

BEYOND THEIR SMILING FACES: RECONSTRUCTING THE REMOJADAS RITUAL  
AND CULTURE THROUGH THE SONRIENTES FIGURINES FROM THE MPM  
COLLECTION

by

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## ABSTRACT

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Under the Supervision of Professor David Pacifico

*Sonrientes* (Smiling Faces) scholarship has waned after a brief period of archaeological interest in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century by both Spanish and English language scholars. Since then, brief attention to these figurines in the Remojadas style, or similar, has been given when discussing the Classic Period on the Gulf Coast and few direct studies on their interpretation or reinterpretation have been given within the last few years. The present study attempts to contribute my own interpretation of these Remojadas-style figurines and answer five major questions driving my research: What kind of rituals did Remojadas or other people carry out? Why did they do them? Who did them? How did they do them? How did the people and these rituals relate to other better-studied groups who neighbored them in space and time? Since the scholarship on the Remojadas culture is just as scarce as on its figurines, I reassess previous research on how the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines would have functioned within their cultural context(s) and what visibly sets their style apart from other figurine variations.

A total of nine figurines from the Milwaukee Public Museum collection were chosen for this study. These figurines are all in modest condition and vary in size, type, gender, and decoration. Their study can be useful in reconstructing the rituals, ideological beliefs, and social structure of the Remojadas people by looking at more than just the *Sonrientes*' smiles. My

project here has the potential to develop a method that could be applied to similar objects that turn up in museum collections without adequate excavation records.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b>	ii
<b>List of Figures</b>	vi
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	viii
<b>1 Introductions</b>	1
<b>2 Hypothesis and Research Questions</b>	2
<b>3 Materials and Methods</b>	3
3.1 Sample Selection Criteria	4
3.2 Specific Methods Employed for Each Object	5
3.3 Other Ceramic and Figurine Analysis Methods	6
<b>4 The Setting: the Gulf Coast Lowlands of Mexico</b>	7
<b>5 Defining Classic Veracruz</b>	9
<b>6 Sonrientes Figurines and the Remojadas Culture</b>	13
6.1 The Ceramic Complex	13
6.2 Figurine Types and Classifications	14
6.3 Manufacturing Techniques	17
6.4 Features and Decoration	18
6.5 Archaeological Recovery and Provenience	20
6.6 Current Academic Setbacks	23
6.7 Literature Review of their Previous Interpretations	24
6.8 Contextualization of Figurines in Burial Mound: Offerings or Companions?	33
<b>7 My Interpretation of the Remojadas-style Sonrientes Figurines</b>	36
<b>8 Nine Sonrientes Specimens from the MPM</b>	38
<b>9 Other Comparative Figurines and Cultures in Mesoamerica</b>	98
9.1 Classification of Figurines	98
9.2 Ritual and Intoxications Practices Associated with Pulque in Other Cultures	103
9.2.1. El Tajin (Late Classic)	104
9.2.2. Teotihuacan (Middle Classic)	107
9.2.3. The Aztecs (Post Classic)	108
<b>10 Conclusions</b>	110
<b>Bibliography</b>	112

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Map of the Gulf Coast showing division of geographic areas	8
Figure 2. Map of Veracruz pinpointing major archaeological sites	21
Figure 3. Drawing by Wyllie of <i>Sonrientes</i> figurines with human remains from El Zapotal	31
Figure 4. Drawing by Wyllie of El Zapotal mural panels B and C	32
Figure 5. El Zapotal Ossuary Replica from the Museo de Antropología de Xalapa	34
Figure 6. Front view of Tajin “Smiling Boy” from the Milwaukee Public Museum	39
Figure 6.1. Back view of Tajin “Smiling Boy”	39
Figure 6.2. Detail of Tajin “Smiling Boy”	40
Figure 7. Front view of small nude whistle mold from the Milwaukee Public Museum	45
Figure 7.1. Back view of small nude whistle mold	46
Figure 7.2. Detail of small nude whistle mold	46
Figure 8. Front view of large Laughing boy figure from the Milwaukee Public Museum	51
Figure 8.1. Back view of large Laughing boy figure	52
Figure 8.2. Detail of large Laughing boy figure	52
Figure 8.3. Second detail of large Laughing boy figure	53
Figure 9. Front view of small Laughing boy figure from the Milwaukee Public Museum	58
Figure 9.1. Back view of small Laughing boy figure	59
Figure 9.2. Detail of small Laughing boy figure	59
Figure 9.3. Second detail of small Laughing boy figure	60
Figure 10. Front view of Totonac Smiling Figurine from the Milwaukee Public Museum	65
Figure 10.1. Back view of Totonac Smiling Figurine	65

