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The San José Mogote Danzante

En la presente contribución se cuestiona la clasificación arqueológica del 'danzante' de San José de Mogote (valle de Oaxaca), señalada por sus excavadores Flannery y Marcus. El autor argumenta en favor de su ubicación temporal y estilística dentro de Monte Albán II, i. e., acercándose más al final, y no al comienzo de la secuencia de los danzantes. Además, se insiste en que la documentación y la descripción del monumento por Flannery y Marcus son inadecuadas, el hecho de que el relieve descubierto no se encontró en su posición original vertical, y en que hay que dudar acerca de su relevancia para la comprensión de los sistemas mesoamericanos del calendario y la escritura, discutiendo sus elementos simbólicos.

In 1975 at the site of San José Mogote in the Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico, archaeologist Kent V. Flannery uncovered a carved stone relief, similar to the danzantes at nearby Monte Albán, depicting a personage accompanied by symbols and a glyph and numeral in the ancient Zapotec writing system [Fig. 1]. In a continuous stream of publications dating from 1976, Flannery and Joyce Marcus have claimed that the relief, designated Monument 3, dates back to the Rosario phase. This stratigraphic context would put this danzante figure back into preurban, pre-Monte Albán times around 750-500 B. C., and thus considerably older than the iconographically similar series from Monte Albán. Based on Flannery and Marcus's repeatedly published assertions that the relief is a 'first' in the history of Precolumbian writing and calendrics, this object has assumed a status of considerable significance in Mesoamerican studies. The claims in particular made for its chronological priority have caused it to reverberate through the scholarship of Mesoamerican art, archaeology, linguistics and calendrics (Coe 1984; Colville 1986; Langley 1986; Méluzin 1987; Pfeiffer 1977; Weaver 1981).

The purposes of this essay are manifold. We will document the often-repeated assertions of Flannery and Marcus concerning the relief's historical locus, function, ans significance. We will also show how their ideas about Monument 3 have attained an almost canonic scholarly status and demonstrate the broad, and, we believe, unwarranted array of implications drawn for what has become a 'factural' given. Our most fundamental concern, however, will be an interdis-

Figure 1: The San José Mogote danzante (Monument 3). Drawing by Mark Orsan from Flannery and Marcus 1983a: 58.

ciplinary argument for reconsidering the generally received notions of the San José Mogote danzante's date and original placement.

In an article published in 1976 and concerned with the beginnings of writing in Mesoamerica, Marcus (1976) both announced the discovery and rudimentarily illustrated Monument 3:

> Monument 3 was discovered at San José Mogote [...] and is published here for the first time. It was discovered in situ serving as the threshold stone for a corridor between two large public buildings of the Rosario phase (600-500 B. C.) atop Mound 1. Monument 3 was laid flat on a bed of stone slabs, so that anyone entering the corridor would tread on the body of the slain or sacrificed captive depicted in the carving. It is our oldest example of a type of carved stone traditionally (and erroneously) referred to as a *danzante*, of which more than 300 examples were previously known from the nearby site of Monte Albán - all of which were evidentially set in a single wall - represent a 'gallery' of slain prisoners, [...]. Monument 3 at San José Mogote is significant because the figure has between his feet a short notation of two glyphs which can be read as "1 Earthquake" (the seventeenth day in Zapotec list of 20 day names). This inscription is a date in the 260-day Sacred Round, our first documented use of that calendar. (Ibid.: 45).

The calendric significance of the relief is underlined by Flannery and Marcus in another article from the same year. They assert "It is also the oldest yet discovered evidence for the 'living' 260-day sacred calendar which the Zapotec were still using at the time of the Spanish conquest" (Flannery and Marcus 1976a: 382).[1]

In a synthesis of her findings about Zapotec writing, Marcus again returns to Monument 3 and the theme of the nude captive figure in Mesoamerican iconography:

> The earliest-known Zapotec carving representative of this convention was found [...] at San José Mogote, a large civic and ceremonial center belonging to the Rosario phase. Known as monument 3, it depicts a sprawled naked human figure. Between the figure's legs an ornate dot (indicating the numeral 1) is accompanied by the Zapotec glyph *xoo*, meaning 'earthquake' or 'motion'. The inscription is the oldest known for the existence of the Zapotec 260-day calendar. It may record the name of the individual. Because San José Mogote appears to have been virtually abandoned at the end of the Rosario phase, presumably as

1 Figure 9 on page 382 of Flannery and Marcus 1976 a is a small photograph of Monument 3. The early dating and threshold function of the piece is again reiterated by Flannery and Marcus 1976 b: 206, 215.

part of the founding of Monte Albán, monument No. 3 was probably made sometime between 700 and 500 B. C.[2]

Flannery and Marcus's conclusions regarding Monument 3 are given a definitive articulation in two major publications of the early 1980's. With their collaborator Stephen A. Kowalewski, Flannery and Marcus succinctly enunciated their findings about the relief. Thus are told:

> A narrow corridor separates Structure 14 and 19, and serving as the threshold for this corridor is a carved stone, Monument 3. Anyone entering or leaving the corridor would tread on the body of the person depicted: a naked individual with his eyes closed and mouth partly open, sprawled awkwardly in the manner of the so-called *danzantes* of Monte Albán.
> Elsewhere, Marcus [...] has interpreted this as the depiction of a slain or sacrificed individual. A complex scroll covers his chest, possibly depicting blood issuing from an open wound such as that made for the removal of the heart; a ribbon-like stream extends from this scroll to the edge of the stone, where we find two motifs whose carving wraps around the edge of the monument. Carved between the individual's feet are two hieroglyphs which probably represent a name taken from the Zapotec 260-day ritual calendar. The ornate dot, below, represents the number 1; the other glyph, above, is *XOO*, or 'earthquake' ('motion'), the seventeenth day in the Zapotec list of 20 day names (Córdova 1578). At the moment, this inscription, 1 Earthquake, is our oldest evidence for the 260-day calendar and, perhaps, for the Zapotec custom of naming individuals for the day of their birth. It may also indicate that the custom of recording the sacrifices of named individuals had begun by this time. Ethnohistorically, such individuals were usually captives taken in warfare, a fact which may have some significance for the Rosario and subsequent Monte Albán I phases. (Flannery, Marcus and Kowalewski 1981: 80-81).

