

Zusammenfassung: Archäologische Grabungen in El Salvador, 1983. Witterlicher Schwierigkeiten wurden in El Salvador im Jahre 1983 die archäologischen Feldarbeiten fortgesetzt. Anfang Juni 1983 wurden die drei Jahre lang Notgrabungen bei San Lorenzo, am unteren Rio Lempa in Ost-Salvador, mit einem Staudamm errichtet wird, beendet. Von den 80 bearbeiteten Fundstätten wurden 3 genauer stratigraphisch untersucht; alle diese Orte datieren in die Klassische Nachklassische Periode. Das zweite größere archäologische Projekt betraf Grabungen von Cara Sucia im äußersten Südwesten von El Salvador, wo seit zwei Jahren Grabungen und restauriert wird. Die Öffnung von Gräbern brachte Belege von der Vorklassik bis zur frühen Nachklassik. Mindestens zwei Ballspielplätze sind festgestellt; einer davon wurde ausgegraben und stammt mutmaßlich aus der Klassik. 1983 wurde auch die Abteilung für Archäologie des Nationalmuseums gegründet und eine große Ausstellung am 9. 10. 1983, zur 100-Jahr-Feier des Museums, eröffnet.

Zusammen: Excavaciones arqueológicas en El Salvador, 1983. A pesar de las dificultades políticas se continuaron en debida forma con los trabajos arqueológicos en El Salvador en el año de 1983. A comienzos de junio de 1983 se reanalaron las excavaciones urgentes que duraron tres años y que fueron realizadas en San Lorenzo, en la parte baja del Rio Lempa en la región oriental de El Salvador; se construyó una represa. De los 80 sitios investigados se estudiaron 8 estratigráficamente y con mayor detalle; todos estos lugares datan del periodo clásico y postclásico. El segundo proyecto arqueológico más grande concierne a las ruinas de Cara Sucia en el extremo suroccidental de El Salvador; allí se está excavando y reanalandose desde hace dos años. Las excavaciones trajeron a la luz pruebas desde el periodo clásico tardío hasta el postclásico temprano. Se registraron por lo menos dos plazas de juego de pelota; una de ellas fue excavada. Procede presumiblemente del clásico y postclásico. En 1983 también se reordenó la sección de Arqueología del Museo Nacional. El 9. 10. 1983 se inauguró una gran exposición para festejar los 100 años de existencia del museo.

1984 Mexican 6(1): 5-10. Excavations at Lamanai, Belize, 1983

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Investigations at Lamanai in 1983, originally intended to be the final season at the site, were focused on the Terminal Classic and Postclassic periods, with one major area of concentration in the southern portion of the Classic ceremonial precinct. The second principal effort of the year centred on the Terminal Postclassic and Early Historic periods as represented in the area of the Spanish church, approximately 750 metres south of the limit of the Classic site centre. We have re-

cognised since the beginning of the project that the Spanish presence in the 16th and 17th centuries must have made the southern end of the site the focus of the early historic community. With this in mind, we carried out excavations from the first season of the project through 1976, both at the church and in Structure N12-11, which lies immediately south of the Spanish structure (Pendergast 1981c:51-52). In 1980, we returned to the area in search of 16th-century dwellings and other buildings west of the church; unfortunately the work, supervised by Olivier de Montmollin, produced no conclusive results. In 1982 we undertook limited testing in and around the nave area of the church, in preparation for a larger-scale investigation during the 1983 season.

Our return to the church area was meant primarily to complete exploration of the immediate environs of the church itself; in addition, we planned to check as many buildings at a greater remove from the church as time permitted. The work was aimed at clarification of the histories of all construction elements not investigated in earlier years in the immediate environs of the church, as well as a sampling of the small number of visible structures further to the north and south. The results of the work produced a nearly complete reshaping of our understanding of events in the church zone, and a major re-evaluation of the picture of the Lamanai Postclassic community that had emerged in earlier seasons.