Figure 10.2. Detail of Totonac Smiling Figurine	66
Figure 11. Front view of Totonac Smiling Face Figure Top Whistle from the MPM	72
Figure 11.1. Back view of Totonac Smiling Face Figure Top Whistle	72
Figure 11.2. Detail of Totonac Smiling Face Figure Top Whistle	73
Figure 11.3. Second Detail of Totonac Smiling Face Figure Top Whistle	73
Figure 12. Front view of Smiling Head from the Milwaukee Public Museum	79
Figure 12.1. Back view of Smiling Head	80
Figure. 12.2. Detail of Smiling Head	80
Figure 12.3. Second detail of Smiling Head	81
Figure 13. Front view of Totonac Smiling Head (Flattened) from the MPM	86
Figure 13.1. Back view of Totonac Smiling Head (Flattened)	86
Figure 13.2. Detail of Totonac Smiling Head (Flattened)	87
Figure 14. Front view of small fully dressed whistle mold from the MPM	92
Figure 14.1. Back view of small fully dressed whistle mold	92
Figure 14.2. Detail of small fully dressed whistle mold	93
Figure 15. Examples of Type A and B jointed figurines	99
Figure 16. Two examples of Jaina-style figurines from Campeche, Mexico	102
Figure 17. The six carved panels depicting pulque ritual and iconography from the walls of the El Tajin South Ballcourt	104
Figure 18. Sculpture 6 of the Building Columns depicting the mortal cult leader, 13 Rabbit	105
Figure 19. Carved panel from the South Ballcourt depicting a variation of the pulque-rabbit	105

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## 1 Introduction:

*Sonrientes* (Smiling Faces) scholarship has waned after a brief period of archaeological interest in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century by both Spanish and English language scholars. Since then, brief attention to these figurines in the Remojadas style, or similar, has been given when discussing the Classic Period (approximately 200-900 C.E.) on the Gulf Coast of Mexico and few direct studies on their interpretation or reinterpretation have been given within the last few years. Thus, further attempts at understanding their original purpose and function are much needed because the aspects of the religion, ritual, and culture within and around Las Remojadas region remains understudied and analyzing these prolific objects will help us understand the people who made and used them during the Classic period.

I propose a more comprehensive read of the unique yet barely understood Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines. Previous studies focused narrowly on limited aspects of the figurines such as common characteristics (i.e. facial expressions, pose clothing), provenience, and regional history. My study examines their overall demeanor in relation to other known artifacts or offerings found in association with them from archaeological contexts, the most notable being pulque bowls, with the intent of reconstructing the nature of their rituals, cultural beliefs, and contributions by previous scholars' identification of these figurines within the social sphere of their culture. To do so, I attempt to survey similar social and ritual contexts of figurines, compare them with better known analogs and related iconography from other cultures geographically nearby, and employ a combination of previously established archaeological and art historical methods to perform a formal analysis on the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines from the Milwaukee Public Museum (MPM) collection. I present the results in a catalog raisonne style thesis essay.