The calendric, epigraphic, art historical and historical significance of Rosario phase San José Mogote and Monument 3 in particular are summarily stated by the authors, when they aver: This phase has produced Mesoamerica's earliest evidence for hieroglyphic writing and the 260-day calendar, as well as providing a clear precursor for the *danzante* carvings of Monte Albán I. If such carvings are accepted as slain or sacrificed captives, we can propose that armed conflict was already present in the Rosario phase and escalated during Monte Albán I and II, [...] (ibid.: 92; see also the chapter by D. Grove 1981: 380-381).

The description and discussion found in the *HMAI* (cited above) is essentially repeated in *The Cloud People* (Flannery and Marcus 1983 a: 57-58). We do,

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2 Marcus 1980: 54. Noteworthy in connection with this article is the apparently first appearance of the handsome but too fluid drawing of Monument 3 by Mark Orsan [Fig. 1]. This drawing seems to be the basic visual documentation for most discussions of the relief.

however, find an interesting excursus on Monument 3's circle and triangle motif. They note, "These two elements, each composed of a circle and triangle, may represent stylized drops of blood. They are identical to a motif which occurs on shell ornaments of the Guadalupe phase (see Drennan 1976: Fig. 78 d), and are very similar to motifs carved on the stairway stones of some public buildings at Monte Negro [...]" (ibid.: 57).

The scholarly ramifications of Flannery and Marcus's often repeated conclusions about Monument 3 have been enormous. The world of Mesoamerican scholarship has almost without exception accepted the basic conclusions about Monument 3 repeatedly articulated by Flannery and Marcus. The sampling citations given here have been selected because they reflect aspects of their wide ranging scholarly impact. The appended bibliography contains additional examples.

Because of its claimed antiquity, the San José Mogote danzante has been particularly widely cited in the literature concerned with the development for writing and the calendar. We read, for example, in a work by Anthony Aveni that "We find the earliest example of the 260-day calendar [about 600 B. C.] at the ruins of San José Mogote near Monte Albán" (Aveni 1980: 144). Writing about the architecture of Tikal Arthur Miller affirms that "The earliest Sacred Round date known from Mesoamerica comes from San José Mogote in the Valley of Oaxaca" (Miller 1986: 30). Similarly, but without citing this relief, Linda Schele and Mary Ellen Miller tell us that the "People of the Valley of Oaxaca were using a very simple writing system by 600 B. C. [...]" (Schele and Miller 1986: 325). Apparently echoing the conclusions of Flannery and Marcus, David Stuart and Stephen Houston have recently maintained that "writing was present in what is now the state of Oaxaca by about 700 B. C., as shown by the discovery there of a monument inscribed with early glyphs" (Stuart and Houston 1989: 70). The relief has even been educed as a critical documentation for the history of human sacrifice in Mesoamerica. Clara Millon writes, "The earliest graphic evidence in central and south-central Mexico occurs in the Valley of Oaxaca at the San José Mogote site. Sometime between 600-500 B. C., a sculptor engraved the outline of a dead captive on a stone" (Millon 1988: 217).

The relief has also been called upon more than once to serve as a document in the history of the development of state power in the Oaxaca region. Charles S. Spencer, for example, subscribes to the archaeological findings of Flannery and Marcus and neatly integrates the work into a larger story of regional political development (Spencer 1982: 17-18). Similar service is given to the relief by Richard E. Blanton et al. who write:

> Although the organization of the valley underwent several major transitions during Monte Albán I, some of the changes that characterize this period were foreshadowed in the earlier Rosario phase. San José Mogote may have served, for at least part of the region, some of the same functions that were carried out at Monte Albán beginning in Period I. Evidence for this is a carved stone (Fig. 2.8) resembling the Period I *Danzantes* from Monte Albán that was uncovered at San José Mogote [...]. It thus seems likely that similar military activities were

> planned or commemorated at the valley's largest centers in both the Rosario phase and Monte Albán I. The efficient coordination and management of these activities at the regional level may have been one important factor fostering the development of a valley-wide administrative institution centered at Monte Albán (Blanton et al. 1981: 65-66).

In addition, Blanton's synthesis has, in turn, found its echo in several popular works. (See, for example, Jeremy Sabloff 1989: 47-54).

Few students of the relief have dissented from Flannery and Marcus's reading of the work. We believe, however, that a careful consideration of the archaeological context, as well as the stylistic aspects of the carving, suggest that the Rosario phase attribution is incorrect, and that certain interpretations ascribed to the monument are wrong.