Excavation was begun in Structure N12-11 and in its northern counterpart, Structure N12-12. Work in N12-11 in 1976 had shown that the low platform housed the historic-period cemetery, and we hoped to complete an extensive sample of burials from the period during 1983. N12-12 was very heavily damaged by the work of Thomas Gann early in this century, but checking in 1982 and at the beginning of this season indicated that much could still be learnt from perimeter clearing and axial trenching of the building. Shortly after initiation of work on the two structures, we began a series of test trenches in and beyond the probable limits of the church nave, as well as at the rear of the Spanish structure. This work, coupled with investigation of a very small platform at the western edge of the zone, near the limits of the 1980 excavations, has recovered as complete a sample as possible from all areas save the sloping land that lies between the rear of the church and the shore of the lake to the east.

Within a short time of resumption of excavation in N12-11, architectural evidence emerged that made identification of the structure as the first Spanish church unquestionable. A number of close resemblances between the outermost platform of N12-11 and the church platform discovered at Tipu, in the western Cayo District of Belize, led us to re-examine the relationship between the obviously historic-period stairs at the north and south, and the body of what had been assumed to be a late Postclassic platform. Similar stairs charac-

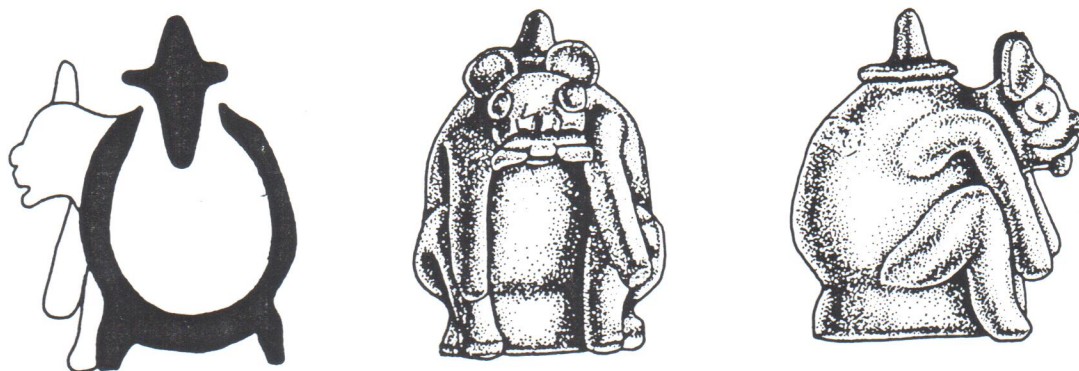


Fig. 1: Cache N12-11/2, LA 739/1; ht. 7.2 cm.

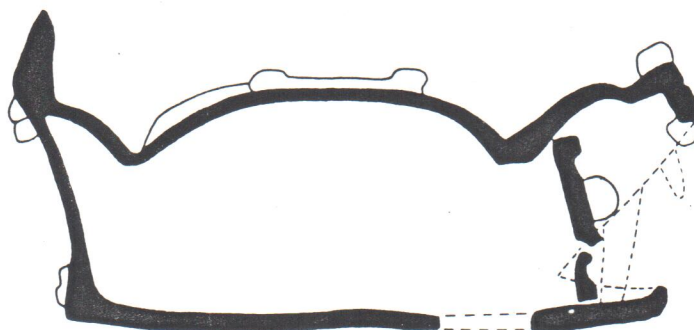
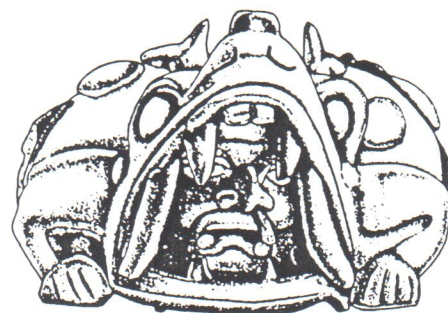
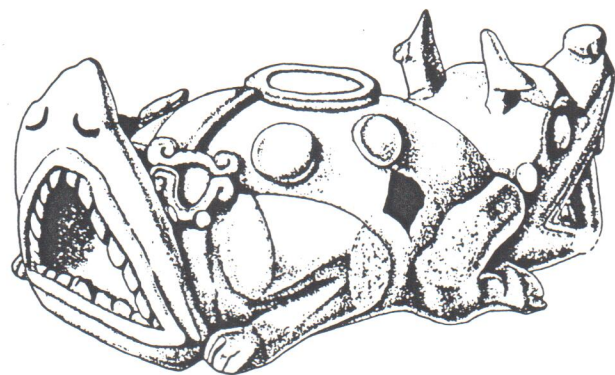


