AGATHE DUPEYRON, CHRIST'S COLLEGE

CHARACTERISING TERMINAL CLASSIC RITUAL IN THE MAYA LOWLANDS

Figure 1: Plaza A, Cahal Pech. Photograph: Jaime Awe.

AN ASSEMBLAGE OF FIGURINES AND OCARINAS FROM CAHAL PECH, BELIZE.

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This submission, in partial fulfilment of the regulations for the appropriate University Examinations, is all my own work. All sources published and unpublished are acknowledged and collaborative work is indicated where appropriate.

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ABSTRACT

In the Terminal Classic (AD 830–950), the Maya Lowlands of Mesoamerica underwent profound socio-political change, marked by the disruption of elite networks. To what extent did these changes affect the way Maya people understood their world?

This dissertation aims to characterise ritual responses in the Terminal Classic, by analysing twelve figurines, nine ocarinas and a flute from the site of Cahal Pech in Belize. The study shows that some of these artefacts were used in termination rituals, while others acted as offerings in a child burial. The subject matters, context and significance of these artefacts are then compared to similar assemblages in other sites of the Maya Lowlands: Jaina, Pook's Hill, Pacbitun, Cerro Palenque (Ulúa Valley) and Motul de San José. This contextualisation highlights significant similarities in subject matter across the region, but divergences in the local conditions of ritual practice. This leads to a discussion of the role of figurines and ocarinas in rituals as well as their social importance, which is informed by practice theory.

The wider scope of this study considers the extent to which ritual practices can resist to external change. The dissertation concludes that ritual was conservative in its main cosmological trends, but its expression varied locally and was influenced by the socio-political context.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Aim of the dissertation

Between c. AD 830 and 950, the Maya Lowlands of Mesoamerica underwent profound socio-political change: the networks of elite-governed city-states broke down, monumental construction ceased, population levels declined and trade all but stopped (Sharer 1994, 338). This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the 'Classic Maya Collapse', and its causes are highly debated and very complex. But **to what extent did these changes in social, economic, and political life affect the way Maya people understood their world?**

The aim of this study is to explore the ritual responses to change in this period, known as 'Terminal Classic' in archaeology (Figure 2). I will characterise ritual in the region by focusing on specific ceremonial activities at the site of Cahal Pech, in Belize, before comparing them to activities in other sites of the Maya Lowlands: Jaina, Pook's Hill, Pacbitun, Motul de San José and Cerro Palenque.

Figure 2: Chronological sequence for the Maya region. From Henderson 1997, xvii.

My study of Cahal Pech will focus specifically on two assemblages of ritual objects found excavated in 2002. In Plaza A, which used to be the main elite precinct of Cahal Pech, archaeologists discovered a late child burial cut into a collapsing building, as well as several midden-like concentrations of miscellaneous objects near the steps of structures A2 and A3 (Figure 3). From these two contexts, they recovered twelve ocarinas, nine figurines and a flute. I will compare the subject matter of these objects, the context in which they were found and their broader significance in relation to other similar assemblages. This will increase our understanding of ritual responses to change within this regional context.

Figure 3: 3D model of Cahal Pech (courtesy of Jaime Awe). The star shows the location of Plaza A and the corner in which ritual activities were found.

The wider scope of this study is to explore the nature of rituals: are they a conservative aspect of society or are they usually influenced by the local socio-political context? If the results of this analysis suggest that despite the breakdown of communications in the region, people still practiced rituals in a similar fashion, we can infer that ritual was a conservative aspect of society. On the other hand, if we find that there is little consistency in ritual practices after the end of political alliances and networks, then these activities were more likely to have been influenced by the dominant political discourse and therefore more susceptible to change after its demise.

Research questions

The first objective of this dissertation is to characterise the rituals at Cahal Pech, examining archaeological evidence from the figurines and ocarinas. To what types of ritual activity did they correspond? Is there a connection between the child burial and the deposits near the steps?

Second, I will place these rituals in their socio-political context. Who participated in these rituals? Were they conducted by the last elites on site, or by commoners returning to Cahal Pech after its abandonment?

Third, the results from Cahal Pech will be compared to other assemblages in the Maya Lowlands. Is there diversity in the ritual practices of the region, or continuity? What can this tell us more generally about the nature of ritual and how it reacts to significant socio-political change?

Site background

Figure 4 shows the location of Cahal Pech in Mesoamerica, in Belize and in relation to other sites in the Belize Valley. In the analysis, the figurines and ocarinas will be compared to five assemblages found in other Maya sites, the locations of which are also below.

Cahal Pech has been known since the 1950s, but the first major excavation project, led by Dr Jaime Awe, began in 1988 (Awe and Campbell 1989, 5). The site is still under excavation today.

Figure 4: Location of Cahal Pech and the main sites mentioned[1].

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[1] The Belize River was not included because of software incompatibility.

Theoretical perspective

This study is informed by practice theory, especially Bourdieu's insights on habitus (1977). The social conditions affect habitus, the generative principle of action (Bourdieu 1977, 78). People are influenced by their social milieu in all their actions, including ritual. However, Giddens adds that actors might also modify aspects of this social and physical context by their actions: this is the dialectic of structure and agency (1984, 5). People not only express the nature of their society by conducting rituals; they also shape it and transform it as actors. Rituals are therefore influenced by existing socio-political conditions, which have an impact on habitus, but these practices not just reflect the existing system. As Halperin and Faust argue, agency theory is a useful perspective to think about the role of figurines, which play a role in shaping the thoughts, behaviours and customs of people (2009, 11). The importance of practice will be highlighted throughout the argument.

In this dissertation, ritual is distinguished from religion by its active aspect: I define it here as beliefs in practice. The basis of archaeological analyses will be the study of activities involving figurines and ocarinas. Unlike beliefs, behaviours have a direct impact on the archaeological record, and this is what I aim to investigate with this work.

Structure of the argument

Chapter 2 will be an overview of previous work on the Terminal Classic in Cahal Pech and its region will be presented. Chapter 3 will review approaches on ritual in the Maya area, and outline the methods of the dissertation. Chapter 4 will present the data and the context in which the figurines and ocarinas were found. In Chapter 5, various hypotheses about ritual will be tested against the data, which will then be compared to other assemblages in the Maya Lowlands. Chapter 6 will discuss the significance of these results. Conclusions will be presented in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 2: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF TERMINAL CLASSIC CAHAL PECH

The Terminal Classic in the Belize Valley

The name 'Terminal Classic' designates the period from c. AD 830–950 (Demarest et al 2005, 3). It was first used to refer to a transitional ceramic phase corresponding to the 'Tepeu 3' style in the ceramic sequence of the site of Uaxactun, Guatemala (Smith 1955, 3), but was later extended to a temporal period commonly known as the 'Classic Maya Collapse'.

Most studies of the Terminal Classic have focused on the process of collapse and on change: archaeologists only started to study continuity and transitions in the 1970s and 1980s (Demarest et al 2005, 4). However, archaeological and anthropological studies showed that most aspects of Maya cultures persisted in complex Postclassic polities (AD 950–1531) and modern communities. This led to a change in the terminology employed: 'collapse' now refers primarily to the cessation of Late Classic political and economic systems, and not to the decline of the Maya as a whole (Demarest et al 2005, 6).

This political transition occurred at different moments of time in distinct regions, and the responses were variable[2]. But it is possible to outline the main characteristics of the Terminal Classic in the central and southern Lowlands. The construction of major administrative, residential and ceremonial structures ceased, as did the depictions of individual rulers on stelae and other artistic means (Sharer 1994, 338). Warfare and violence increased: some cities, such as Dos Pilas, were walled off (Hoggarth 2011, personal communication). The production and distribution of prestige items decreased, because of the weakening of elite networks (Sharer 1994, 338). However, arable land was still productive and people still cultivated the lands, although the population declined (Sharer 1988, 340).

This process of change was long, complex and gradual (Sharer 1994, 355). Each region possessed its own cycle of growth and decline, which led to an important regional variability (Marcus 1993).

Not much research has been conducted on the Terminal Classic in the Belize Valley, and it has often been described as a period in which village-level groups lived in and around abandoned urban centres (Aimers 2004, 305). Willey (1965, 578) described the phase as dominated by peasant populations in outlying communities. However, in recent years, Terminal Classic ceramics have been found in reused urban centres, such as Cahal Pech, or Baking Pot (Aimers 2004, 303).

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[2] The causes of the collapse were multiple, and they are highly debated by archaeologists.

Some characteristics across the region include a reduced population size, and a levelling of status (Aimers 2004, 307). However, unlike certain regions like the hinterland of Tikal in Guatemala, Belize did not experience a population 'crash' at the end of the 8th century AD (Webster 2002, 288). In some cases, local responses could even be successful: the site of Lamanai, for example, was continuously occupied from c.300 BC to AD 1675 (Webster 2002, 292). The presence of the Belize River as an axis for trade might explain why the Belize Valley was relatively less disrupted than its neighbours (Awe 2011, personal communication).

The Archaeology of Cahal Pech in the Terminal Classic.

Cahal Pech was a relatively small urban centre, consisting of a 11ha core, which corresponded to an extensive palace system and its outliers (Ball and Taschek 2001, 173–174). It has been described as a regal-residential centre inhabited by high-status groups (ibid, 174). A range of activities is documented on site: regal burial, ancestral veneration, royal audience and display, royal reception, as well as associated domestic and attendant activities (ibid).

Figure 5 shows the plan of the site: Plaza A, under study in this dissertation, was private with highly restricted access; while Plaza B was more open and public (Awe 2011, personal communication)[3].