Although Flannery and Marcus reiterated their conclusions about the San José Mogote relief, they have never clearly articulated in print how they arrived at a Rosario date for the San José Mogote danzante. The latter was found on top of Mound 1 and as of this writing is still in place there. Several stone platforms were uncovered by the excavators on top of Mound 1 and Monument 3 was found between walls of two of them, Structures 19 and 14. Structure 19 is a rectangular platform over 20 meters on a side with stone walls and a stairway of the west side. It is an enlargement of structure 19 A, and both are considered Rosario phase (Flannery and Marcus 1983 a: 57), though Flannery and Marcus do not specify whether the wall next to Monument 3 was of this stage. The monument was not sealed beneath a floor, so the age cannot be determined by associated ceramics, since intrusive materials may have been present. Without a sealed floor any sherds associated with the danzante could be redeposited.

During a visit to the site a few days after the discovery of the danzante, Flannery told one of us (M. W.) that the dating was based on the sherds found used as chinking material between the stones in the walls. This is not a reliable stratigraphical marker since sherds older than the wall could have been used as chinking. The walls can be no older than the sherds but do not have to be of the same period. Thus the presence of Rosario material only confirms that the wall could be no older than the Rosario phase. (If the wall had been patched or repaired it is conceivable that sherds later than the original wall could have been incorporated in it.)

During the same visit Winter also noted a stucco floor and Late/Terminal Monte Albán I sherds in the dirt about two meters to the east and below the level of the carved stone. Although this material does not date the stone, it does show that later material was present in its vicinity.

Flannery and Marcus (1983 a: 57) imply that Monument 3 was placed between the walls of Structures 19 and 14. They believe that the monument was placed as a 'threshold':

> The stone was laid flat on a bed of stone slabs so that anyone entering or leaving the corridor would tread on the body of the person depicted [...] (Flannery and Marcus 1983 a: 57).

This may be true though, as Damon E. Peeler (1989: 296) has pointed out, the danzante is not worn and thus probably was not used for long as a step. Perhaps the stone was placed not as a step but simply to raise the level of the corridor and prevent the dirt and rock from eroding out.

Flannery and Marcus's interpretation of the use of Monument 3 implies that it is in its primary context. Several factors, however, suggest that its placement in the corridor constitutes a reuse. The position of the figure and the glyphs suggest that the carving was intended to be seen with the stone in a vertical or upright position, as is the case with similar danzantes at Monte Albán. It is of some interest that, although Flannery and Marcus have consistently indicated that the relief is a tread, they have always reproduced it as if it were an upright orthostat. As Marcus herself has more than once asserted, the inscriptions of the Oaxaca tradition are intended to be read in "vertical columns" (Marcus 1980: 50). The glyphs on the San José Mogote danzante form a vertical column when the relief is viewed in an upright position. The glyphs are not, however, correctly placed had the stone been intended as a tread. The epigraphic incongruity of the present position suggests the possibility that this danzante - like so many of the Monte Albán danzantes - was not intended for the location in which it was discovered. Many carved stones in the Valley of Oaxaca, including most of the danzantes at Monte Albán, have been reused.[3] Those Monte Albán danzantes still in their original position are upright.

Also arguing for reuse is the fact that the San José Mogote danzante is carved on two sides. As the carving on the two surfaces form part of the same design, it seems evident that both surfaces were supposed to be visible. Probably the stone formed the corner of a wall which may also have included other carved stones.

Finally, we believe that the apparently damaged condition of Monument 3 suggests that its find site is not its primary locale. Like the Monte Albán danzantes, the carved figure is 'fitted' to the shape of the face of the stone block. However, Monument 3 seems to be missing a triangular fragment in the upper right corner. The top of the figure's head is broken off and the line marking the top of the head is incomplete. This fragment did not apparently emerge in the excavation which suggests that the relief was damaged in another locale prior to being laid down in its present position.

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3 The caveats of John Graham and Lee Allen Parsons concerning the migration of works of art are worth noting in this context. Graham, in his article "Olmec Diffusion: a Sculptural View from Pacific Guatemala", observes, "Curiously, many Mesoamerican archaeologists frequently continue to equate the age of creation of the sculpture with the age of setting, 'stratigraphically dating style' while ignoring the common practice of varied re-use of ancient monuments" (1989: 229). In the same article Graham further observes, "There is a vast amount of quite varied information on monument re-use throughout Mesoamerica; these data have implications of the greatest significance not only for chronological ordering of Mesoamerican art history but as well for the function and changing meanings of art". Parsons, in his *The Origins of Maya Art* (1986: 7-8), similarly observes that "One of the bothersome factors in the study of the Pre-Columbian stone sculpture is the mobility and mutability of the objects".

In addition to our belief that the San José Mogote danzante was moved from another place where it did not function as a tread or threshold, we also hold that there are strong arguments for dating the work substantially later than the Rosario phase. These arguments, as shall be seen, complement and confirm our understanding of the relief's non-Rosario archaeological context.[4]

Building orientation supports a post-Rosario date for Monument 3. There are two standard site orientations in the Valley of Oaxaca; one is 8 degrees west of true north and the other is from 3 to 6 degrees east of true north (Peeler and Winter s.a.). The former occurs on early buildings (Rosario phase and earlier) in the Valley of Oaxaca; the latter occurs at Monte Albán starting in period Monte Albán I. The passageway (corridor) between structures 14 and 19 at San José Mogote is oriented 96 degrees 25 minutes, or about 6 degrees west of north (Peeler 1989: 294). In other words, it corresponds to the Monte Albán type of orientation and, as we have noted, placement of the danzante post dates construction of the walls. It is, of course, conceivable that the change in orientation took place at San José Mogote before period Monte Albán I, but this cannot be evaluated with the available data.

