STONE VASE TRADITIONS IN MESOAMERICA: A CASE FROM HONDURAS

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Abstract
Archaeological information from excavations reported here documents that marble carving traditions began in Honduras during the Early Formative period, 1600-1400 B.C. and continued until the end of the Terminal Classic period, A.D. 850-1050. We argue that stone carving traditions, particularly marble carving, were a local development in Honduras, which changed over time as settlement patterns and ideas of form and iconography shifted. Forms became more complex and standardized as social and political organizations became more focused. These traditions included not only marble, but limestone, greenstone, and basalt. Artifacts of stone include stone heads, manos and metates, bowls, vases, and freestanding stone sculpture. The majority of vases are carved from marble. We suggest that Early Formative stone vase carving traditions set the stage for later traditions, specifically the use of marble. We examine relationships between ceramic and stone vase traditions, the use of vases in communities and the scale of production. Our evidence indicates that carving vases from marble became a skilled craft in Honduras. By the Late Classic period, stone vases represent luxury goods, regional identity markers, and provide evidence for the emergence of wealth and attached craft specialization in Mesoamerica.

Keywords: HONDURAS, STONE VASE TRADITION

Introduction
Honduran stone carving traditions begin during the Early Formative period, ca. 1600-900 B.C., and continue through the Terminal Classic period, ca. A.D. 850-1050. Objects carved from stone include monumental sculptures, bark beaters, stelae, ear spoons, manos and metates, mace heads, pectorals, pendants, and vases. Stone vases are a special facet of the various stone carving traditions (Hirth and Grant Hirth 1993). Carving vases from stone was practiced across Mesoamerica beginning in the Formative period. The Honduran tradition is unique among other traditions in its elaborate forms and material, specifically the use of marble. Regionally distinctive stone vases in Mesoamerica tend to be limited in number and associated with special contexts suggesting that they functioned as status and identity markers and ceremonial goods by the Classic period, if not earlier. This pattern is true in Honduras where stone vases are typically found in caves, caches, plazas, and burial mounds.

The focus of this paper is how the production of stone vases changes over time in Honduras. We examine relationships between ceramic and stone vase traditions, the use of vases in communities, and the scale of production. Based on the current data, stone carving traditions begin very early in Honduras, slightly later than the first ceramics. Vases are of very high quality; the delicate forms and thinness of the vessel walls as well as the highly polished surfaces are indicators of skilled craftsmanship. Following models of craft specialization (Clark and Pauly 1990; Curtis 1991), the production of luxury goods should occur as complexity increases within a community. In addition, patronage of luxury goods should follow contemporary canons of beauty in order to maintain and develop socially meaningful styles, which serve to impress and celebrate the high status of the patrons and other members of this elite group—rulers, nobles, merchants, and artisans (Clark and Blake 1994: 25-26; Joyce 2000).

A model for luxury goods: stone vases
Current research (Clark and Blake 1994; Groves and Gillespie 1992; Joyce and Groves 1999) shows that high status groups may have emerged throughout Mesoamerica during the Formative period, much earlier than previously thought. Excavations at Puerto Fornidido as well as several other sites in Honduras (Talgua Cave, Yaramela, Los Naranjos, and Playa de los Muertos) demonstrate that communities may have been ranked by the Early Formative period (Map 1 and 2), and participated in widespread Mesoamerican Formative networks involving the Pacific Coast, Gulf Coast, and Yucatan (Henderson and Joyce, in press: Joyce 1992, 1996, 1999; Joyce and Henderson, 2001). We explore the possibility of fine quality stone vases as markers of status in the context of Formative material in Honduras and how the development of this tradition allows us to understand better the changes in social complexity. Our goal is to document how developments of stone carving in Honduras during the Formative period influenced choices made during later periods, particularly the LateTerminal Classic period.

The Early Formative period marks the formation and promotion of concepts of cosmic order in Mesoamerica (Joyce 2000). During this time, jade, obsidian, and fancy ceramics functioned as high status markers (Clark 1987, Clark and Blake 1994; Groves and Gillespie 1992; Joyce and Groves 1999; Joyce 1992, 1996, 2000; Joyce and Henderson, in press). Following Clark and Blake (1994), communities and agraran-
dizers within them competed for high status through the presentation of luxury goods during competitive feasting or what Dieterle (1996) refers to as entrepreneurial feasts. These luxury goods served to link high status goods with the supernatural or cosmic order, which helped maintain and legitimate their emerging status (cf. Baines and Yoffee 1998; Joyce 2000).