Figure 5: Map of the monumental epicentre of Cahal Pech. Courtesy of Jaime Awe, BVAR Project.

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[3] Structure A2 closes off Plaza A, and only one door enables access to Plaza A from Plaza B (Awe 2011, personal communication).

Cahal Pech was occupied from c. 900 BC to the Terminal Classic (Awe and Campbell 1989, 30). The date of abandonment is uncertain. Awe and Campbell explain that occupation ceased shortly after 800 AD (1989, 32): the site was not able to compete economically, politically and militarily with the other major centres of Baking Pot, Xunantunich, Pacbitun and Buenavista del Cayo. However, this date is problematic. According to Ball, the last high-status royal occupants would have left the site as late as 900 AD (Ball 1993, 39). Ball bases his interpretation on the Western Ballcourt, built near Plaza A in the first half of the 9th century: despite its simplicity which shows a decrease in kingly authority, cessation of activity could not have occurred before its construction (Ball and Taschek 2001, 184). Burials, too, hint at a possible occupation after AD 800. At the top of structure B1, the burial of a woman has been dated to 800–900 AD, 'after major construction activity had ceased' by Schmidt (in Awe and Campbell 1989, 16). In structure B4, another female burial was found a few centimetres below the surface, after the final construction layer; this person could have been buried there by people still living in the vicinity of Cahal Pech (Awe and Campbell 1989, 22). However, this dating is ambiguous since she was found with a Late Classic polychrome vessel.

Despite the uncertainty of the archaeological record, a consensus was reached and presented to the public in the visitors' centre: the site was abandoned towards the end of the 9th century AD. According to Awe, who has been site director for more than 20 years, no further architectural activities are attested in the 10th century; however he has shown that there were attempts to reoccupy the settlement or to conduct ceremonies within Plaza A (personal communication). These ritual activities are the focus of this dissertation.

For this study, I accept that the site's architectural activities ceased in the first half of the 9th century, and that the majority of its population (servants, retainers, craft specialists and most of the elite) had left by c. 900 AD.

The dating of the assemblages under study has been ascertained by stratigraphic comparison. Indeed, in 2002, excavations in Plaza H revealed a tomb constructed out of the scavenging of stones from the Late Classic structure H1: Awe and his team assigned a Terminal Classic date for this tomb and its associated materials (Awe 2011, personal communication). These late vessels displayed the same characteristics as the ones found in the midden-like deposit around the stairs of structures A2 and A3, and the child burial in structure A3 (ibid). The assemblages can therefore be securely dated to the Terminal Classic, after construction work had ceased. They probably date to the second half of the 9th century or the 10th century AD.

CHAPTER 3: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF MAYA RITUALS: PREVIOUS WORK AND METHODS

Literature review

Most studies of rituals in the Maya Lowlands emphasize the continuity of practices and beliefs over time: regardless of the time period they focus on, they underline fundamental Mesoamerican cosmological principles. One of them is the concept of soul: places and things created by the gods already have one, but human-made places, buildings and objects need to be given one during dedication ceremonies (Freidel, Schele, Parker 1993, 234). Conversely, when an object or structure is no longer used, this living force becomes potentially dangerous, and has to be contained or released in special termination rituals in order to protect the community (ibid). Termination rituals, by sealing a structure, ensured its ritual cleansing to enable future uses (Wagner 2006, 64). Dedication and termination rituals were usually repeated cyclically for each new addition to a structure, and could be timed to occur on meaningful days of the year, or in correspondence with astronomical events (Freidel and Schele 1989, 236). They involved a range of practices including offerings and sacrifices of humans and animals, but were also the occasion for communal feasts, dances, ball games and other events (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993, 234).

The setting of these rituals was meaningful: Maya architecture often represented elements of a sacred natural geography: mountains, caves, rocks and water sources (Fernández Souza 2006, 28). The physical arrangement of buildings channelled the movements and experiences of the actors (Joyce and Weller 2007, 152). Some of these elements could act as portals between this world and the sacred ones (ibid, 29). In fact, the significance of the settings was increased by the repetition of ritual practices in the same place across generations (Joyce and Pollard 2010, 307). The process of deposition itself made a place sacred; indeed, the repetition of highly formalised activities through time led to the creation of enduring patterns of rituals (ibid). In this light, Plaza A in Cahal Pech might have been considered a sacred space in shared memory.

Rituals metaphorically linked structures to human lives: ethnographic studies such as Van Gennep's work in 1972 have shown that these rituals were analogous to rites of passage (Mock 1988, 9). In fact, the study of depositional histories and ritual events over time gives archaeologists an idea of the life history of the structure (Walker and Lucero 2000).

The work of Hendon and Lopiparo in the Ulúa Valley has highlighted the social role of rituals, enabling the maintenance of social identity by the engagement of human and non-human actors (2009, 65). According to them, rituals were also analogous to practices of planting, cooking and eating, and enabled the reproduction of life itself (2009, 68).

In spite of these general characteristics, dedication and termination rituals were affected by institutional change and diversity can be seen through time (Freidel and Schele 1989, 243). The forms, contexts, and placement of offerings also vary depending on the geographical area, as do the boundaries between dedication and termination (Mock 1988, 6). Moreover, the study of Terminal Classic rituals in the Ulúa Valley has shown that their range expanded beyond these two types, and several activities remain uncharacterised by archaeologists (Hendon and Lopiparo 2009, 62)[4]. This will be taken into account during the analysis and the comparisons with other sites.

These insights about the archaeology of Cahal Pech in the Terminal Classic and the main characteristics of Maya rituals will inform the analysis of the assemblage under study.

Understanding the problematic deposits of Plaza A: Methods

In order to understand the significance of the artefacts under study, but also if they represent continuity or change in ritual activities of the Terminal Classic as opposed to previous periods, we need to examine in what contexts they were used. The following hypotheses will be tested.

1. *In what type of context were the caches created?*

-the artefacts were used during termination rituals

-the artefacts were used during dedication rituals

-the artefacts were deposited in the context of de facto abandonment or refuse

2. *Is there a connection between the caches and the child burial? Were they generated by the same people?*

3. *Were the caches and the child burial created by the last elites on site or by visitors post-abandonment?*

4*. Are these activities typical in the Maya Lowlands? Do we see continuity or change across the region following the breakdown of political control?*

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[4] A discussion of Hendon and Lopiparo (2009)'s work will be found in the Analysis section. Cerro Palenque in the Ulúa Valley is indeed one of the sites used in comparison to Cahal Pech.

To test the nature of the caches, we will have to look for the characteristics of termination and dedication rituals, as well as refuse.

Mock defines **termination** actions as 'the defacement, mutilation, breaking, burning, or alteration of portable objects (such as pottery, jade, stone tools), sculptures, stelaes or buildings. They may involve the alteration, destruction, or obliteration of specific parts; the moving of objects such as stelae or the scattering of their broken pieces, and even the razing and burial of a monumental structure before new construction' (Mock 1988, 5). In the Preclassic, termination was also characterised by the sealing of the structure in a layer of white stucco (Wagner 2006, 55); however it is problematic to assume that this will be seen in the Terminal Classic.

In **dedication** events, objects were whole rather than broken (Freidel and Schele 1989, 239) and floors and walls could be replastered to convey a sense of renewal (Walker and Lucero 2000, 139). These rituals were also connected to the construction of new buildings, and items of value such as jade or shell ornaments are often deposited (Mock 1988, 5).

As Clayton et al explain (2005, 123), vessels were smashed and scattered in termination rituals: we should be able to reconstruct whole vessels, whereas in the case of **discard** accumulated over long periods this would not necessarily be possible.

Therefore, I will conduct analyses on the aforementioned assemblages, looking at the following signs: if the artefacts are entire or broken, if there are signs of burning or destruction, what types of objects they are associated with, and their relation to their archaeological context.

To test whether the midden-like deposits and the child burial are connected, I will analyse the contexts and the nature of the objects found, and compare them.

To test whether variation can be observed on a regional scale, I will compare this assemblage to similar ones across the Belize Valley and beyond.

CHAPTER 4. DESCRIPTION OF THE OCARINAS AND FIGURINES

Figurines and ocarinas from Cahal Pech: form and function

The primary data of this dissertation consists of two assemblages of ceramic objects, found in two separate archaeological contexts. The objects comprise twelve figurines, nine ocarinas and a flute. A detailed catalogue of these artefacts can be found in the appendix.

Context of the finds

Location	Number of figurines	Number of ocarinas	Number of flutes
Cache, structure A2	9	6	
Cache, structure A3	1	1	
Child burial, structure A3	2	2	1

Table 1: Distribution per location of the artefacts under study.

The assemblage under study was found in two contexts, in Plaza A: a midden-like deposit and the grave of a child (Awe 2011 personal communication).

The midden-like concentrations were found on the plaza floor around the central stairway of structure A3, on the stairs, and along the internal edge of structures A2 and A3 (ibid). These deposits are often referred to as caches, which designate a group of artefacts intentionally buried or deposited in a specific location intended as an offering[5]. In the remainder of this study, they will be referred to as **caches**.

Figure 6: Dense midden-like deposit found along the edges of structures A2 and A3.
Photograph by Jaime Awe.

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[5]Definition of 'cache' found in the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (BVAR) Field School reader.

The figurines and ocarinas' labels distinguish between structure A2 and A3, but the distinction between them may be an arbitrary one. It will be kept in this study because the figurines are categorised by context (A2 or A3). However, the caches occupied a wide zone horizontally, in front of both structures, and these deposits overlapped. Figure 6 gives an idea of what the caches looked like as archaeologists excavated them, and of the ambiguity of delimitations.