A particularly interesting challenge to Flannery and Marcus's Rosario dating of Monument 3 is propounded by epigrapher Gordon Whittaker (1983: 104-105). Not only does he challenge Marcus's reading of the inscription as '1 Earthquake', he also asserts:

> If taken alone, the style of the calendar hieroglyphs below the San José *danzante* would suggest a date no earlier than the Proto-Classic, beginning around 200 A. D. with the First Intermediate Period [...] and Monte Albán Period III A (c. 250-450 A. D.). The sign for the numeral 1 is embellished with a curved base and the U-bracket, a hallmark of the Classic unattested on earlier periods. Furthermore, the day-sign identified by Marcus as the 17th Zapotec day-name 'Earthquake' takes a form here which is not attested before the Monte Albán Classic. In fact, a virtual duplicate is found on the stone marker excavated in the Zapotec quarter of Teotihuacan, which is some thousand years later than the date Marcus assigns to the San José slab, coming as it does from Monte Albán III B (c. 450-700 A. D.). (Ibid.).

In addition to proffering some doubts about the 'chronological' context of the discovery, Whittaker concludes, "It would seem best to withhold final judgment on the matter until such questions are resolved. Nevertheless, given the fact we are dealing with glyphs on a danzante-style monument, I would argue, albeit tentatively, for a terminal Late Preclassic date" (1983: 105).

In part following the arguments of Whittaker, John Justeson et al. also argue against Marcus's very early dating. They state:

> Most important, the stylistic evidence of the signs themselves makes Marcus's assessment of the age of San José Mogote Monument 3 ap-

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4 Winter (1989: 118) briefly adumbrates our arguments for dating and reuse.

> pear doubtful at best. The numeral 1 includes a U-shaped infix in the dot. This element occurs frequently in numerical dots and other signs in the Classic texts of the area; it also appears in Lowland Mayan and Greater Izapan iconography and writing in the Protoclassic and the first half of the Early Classic, corresponding to a simple dot in later material. It does not appear in any of the Preclassic texts of Oaxaca, nor does it occur in any non-numerical sign in Whittaker's [...] comprehensive catalogue of Preclassic Oaxacan hieroglyphs.
> Given the uncertainties cited for the stratigraphic assessment, the stylistic evidence argues rather forcefully against an early date for the San José monument. (Justeson et al. 1985: 33-34).

More recently, however, Justeson (1986: 447) has come to accept the chronology for the relief promulgated by Flannery and Marcus. In a brief repentance of his earlier conclusions, Justeson affirms, "An earlier Middle Preclassic dating of San José Mogote Monument 3 (Flannery and Marcus 1983: 57) to 700-500 B. C., is stratigraphically secure (Flannery, pers. comm.); seeming anachronisms [...] may be later provincial variants" (ibid.). Aside from his affirmation of what we contend are the questionable stratigraphic conclusions of Flannery and Marcus, Justeson's reversion to orthodoxy adds little to the discussion.[5]

Any attempt at chronologically repositioning an art historical work as apparently significant as the San José Mogote must, of course, deal with the central problems of style and symbolism. We maintain that in terms of visual qualities and symbolic details this work is most convincingly associated with the periods Monte Albán I and II.

Among the few scholars attentive to Monument 3's distinctive visual qualities and its formal relationships to the danzantes of Monte Albán is John Scott (1978). Like most students of the work, Scott subscribes to the chronological context articulated by Flannery and Marcus. He observes:

> Its large size (92 x 145 cm), moderately high relief, apparently sunken background [...] correspond to the same traits in the earliest proposed style of the Danzantes. Although the profile face shows that heavy nose and open mouth with two teeth characteristic of the early First-Row Danzantes, it lacks their heavy lip outlines, earspools, complex hair or headdresses, and round eye-sockets. The teeth are much smaller in proportion to the head than those of the First-Row Danzantes, and the position of the body fits none of the categories proposed for the Monte Albán Danzantes. Particularly surprising are the legs: they are in a running pose. The especially complex scrolls enclosing circles are not on the groin, as in the Groin Scroll group at Monte Albán, but on the torso, as if representing eviscerated intestines (Scott 1978: 69).

Unaccounted for in his discussion is the gap between Flannery and Marcus's Rosario dating and dating of 300-250 B. C. "for the earliest Danzantes of the First

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5 In a recent conversation with R. C. (January 1990) Justeson reaffirmed his confidence in Flannery's archaeological conclusions.

Row" (Scott 1978: 69). This problematic temporal hiatus between the thus far singular example from San José Mogote and the numerous Monte Albán figures suggests to us the possibility of an error in dating on the part of either or both Flannery/Marcus and Scott. We find it difficult to conceive a series as complex in form and content as the Monte Albán danzantes depending upon for inspiration a single and historically remote example. If the datings as stated are correct, it might suggest the possibility of an as yet unexcavated series linking the San José Mogote figure and those of Monte Albán. We would contend, however, that better stylistic sense can be made for Monument 3 by a considerable shift forward in time.