We argue that Formative period stone vases are one indicator of the emergence of wealth in Honduras, based on their fine quality craftsmanship, rarity, and close relationship to contemporary ceramic forms. During the Early Formative in the Mazatan region of Chiapas, artisans produced ceramic vessels that imitated contemporary ground vessels. They followed contemporary vessel forms, but produced them in a new and more expensive medium (ceramics). This practice served to enhance their value, but did not tamper with meaningful social conventions (Clark and Blake 1994: 26). We argue that similar practices were operating in Honduras, but rather than ground vessel forms made into ceramic forms, we focus on the possibility of marble and alabaster vessels imitating ceramics. We discuss how the Honduran Formative period tradition of carving stone vessels, particularly the use of marble, set the stage for later stone carving traditions in the context of the continued production of marble vases.

**Formative period**

Fine quality serpentine, alabaster, basalt, and greenstone bowls from the regions of Guerrero, the Tehuacan Valley, Mazatan, the Gulf Coast, and Central Mexico begin to be produced in the Formative period. Formative Honduran stone bowls and vases are among these traditions in style and in the use of marble or alabaster. Vases date to the Early Formative period in the Lower Ulúa and Comayagua valleys and in certain regions of Olancho.

**Fig. 1** – Middle Formative marble vase with red pigment, Talgua Cave, Instituto de Antropología e Historia, Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Photo taken by C. Luke.

**Fig. 2** – Early Classic marble bowl, Orica. Orica municipal collections, Honduras. Photo taken by C. Luke.

Formative and Early Classic stone vases reflect a canon for the period expressed in contemporary ceramic vessels. Pottery forms from the Formative period include thin, elaborate bowls with cylindrical sides as well as the more common teconate forms, often with burnished surfaces and/or incised designs. Lacking extensive surface decoration, the aesthetic quality resides in the overall form. Simple silhouette stone bowls, often with constricted necks or slightly flaring rims, represent a very sophisticated tradition of carving vessels from a single piece of marble or alabaster that imitate these ceramic forms. The uniform thickness of less than five millimeters, with some examples less than three millimeters, demonstrates the fine craftsmanship achieved by the skilled artisans who produced these vases. Whole vases from Talgua Cave (figure 1), Orica (figure 2), collections housed in at the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia in Tegucigalpa (figure 1), the Museo de Antropología e Historia in San Pedro Sula, fragments of marble vases from Puerto Escondido (Joyce and Henderson 2001) and Yatunuma (Josinek-Manervielle 1987: 200, pers. comm., 1996) demonstrate the stylistic similarities between ceramics and marble and alabaster vessels.

Most likely used during festive occasions, these vases represent a specialized tradition, perhaps a particular form used as serving or drinking vessels during ritual feasting. These events can be described as patron-role feasts where the goal was to erect high status or entrepreneurial feasts aimed at establishing status (cf. Dieterle 1996: 97). The vases represent the presence of a skilled artisan class as well as evidence for increased ceremonial practices.

When polished, marble has a nice luster, an almost milky appearance. Many of the early as well as late pieces do appear to be polished, but evidence indicates that a thin coat of red pigment was applied to the exterior of many vases as demonstrated on the Middle Formative (ca. 1000-800 B.C.) marble and alabaster vases from Talgua Cave, located in the region of Olancho (Dixon et al. 1998). All have a coat of red pigment applied to their exterior (Brady, pers. comm., 2000; Luke, pers. obscr., 1996). In addition to the marble vases, this deposit contained ceramics, and burial remains – all covered with red pigment. This suggests that either the white color was not important and the stone was chosen for its physical
The best context for Formative period stone vases in Honduras comes from Puerto Escondido (Henderson and Joyce, in press; Joyce and Henderson, 2001). Two fragments of stone vessels were recovered in Early Formative contexts, stratified deposits created through the successive remodeling of perishable buildings during the Early Formative period. One of these, made of granite, was deposited in the late Ocútillo phase (ca. 1600-1400 B.C.). The other, made of marble, was recovered from a context associated with early Ocútillo phase remodeling, along with Guatusa complex sherd's of the Barahona phase (ca. 1600-1400 B.C.). These stone vase fragments demonstrate that a stone carving tradition was established in Honduras by the Early Formative period, and that marble vessels were used within domestic contexts.