Through the direct analysis of nine objects from the MPM collection, I take a closer look at the expressive yet transformational nature of these figurine types which may hold clues into components of their society, material culture, influences, and ceremonial or ritual practices. Additionally, I evaluate to what extent they can be read as internally communicating the cultural and personal experiences of the people who created and used them. What is more, these figurines are only one part of their whole cultural story, but an important part nonetheless; they can reveal much about what the cultures from the Gulf Coast were thinking or experiencing during their time, and how these ways extend not only to social life but also to other parts of Mesoamerica during the Classic and Postclassic periods. The *Sonrientes* figurines are one of many categories of objects that came to academic attention suddenly, en masse, and with limited controlled excavations. My project here has the potential to develop a method that could be applied to similar objects that turn up in museum collections without adequate excavation records.

## **2 Hypothesis and Research Questions:**

I hypothesize that we can learn the nature of the Remojadas rituals, who the practitioners were, and how their beliefs were acted out as represented in the *Sonrientes* figurines. Initially, the happy and lively expressions of the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines, thought to be representing either adults or children who took part in sacrificial ceremonies, have been read as hallucinogenic as a result of ingested ritual substances (e.g. Emmerich, 1963: 108-110; Bogar, 1983: 11; Davies, 1983: 90-91; Berjonneau, 1985: 30; Barakat, 1986: 11; Diehl, 2000: 180); few sources have even interpreted these figurines to be dancers, performers, or musicians as some held musical instruments or were instruments themselves (i.e. whistles) (e.g. Covarrubias, 1957: 195; Easby, 1970: 165; Miller, 1997: 155-156). I agree with the former approach and, moreover, hypothesize that this same reading can be applied to the MPM *Sonrientes* figurines. However, I

diverge from these predecessors in suggesting that these figurines are not in a trance of hallucination and instead are in a state of drunkenness. Thus, I propose that these figurines represent Remojadas priests and priestesses and document cult-like experiences of ritualistic intoxication and body disassociation involving the sacred Pre-Columbian liquid known as pulque. In sum and using the *Sonrientes* figurines from the MPM, I seek to answer five questions to guide my thesis. These questions include: What kind of rituals did Remojadas or other people carry out? Why did they do them? Who did them? How did they do them? How did the people and these rituals relate to other better-studied groups who neighbored them in space and time?

### **3 Materials and Methods:**

This section explains what materials and methods I used to conduct my formal analysis of the *Sonrientes* figurines and those from the MPM collection. To recap, I am interested in reconstructing the rituals, beliefs, and social structure of the Remojadas people by looking at more than just the *Sonrientes*' smiles. Unfortunately, the details about the Remojadas culture itself, its social spheres, and ritual and belief practices remain mysterious. To help me reconstruct those identifications and rituals, I utilized previous research on the *Sonrientes* within the context of their facial expressions, body poses, and dress attire, and then compared them with what we have inferred from similar figurines and cultures from neighboring regions where these figurines were also found. Moreover, I mapped out the existing historiography on the early and recent general scholarship on the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines as it pertains to their common types and phases, significance of archaeological recovery and provenance, initial or current interpretations proposed, and any other articles or publications in English and Spanish (from museums or scholars) written specifically on the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines or similar. I also apply observation from travel to the field where I observed at least one replica of the sites

where these figurines were made, used, and deposited. Lastly, I review the scholarship on archaeological evidence of pulque production and iconography from three different cultures that are contemporary in space and time with the cultures who made and used these figurines: Teotihuacan, El Tajin, and Aztec. These comparative cases allow me to make a comparison or link between regional behaviors and beliefs involving pulque.

To complete this analysis, I actively worked with Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines currently on view or in storage from the MPM collection. I conducted a visual analysis on each figurine and treat them as visual culture that communicate information to understanding who the people who made them were and the possible beliefs they held. I have taken field notes that include my initial observations, titles (given by MPM), physical descriptions (specifically noting material elements), condition/damage reports (at the time that I handle them), acquisition history, provenance, appraisal, photo documentation of each figurine, where they are currently located in the MPM (on view or off view), and my overall analysis for of how the specific figurine fits into my overall argument. All final notes and documentation from the MPM and from Mexico are incorporated into this summary analysis. Overall, these figurines have provided me with more physical material to evaluate, weigh, match, update, and contribute to the current scholarship and debates of the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines.