As Scott has correctly observed, the San José Mogote figure fits none of the stylistic categories he has established for its Monte Albán brethren. Monument 3's combining of aspects of the profile pose of the legs with the frontality of the elaborately embellished torso is unlike anything found at Monte Albán. The inventive formal combination of the implied activity of the legs and the timeless frontality of the symbol laden torso create a quality of 'arrested movement' of the sort encountered in the early dynastic relief sculpture of ancient Egypt. It seems to us that the San José Mogote relef is like Monte Albán danzante D 55 [Fig. 2]. The elaboration of the torso, the double glyph between the legs and the elaborate groin scroll offer suggestive but not perfect formal analogies.[6]

If, as we believe, Monument 3's formal features are most analogous to the later phases of the Monte Albán danzantes sequence and can be associated with the phases late Monte Albán I or early Monte Albán II, then comparison with the period Monte Albán II ballplayers of Dainzú may also be warranted. Although the Dainzú ballplayers are impelled by a dynamism appropriate to their distinctive function, certain compositional similarities with the San José Mogote can be observed, for example, with Dainzú Ballplayer 11 (Bernal 1973: 15, Fig. 3) [Fig. 3]. Worth noting, in particular, are the flexed positions of the profiled legs, the ribbon-like bands emerging from the waist and flowing down parallel to the near legs, the raised and lowered arms and the richly ornamented and frontally posed torsos.

The visual analogues adduced here, while not intended to precisely fix the danzante from San José Mogote in time do, we believe, suggest a chronology consonant with the later Monte Albán danzantes or the Dainzú ballplayers and considerably subsequent to the Rosario period (Winter 1989: 103). The relief in a visual context of the sort suggested here emerges as an integral aspect of the art

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6 This is a comparison suggested by the juxtaposition of reproductions found in Bernal and Simoni-Abbat, *Le Mexique des Origines aux Aztèques* (1986: 403). We would also like to suggest the possibility that the much discussed triscroll motif of the torso is an elaboration visually if not symbolically of Scott's "Elaborate Groin Scroll" motif (Scott 1978: 49). In addition, although Scott has characterized the position of the legs as "running" we would also posit the influence of figures like those in the 'Tumbling Danzante' group. Worth noting at this juncture is Lee Parsons' observation that "Some of the 'swimming' and 'tumbling' Danzante slabs may belong to early Monte Albán II phase [...]" (Parsons, "Proto-Maya Aspects of Miraflores Arenal Monumental Stone Sculpture [...]", 1983: 38, and Scott, *The Danzantes of Monte Albán*, 1978: 58).

Figure 2: Monte Albán danzante 55. From Bernal 1969: Plate 73 a

Figure 3: Dainzú ballplayer No. 11. From Bernal and Seuffert 1979: Fig. 9.

history of the Valley of Oaxaca and no longer a sequentially isolated and stylistically disassociated art historical 'first'.

Careful scrutiny of the complex of symbols on Monument 3 will also serve to strengthen our post-Rosario phase hypothesis. One symbolic element, the circle-and-triangle motif, occurs twice on the danzante and is known from other sites. On Monument 3 the circles appear on the main carved face and the triangles curve over onto one edge.

At La Venta this motif occurs incised on a serpentine pendant [Fig. 4]. It was found in the North Pavement area and apparently corresponds to a reoccupation some 200 or 300 years after the La Venta Olmec occupation (Drucker, Heizer and Squier 1959: 237), which would make it equivalent to periods Monte Albán I or II. Drucker, Heizer and Squier note that stylistically "the figure is not closely related to the Olmec art tradition as known from La Venta" (ibid.: 236). They also note its similarities with danzantes from Monte Albán.

In the Valley of Oaxaca the motif occurs on a shell ornament from Fábrica San José [Fig. 5] reported by Drennan (1976: Appendix IX Fig. 78 D). This example is cited by Flannery and Marcus (1983 a: 57) to support their claimed early date for the danzante.

The ornament comes from provenance A 111/Z 1 (area 3, zone 1) and is described by Drennan (1970: 229) as an "engraved ornament fragment probably of *Pinctada mazatlanica*". The ornament is about 4.5 cm long, and from Drennan's illustration it appears complete, not fragmentary. It has a tiny hole at the top of the circle or dot and appears to be a sequin perhaps to be sewn on a garment or work on a necklace. The location of the hole suggests the ornament was suspended vertically.

Drennan ascribes provenance A 111/Z 1 to the Late Guadalupe phase which comes just before the Rosario phase in the Valley of Oaxaca sequence. However, it is not clear why Drennan calls this a Late Guadalupe phase deposit, and examination of the date in his report raises some questions about the chronological placement. It evidently was not a 'pure' deposit since it was not selected for the initial seriation (Drennan 1976: 45). Outleaned wall gray ware bowls are well represented (Drennan 1976: Appendix III), and while they could be Guadalupe phase, the presence of incised decoration suggests a later period. Two of the attributes Drennan uses to define Rosario phase Socorro Fine Gray pottery also occur in period Monte Albán I: outleaned wall bowl rim form 10 (Drennan 1976: Fig. 28 j) and the incised hachure motif (Drennan 1976: Fig. 32 f). Sherds with these attributes occur in deposit A 111/Z 1 (Drennan 1976: Appendix III) whereas clear Rosario phase attributes such as the pennant motif and negative painting are absent. Thus while it is possible that the deposit and the features are Late Guadalupe phase, there was evidently some mixing with period Monte Albán I material. Shell ornaments, especially sequins with tiny holes like the one reported by Drennan, though of different shapes, are particularly common in period Monte Albán I contexts at the site of Monte Albán and the Fábrica San José ornament may well belong to period Monte Albán I.