Fig. 2: Church II Cache 5, LA 767/1; len. 20.8 cm.

terise the Tipu church, and this plus the discovery of floor plaster of historic type in areas that abut the sanctuary steps left no question as to the identity of the building. Archival research carried out by Dr. Grant Jones in 1982-83 under the Lamanai grant indicates that the establishment of a church at Lamanai is very likely to have taken place during a reduction in 1567. If we allow for a reasonable period of consolidation of the Lamanai community following establishment of a Spanish presence, it is likely that raising of the second church took place near the end of the 16th century. The originally-identified church (Pendergast 1981c: fig. 2) was a much more impressive effort than its predecessor, and the contrast between the two edifices suggests an attempt at strengthening of the Spanish hold on the area, perhaps by provision of a large central church rather than through relocation of population. Whatever the rationale for the new church, the construction had no long-lived effect, for Spanish influence was brought to an end at Lamanai in the uprising of 1640-41.

Use of the nave of the original church as a burying-ground must, in the absence of any other cemetery in the church zone, have begun very shortly after the building was constructed. Once the grand new church was completed, the older building almost certainly continued to serve for burials, and hence the span represented by the interments in N12-11 is about 75 years. Excavation in 1983 recovered the remains of about 45 to 50 individuals to augment the sample of approximately 60 unearthed in 1976. Extensive disturbance of earlier interments by later ones made separation of individuals extremely difficult, and weather and other factors eventually caused us to call a halt to burial excavation despite the fact that a great many interments remain in the body of the church. Architectural investigation of the structure was, however, essentially completed during the season.

Work on N12-11 in 1976 showed that the final platform, which we now recognise as the base for the first church, covered a Tulum-style building that suffered demolition of all but its platform before the later building was erected. Work beneath the sanctuary of the church yielded large quantities of interior plaster from the rooms of the Tulum structure, which showed that destruction of the building's superstructure must have been undertaken in preparation for the erection of the church. The fact that the demolition was under the direction of the Spanish suggests a conscious decision on their part to supplant an important focus of late Postclassic religious or other activity with a focal point of a Christian sort. Unhappily we still know comparatively little of the Maya community for which the church provided the late 16th-century focus.

The plaster from the razed Tulum structure consists in many cases of four or five heavy coats, of which most or all bear mural decoration that is linked stylistically and in palette with that at Tancah and Tulum. Unfortunately, the fragments are small, and reconstruction of any large area of the mural painting therefore seems impossible. The presence of large, painted animal (felid?) feet and other modelled plasterwork among the mural fragments suggests that the building's interior may have been quite spectacular in its adornment, a matter that we hope to examine further during 1984.

Checking of one of two raised units, possibly plinths for statuary, that flank the stair of the Tulum structure's platform revealed a cache in the western unit, with no counterpart at the east. The offering, a small animal-effigy vessel (Fig. 1) was placed in a small pit cut into the surface of the raised unit and not sealed with a patch or a resurfacing of the unit. Since the cut was overlain only by the core of the church platform, the offering must date from the time of church construction.

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Fig. 3: Church II Cache 4, LA 766/1,2,3,5, and 4. ht. of 766/3, 5.2 cm

erely no Spanish cleric would have condoned deposition of an offering in a pagan building during construction of a Christian church, and hence the object was probably placed clandestinely, perhaps to placate the deities whose seat of power was being usurped by a European god.