These caches contained an important array of ceramic objects, including whole and fragmented vessels, spindle whorls, but also chert tools, and even a deer antler (Awe 2011, personal communication)[6].

The **child burial** was found in Room 2, structure A3 (see Figure 7). It was cut into a bench, and its location is close to the caches along the edges of structures A2 and A3. It contained the skeleton of a child[7], several ceramic vessels in a good state of preservation, two figurines, two ocarinas and an elaborate flute (see Figure 8).

Figure 7: Excavation of the child burial, room 2, structure A3. Photograph by Jaime Awe.

Awe, who excavated both contexts, said that they displayed similarities and both ceramic assemblages could be dated to the Terminal Classic[8] (2011, personal communication).

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[6] The accompanying artefacts cannot be quantified in this dissertation. The author has heard about them in a personal communication with Jaime Awe, but no data has been published on them.
[7] The age/sex of the child are undetermined.
[8] Awe encouraged the author to analyse both assemblages, since he thought that they were likely to date from the same period and a related sequence of deposition.

Figure 8: Child burial during and after excavation. Photographs: Jaime Awe.

Methods of production

The majority of the figurines and ocarinas were moulded. A thin layer of clay was applied to the mould to form the figurine, and a thin sheet of clay joined the edges (Corsen 1976, 145). The consequences of this production method are that the degree of contouring and the depth of detail were shallower; asymmetric postures became rarer, and more standing postures are observed (Corsen 1976, 146). These characteristics correspond to the Cahal Pech assemblage, as can be seen in Table 2 (below) and in the rest of the collection (Appendix).

As for ocarinas, the front parts were also probably moulded (Lopiparo and Hendon 2009, 60) while the chambers were modelled around smooth clay spheres (ibid).

Subject matter

The figurines and ocarinas represent a variety of subjects. Table 2 makes these subjects explicit and gives examples from the assemblages. The examples are labelled: CP stands for Cahal Pech, A2 or A3 gives the context, Rm2 Br1 is the site code for the child burial, L1 means Level 1, a stratigraphic subdivision, and the three-digit number is the artefact code[9].

Anthropomorphic – undetermined sex CP A2 L1 428	Anthropomorphic– woman CP A2 L1 450	Anthropomorphic – old person CP A2 L1 422	Anthropomorphic – woman and baby CP A2 L1 451
Anthropomorphic – possible Fat God CP A2 L1 433	Anthropomorphic – elite or divinity CP A3 Rm2 Br1 421	Anthropomorphic– grotesque CP A3 Rm2 Br1 419	Zoomorphic– bird CP A2 L1 430
Zoomorphic– canine CP A3 L1 426	Anthropomorphic or zoomorphic or supernatural CP A3 Rm2 BR1 420	Floral design CP A2 Rm2 BR1 (Flute)	No representation CP A3 Br1 412

Table 2: Subject matter of the figurines and ocarinas by category (with specific examples).

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[9] More information on the specific artefacts identified in each type can be found in the Appendix.

Category	In cache: Ocarinas	In cache: Figurines	In Child Burial: music instruments	In Child Burial: Figurines
Anthropomorphic – undetermined sex		5		
Anthropomorphic – woman	1	2		
Anthropomorphic – old person		1		
Anthropomorphic – woman and baby		1		
Anthropomorphic – possible Fat God	1	1		
Anthropomorphic –elite or divinity				1
Anthropomorphic- grotesque				1
Zoomorphic – bird	2			
Zoomorphic – canine	1			
Anthropomorphic or zoomorphic or supernatural	2		1	
Floral design			1 (flute)	
No representation		1		

Table 3: Distribution of the figurines and ocarinas in the assemblage per subject matter.

The subject matters differ in the caches and in the child burial (Table 3)[10]. The cache is heavily dominated by realistic anthropomorphic representations, as well as zoomorphs, while the burial presents ambiguous depictions of elites, gods, grotesques or supernatural beings.

Significance and context of use

It is difficult to understand the ritual use of figurines when we have lost the context associated with them: the ritual participants, the audience, the ritual location, the purpose of the ritual, the span of time, and the series of associated actions such as the dances, the music, or the smells (Marcus 2009, 45). In the case of Cahal Pech, we know where the figurines and ocarinas came from and which materials they were associated with, which will enable us to perform an analysis, albeit partial.

According to Awe, who has conducted excavations at Cahal Pech since 1988, the caches along the edges of structures A2 and A3 may represent termination rituals conducted by people who attempted to reoccupy parts of the site, or came back for the sake of these rituals (2011, personal communication). In his opinion, the child burial was also orchestrated by these people, and corresponds to a mortuary ceremony. In order to test the hypotheses outlined in the previous chapter, we need to study the use of these artefacts and consider the material trappings of various types of rituals in the region.

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[10] See interpretation below (Chapter 5).

CHAPTER 5. ANALYSIS

Significance of the caches on the edges of structures A2 and A3

To determine what types of ritual activity created the deposits observed, we will have to test whether the assemblage shows traces of breaking, burning or other forms of alteration, if the objects can be reconstructed, and if the presence of white marl or stucco can be detected.

Signs of breakage

Most figurines and ocarinas are broken. In fact, only two ocarinas are complete (Figure 9), and a third one is ambiguous (Figure 10). Indeed, this ocarina depicting a woman may well have been designed to function as a head without a body[11]. There is no clear breakage pattern at the bottom, but there could have been another chamber.

Figure 9: CP A3 L1 426 (left) and CP A2 L1 433 are the only complete ocarinas.

Figure 10: CP A2 L1 423.

Interestingly, the surviving bits of broken ocarinas or figurines are either bodiless heads or headless bodies. This hints at the potential significance and meaning of faces in the context in which these artefacts were used.

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[11] The author's photographs do not show the bottom of the ocarina in great detail, since they were taken in poor conditions in the field. For a greater discussion of the wholeness of this ocarina, please refer to its entry in the catalogue (Appendix).

The occurrence of breakage along the neckline supports the hypothesis that these artefacts were used during rituals, as if they were symbolically beheaded: this seems closer to termination than dedication. Beheading the figurines could 'kill' their souls. It does not seem that the breaks occurred after deposition. Indeed, none of these figurines have been reconstructed, indicating that the missing parts were not found.

Signs of burning

Four ocarinas exhibit partial traces of burning (Figure 11).

Figure 11: CP A2 L1 423, 429, 433 and 427 (left to right).

However, this occurs for four artefacts out of seventeen found in the caches along the edges of structures A2 and A3. It seems more likely that these traces of burning occurred while the ocarinas were fired. This does not support the hypothesis of termination.

Presence of whole vessels

Figure 12: Reconstructed vessel found in a cache on Plaza A, Cahal Pech. Photograph: Jaime Awe.

Many of the pots can be reconstructed (Awe personal communication), as seen in Figure 12[12]. This challenges their interpretation as garbage or displaced ritual deposits (Clayton et al 2005, 123): indeed, all sherds would not necessarily be found in the same archaeological context, as they would have been brushed aside.

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[12] This photograph was given to the author by Jaime Awe, unfortunately without a scale.

Although they can be reconstructed, the vessels were first smashed on location. This seems to be consistent with the hypothesis of ritual termination, and stands in a stark contrast to the child burial, in which vessels were recovered whole.

Presence of a layer of white marl/stucco

There is no record that plaster layers were recovered during excavation, but this might be due to the paucity of information rather than the nature of the archaeology on site. Photographs from the child burial, on the other hand, exhibit a clear white layer, which implies that the burial was sealed.

It does not seem that the caches were recovered by white stucco, but that time gradually covered them in earth and humus. However, this does not disprove the hypothesis of termination, since the process of replastering has mainly been documented for the Preclassic, and historical continuity cannot be assumed for such a long time span.

Significance: synthesis

The hypothesis of dedication seems disproved: no whole vessels were recovered during excavation, and there is no evidence for the construction of new architectural structures or plaster floors after deposition.

The hypothesis of garbage is seriously challenged since whole vessels can be reconstructed from the sherds, and many of the artefacts seem to be still functional (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Chert tools found in the caches along the edges of structures A2 and A3. Photograph: Jaime Awe.

The hypothesis of termination seems most well supported, since smashed vessels were found on location, as well as 'beheaded' figurines and ocarinas. It seems to fit with the idea that the soul of this place needed to be sealed, or killed. There is no evidence for burning, but considering the variability and local character of rituals, it is not surprising that they can deviate from the canon.

Connection with the child burial

Unlike the caches, the figurines and ocarinas found in association with the child burial exhibit no signs of burning, and the vessels recovered were whole.

The artefacts are markedly different in terms of manufacture. Indeed, they show traces of red and blue pigments, indicating that they were painted. They also seem more elaborate: the details visible in Figure 14 are not seen in the artefacts of the caches. The presence of blue pigments in all five artefacts studied and the degree of elaboration indicate consistency in the methods of production. It is possible that all five artefacts were crafted by the same person or group.

Figure 14: CP A3 Rm2 BR1 420 exhibits blue and red paint, and an elaboration in details.

The subject matters are also distinctive. One of the artefacts represents an elite individual with an impressive headdress; another one (Figure 14) represents an ambiguous being which could be anthropomorphic, zoomorphic or supernatural. I find resemblance with a turkey figurine found at San José Motul (Figure 15), but it could also have represented a human being since it has earplugs and is holding a vessel, or even supernatural. The last figurative artefact represents a grotesque being, possibly a dwarf (Figure 16). The other two artefacts under study are a non-representative ocarina and a flute with floral designs. These themes contrast with the ones encountered in the caches and seem to reflect Maya cosmology and beliefs instead of being a life-like depiction of individuals.