The circle and triangle motif is also known from two sites in the Mixteca Alta region of Oaxaca. One example, mentioned by Flannery and Marcus (1983:

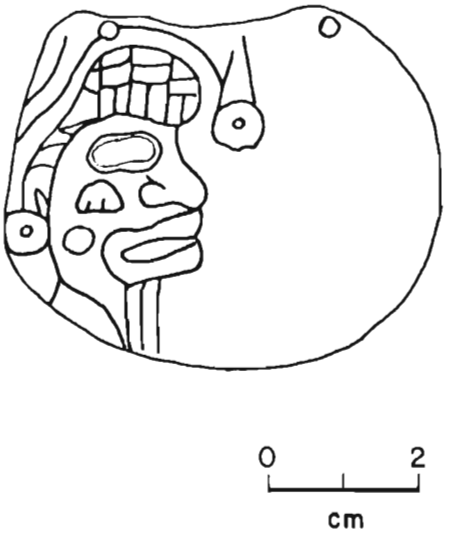

Figure 4: Serpentine pendant from La Venta with circle and triangle motif. From Drucker, Heizer, and Squier 1959: 237.

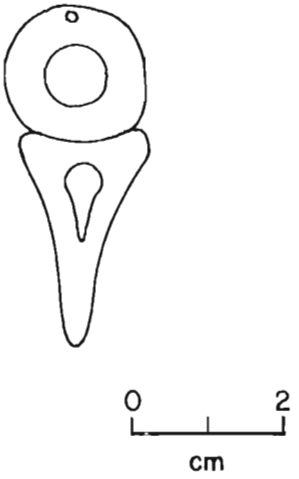

Figure 5: Shell ornament from Fábrica San José with circle and triangle motif. From Drennan 1976: Appendix IX, Fig. 78D.

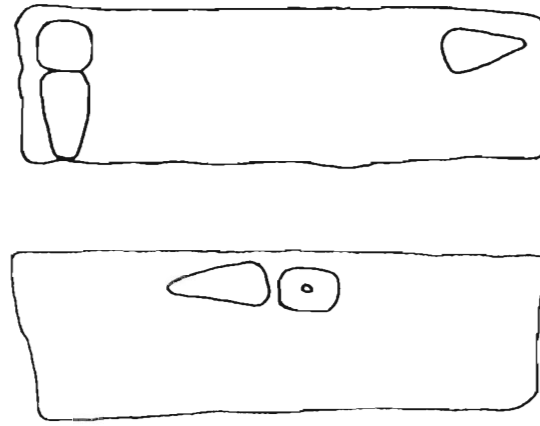

Figure 6: Carved step at Monte Negro with circle and triangle motif. Not to scale. From Acosta s. a.

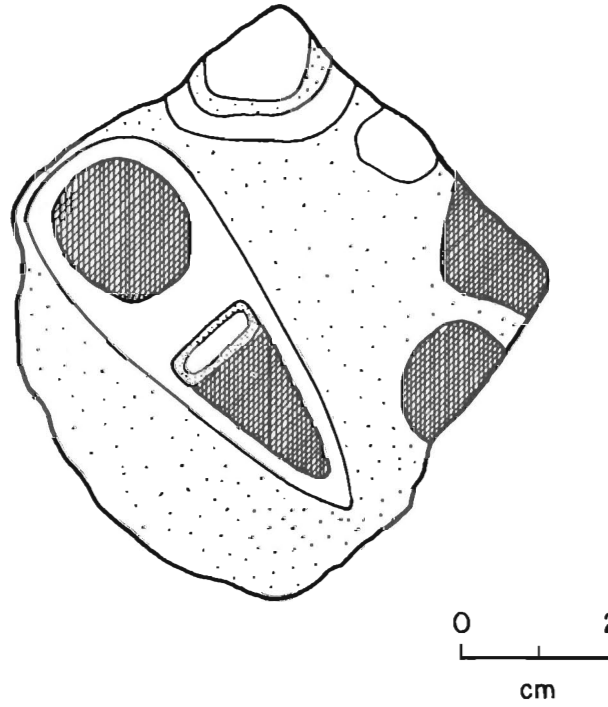

Figure 7: Stuccoed potsherd from Yucuita with circle and triangle motif. Hachured areas pinkish red, dotted areas white, and blank areas dark brown natural color of sherd.

58) is a carved step at Monte Negro (Acosta s. a.) [Fig. 6]. The structures at this site are Ramos phase which dates between 400 B. C. and A. D. 250 (Winter 1989: 117).

The circle and triangle motif also occurs on a sherd from the site of Yucuita [Fig. 7]. The motif is executed on red and white stucco on the exterior of a café ware bottle with indentations. Stuccoed vessels occur in the Late Ramos phase (100 B. C. - A. D. 250) in the Nochixtlan Valley and in period Monte Albán II (100 B. C. - A. D. 250) in the Valley of Oaxaca. The indented bottle is a good period Monte Albán II chronological marker in the Valley of Oaxaca.

In sum, both in the Valley of Oaxaca and in the Mixteca Alta, the circle and triangle motif occurs consistently in Late/Terminal Formative contexts, including Late Monte Albán I, Monte Albán II and Ramos phase. Although Flannery and Marcus attribute one example to the Guadalupe phase, the evidence is ambiguous and the piece may actually be of Monte Albán I date. No definite Middle Formative (Guadalupe or Rosario phase) examples have been reported.

The other critical symbolic element of Monument 3 is, of course, the elaborated triscroll (or trilobe) device spreading across the torso. While the iconographic significance of the circle and triangle motif has attracted little scholarly discussion, the triscroll independent of and in relation to Monument 3 has generated a considerable body of commentary. A survey of this literature provides not only an insight into the work's general content but important clues for its temporal setting.