Offerings abound in the area of the later church, and most of them consist of effigy vessels in positions that suggest or document a post-1642 date. Occupation of the later church following desecration of the building was revealed by excavations in 1974 and 1975 (Pendergast 1981c:52), when several mid-17th century offerings were also recovered. Among those that emerged during 1983 was a large two-headed saurian with a human head in one of the mouths (Fig. 1), which lay in the northern part of the nave area just outside the sanctuary wall, in a zone almost certain to have been disturbed during construction of the church. It is this position that suggests a post-church date, as is true of a second offering, a group of miniature human-head and frog-effigy vessels (Fig. 3) that lay in a pit in bedrock just at the corner of the south jamb of the sanctuary entrance. Together with a small Tlupu-type altar that unquestionably postdates the desecration of the church, the offerings surely document continuing ceremonial activity in the ruins of the building, which probably persisted until at least the end of the 17th century.

The focus of early Historic ceremonial activity at the church may have been an uncarved stela that was found toppled out of position, but originally stood parallel with the sanctuary wall in the northern part of the nave area. Beneath the stela lay an offering that consisted of a recut jade pendant in the form of a full-front human face, a fragmentary jade bead, and a small effigy vessel (Fig. 4). Far to the west of the stela, where it may have been deposited by 19th-century users of the church, lay a single slab that may be from a hieroglyphic stair of Classic date; use of a similar slab as the altar before a late Postclassic stela in the site centre suggests identification of the stone as a part of the Historic ceremonial focus. Taken together, the evidence indicates an essential continuity of ceremonial practises from the late Postclassic through at least the first century and a half of the Historic period, despite the short-lived intervention of the Spanish.

Work on N12-12 showed that Gann's depredation were not as destructive as it first appeared, although his disturbance of the platform's top surface and his removal of at least one late Postclassic or Historic vessel from the structure leaves us with less complete data than one would like. Perimeter trenching of the structure provided clear evidence of Postclassic construction characteristics, with the unusual feature of a stair at the west, rather than facing towards N12-11, as might be expected. Axial trenching yielded a single effigy vessel (Fig. 5), which from its context could be either contemporaneous with or intrusive into the structure. The trench also produced solid ceramic evidence from the lower portion of the core of the single-phase structure, of a middle Postclassic or later construction date. The unusual form of N12-12 leaves major questions as to the use of the building unanswered, but it does not appear very likely that the answers would have been forthcoming even if Gann had not wrought havoc with the building's upper surface.

The role of N12-12 as a residential structure at some point in the Historic occupation of the zone is indicated by the presence of sherds of Spanish jars ("olive jars") in midden scattered along the northern perimeter of the building. Early Historic material is not common anywhere in the church vicinity, and no offering contained objects of European origin.

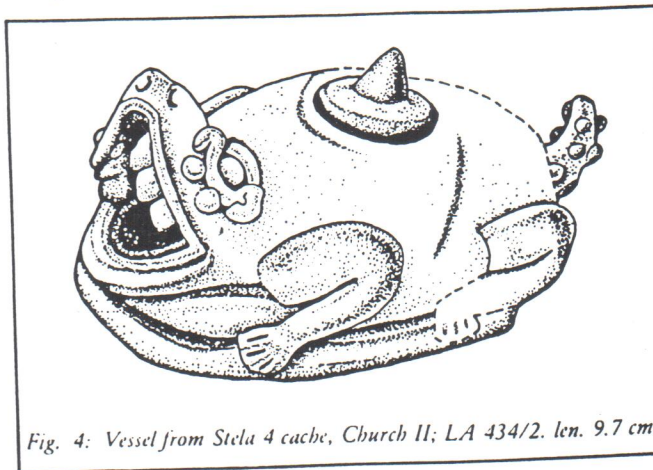


Fig. 4: Vessel from Stela 4 cache, Church II; LA 434/2. len. 9.7 cm.