### 3.1. Sample Selection Criteria:

The current number of figurines that have been selected is nine. In selecting the *Sonrientes* figurines from the MPM's collection, I specifically looked for certain characteristics that follow the criteria of the animated expressions and nature that is considered diagnostic of the Remojadas-style as reported in the literature that provides at least one image of a *Sonrientes* and an accompanying description. Generally, these descriptions of the *Sonrientes* were similarly

worded and consistent. The diagnostic characteristics include one or more of the following: if the figurine's size is doll-like or smaller hand-held; if the figurine is hollow on the inside; if the figurine is in straight or rigid standing poses; if the figurine's arms and legs (if applicable) are positioned straight out; if the figurine has missing arms or legs; if the figurine is dressed or partially dressed in indigenous clothing, headdress, and accessories; if the figurine's face possesses an active expression that can be perceived as smiling or laughing (almond shape eyes, teeth showing or tongue sticking out); and, lastly, if the figurine's head is tilted upward. I also evaluated whether the museum's register determined the figurine's locality as being directly from the Remojadas region or within the larger state of Veracruz. By having a baseline of characteristics as a control the objects would be easily recognizable to me and set apart from the other figurine styles and types that are identified as Remojadas from the MPM's collection of Veracruz objects. At the moment, I will set aside the other types of Remojadas figurines and objects because they do not fit into my focused list of criteria. Thus, I will be able to directly reference those *Sonrientes* figurines that reflect these characteristics with the hope that they may help me understand how the Remojadas perceived themselves through their artistic style and technique. Moreover, these characteristics will help me answer my questions about who performed the rituals and how.

### 3.2. Specific Methods Employed for Each Object:

Through my examination of the MPM's *Sonrientes* figurines, I used several archaeological and art historical methods. These methods included conducting an analysis of their physical characteristics—shape, form, style, color, size, design, dress, mineral composition(s), etc.—iconographic analysis of their figural meaning, contextual analysis as it pertains to their contribution to their culture and ritual performances, authenticity analysis to

assess their original provenance since before ending up at the MPM, and technique analysis of their ceramic mold-making techniques, appliqué, and features that are specific to these figurines. Additionally, I believe that these figurines are not strictly Remojadas-style and can be reclassified as either a Nopilola ceramic style or by the archaeological sites where they were recovered.

### 3.3. Other Ceramic and Figurine Analysis Methods:

Several scholars have employed archaeological and analytical methods in the field that have been successful in answering questions like mine when applied to other ceramic figurines from other cultures. Specifically, these scholars used these methods to explain the social structures, regional interactions, and ideologies that led to the making, using, and depositing of Mesoamerican ceramic figurines. These scholars include Stephan F. de Borhegyi (1954), Elizabeth M. Brumfiel (1998), and Donald McVicker (2012). Thus, I below dedicate a section to their research on figurine analyses from other Mesoamerican cultures that existed before, during, and after the Classic Period. Major cultures include the Mayans, the Aztecs, and the Teotihuacan, to name a few. Ultimately, these types may or may not follow the *Sonrientes* criteria. A combination of these methods was brought to my attention by several scholars who have analyzed ceramic figurines. Similarly, Park Huntington et al's publication, *Ceramics of Ancient America* (2018) uses multiple approaches that have been used by art historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists to examine areas of archeological ethics, culture, identity, authenticity, provenance and provenience tracing, and unique properties of early ceramics from excavations to institutional collections. This list is part of a larger set of approaches from which the previous scholars have already used. They assist in interpreting themes and meanings of identity, ideology, and religion that are represented in the MPM's *Sonrientes* figurines.