Long prior to the discovery of Monument 3, Neys and von Winning (1946) organized a brief compendium of what they call the "treble scroll" in examples mostly derived from the regions of Teotihuacan and Oaxaca. Their rather random gathering offers little by way of chronological or archaeological specifics and their assertion that the "trilobe derives from the horizontal scroll hand and is also a sign relating to water" (Neys and von Winning 1946: 82) is not convincingly supported. In addition to their short catalogue of Oaxacan examples of the motif, they conclude by observing:

> It is interesting, however, to note that we find the treble scroll symbol on the Monticulo J at Monte Albán and that Caso [...] attributes it to the epoch of the Danzantes, or the one immediately following, thus showing its extreme antiquity and possible origin (ibid.).

In the context of a consideration of the coyote and jaguar painting of Classic Teotihuacan Atetelco, George Kubler (1972: 33) says, "Under the mouths of both creatures appear trilobed water signs [...] like those common in Oaxaca."[7] Clara Millon (1988: 217) has not only aligned herself with the interpretation of the trilobe as a symbol of the human heart, she actually brings into the consideration the San José Mogote danzante. Thus we read:

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7 This is an interpretation that Kubler reiterates in "Renascence and Disjunction in the Art of American Antiquity" (1985: 357). In the first cited essay (1972: 33) he rebuts Sejourné's contention that "this sign is a human heart".

> The trispiral was a sign shared by Monte Alban and Teotihuacan. At Teotihuacan it seems to mean flowing heart's blood and in any case referred to the heart. The sign may have a related meaning at Monte Albán. The scrolls representing the blood issuing from the sacrificed captive's chest on the San José Mogote carving form the pattern of a complex trispiral. Flannery and Marcus do not comment on the sign's meaning at Monte Albán. They point out that it seems to represent a sacrificed human heart at Teotihuacan (Flannery and Marcus 1983, 165). If the toponym should refer to Teotihuacan, the Zapotec may have named the city "the place of heart sacrifice" (ibid.).

Speaking directly to the issue of the trispiral as it appears in Preclassic Oaxaca, Gordon Whittaker asserts of Monte Albán's Mound J Tablet 44 [Fig. 8], "The trilobate element [...] is, I believe, a depiction of wind, air or breath, such as one finds departing from the mouths of canines and felines at Teotihuacan [...]. Accordingly, I suggest that the tablet names Mound J 'Place of Wind'" (Whittaker 1981: 59).

Subsequently in the same essay, Whittaker also sees as the "possible referent of the place-sign of Tablet 7, a trilobate element from which a liquid spouts. I have identified this element as wind, air or breath. Its more general sense, however, is 'vital essence' (*pèe, tini*), in which it echoes the mediaeval usage of English humour, the body fluids which control the spirit. On the Danzante of San José (del) Mogote [...] this element is carved over the chest of the sacrificial victim, and from it pours a stream of blood" (Ibid.: 60-61).

Despite areas of significant disagreement with both Millon and Whittaker formulations, their specific sacrificial exposition of the triscroll motif *as it concerns Monument 3* seems credible.[8]

As has been documented by Neys and von Winning (1946), the triscroll motif made its appearance in Oaxaca early and often. Nevertheless, aside from the contested Rosario dating for Monument 3, the example of the triscroll appended to Mound J (see above) most likely can be dated to Monte Albán II (Marcus 1983: 106). It is probable that a similar dating can be given to the several triscrolls found at Dainzú (Bernal and Oliveros 1989: 49). Most interesting among the uses made of the triscroll at Dainzú is in conjunction with the sumptuous and singular Stone 1 [Figs. 9 & 10] (Bernal and Seuffert 1979: Plate 2). In front of the richly garbed ballplayer is a complexly elaborated example of the triscroll motif. Although 'rotating' in a direction opposite of that found on Monument 3, the amplified version of the motif on Stone 1 is strikingly similar to that found on the San José Mogote danzante.

Particularly relevant to this comparison are the 'ribbonbands' (perhaps blood) flowing at an angle down to the left edges of the reliefs. The analogous but not formalistically parallel amplifications of the core triscrolls also bear

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8 Scott (1978: 69) says of the trilobate form, "The especially complex scrolls enclosing circles are not on the groin, as in the Groin Scroll group at Monte Albán, but on the torso, as if representing eviscerated intestines". The numerous and obviously symbolic uses of the triscroll motif argues against the device as merely descriptive.