Figure 15: Figurine representing a turkey found at Motul de San José. Drawing by Ingrid Seyb in Halperin 2007, 49.

Figure 16: CP A3 Rm2 Br1 L2 419 represents a human being with grotesque features, possibly a Maya dwarf.

The vessels encountered in the grave were found whole, unlike the ones found in the cache. This indicates that the child was not sacrificed as part of a termination ritual. Because the grave was cut from a pre-existing structure, and nothing else was built on top of it, it does not seem that the burial is associated with dedication either.

In sum, this event seems to be disconnected to the caches along the edges of structures A2 and A3. The quality of the materials is better and the methods of production are more consistent: they might have been commissioned by high status individuals and crafted by specialists.

Since the materials accompanying the child were whole, it seems that they were intended as mortuary offerings and not as sacrifices. If the child was placed in room 2 as a sacrifice, a new structure would have been built. Instead, it seems that the burial was cut from the collapsing building, to provide a space for the dead. In Fernández Sousa's analysis of mortuary cults at Chichen Itza (2006, 30), people who died naturally were placed in their homes but they could be interred in special buildings if they had an elite status: I think this is probably what happened in that case.

Who created the caches and the child burial? Results of the analysis

There is constancy in the production methods used for the figurines and ocarinas in the child burial. On the other hand, the artefacts found in the caches along the edges of structures A2 and A3 are dissimilar, and cruder. The pastes used have various colours including orange, dark orange, beige and white. This implies that the cache figurines were not all created together. They might have been brought together from different locations, or created from several types of clay by various individuals. It is also possible that the caches observed represent a sequence of deposition over long periods of time, which means that the artefacts could correspond to various ritual events. All these elements suggest that the cache assemblages were created by non-elite people visiting the site after abandonment, who believed that Plaza A was appropriate to conduct rituals. It was perhaps vested with sacred power.

The child burial displays different types of artefacts, which exhibit consistency. The child was buried with elaborate materials including painted ocarinas and figurines with a connection to Maya cosmology, and whole vessels. My interpretation is that this mortuary ceremony might have been orchestrated by the last elites on site, shortly before it was abandoned. Indeed, the burial was cut in a collapsing building (Awe 2011 personal communication).

However, the figurines and ocarinas deposited in the caches of Plaza A might have been gradually deposited over time, by villagers visiting the monumental epicentre. As we have seen, the smashing of functional vessels implies that a form of termination rituals was conducted, but it is possible that other types of rituals also took place: various activities could generate the same archaeological patterning.

The two contexts under study seem to stem from two disconnected events: a sequence of rituals including termination for the caches, and a mortuary ceremony for the child burial. It seems likely that the mortuary ceremony was conducted by elite people while the rituals on the plaza edges were conducted by later visitors to the site.

Comparison with other sites

The ritual activities at Cahal Pech in the Terminal Classic, and the contexts in which figurines and ocarinas were used have now been identified.

To what extent are they characteristic of the Terminal Classic in the region, and are these activities consistent over the Maya Lowlands?

Figure 17: Location of Cahal Pech and the other sites under analysis.

Terminal Classic figurines: continuity and change

Halperin's work in the Petén region (see Figure 17) enabled her to distinguish between Late Classic and 'diagnostic' Terminal Classic figurines.

In most cases continuity can be seen in size, manufacture, paste and iconography (Halperin 2011, personal communication). However, in some of the sites still occupied in the Terminal Classic, new ceramic forms appeared, indicating gradual changes in visual culture and household rituals. The emphasis shifted to the depiction of long hair, often parted at the centre,

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and in which individual strands were visible; simpler clothes and ornaments; a bigger size; and tubular nose ornaments (ibid). These characteristics existed in the Late Classic, but became more prominent in the Terminal Classic.

The figurines and ocarinas from Cahal Pech seem to fit within this pattern. Some of them exhibit typical Terminal Classic features such as the depiction of hair, and the increased size[13] (Figure 18). None of them show signs of tubular nose ornaments. The subject matters express continuity with the Late Classic, since similar depictions are found: women with broad brimmed hats, old people with wrinkled faces, and supernatural beings among others (ibid).

Figure 18: CP A2 L1 451 exhibits incised hair strands and an increased size.

As we can see, Cahal Pech seems to fit well within the wider regional pattern as defined by Halperin: some of its artefacts show signs of continuity with the past while others show traces of change, which is the situation elsewhere in the Lowlands.

Context of use and significance of figurines and ocarinas: a regional view

I have chosen to compare five sites[14] to Cahal Pech to provide a regional framework for the ritual use of figurines and ocarinas in the Terminal Classic Maya Lowlands (Table 4).

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[13] Further discussion of these characteristics and of the individual artefacts in which they are seen can be found in the appendix.

[14] The priorities for choosing sites were A) a Terminal Classic date B) the presence of figurines and ocarinas and C) their geographical location. The number of sites chosen was determined by the literature that the author could access.

	Date	Sample	Themes	Social status	Context
Cahal Pech	Terminal Classic	24 figurines and ocarinas	Religious (fat gods, dwarfs), also common life, animals	Caches: non elite. Burial: potentially elite.	Termination rituals and a burial
Jaina	Late and Terminal Classic (starting at AD 650)	500 figurines and ocarinas	Religious mythology, themes from the Popol Vuh	Not restricted to the elite but highly elaborate	Mortuary (necropolis)
Pook's Hill	Terminal Classic	39 ocarinas	Birds, canines and bats, humans, babies	Probably non elite	A shrine (eastern structure) A feasting hall (western structure)
Pacbitun	Late and Terminal Classic	5 flutes and 8 'figurine-ocarinas' in the Terminal Classic grave	Religious associated with death (fat god, woman holding a water lily)	Elite	Mortuary (elite burials)
Motul de San José	Late and Terminal Classic	2,800 figurines	Religious (fat gods, dwarfs), women with broad-brimmed hats, warriors	Both elite and non-elite figurines were found.	Residential and elite
Cerro Palenque	Terminal Classic	2018 figurines and 440 moulds	Supernaturals, Animals and human-beings	Non elite. The figurines were found in commoner compounds.	Residential (and ritual)

Table 4: Comparison of six assemblages of figurines and ocarinas, and the contexts in which they were found.

Jaina

Although Jaina is situated far from Cahal Pech (Figure 17), the figurines and ocarinas found in this necropolis represent the artistic canon of the Early and Late Classic[15]. In the first phase, the ceramics correspond to realistic hand modelled figurines. The Terminal Classic corresponds to the later phase and its mould-made figurines (Corson 1976, 3).

These figurines are far more elaborate than the ones seen in Cahal Pech (Figure 19). This can be explained by Jaina's location in Northern Yucatan, which did not experience the same type of social and political pressures as the Southern Lowlands (Hoggarth 2011 personal communication): the elite levels of society were retained and the population increased. As Miller explains (1975, 60), the figurines and ocarinas found at Jaina do not correspond to simple folk art and are complex depictions of Maya iconography. Because they are highly sophisticated, they seem to differ from the figurines and ocarinas found in the caches of Plaza A.

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[15] This site was suggested by Jaime Awe as a starting point to work on figurines and ocarinas.

Figure 19: A figurine from Jaina Group L (b). Similarities can be seen with CP A2 433 (Figure 9).
Source: Corson 1976, 192.

The attraction exerted by Jaina as a pilgrimage site and a holy place to bury the dead may explain the degree of elaboration of its figurines. There was probably a high demand to be buried on such a meaningful site, which explains why archaeologists primarily find fine burials there.

Despite being from the same period, these figurines stand in stark contrast to the Cahal Pech artefacts and show that the diversity of political situations at this time led to a variety of responses in material culture.

Pook's Hill

The assemblage consists of 39 ocarinas from the main plazuela of the site. (Forbes 2003,4). Most of these ocarinas are zoomorphic: owls, crested avians, canines, bats (ibid, 35−36). However seven anthropomorphic ocarinas were also found, representing adults holding babies or humans with feathered headdresses (ibid, 36). There is a correlation between the decoration of the ocarinas and their attributes, including the number of tonal holes, the nature of the window and the number of feet (ibid, 33).

These ocarinas correspond to the last phase of occupation of the site and were found in discrete middens (ibid, 57). Most of them were in secondary contexts: they were displaced. However it is likely that 19 of them were associated with the Western structure of the Plazuela, which was a feasting hall (ibid, 65−66), and 27 of them with the Eastern structure, which was the primary focus of ritual activities (ibid, 67−69). Therefore, these ocarinas may correspond to ritual activities in the last phase of the site's occupation, like the Cahal Pech ones. These artefacts do not seem to be associated to elite activities, and some of them may have been used as termination deposits, in a similar context to the Cahal Pech ones.

Pacbitun

The site of Pacbitun was abandoned in the 10th century AD (Healy 1990, 247), but the figurines and ocarinas studied come from two elite burials that shortly predate abandonment and are both situated in Plaza A, the monumental and ceremonial centre of the site (Healy 1988, 28).

In these burials, several music instruments were found including five flutes and eight 'figurine-ocarinas'. Healy hints at the possible use of the figurine-ocarinas as toys (1988, 27). Subject matters include a fat god, a woman holding a lily, which both seem to be associated with death, but also males with elaborate headdresses (ibid, 28). These themes correlate with the Cahal Pech ones but seem to be more oriented towards the realistic depiction of elite life and beliefs (ibid, 29).