#### **4 The Setting: the Gulf Coast Lowlands of Mexico**

The region referred to by scholars as the Gulf Coast Lowlands is located on the easternmost border of Mexico. The focused region extends from the southernmost border of Texas in the United States and curves all the way down to the Yucatan Peninsula. The closest major body of water which is hugged by this inner bend is the Gulf of Mexico, an extension of the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea. Despite being characterized as hot and humid, the Gulf Lowlands also experiences yearly rainfall which contribute to the growth of tropical vegetation and natural water systems found throughout including estuaries, rivers, lagoons, and swamps. Richard A. Diehl has pointed out that the environment from north to south is much more complex in that it consists of “tremendous diversity created by differences in altitude, topography, precipitation, drainage, and soils. The resulting dynamic environmental mosaic exerted considerable influence on the ancient inhabitants and their cultures” (Diehl, 2000:157).

The Gulf Lowlands includes the modern-day states of Tamaulipas to the north, Veracruz in the center, Tabasco to the south, and Campeche and Yucatan to the most southeastern portion. The Sierra Madre Oriental lies to the west, which has been described by Diehl as acting as a border to “separate the region from the highland plateaus of central and southern Mexico” (Ibid). Specifically focusing on the center, Veracruz is a present-day state which, due to its impressive length, shares its borders with the states of Tamaulipas and San Luis Potosí to the north, Hidalgo, Puebla, and Oaxaca to the west, and Chiapas and Tabasco to the south. Mainly, Veracruz’s placement between neighboring regions such as the Central Highlands to the west and the Mayan Lowlands to the south allowed for this region to act as a sort of “passageway” that established important trade relationships between the three regions (Berjonneau, 1985: 26.). The early



inhabitants of Veracruz, described as hunter-gatherers who relied on the coastal resources before becoming farmers, may have first settled in the north around 5600 B.C. (Coe, 2001:175-178).