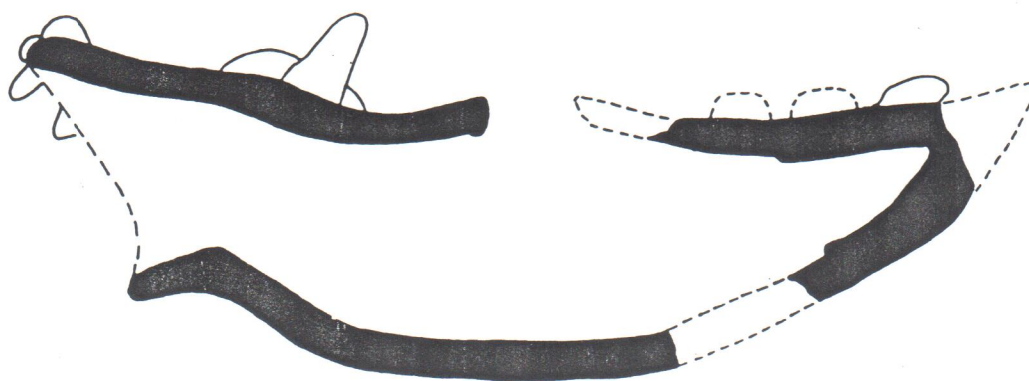
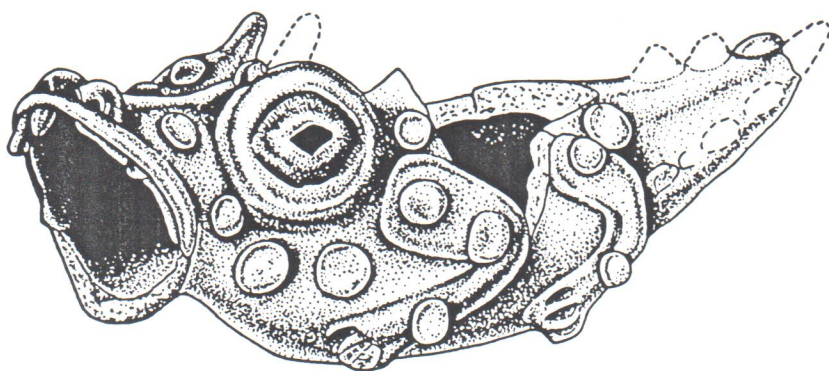


Fig. 5: Cache N12-12/1, LA 757/1; len. ca. 20.9 cm.

Olive-jar sherds were, however, found in moderate quantity around the perimeters of both N12-12 and N12-11, as well as among Maya ceramics recovered in the trenches and area exposures opened throughout the nave area of the later church and in surrounding open land. To date no burial in the first church has been accompanied by European ceramics, and among the limited number of metal artifacts with the burials there is none that can be demonstrated to be of non-Mesoamerican origin. This may indicate that European goods were never plentiful at Lamanai, but it is also possible that discovery of an early Historic residential area away from the church zone would bring us to a better source of information on the availability of Spanish ceramics and other material goods in the Maya community.

At the west side of the church area, investigation of a very low rise yielded data on a small platform of typical Late Postclassic construction, with facings of single stones set upright on one short side. Ceramics from around the structure include Late Postclassic and other material, but in the end the architectural characteristics remained the only basis for dating the platform, and we were left with no means of determining the use for which the building had been designed. In the absence of evidence on these two points, the relationship

between the platform and Structures N12-11 and N12-12 remains unclear at best.