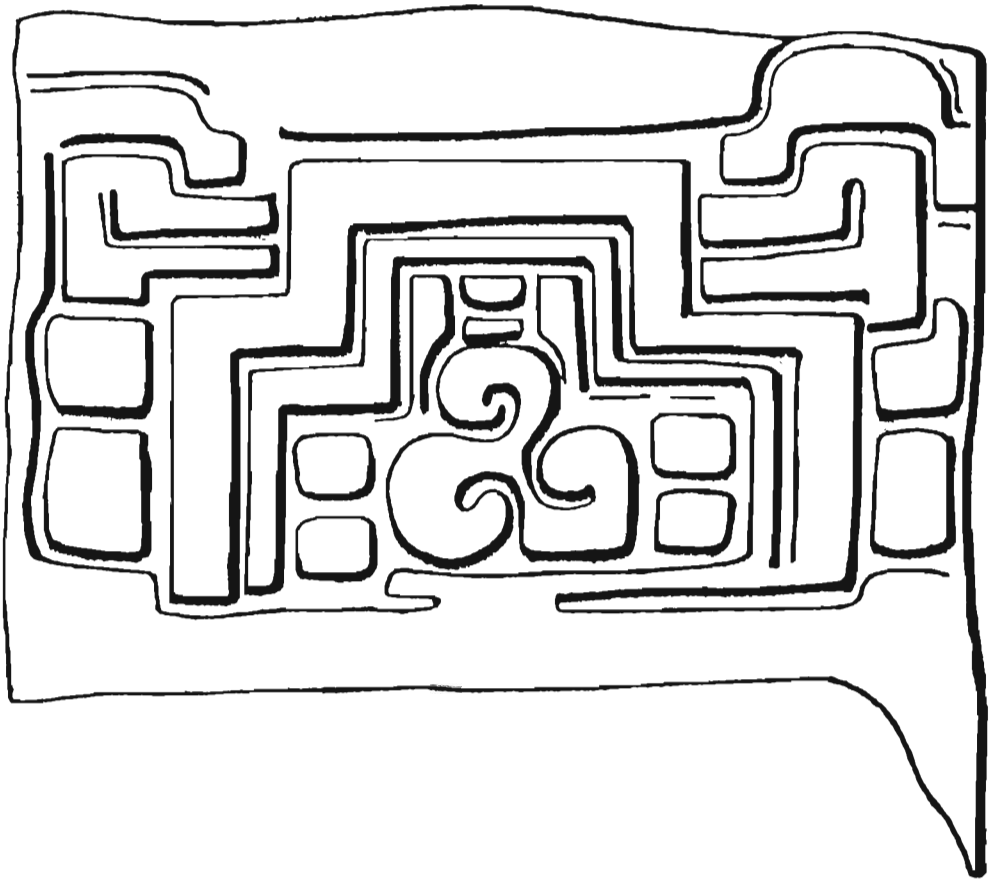

Figure 8: Trispiral motif on tablet 44, Mound J, Monte Albán. From Whittaker 1982: Fig. 65.

Figure 9: Dainzú, Oaxaca, Stone No. 1. From Bernal and Seuffert 1979: Plate 2.

a

b

Figure 10: Comparison of triscroll motif on (a) San José Mogote danzante and (b) Dainzú Stone No. 1; (a) from Marcus 1980a: 55; (b) from Bernal and Seuffert 1979: Plate 2.

comparison. In short, the expansive manifestations of the motif on both reliefs and the secure dating of the Dainzú ballplayer again strongly suggests a Monte Albán II date for the San José Mogote danzante.

If Monument 3 can, in fact, be situated in this late chronological environment, then it should be possible to reconcile it with what we know about San José Mogote during Monte Albán II. If, as is proposed here, the danzante was emulating a sculptural type long familiar from nearby Monte Albán, the figure may be part of a programmatic assertion of triumphal political imagery of the sort long associated with Monte Albán. As Flannery and Marcus note:

> After an apparent hiatus in public construction during Monte Albán I, San José Mogote seems to have been deliberately selected for development as a regional administrative center during Period II. Not only did the site enjoy a kind of renaissance, but as pointed out by Kowalewski [...] its rural hinterland seems to have enjoyed a significant population growth. [...] Perhaps most significantly, during Period II San José Mogote was made to look like a local carbon copy of Monte Albán. (Flannery and Marcus 1983 b: 111).

Similarly Hartung (1981: 46) notes that "during period Monte Albán II, there was a reverse influence, and the plaza at San José Mogote was arranged following the example of the large ceremonial center at Monte Albán".

Blanton's et al. (1981: 87) political reading of the changes occurring at San José Mogote during Monte Albán II seems consonant with the creation of sculptural work for the site. As he observes:

> Details of Period II architecture at San José Mogote [...] seem to bear out the rise in the power of local authorities. There, excavators discovered that the first substantial palace appeared in Period II, and that it stands on a plaza whose dimensions and structural arrangement closely copy the Main Plaza at Monte Albán. This elaboration of secondary centers occurring at the same time Monte Albán was actually declining in population, indicates that the lower-level elite had relatively more resources at its disposal. (Blanton et al. 1981: 87).

It seems plausible that San José Mogote's Monument 3 is intended as part of an ambitious civic programme to rival by echoing not only the architectural elements and disposition of Monte Albán but also the form and content of its sculpture. If Monument 3 is part of a scheme to coopt the triumphal iconography associated with Monte Albán, then we may expect to uncover more danzantes or even a danzante gallery-type structure at San José Mogote. Cognizant as we are that much of the town reflects the site disposition of Monte Albán, the unexplored (?) Mound 2 Ridge opposite the ballcourt (Flannery and Marcus 1983 b: 112, Fig. 4) might indeed be worth investigating in this context.

Our analysis of the San José Mogote danzante attempts to demonstrate several quite basic points: that the relief, as we have argued, is not an incanabulaic document of the Mesoamerican calendar or writing systems, that the relief as discovered was not in its originally vertical position, and that it dates toward

the end and not the beginning of the danzantes sequence. We have, we believe, carefully opposed our reasoning and evidence against what we would contend is the inadequate documentation and description by the excavators, Flannery and Marcus. We sense in their reiterated assertions about the relief's primacy a desire to have discovered something that is unique or a 'first'. Flannery (1968: 85) himself said several years before the discovery of the relief, "It is vain to hope for the discovery of the first domestic corn cob, the first pottery vessel, the first hieroglyphic, or the first site where some other major breakthrough occurred". To the degree that their conclusions have been accepted, we would contend that at the least the understanding of the epigraphic, calendric, artistic and political history of early Oaxaca have been significantly distorted.

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