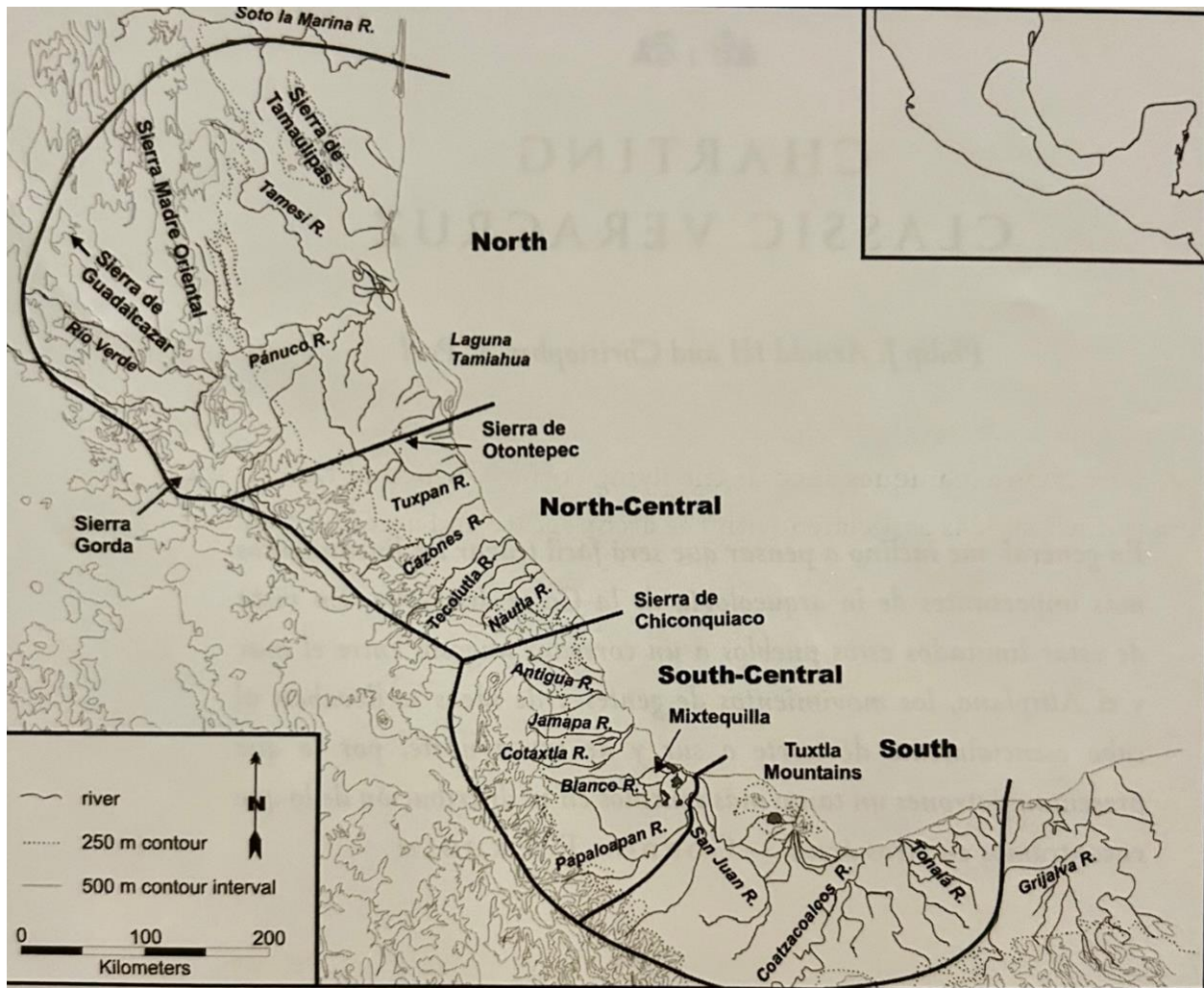


Figure 1: Map of the Gulf Coast showing division of geographic areas from Arnold's 2008 text on page 2.

In academia, the span of the Veracruz region is divided in one of two ways. The first is by the cultural “language distribution” known during the sixteenth century, which were the Huasteca to the north, the Totonacapan in the center, and the Olmecapan to the south and extending into western Tabasco” (Diehl, 2000:157-159. Also see Arnold, 2008: 3.). However, this division has often been met with criticism and disagreement on the extent of established territorial boundaries and issues of archaeological overlap. The second division, which is more widely used for “archaeological investigations,” is by geographic area labeled as north Gulf

Coast, North-central Veracruz, South-central Veracruz, and Southern Veracruz-Western Tabasco (Diehl, 2000:158. Also see Arnold, 2008: 4.) (Fig. 1). For this catalog, our area of focus is within the South-Central Veracruz where the objects of study have predominately been found. However, as will be discussed in the next several sections, while the “[a]rchaeological investigations in the Gulf Coast lowlands have revealed some of ancient America's most spectacular remains” including the *Sonrientes* figurines, “the intensive research necessary to achieve a real understanding of [these] ancient cultures and the processes that account for their history has been largely absent in the region until recently. ...[these] chronologies are notoriously sketchy and poorly documented. ...with the caveat that many placements depend more on faith and accepted wisdom than on archaeologically verified information” (Diehl, 2000: 159-160). It should be noted that Diehl does not explicitly lists this recent scholarship, perhaps due to the fact that the material from these sources are too spread out to follow.