The flutes really resemble the Cahal Pech one: they have a small globular sounding chamber too, as well as a flaring distal end modelled in the shape of a flower (ibid, 30).

It seems that strong elite activity was retained in Terminal Classic Pacbitun, in contrast to Cahal Pech. As Healy explains, the use of exotic materials and the overall quality of craftsmanship decline in the Terminal Classic but the overall number of offerings increases (1990, 256): this means that although the inhabitants of the site and its elites felt the pressures of the time, they invented local responses to face these challenges. Although the socio-political situation and the context of use differ from Cahal Pech, the artefacts illuminate our understanding of the role of music in Maya rituals[16].

Motul de San José

The figurines from Motul de San José are primarily from the Late Classic and Terminal Classic period (Halperin 2007, 11). Like the ones found at Cahal Pech, they were mould made, (ibid, 12) and similar types of subject matters are found: women with broad-brimmed hats, women with centre-parted hair tied with a cinta or hair cloth, women with stepped-hair cuts with incised head bands and tassels (ibid, 24). A few ruler figures with fan-shaped or war serpent headdress are found, which remind of CP A3 BR1 Rm2 L2 421 (Figure 20).

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[16] This role will be further explored in the discussion.

Figure 20: CP A2 Rm2 Br1 L2 421 depicts a ruler, which is also one of the themes found in the Motul de San José figurines.

Supernatural figures such as dwarves, fat gods or humans with animal attributes are also in the assemblage, similarly to Cahal Pech (ibid, 34 and 44). Zoomorphic figures are also found: birds, dogs, jaguars, monkeys and owls among others (ibid 48).

The main difference with Cahal Pech is the size of the assemblage, much bigger in the case of Motul de San José (Table 4). The artefacts from Motul were found in four dense middens and the production seems to stem from the elite core of the site (Halperin 2007, 60).

However, as Halperin points out, it is difficult to differentiate between Late and Terminal Classic figurines on site because they often exhibit similar characteristics (2011, 2). Therefore, it is difficult to trace political changes in the production of ceramics: we do not know whether all the ruler depictions come from the Late Classic, for instance. Halperin explains that households are more traditional and impermeable to change than the state (ibid, 1): the continuity displayed on the Motul site highlights the conservative nature of rituals. However, she acknowledges that a diagnostic Terminal Classic style gradually developed (ibid).

The Ulúa Valley[17] and Cerro Palenque

Lopiparo and Hendon's study (2009) focuses on five Terminal Classic sites situated around Cerro Palenque in Honduras. The figurines under study come from residential compounds, including a large patio group near the southern end of the Great Plaza of Cerro Palenque (Lopiparo and Hendon 2009, 52) and multiple broad earthen rises called *lomas*, built up over the years by the accumulation of living floors (ibid, 55). The context is hence that of

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[17] This site is situated some distance away from Cahal Pech but was an interesting comparison for my analysis because of the insights developed by Lopiparo and Hendon, and their thorough analysis of a Terminal Classic phenomenon.

household and community activities at the domestic level, unlike Cahal Pech in which the artefacts were found in a ceremonial plaza.

A range of subject matters is found: both figurines and ocarinas can be anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, both or neither (ibid, 61). However, representations of animals are often associated with ocarinas. This phenomenon is not observed at Cahal Pech: only three ocarinas are unambiguously zoomorphic.

The figurines were locally produced and incorporated into localised practices associated with the reproduction of social identities (ibid, 61). In fact, these rituals involved the intentional smashing, burning and breaking of artefacts in front of platform, which corresponds closely to the type of activities observed at Cahal Pech[18].

Ritual activities in the regional context

The analysis of these five sites shows the widespread use of figurines and ocarinas in ritual and mortuary contexts across the Maya region, even during the Terminal Classic transition. Similarities in the subject matter are seen: women with broad-brimmed hats, dwarves or fat gods for example. However the methods of production differ, reflecting regional trends and the lack of institutionalised communication between the different zones.

Despite showing a variety of social contexts, from elite to non-elite, and a wide geographic scope, the sites chosen demonstrate the significance of replicating animals and humans on a smaller scale to perform mortuary rites and terminate structures.

Ritual seems to be shared, at least in its fundamental principles, but the ways of conducting it were different (Table 4). Indeed, some of the sites exhibit mortuary rituals mainly (Jaina, Pacbitun), others show domestic rituals (Motul de San José); but public rituals on plazas are also found (Pook's Hill, Cahal Pech). The number of figurines and ocarinas used also varied, depending on the context (Table 4).

This disparity can be explained by the geographical factor, by the breakdown of control over production, and by the difference between elite contexts, in which prestige plays an important role, and commoner contexts, in which long-lasting traditions and gradual change become apparent (Halperin 2011, personal communication).

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[18] Lopiparo and Hendon's interpretation of the social significance of these practices will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

Building on the conclusions of Chapter 5, the significance of figurines and ocarinas in rituals will now be discussed: how do they favour interaction within a group, and why was that important in the Terminal Classic? How did the musical properties of ocarinas affect their roles in rituals? How do the subject matters of artefacts express social concerns?

Figurines as agents of social life

Lopiparo and Hendon explain that ritual practices create a context for the interaction between humans and non-humans (2009, 66). The significance of figurines and ocarinas did not come entirely from their form, otherwise they would lose their meaning when broken. In fact, it is the practice of using them and breaking them as a group that made them potent (ibid). In that sense, figurines and ocarinas were non-human agents that brought communities together through their ritual use (ibid, 69).

Reiterating termination and dedication rituals over long periods of time shows continuity and the importance of having a shared social memory. Participating in these rituals was a way to socialise in a regular, meaningful event that was tied to people's personal lives. Indeed, there is a documented analogy between life cycles and the life span of dwellings (ibid, 67): the cycles of dedication and termination corresponded to the cycles of death and rebirth. The figurines themselves act as surrogates of humans, or as Lopiparo and Hendon put it, as 'human non-humans' (ibid, 69). These subjects were formed with raw materials, in a similar way to the shaping of human personalities through rites of passage, and could act as proxies for humans to be interred, decapitated, or offered (ibid). The form and function of these figurines and ocarinas are linked: anthropomorphic shapes were chosen for their powerful symbolism. The scale of figurines facilitated their meaningful manipulation, since they were easy to move, hang, arrange, place and cache (Faust and Halperin 2009, 3).

In fact, as Mock explains, the trend of using figurines for rituals is especially seen in the Classic and Postclassic, in contrast to the Preclassic and Early Classic in which real human sacrifices and the placing of the bones in ceramic vessels were favoured (Mock 1988, 7).

These practices were not only socially important, but also cosmologically primordial. Freidel underlines the fact that the daily existence is cosmologically informed but that special times are set apart for sacred work, which is seen as necessary in the community (Freidel 1988, 190).

In the context of the Terminal Classic, we can imagine that these types of rituals could cement the remaining population and anchor them to the past. This could explain why they

decided to conduct rituals in a space that used to be the elite restricted ceremonial plaza of the site. It might have represented a threshold to a more sacred place. By the practice of rituals, they could appropriate this meaningful space.

Following the analysis of the Cahal Pech assemblage, it seems unlikely that the smashing of these figurines and ocarinas was an act of resistance against the elite, which often happens in reoccupied sites in the Terminal Classic such as Xunantunich (Joyce and Weller 2007, 152). Instead, the termination rituals on Plaza A at Cahal Pech seem to correspond to community-binding practices.

Music and performance

In all six sites studied, ocarinas accompanied figurines to be used in rituals or buried with the dead. In the case of Cahal Pech and Pacbitun, elaborate flutes were also placed with the dead. This hints at the important role of music in Maya ritual life. As Healy explains, professional musicians escorted funeral corteges and created a melancholic atmosphere by playing flutes and maracas (1990, 25). But music was also used in festive contexts, as depicted in the Bonampak murals (ibid, 27).

Figure 21: Reconstructed fresco from Bonampak, c. AD800, showing a procession with trumpets. (Miller 2007, 239).

Performance was an important aspect of the rituals carried out at Cahal Pech. Maya rituals involved music and dances, recitations and other ways to involve the participants (Mock

1988, 7). The ocarinas found in the caches of Plaza A might have been deposited there after having been used in the celebrations associated with the rituals.

The sound-producing capacity of ocarinas demonstrates their active role in the shaping of rituals. As Latour explains, (2000, 19), meaning is constituted by objects, not by intentions. The settings in which rituals were conducted made people believe in them: music helped to create the appropriate atmosphere. The ocarinas were purposefully left on site, showing their integral belonging to that particular scene.

Commoner cosmologies and beliefs

The subject matters depicted on the figurines and ocarinas reinforced their role as proxies since they corresponded to daily social concerns (Taube and Taube 2009, 237). In fact, mould technology is not always associated with standardized production and homogeneity: it can be a way for individuals to express themselves too (Hendon and Lopiparo 2009, 56)

In the Cahal Pech assemblage, the concerns raised include death. In the context of a child burial, these references are not surprising. All five artefacts found in the grave showed traces of Maya blue, a pigment symbolically associated with rituals, and sometimes with sacrifices and death, as seen in Chichen Itza (Arnold et al 2008, 158).

One of the figurines is a dwarf (Figure 22): in Maya cosmology, they were strongly associated with the Underworld, as seen in the assemblage of Jaina figurines (Miller 1985, 143).

Figure 22: CP A3 Br1 419 depicts a dwarf (see details in the Appendix).