In sum, during the Formative period marble and alabaster bowls become an important commodity in Honduras. Their chronological placement, slightly later than ceramics, suggests that the forms of stone vessels imitated ceramics, following an accepted canon for the period. However, the new material, marble and alabaster, and the crafting skills necessary to produce stone vessels suggest that they had a greater value than ceramic vessels.

Classic period

Stone vases from Early and Late Classic periods are found throughout Mesoamerica. Like the Formative period vases, Honduran Early Classic period vessels are carved from marble in unique forms distinct from Mesoamerican alabaster, teclal, and basalt vessels.

Two Early Classic stone bowls, both made of marble, in Puerto Escondido are from an intrusive pit cut into Middle Formative fill. The associated ceramics date to the Early Classic, Chamelecon phase, ca. A.D. 200-450. Marble bowls housed at the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia in Tegucigalpa are also attributed to the period between the Late Formative to Early Classic period, ca. 100 B.C.-A.D. 200 (figure 3). One vase from the region of Oriente (figure 2) is an open vessel with a scalloped flaring rim. It is very similar to pieces from Early Classic Kaminalju, (Shook 1969). Like the Formative period stone vases, these vessels mimic contemporary ceramic forms.

During the Classic period, Ulúa style polychrome ceramic vessels begin to be produced in the Lower Ulúa Valley. This marks a significant shift in ceramic production during a period of increasing population growth in the region (Henderson 1992b; Joyce 1985, 1991, 1993 a & b). These objects were also used as serving vessels and distribution patterns indicate that access to this type of pottery was not restricted (Henderson 1992a; Joyce 1985, 1991, 1993 a). Therefore, in contrast to the situation in the Maya world, polychrome pottery is not believed to have been a marker of elite status in the Lower Ulúa valley.

It is during this period that Ulúa style marble vase production begins. Unlike the polychrome vessels, marble vessels do show restricted distribution at large centers suggesting that high status groups used these vessels. The majority of Ulúa marble vases are from the region surrounding the site of
Travesía, where they have been found only in special contexts such as caches and burials associated with other putative elite goods (Henderson 1992a; Luke, n.d.). Most likely used as drinking vessels during ceremonial activities, these vessels provide the best evidence for the emergence of an elite in the region (Luke, n.d.; Luke and Tykot 2001).

Like other Honduran marble vessels, Ulúa style marble vases are part of a canon of the period. The earliest vases are cylinders, lacking handles, with repeating vertical and horizontal mat designs, similar to Red Group, Cyanno: Cyanno (Luke, n.d.). Several of these vases have ring-supports, a form documented in Early Classic ceramics (Beaudry-Corbeil et al., 1993) and on Red Group, Cyanno: Cyanno (Joyce 1993a). Vases with bird handles and ring-supports mark the next stage of production, related to Maroon Group, Lug Head: Paloma (figure 4; Luke, n.d.). Shortly after the initial production period, the tripod drum style becomes very popular and it is most likely related to Early and Middle Classic period tripod ceramic forms (Luke, n.d.; Schaeffer 1992). Dual lug handles on ceramic cylindrical vases are found in El Salvador, Comayagua, and the Lower Ulúa Valley. Marble vases reflect an expansion of this ceramic tradition – tripod drums and cylindrical with ring bases and dual lug handles – most closely related to Maroon Group, Lug Head: Paloma and Bombero (figures 4 and 5; Luke, in press, n.d.; Luke and Tykot 2001; cf. Viel 1978; cf. Joyce 1993a). Bird handles appear first on Ulúa marble style vases followed by bat, monkey, feline, and composite forms (figures 6, 7 and 8). The later cylindrical Ulúa style marble vases with composite handles are more closely linked with iconographic traditions from the Central Maya region.

Across Mesoamerica, the Late Classic period marks the development of regionally specific stone vase traditions. Vessels are typically associated with special contexts suggesting that stone vases functioned as markers of elite groups and regional identities: Central Maya alabaster vases (Ahumada et al. 1999: 75-80; Chase and Chase 1989: 20; Cow and Kerr 1997: 91, 138-39, figs. 10, 48, 101, pls. 64, 97; Nakamura 1987; Willey et. al 1994; Fash 1991), Yucatan tecali vases (collections at the Dallas Museum of Art; Moholy-Nagy and Ladd 1992: 102-105, Ruiz-Lemler 1954: 6, fig. 6, pl. 24; Thompson 1938) and Ulúa style marble vases (Stone 1938; Luke, n.d.; Luke, this volume). The Ulúa marble style is unique to the Lower Ulúa Valley and reflects the continued development of a long-standing marble vase tradition. Late Classic vases are carved from marble into specific forms and with a limited set of iconographic motifs.
Unlike earlier stone vase traditions in Honduras, the exterior of Ulúa marble vases is carved in a very specific iconographic program. Sculpted volutes, often creating profile and central images, are unique from local ceramics and other stone vase and sculptural traditions. Sculpted borders in the form of scales, yowusses, interlocking keys, and/or the motif usually frame these profile and central images. This imagery marks a completely new set of images not previously part of the Ulúa valley iconographic repertoire and closely related to imagery from the Pacific and Gulf Coast regions of Mesoamerica (Lake, n.d.). Evidence suggests that portions of the exterior were covered in stucco as in the earlier traditions.