At the northwest side of the sanctuary of the later church, area exposure revealed a huge spread of plaster fragments, many of them with multiple layering and mural painting similar to that found on plaster from the core of the first church. Deposition of the material surely antedates construction of the second church, and the location does not argue for identification of the plaster as from the Tulum-style structure in N12-11. It may be, therefore, that the plaster is evidence of the existence of a second Tulum-style building, in which case the structure is most likely to have stood on the site of the second church. It is highly improbable that such a structure would have been allowed to remain standing unchanged while the first church was in use, and hence it may be that the material represents demolition undertaken in the 1560s, perhaps simply to clear the area of a structure that had been important to the prehistoric Maya community. The demolition may, however, have been to permit a use of the site that cannot now be determined owing to the extensive modification of the area that preceded erection of the second church. The presence of large fragments gives the plaster an

higher interest value. Excavation of the site does not appear very likely to securely the source of the material.

Sampling of structure N12-12 involved only approximately 100 m² of work here, probably the latest eliminated in brief (Pendergas) all platform documents classic times, while it shows that N12-26 was 16th century. The residue, and the fact that the series make N12-26 a burial. Those changes must have been able to be evident in the area of N12-26 a suitable residence for a major figure at Lamanai in the historic period.

Following the work, recovery of an important about 30 metres south of the large and rather ill-constructed no features to show the surface were heights of 337.2 and of such value on a structural axis, suggest the and neighbourly considerable significance of postclassic Lamanai from the immediate area offering insight into the presence in the area previously recognised as we once centre at the time of the data from core of the modern zone began in the past several examination of the evidence of continuous long period of

As a result of the discovery of excavation in 1983, our investigations from the southern area as great a distance from 1983, reasons, makes it a good room for high of Lamanai's past focus on the south characterise as full in the critical century years of the H

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even higher interest value than that of the N12-11 material, but as excavation of the second church is now complete it does not appear very likely that we shall ever be able to identify securely the source of this second body of Tulum-related material.

Sampling of structures outside the immediate area of the churches involved only a single building, Structure N12-26, approximately 100 metres north of the second church. The results of work here, which included discovery of what is probably the latest elite burial at Lamanai, have been reported in brief (Pendergast: In Press d). Evidence from core of the small platform documents use of the area in middle Early Classic times, while midden from the rear of the structure shows that N12-26 was abandoned not later than the early 10th century. The residential nature of the building, its small size, and the fact that it had lain unused for nearly five centuries make N12-26 seem a most unlikely site for an important burial. Those charged with construction of the tomb must have been able to see something in the building that is not evident in the archaeological record, and which made N12-26 a suitable resting-place for a person who was surely a major figure at Lamanai not long before the beginning of the Historic period.

Following the work on N12-26, we made the chance discovery of an important offering, virtually at ground surface about 30 metres south of the structure. The area, part of a large and rather ill-defined platform on which N12-26 sits, had no features to suggest a focus for offerings; yet at 1-10 cm below the surface we encountered a pair of copper axes, with weights of 337.2 and 219.3 grammes. The presence of objects of such value on a platform surface, unassociated with any structural axis, suggests that area exposure of the discovery site and neighbouring platforms may yield information of considerable significance to an understanding of the Late Postclassic Lamanai community. Together with the data from the immediate vicinity of the church and from N12-26, the axe offering indicates a much stronger Late Postclassic presence in the area south of the Classic site centre than we previously recognised. It therefore does not seem necessary to posit, as we once did, a shift southward in the community centre at the time of arrival of the Spanish. At the same time, data from core of N12-26 show that occupation of the southern zone began in earlier times than we had been able to document in past seasons' excavations; this raises the possibility that examination of other structures in the area may yield evidence of continuous occupation of the church zone over a very long period of the site's history.

As a result of the discoveries made in 1983, the principal focus of excavation in 1984 will, if we find it possible to continue our investigations in that season, be in the area that extends from the southern limit of the Classic site centre southward for as great a distance as we are able to encompass. The data yield from 1983, as well as that from the preceding nine seasons, makes it clear that excavation through 1984 will still leave room for highly profitable exploration of many aspects of Lamanai's past. There can be no question, though, that a focus on the southern portion of the site will permit us to characterise as fully as possible the course of life at Lamanai in the critical centuries from the close of the Classic to the early years of the Historic period.

Notes

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