Dwarfs were also associated with feasting and important social events (Taube and Taube 2009, 250): the child's mortuary rites might have been accompanied with commemoration ceremonies.

The presence of a supernatural figurine in the same grave underlines the importance of believing in deities when facing death. Furthermore, the presence of ocarinas and a flute hinted

at burial rites or mourning ceremonies, destined to comfort the relatives of the deceased. These objects might also be intended to serve as protecting effigies or toys in the Afterlife.

However, this concern with death is more surprising in the context of the caches. One ocarina was identified as a Fat God, which were associated with death in the Maya Pantheon (Healy 1988, 28).

Some more mundane subject matters might have represented local individuals and satirised social relations (Taube and Taube 2009, 239). In the cache, they include the depiction of women, the regional theme of broad-brimmed hats (Halperin 2007, 24), new-borns, elderlies, and unidentified adults. These subject matters are a far cry from traditional Late Classic Maya art, in which few women, dwarfs and tricksters are found and most depictions represent elite individuals (Halperin 2009, 395). Finding this alternative discourse in the formerly elite-restricted plaza of Cahal Pech reinforces the contrast: the instigators of these rituals lived in a political context deprived from such elite/non-elite distinctions. Such a phenomenon could not have happened during the Late Classic occupation of the site.

Because the Cahal Pech artefacts replicated human beings and animals that looked familiar in the Maya world, the act of destruction during termination rituals might have helped to release social tensions, or express down-to-earth concerns.

The association of music and rituals, the important role of cosmology in daily life and its role in shaping communities, as well as the widespread display of commoner concerns in the folk art therefore seem to be characteristic of the Terminal Classic Maya Lowlands. Despite seeing local ways of expressing these features, these broad trends can be seen in Pacbitun, Pook's Hill, Motul de San José, Jaina and the Ulúa Valley as well as in Cahal Pech.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION: BETWEEN CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The study of the ocarinas and figurines from Plaza A, Cahal Pech has enabled a discussion of the characteristics of rituals in the Terminal Classic Maya Lowlands: we see continuity in the underlying beliefs and change in the specific ways of expressing them.

In this characterisation of ritual, profound trends persist. There is a conservative aspect to ritual practices, despite the local socio-political conditions and their change over time. This can be seen in actions performed during ritual: the smashing of artefacts is documented as early as the Preclassic (Wagner 2006, 55) and still continues today (Freidel 1988, 190). The underlying belief that all aspects of material life have a soul also seems to be a shared characteristic across the region.

The Maya focus on liminal spaces and the belief that they are powerful and meaningful spots to conduct rituals is exemplified in Cahal Pech: people felt the need to cross the boundary between the public (Plaza B) and the private (Plaza A), and return to a forsaken and previously elite space. Performance played a major role in these events, hence the importance of musical instruments: rituals were meaningful social experiences.

The correlation between the form of ocarinas and figurines, especially anthropomorphic ones, and their significance in replacing humans during ritual sacrifices, has been outlined by Lopiparo and Hendon in the Ulúa Valley (2009), and can also be extrapolated to the region. Anthropomorphic artefacts were used for similar ritual purposes in all six sites studied, despite their inherent geographical, social, and historical differences.

However, the socio-political context affected the expressions of rituals activities. Although the broad significance of rituals did not change, certain aspects of how to conduct them did. Similar themes come up in the six sites studied, but diversity is found in the degree of elaboration, number and styles of figurines and ocarinas, as well as in their archaeological context.

As Halperin outlined, figurines and ocarinas evolved in style throughout time, albeit more slowly than official art (2011, 4). A gradual transition from Late Classic figurines to more specific Terminal Classic ones can be observed; and some of the trends observed by Halperin were seen in the Cahal Pech assemblage[19]. Ultimately, a completely new type of figurines emerged in the Postclassic (ibid). They reflect interactions with other Mesoamerican groups, but are still used in ritual contexts.

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[19] In the Appendix, the presence or absence of specific Terminal Classic features will be discussed for each artefact.

This change in material forms is also expressed in the transition between the use of human sacrifices in the Preclassic and their replacement by figurines and ocarinas in the Late and Terminal Classic (Mock 1988, 7). Acting as surrogates, figurines achieved a similar ritual purpose by being broken or symbolically beheaded. Similarly, there is no evidence at Cahal Pech that the long-term practice of sealing terminated structures in marl was conducted.

Depending on the political context, ceremonies can be more or less manipulated to materialise the interests of the elite (DeMarrais et al, 1996), as in the highly orchestrated rituals that occurred at the royal temple of Cerros (Freidel and Schele 1990, 114). In that type of ceremony, the ruling group built on the expectations of the public to legitimise their power. However, in the Terminal Classic, ritual expressions seem to be simpler and closer to the cosmological beliefs of the population, as previously discussed. This is a marked change from the Late Classic, in which commoner beliefs seemed to be highly influenced by the elites and what they wanted to communicate (Halperin 2009, 394).

In sum, ritual in the Terminal Classic Maya Lowlands seems to be rather conservative in its underlying trends, since we can still detect common themes in six very different sites. However, the specific actions performed and the nature of materials used during ritual seem to be affected by the change of socio-political context. The study of the Cahal Pech assemblage highlighted the distinction between beliefs and how they were translated into practice. This conclusion is exemplified by modern ritual activities in Plaza A (Figure 23): they are different in expression, but still conducted in the same meaningful space.

Figure 23: Modern ritual in Plaza A, Cahal Pech. Photograph: Jaime Awe.

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APPENDIX

Technical characteristics of ocarinas

Ocarinas are musical wind instruments with finger holes, usually shaped like birds. They are defined as 'multi-note instrument[s] in which the resonating chamber has an open oval form and several ventages' (Lee 1969, 66). They can have multiple chambers, which enables them to produce a range of sounds, unlike whistles which only have one chamber (Lopiparo and Hendon 2009, 60) and possess neither finger hole nor ventage (Lee 1969, 66). Some archaeologists refer to both instruments as whistles in case of uncertainties due to the archaeological record (Lopiparo and Hendon 2009). In this dissertation, they were referred to as ocarinas, as in Healy 1988 and Forbes 2003. Indeed, finger holes are clearly visible in all cases but one (see below). CP A3 L1 426 does not have a tonal hole and is therefore a whistle, but the distinction was not made throughout the argument for the sake of consistency.

Forbes lists five attributes of the ocarina (2003, 6):

-the closed chamber,

-the tonal hole(s),

-the beak or mouthpiece used for the initial passage of air,

-the windway which is the small opening in the centre of the beak,

-and the window, which is a cavity venting air to produce a note.

Ocarinas are distinct from flutes: in the latter, the resonance chamber is in the form of a long cylinder (Lee 1969, 66).

The identification of gender in figurines

The gender of figurines in this assemblage is difficult to identify because no apparent sexual characteristics are visible. In most cases, I described the gender as ambiguous.

I described two figurines and one ocarina as female, as well as one figurine as a female holding a baby. In Mesoamerica, headdresses were a way to indicate gender and age in figurines (Lesure 2011, 89). Building on Halperin's identification of the theme of women with broad-brimmed hats (2007, 24), I described CP A2 L1 451 and CP A3 L1 452 as female. CP A2 L1 423 seems to correspond to Halperin's description of women with centre-parted hair and a hair cloth (ibid): therefore, I identified it as female. The case of CP A2 L1 450 was more ambiguous: there are no sexual characteristics, but I interpreted the delicacy of features as female, although I recognise that it might represent another gender. These dichotomous categories might not even apply to the Maya, and should not be the most determining factor in an analysis (Marcus 2008, 56).

Catalogue of the figurines and ocarinas found in the caches, structures A2 and A3

STRUCTURE A2

CP A2 L1 422

Nature[21]: Figurine

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 4.6cm/3.3 cm/ 1.6cm

Method of production: Moulded with incisions

Colour: Dark orange/ light red

Subject matter: Wrinkled, aged human being.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: No. Wrinkled anthropomorphic figurines were also common in the Late Classic (Taube and Taube 2009: 245).

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[21] 'Nature' refers to whether the artefact is a figurine or an ocarina.

CP A2 L1 423

Nature: Ocarina (the beak is the top of the headdress)

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 5cm/ 3.9cm/ 3.2 cm

Method of production: Mould-made with appliqué parts (hair, ear plugs, 'veil')

Colour: Light orange

Subject matter: Anthropomorphic with earplugs and elongated skull, which forms the beak of the ocarina. Long hair, or veil. The ocarina possesses a tonal hole at the back, halfway across the elongated skull. This ocarina could correspond to the theme of women with centre-parted hair toed with a hair cloth defined by Halperin (2007, 24).
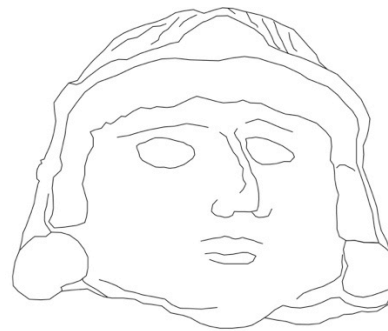
Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: The figurine has long hair parted in the centre. According to Halperin (2011, 2) this is a Terminal Classic feature. However, the size of this figurine is a lot smaller than typical Terminal Classic figurines (as described by Halperin 2011).

Other information

The bottom of the figurine is not hollow, and there is no sign of breakage. This makes me think that this was possibly the figurine's original size, although it is possible that the break marks became dimmer in bad preservation conditions.

