powerful and dangerous creature. We see it battling with human figures, whose naked, sprawling or huddled forms on Relief IV at Chalcatzingo and Monument 3, Potrero Nuevo, and possibly—since any jaguar ele-

ment in these monuments cannot now be detected—on Monument 1, Rio Chiquito, and Monument 20, Laguna de Los Cerros, express in every detail complete submission to the triumphant jaguar. Possibly, of course, some sort of rite is represented, in which the novice demonstrated submission to jaguar-clothed initiates. Alternatively, it is tempting to suggest that these jaguar representations were products of a warriors' cult and are symbolic of victory over enemies or competitors. Grove points out that in later times, there existed a "jaguar knight class" (1973:131); among the Olmec, such men might have worn jaguar pelts, which possibly appear on the surfaces of La Venta altars and on the well-known seated figure from Atlahuayan, Morelos (Covarrubias 1957:Pl. 9).

Even if we rule out copulation as the meaning of the 3 sculptures under consideration here, as many observers have remarked, the various jaguar representations seem to be allegorical in some way. The prone figure in Relief II at Chalcatzingo may be ithyphallic (Gay 1971:Fig. 17; but cf. Grove 1968a:488); the event or rite here, then, perhaps contains a sexual element. And in fact, although I have rejected Stirling's interpretation of "copulation" scenes in Olmec sculpture, copulation is perhaps shown on Painting 1-d, Oxtotitlan (see Grove 1970).

Figures emerging from "niches" carrying "were-jaguar babies" (Altars 2-5, La Venta, Monuments 12 and 20, San Lorenzo) are associated with the jaguar, although the "were-jaguar baby" as a typological unit is at best a convenient rather than a precise classification. In Relief I at Chalcatzingo (Gay 1971:Fig. 11), we see an Olmec personage seated in a large U or bracket motif, which is most likely the jaw of a jaguarlike creature, as Relief IX suggests (Drucker 1952:200; Joralemon 1971:Figs. 141, 142; but cf. Grove 1968a:486-487). Above the niche-figure on Altar 4, La Venta (Stirling 1943:Pls. 37a, 37b; Fuente 1973:No. 4), appear elements of the stylized jaguar "mask," the schematic, 2-dimensional version of the jaguar head which appears fairly naturalistically on Monument 28, La Venta, and Monument 2, Rio Chiquito. It is possible that Stela 1, La Venta (Stirling 1943:Pl. 33a; Fuente 1973:No. 8), represents a female standing in the open mouth of a jaguar (Stirling 1943:50). Unfortunately, Monument 1, Rio Chiquito, is too eroded to permit us to compare what is just possibly a woman lying on the ground with the woman on the stela.

It is certainly conceivable that the jaguar jaws from which the niche-figures carrying babies are emerging are meant to be caves in mountains. The fluted pyramid at La Venta has been interpreted by some as being an artificial volcano (Heizer and Drucker 1968:52-56), perhaps evidence of an Olmec interest in the mountains. The Aztecs used the name *Tepeyollotl*, "heart of the mountain," for the jaguar (Coe 1972:8), and Bernal interprets a relief from the Dainzu area as showing an individual standing upon a mound with a jaguar head, "which may mean the 'Hill of the Jaguar'" (1973:17). But the evidence of the U motif on the Chalcatzingo cliff-reliefs is admittedly slight evidence with which to connect jaguars and the mountain regions in Olmec belief, although in later times the jaguar was an underworld deity associated with earthquakes (Covarrubias 1946:46), and in the Morelos-Puebla area the burial grounds of Olmec sites are located below cliffs (Grove 1968b:183).

The "were-jaguar" figures themselves pose many interesting problems. To take a single instance, we may consider the so-called "Nexcaca tiger," a jade "were-jaguar" figurine from Nexcaca (Covarrubias 1946:Fig. 6). This little figure apparently has the body of a crouching feline, although just possibly it is meant to show human legs as if the figure were squatting back on its heels, as in the idol from San Martin Pajapan (Clewlow and Corson 1968:Figs. 8-10, Pls. 6-10; also Heizer 1968:Fig. 13). The feline face exhibits a flattened, wrinkled nose and snarling mouth like those so naturalistically portrayed on Monument 28, La Venta, and on the jaguar headdress of the figure on Monument 19, La Venta (Drucker et al. 1959:198, Fig. 55). The Nexcaca figure, unlike the related naturalistic Monument 28, La Venta, has human hands and arms and wears a neckband, armbands, a skirt or apron, a headdress with a "comb," a forehead band, and "wavy ear decorations" (Joralemon 1971:No. 216). The forehead band and wavy ear decorations are commonly found on Olmec representations of juvenile or infantile figures, as are almond-shaped eyes. The latter also appear, for example, on the small figure held by the larger figure in an interesting jade artifact shown by Coe (1965b:Fig. 4) and on Monument 52, San Lorenzo (see Clewlow 1974:48). Although by such associations the Nexcaca figure is related to Olmec infantile figura-

tions, the "profile band" which passes through one of its eyes appears rather rarely in Olmec art, and then only in association with artifacts exhibiting the adult "classic Olmec" face displayed typically on La Venta jade figures (for example, Drucker 1952:Pls. 46(2), 47-49). On a remarkable jade bead from Chiapas (Vaillant 1932:517) and on a mask of unknown provenience (Covarrubias 1957:Pl. 10), both presenting the face typified by La Venta figurines, we see this profile band, which seems to have some connotation of fertility or vegetation (note the maize sprouting from this band as it appears, for instance, on a celt from Veracruz illustrated by Coe [1972:Fig.: 4]). Wolf has interpreted Relief II at Chalcatzingo, with its 3 jaguar "priests" and ithyphallic (?) figure, as a fertility rite (1959:81), and possibly the jaguar is to be equated with some form of the rain-god Tlaloc (Covarrubias 1957:57-60). In many Mesoamerican cultures, in fact, the jaguar seems to be associated with fertility (see, for instance, Thompson 1931:36).

But precisely what all of these motifs mean is not known; in my view reconstructions of any "jaguar myth" or myth of jaguar-human union underlying Olmec culture and belief are not yet confirmed. Perhaps, as Coe puts it, "in one way or another, the concept of the were-jaguar is at the heart of the Olmec civilization" (1962:85); but although such beliefs can be assumed, "the actual form and nature of these evades definition" (Heizer 1962:312). This brief survey of some problematic artifacts—and the number could be multiplied—suggests that the intractability of the material itself is matched only by the elusiveness of our typologies. The most recent and careful iconographical studies have shown that the Olmec "worshiped" a number of "gods" (Joralemon 1971, 1976; Coe 1972, 1973). To my mind, then, the jaguar and were-jaguar motifs in Olmec art should be treated as themes which are only more or less explored and exploited in various individual works of art; interpretations which assign to the motifs a single mythical or historical meaning or referent are likely to be only partially correct.

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AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY REFERENCE TO A FLUTED POINT FROM GUATEMALA

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The earliest literary reference to a fluted point occurs in a work written in 1722 by Francisco Ximénez. This specimen and others from Guatemala are discussed in the light of recent discoveries from neighboring areas.

Publication of the Paleoindian finds from Los Tapiales, in the Department of Totonicapán (Gruhn and Bryan 1977; Stross, et al. 1977) and the recent discovery of fluted points in the Quiché

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