Several factors account for why marble was chosen for Ulúa style stone vases. After years of carving stone into various forms, skilled craftsmen understood that marble was soft enough to be manipulated with reasonable labor expenditure, it was fine enough to sculpt intricate programs, source location was known, and the color may have provided important symbolism. The tradition of carving vases from marble held considerable importance, as this had been the practice for over 1,600 years. The established tradition of luxury vases made from marble continued well into the Late and Terminal Classic periods. Outside the Ulúa Valley, these vases were seen as exceptional objects, carved with powerful iconographic programs, and from a material not abundant in other regions of Mesoamerica. Found in high status contexts in Nicaragua (Espinosa Pérez et al., 1996), Costa Rica (Ferrero 1981: 88; Stone 1972: 141), and the Maya Lowlands (Kidder 1947; Pennebaker 1990, 1982; Thompson 1939), these vases most likely served as presentation gifts during important ceremonies commemorating alliances at home and abroad.

As Ulúa polychrome vases were most likely used during feasting events, including both eating and drinking symbolic rituals, it is reasonable to suggest that Ulúa style marble vases had a similar function. Yet, unlike Ulúa polychrome feasts, those involving marble vases may have served to visually distinguish among ranked differences in social status among community members, specifically the presence of an elite group. These discritical feasts (Dietler 1996: 98) may have functioned as performances where regional and long-distance alliances were celebrated and reaffirmed.

Evidence suggests that at least two or three other stone vase carving traditions were present during the Late Classic and Terminal Classic periods. Several marble vases, now housed at the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia in Tegucigalpa, indicate a tradition of carving vases from stone on the Bay Islands. Several Late Classic vases, from the Patuca region, are unique in their elegant forms as well as their material, greenstone (Smithsonian A373427-0). These vases are...
very similar to one vase from Travesía (figure 9). Given the
abundance of greenstone artifacts from the Patuca region
(Smithsonian collections, Luke pers. obs., 1998) it seems
possible that a greenstone source could be located in the
region and that vases made from greenstone were luxury
gifts.
A tripod base fragment of a greenstone vase recovered from
Matancuales is in the Ulúa marble form, but the lack of
imagery and the green color of the stone suggest that it might
be more closely related to the Patuca stone carving tradition.
Finally, a worked piece of exquisite green marble from Cerro
Palenque (Henness and Lopardo, in press) also suggests an
additional stone carving tradition, specifically the carving of
greenstone. This tradition may be related to other greenstone
vase traditions in Mesoamerica.

The location of this greenstone source is not known.
However, Marmoles de Honduras, a modern marble quarry
firm, notes at least three greenstone sources in Honduras: one near
Tegucigalpa, one near Los Cedars, and one in Olancho.
These sources were not visited during the 1996, 1999, and 2000 sur-
suggests that greenstone may not have been imported into
Honduras, and may be a locally available.

Production

The continued use of marble for carving vases over a period
of two thousand years indicates a considerable time-depth tra-
dition in Honduras. As Joyce (2000) has argued elsewhere,
the development of specialized crafting skills in Formative Meso-
america created a class of craft specialists underwritten by elite.
Stone vases represent an important specialized crafting
skill. In Honduras, marble and alabaster vases indicate the pre-
scence of high quality craftsmanship as well as specific procure-
ment strategies – to be expected with skilled crafting practices.
To the extent that products of these craft workers perpetuated
success in display by their patrons, the same social groups
would continue to set the standards of beauty, one of the scales
of value by which wealth could have been assessed (Joyce
2000). A suite of iconographic motifs, ritual performances, and
luxury goods developed during the Formative period and set
the parameters within which later Mesoamerican elites operated.
Lavish use of items of high culture by Late Classic elites was
externally traditional in the selection of valued materials (Joyce
follows this model nicely. Given the various culture groups living
in Honduras over a two thousand year period, this perpetuation
of stone vase production was most likely not facilitated by po-
litical continuity. Rather it appears that the waxing and waning
of political and social power operated within a defined vocab-
ulary of material products of high culture established during the
Formative period.