If the figurine was in fact bigger, and the entire body was lost, it means that the figurine might be a diagnostic Terminal Classic figurine following Halperin 2011's identified characteristics. It is indeed not uncommon for diagnostic figurines to exhibit a length of 10cm or more.

CP A2 L2 424

Nature: Figurine

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 3.2cm/ 3.8cm/ 2.3cm

Method of production: Moulded

Colour: Orange

Subject matter: Anthropomorphic being with ear plugs, short hair, and a head band.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: No

Other information

Coarse paste with sandy inclusions

CP A2 L1 27/189.003 425

Nature: Figurine

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 3.3cm/ 3.2cm/ 2.8cm

Method of production: Mould-made

Colour: White/light gray

Subject matter: Anthropomorphic figure with earplugs and a head band.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: This figurine looks Late Classic. Late Classic figurines often had a smaller face with less distinguishable features, and more ornaments (Halperin 2011, personal communication). But this one is also coarse, unlike the finely decorated Late Classic figurines.

Other information

It is hollow, but there is no evidence that it was an ocarina.

CP A2 L1 27/189 003.427

Nature: Ocarina

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 5.2cm/ 3.8cm/ 5.0cm

Method of production: Moulded and incised

Colour: Light orange with traces of burning

Subject matter: Anthropomorphic/Zoomorphic or supernatural. This ocarina possesses a loin cloth, and a separation between its legs has been incised, but its beak looks like a possible tail, which is longer than that of CP A2 L1 431 (see below). Therefore, it is impossible to identify this ocarina as anthropomorphic or zoomorphic, although the former is more likely.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: In size and depiction, it looks Late Classic, although it is crude and could be Terminal Classic.

Other information

The beak of the ocarina is situated at the end of its tail. The window (cavity venting the air) is situated at the bottom of the ocarina. In the drawing, one of the two tonal holes at the back is visible.

CP A2 L1 27/189.003 428

Nature: Figurine

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 3.1cm/ 3.2cm/ 2.6cm

Method of production: Moulded with incisions

Colour: Dark orange

Subject matter: Anthropomorphic. This figurine represents a human-being with a short-brimmed hat and long hair.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: The depiction of hair strands is Terminal Classic (Halperin 2011, personal communication). Besides, the figurine's head is 3.1cm long. If it was complete, it would probably be big enough to be a diagnostic Terminal Classic figurine (ibid).

CP A2 L1 27/189.003.429

Nature: Ocarina

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 3.8cm/ 3.3cm/ 3.3cm

Method of production: Moulded with incisions for the eyes

Colour: Light orange with traces of burning (black)

Subject matter: This ocarina is zoomorphic and seems to depict a bird with a small crest. The crest is incised. A tonal hole is present on the bird's 'chest'.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: There are no characteristic signs of the Terminal Classic on this ocarina. It is very simple and could be a Terminal Classic imitation of earlier Late Classic models.

Other information

Traces of burning can be seen on this ocarina. This is probably due to the firing process.

CP A2 L1 430

Nature: Ocarina

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 3.8cm/ 3.6cm/ 5.0cm

Method of production: Moulded with appliqué eyes

Colour: Light orange

Subject matter: Zoomorphic. This ocarina represents a bird with small wings.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: No, but its realisation and level of detail are very crude.

Other information

A tonal hole is situated under its right wing. The breakage made half of this hole disappear. The other ocarina features could not be determined.

CP A2 L1 27/189.003 431

Nature: Ocarina

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 7.1cm/ 5.0cm/ 4.4cm

Method of production: Moulded

Colour: Dark orange

Subject matter: Anthropomorphic depiction of a short person, with a belt, a loincloth, a necklace, and joined hands. It might represent a dwarf.
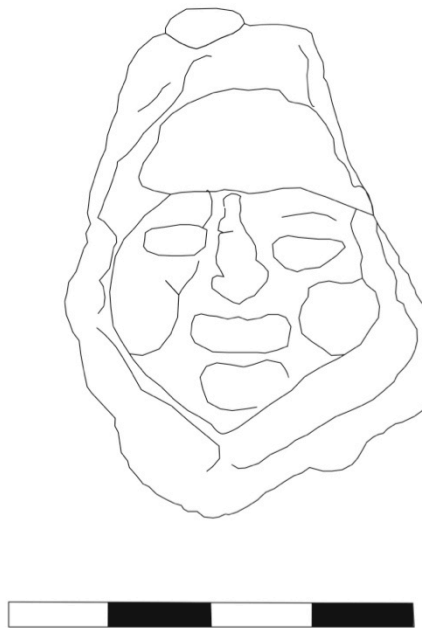
Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: In size and subject matter, it looks Late Classic.

Other information

There are two tonal holes on the back of the figure. The beak was probably situated at the top of its head. The mouthpiece is situated at the bottom of the ocarina[22].

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[22] This assumption is made on the basis that the author has photographs of every other face, which do not show a mouthpiece.

CP A2 L1 27/189.003 432

Nature: Figurine?

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 4.7cm/ 3.5cm (cheeks)/ 2cm

Method of production: Moulded

Colour: White/very light orange

Subject matter: Anthropomorphic. The features have been blurred by time, which makes it hard to infer a lot of information. This figurine possesses big round cheeks, so it is possible that it depicts a Fat God (Halperin 2007, 35), which was associated with death in the Maya pantheon (Healy 1988, 28). See CP A2 L1 27/189.003.433 below, which is more characteristic of a Fat God.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: No.

Other information

This figurine is extremely fragmented: only its face has been recovered. It is possible that it was an ocarina, but all elements enabling to establish this have disappeared.

CP A2 L1 27/189.003.433

Nature: Ocarina

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 5.4cm/ 3.3cm (near the arms)/ 4.2cm (base to tail)

Method of production: Moulded. The facial features were possibly incised.

Colour: Orange with traces of burning

Subject matter: This ocarina is anthropomorphic. It probably represents a fat god with joined hands. According to Miller (1985, 147), characteristics of Fat Gods include closed eyes, jowly cheeks, which this ocarina exhibits, as well as a tight-fitting body suit and a fan, which might be present but cannot be observed due to the blurring of the features. The ornamentation on the head could either represent hair or a headdress/head band.
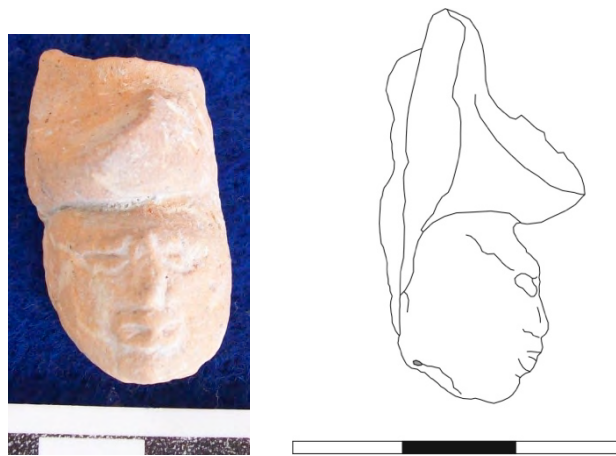
Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: This ocarina is complete, which enables us to see its total size. It is small and of an average size for a Late Classic ocarina. Moreover, the theme and its depiction seem typical of the Late Classic.

Other information

Fat Gods were connected to Death. This theme permeated several periods and continued well into the Terminal Classic.

The ocarina has two tonal holes on its back and its beak is on the creature's tail. The windway is situated under the figure's feet.

CP A2 L1 27/189 003 434

Nature: Figurine

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth: 3.4cm/ 1.7cm/ 1.4cm

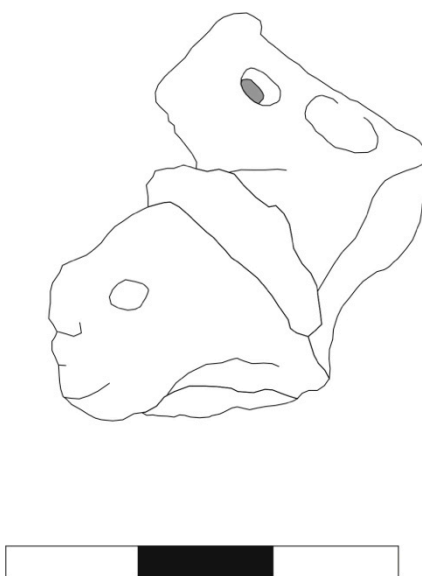**Method of production:** Moulded with incisions

Colour: Light orange

Subject matter: Anthropomorphic. The figurine depicts a man or woman with a bulging headdress.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: No.

Other information

Because of its small size and hollow interior, it might have been a pendant. However, there is no evidence to prove this.

CP A2 L1 27/189.003.435

Nature: Figurine. Possibly pendant

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 3.2cm (base of neck to top of headdress)/ 2.0cm/ 2.1cm

Method of production: Moulded and pierced
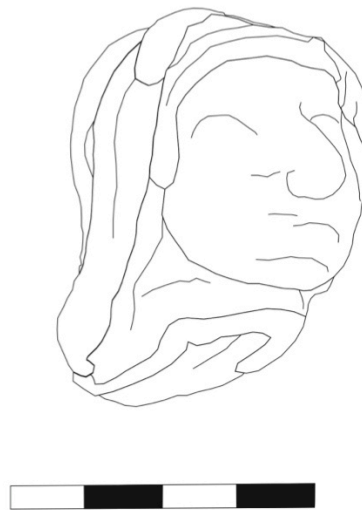
Colour: Dark orange

Subject matter: Anthropomorphic. The human being had a headdress, which is pierced, probably so that this small effigy could be worn.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: No.