By the Late Classic period, stone vase production became
highly standardized. The use of alabaster ceased while the
procurement of marble for the production of Ulúa marble
style vases became highly organized focusing on one central
procurement zone. Sixty-seven of the seventy-one vases sam-
ples show high probability of coming from the same quarry
indicating restricted procurement strategies and control of
production organization. In conjunction with the stable iso-
tope results, distributional and stylistic data from 13 vases
strongly point to a production area at or in the near vicinity
to the site of Travesía (Luke, n.d.). It is unlikely that an actual
workshop with marble scrap heaps and/or unfinished vases
will ever be identified at this site because it has been exten-
sively and intensively looted for Ulúa style marble vases,
among the most valued items on the Pre-Columbian antiqui-
ties market. The special contexts, limited circulation, elabo-
rerate iconography and restricted procurement activities of Late
Classic marble vases suggest restricted production, perhaps
attached specialization. An additional tradition of carving
greenstone vases may be contemporary with these marble vases
or may be just slightly later.

Stable isotope results from two Late Classic marble vases
not part of the Ulúa marble style, currently housed at the Museo
de Antropologíai e Historia, San Pedro Sula, are produced from
sources other than those used for the Ulúa marble style. This evidence
indicates that stone carving traditions during the Late
Classic period can be linked with specific procurement regions.
Future results from a sub-set of Formative and Early
Classic marble bowls will allow us to understand when spe-
cialized procurement and production strategies began in Hon-
duras. This data will be used in conjunction with settlement
pattern and ceramic data to discuss possible relationships
between increasing complexity and craft specialization.

Conclusions

Among the various stone carving vase traditions in
Mesoamerica, the Honduran tradition is unique. Beginning
in the Early Formative period, vases were carved from marble
and alabaster. By the Late Classic period, marble was preferred
to alabaster. Similar to other stone vase traditions in Meso-
america, Honduran stone vases tend to mimic contemporary
ceramics in form during all time periods.

The limited number of stone vases and their fine quality
compared to other artifact groups in Mesoamerica during all
time periods suggests that stone bowls functioned as luxury
goods and regional identity markers beginning in the For-
mative period and most definitively by the Late Classic. The pro-
duction of Late Classic Ulúa marble style vases developed out
of existing marble carving traditions integrating new forms and
iconographic motifs. This style is unique in Mesoamerica sug-
gesting that the vases functioned as markers of an Ulúa identity
outside of the region. Ulúa marble vases found in special
contexts in Costa Rica, Belize and Guatemala indicate that they
functioned as luxury goods exchanged among elite groups.

Given the long-standing tradition of marble vases as high
status goods in Honduras, we suggest that Early Formative tra-
ditions played a vital part in establishing this luxury good.
Carving vases from stone during the Formative period served to
set the stage for later luxury production. Classic period communities drew from traditional technologies to provide links to their historical past, thereby legitimating their emerging status.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia for the opportunity to conduct research in Honduras. The National Science Foundation, Geological Society of America, and international organizations at Cornell University, including Sigma Xi, the Latin American Studies Program and the Department of Anthropology have supported research for this project.

Notes

1 Clark and Blake (1994: 25-26) argue that aggrandizers borrowed foreign ceramic technologies for personal advantage.
2 The earliest hemispherical bowls are from the Teuchuacán Valley dating to the Coxcatlán phase (4800-5500 B.C.; MacNeish, Nelson-Termer and Johnson 1967: 117-118). These granite bowls are crude in form and style and may reflect the first alternative material to gourds, prior to ceramic production. Stone bowls continue to be produced in the Teuchuacán Valley until the Late Classic period and the quality becomes more elegant and the material shifts from granite to limestone and marble. Twenty-three stone bowls and vessels from San Lorenzo (Coie and Dietl 1980: 232-234, 294) date from the Early Formative (Ojochi phase, 1500-1300 B.C.) to the Villa Alta period (A.D. 900) with the majority dating to the Formative periods (collections at the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University). Other stone vessels have been reported from the Ocós and Chiapa de Corzo I phases and the Formative period phases at Tlatilco (MacNeish, Nelson-Termer and Johnson 1967: 117-118). Greenstone vessels from Xochipala (Gay 1972: 48-50) and stone vessels from Atotonilco (Henderson, 1979) in Guerrero date to the Formative period. Thirty vessels from Xochipala carved from greenstone, often with incised, sculpted, and polished designs on the exterior, suggest a specialized workshop. Stone vessels from the Barra phase in the Molaya region of Soconusco imitate fancy ceramics (Clark and Blake 1994: 22) One stone vessel from Chalcatzingo (Groves, 1987: 335) with an incised exterior design dates to the Cantera phase (700-500 B.C.), equivalent to the Middle Formative. In all of these cases, with the exception of the early Teuchuacán vessels, the vessels are very high quality, presumably not everyday goods.

1 Marble and alabaster were preferred to granite, volcanic tuff, limestone, and greenstone - all available in Honduras. Unlike many greenstones, marble is relatively soft, making it easy to carve. Yet, it is more durable than syenite and finer than volcanic tuff or granite, allowing for the production of vessels with very thin walls and fine designs.

1 A similar pattern is found in the Moctezuma region. During the Locona phase (beginning ca. 1400 B.C.) artisans made ceramic vessels and figurines, elaborate carved stone bowls that imitated fancy ceramic forms, greenstone beads, and, perhaps, textiles and cordage (Clark and Blake 1994: 22).

1 Early Classic stone vessel traditions are documented from the southern Mexican states of Mexico and the Guerrero highlands and lowlands. Vessels from Chalchuhuapa date to the Late Formative through Early Classic periods (Sheets 1978: 35-37). At Zaculeu (Woodbury and Truk 1954: 241) and Kaminaljuyu (Shook and Kidder 1961) pairs of joined alabaster cups are found in Early Classic tombs. Carved from a single piece of alabaster, the presentation of two cups side-by-side is unique in Mesica. A similar pair is on display at the Princeton Museum of Art and attributed to Teuchuacán III, ca. A.D. 300. Stucco remains are found on the paired cups from Kaminaljuyu (Shook and Kidder 1961) and two cups currently housed at the Instituto de Antropológica e Historia in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. A tripod marble vase with a lobed flange is from Finca Arizona, Guatemala (Shook 1969: 213). One vase from Tikal (Shook and Kidder 1961) is very elaborate with incised glyphs and remains of stucco on the rim and base. Marble bird vessels are found at Kaminaljuyu (Miralles ca. 200 B.C.; Shook and Kidder 1961), in the Guayemel caves near the site of Copán (Healy 1984), and in the Ulúa Valley (Strong, Kidder and Paine 1946).

There are several stone vessels on display at the Popol Vuh Museum other than the two Ulúa style vessels. One is particularly interesting. It is a tripod drum with very thin walls and an exterior midband rope motif. There is a channel through the wall of the vase that has openings at the lip and at the interior of the base. There are remains of red pigment and white stucco. The other vessel is a cylinder tripod. Not on display, but in the storage area, are ten other vases. Two of these date to the Early Classic. One is a doublecup like those from Kaminaljuyu and the other is a tripod drum with a scalloped rim. This vessel is similar to one from Ocos, Honduras. The other remaining eight vases vary in style and quality.

Only two stone vessels are known from Teuchuacán, both from burial contexts (Simmons and Stone 1994: 13, 103, 158, 168, 191). One vase, an oxyn bowl, dates to the Xolapan phase (A.D. 400-700) and was associated with stucco vases, jade, miniature vessels, bowls, and jars. The other vessel, made from alabaster, has four supports and was associated with bone needles, obsidian, bowls, miniature vessels, painted slate and a pyrite disc. It dates to the Tlamimitolpa phase, A.D. 200-400. These contexts reflect, again, stone vessels associated with rich deposits.

1 Within the Lug Head types there are two varieties: Paloma and Bombero. Paloma dates slightly earlier than Bombero. The distinguishing features of these varieties are a diagnostic red color on Paloma with bird handle forms and a maroon color on Bombero with monkey handle forms (Jouve 1993 a, 1993 b).

1 During a regional survey of the Lower Ulúa Valley (January 1995, June 1996 and January 2000) marble and limestone sources were located (Luet and Tykot, in press). No alabaster sources were located suggesting that Late Classic production focused on marble because it was locally available and alabaster was not.

1 Fakes of Ulúa style marble vessels do exist. They are easily recognizable by erroneous associations of iconographic motifs and forms as well as modern tool marks, particularly evidence of metal tools, not available in antiquity.
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