Other information

This head could have been part of a full body but could also have been worn on its own.

CP A2 L1 450

Nature: Figurine

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 4.5cm/ 3.5cm/ 3.8cm

Method of production: Mould made with appliqué strands of hair

Colour: Dark orange

Subject matter: Anthropomorphic figurine. The delicacy of the traits suggest that it might be female.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: The hair details of this figurine have been added by attaching coils of clay. This is a Terminal Classic way of representing hair (Halperin 2011, personal communication). Besides, if we assume that the figurine was bigger when unbroken, then it matches the size of a diagnostic Terminal Classic figurine.

Other information

I think this figurine is female because of its hairstyle. It was probably broken: its bottom is not smooth and some breaks can be seen in it.

CP A2 L1 451

Nature: Figurine

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 6.3cm/ 4.5cm/ 2.4cm

Method of production: Moulded with incisions (facial features and hair). The broad-brimmed hat was probably an appliqué.

Colour: White/light grey

Subject matter: Woman with broad-brimmed hat and an earplug, holding an infant.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: The theme of women with broad-brimmed hats is very common both in the Late Classic and in the Terminal Classic (Halperin 2007, 24). However, the size of this figurine, which seems to have been broken, hints at the possibility that it is more diagnostically Terminal Classic. As Halperin explains (2011, personal communication), the depiction of hair strands is also a Terminal Classic feature.

Other information

This figurine is hollow, but does not seem to be an ocarina as no tonal hole was found, and the cavity seems less rounded than those of ocarinas.

STRUCTURE A3

CP A3 426 L1

Nature: Ocarina

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 3.6cm (length of ocarina beak)/ 3.8cm (from ear to ear)/ 2.9cm (from ears to neck)

Method of production: Moulded with attaché eyes

Colour: Light orange

Subject matter: Zoomorphic, and probably canine. This ocarina looks like a dog.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: There are no characteristic features.

Other information

The mouth of the canine is the beak of the ocarina. The window is situated under the canine's neck. There are no tonal holes for this very small ocarina: it only produced one note.

This ocarina is complete, but very small and crude.

CP A3 L1 452

Nature: Figurine

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 6.2cm/ 3.6cm/ 3.3cm (comprising hat rim)

Method of production: Moulded

Colour: Light orange

Subject matter: Anthropomorphic. This figurine represents a woman with a broad-brimmed hat. The hairline is also visible.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: No. Women with broad-brimmed hat were a popular theme as early as the Late Classic (Halperin 2007, 24).

Catalogue and Description of the figurines/ocarinas found in a child burial, structure A3
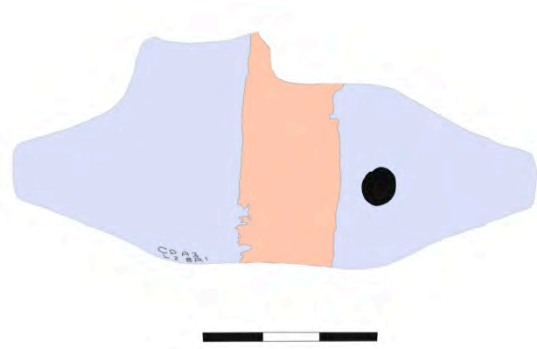
CP A3 BR1 L2 412

Function: Ocarina

Maximal dimensions (length/diameter): 8.8cm/ 3.0cm

Method of production: Modelled or moulded

Colour: Originally light orange. Painted in blue with a red band.

Subject matter: This ocarina does not depict anything in particular: it is tubular and seems to perform solely the function of whistling.
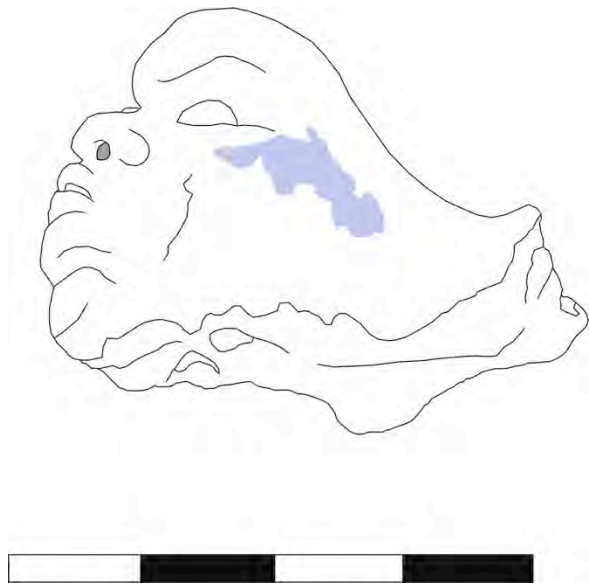
Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: No Terminal Classic characteristics are visible on this ocarina.

Other information

The window is situated at the top of the ridge. The ocarina is pierced at each end (either of them can serve as mouthpiece) and has a tonal hole on the side.

Because it is so simple, I am inclined to this that it might have been buried because of its association with the deceased. Maybe it was a toy belonging to the child.

CPA3 Rm2 BR1 L2 419

Function: Figurine

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 2.9cm/ 2.2cm/ 4.2cm

Method of production: Moulded and incised

Colour: Light orange

Subject matter: Anthropomorphic figurine which represents a grotesque human being or potentially a dwarf. The characteristics of dwarfs in figurines include a small stature, abnormally short and fleshy limbs, a protruding abdomen, a disproportionately large head with a prominent forehead, a sunken face and a drooping lower lip (Miller 1985, 141): the last three are visible here. Its nose is large with visible nostrils. It seems to have a closed eye and an opened one. Its mouth is open and reveals its teeth. The face is prognathic and the figurine has a bulging forehead. The figurine has no hair or headdress, and appears to be bald.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: Grotesque figurines were common in the Late Classic, and there are no specific features indicating that this one is diagnostically Terminal Classic.

Other information

The breakage marks of the figurine are visible. The head seems to spring out of where the body was situated. This could have represented a hunchback.

CP A3 RM2 L2 BR1 420

Function: Ocarina

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 8.4cm/ 5.1cm/ 5.3cm

Method of production: Moulded

Colour: Polychrome. Originally light orange, painted in dark orange and blue.

Subject matter: Zoomorphic or anthropomorphic ocarina. Some features (Mohawk, tail, general shape, beak) make me think that this represents a turkey (Figure 15). However, there are also anthropomorphic features: the arms, the fact that it holds three vessels, and that one earplug is visible. This ocarina is therefore ambiguous. It could therefore represent a deity sharing human and birdlike attributes.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: No Terminal Classic characteristics have been found.

Other information

The ocarina has two tonal holes on the creature's back. The mouthpiece is the tail, and the window is situated behind the creature's feet.

CP A3 BR1 RM2 L2 421

Function: Figurine

Maximal dimensions (length/width/depth): 6.6cm/ 7.3cm/ 3.5cm

Method of production: Moulded with appliqué ornaments and incised feathers

Colour: Originally light orange. The feathers and hair are painted in blue and the face and shoulders are painted in dark orange/red.
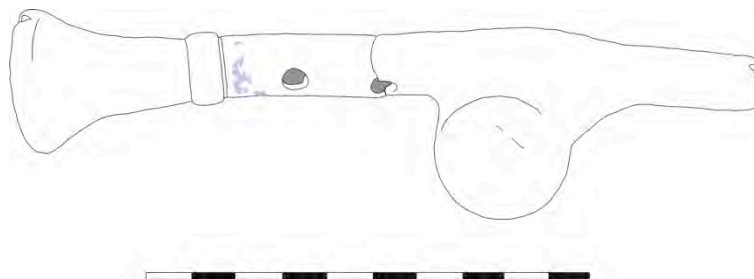
Subject matter: Anthropomorphic figurine representing a man with an impressive feather headdress, a headband and earplugs. It probably represents a deity or member of the elite.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: No, it looks Late Classic because of the theme depicted.

Other information

This figurine is very unusual in the assemblage, because of its subject matter. It supports the hypothesis that the child was a member of the elite or would-be elite, buried with symbols of status accompanying them to the Underworld. This means that the burial chamber performed a different ritual role than the cache deposits found in structures A2 and A3.

CP A3 L2 BR1

Function: Flute

Maximal dimensions (length/diameter): 16.0cm/ 1.9cm

Method of production: Probably modelled

Colour: Originally light orange. Some parts were painted blue (at least a band near the ceramic ring)

Subject matter: This flute is finely crafted and the distal end flares out. The inside of the distal end is decorated with a floral motif. The flute has two finger-hole stops and a small globular sounding chamber in the middle.

Presence of diagnostic Terminal Classic features: There are no particular Terminal Classic characteristics but the flutes described by Healy (1988) date from the same period, and look very similar, including the blue paint at the distal end.

Other figurines from the Cahal Pech visitors' centre

The Cahal Pech artefacts were presented with an ocarina from Baking Pot, a possible figurine from Baking Pot and an ocarina from Xunantunich. These objects were found in similar contexts to the Cahal Pech ones, and are also Terminal Classic (Awe 2011, personal communication). A bigger sample is needed to compare the rituals responses to the ones in Cahal Pech. However, in form and style, these three artefacts remind of the Cahal Pech assemblage. This reinforces the conclusion that homogeneous beliefs and concerns were expressed in Terminal Classic rituals across the region.

Zoomorphic ocarina from Baking Pot.

Zoomorphic figurine from Baking Pot, possibly representing an owl.

Zoomorphic ocarina from Xunantunich, representing a bird.