## **5 Defining Classic Veracruz**

The epoch of the Classic period, and by extension Classic Veracruz, dates approximately between 200-900 Common Era or C.E. (or Anno Domini or A.D. which was used by earlier scholars) and is divided into three subperiods: the Early, Middle, and Late Classic. This period of Mexico’s pre-Colombian history was marked by the emergence of major urban state-level societies notably in Teotihuacan, Monte Alban, El Tajin as well as in the Mayan Lowlands (Pohl, 2003). In sum, as Diehl describes it, when compared to the earlier Preclassic, the Classic period was “a time of cultural florescence...Populations grew in size and density, social complexity increased, long-distance commerce intensified, warfare motivated by political and economic considerations became the norm, and artistic accomplishments, especially in religious and elite

realms, achieved new heights” (Diehl, 2000: 172. Also see Bernal, 1968: 112 and Pasztory, 1978: 7-9).

The term “Classic Veracruz” has several definitions that aid in differentiating the Classic period, the cultures, and the cultural traits in Central and South-Central Veracruz. Chapter one of Philip J. Arnold and Christopher A. Pool’s 2008 source focuses on this working definition by breaking it down into the region’s spatial, temporal, artistic, ethnicity and intra- and interregional areas (Arnold, 2008). First, in terms of establishing the spatial divisions of Classic Veracruz, Arnold cites the use of both the language or ethnohistoric distribution and geographic areas divisions as described earlier by Diehl’s 2000 source. However, while in agreeance with the latter division, Arnolds further adds that “culturally these subareas were interconnected and internally diverse” (Ibid: 4). Arnold’s statement may hold true especially when we consider later the interregnal relationships between cultures within Veracruz (i.e. Las Remojadas, El Tajin) and the central highlands (i.e. Teotihuacan) as it relates to artistic and iconographic influences. Next, many scholars and archaeologists tend to blindly follow each other on the approximate dating of the Classic Veracruz period; that being between 300-900 C.E. more or less, which was initially established by at least one or two earlier or outdated sources without reassessment. Yet, there are continuing issues with this timeframe and, by extension, placing the *Sonrientes* figurines within an appropriate chronology. These shortcomings are due to several types of archaeological methods that are often overused including “a bias toward survey projects...an emphasis on governmental initiatives designed to promote archaeotourism. ...[and] artifact cross-dating, a system that can quickly become self-reifying. ...[Thus,] Absolute dating (radiocarbon, obsidian hydration, etc.) often takes a backseat in such efforts. ...[and] chronometric data may go uncollected, unprocessed, or virtually unreported” (Ibid: 5-6). Still, until further methods are

conducted, it appears that this approximate timeframe for the temporal definition will remain for both the *Sonrientes* and the overarching umbrella that is Classic Veracruz. On the other hand, the artistic considerations seem to be a more widely accepted and viewed as a simplified definition that encompasses the visual and physical aspects of the artworks during this period. Referencing Tatiana Proskouriakoff's original definition, Classic Veracruz or Classic Veracruz-style is "an artistic tradition that had previously been called "Tajin," "Tajinoide," or even "Totonac"; it includes rhythmic curves and interlacing scrolls, often sculpted on stone yokes, palmas, and hachas... Moreover, the term was intended to aid archaeological identification in the field and to assist the kind of cross-dating" (Ibid: 7; cites Proskouriakoff 1952-53, 1954, 1971). Of course, this definition has recently been expanded, which now focuses on "differentiat[ing] regional variations of the interlace-scroll style. ...on both large and portable sculpture," including reliefs and certain Tajin architecture styles and "to identify a tradition of life-sized terracotta sculpture and smaller 'smiling-face' figurines" (Ibid: 8; cites Stark, 1998 and Ochoa, 2001).

Several aspects of defining what or who is considered Classic Veracruz in Central and South-Central Veracruz has recently been revised. The ethnic background was notably argued by Alfonso Medellín Zenil (1960), a prominent archeologist from the Anthropology Department of the State of Veracruz, who proposed that the early inhabitants of the Late Pre-Classic period were the Totonacs and would later continue to thrive throughout the Classic period in Central Veracruz, which other earlier scholars have backed up until recently. Based on evidence of the presence of Pre-Classic and Classic elements in ceramic and figurine types found both in the Gulf Lowlands and the Central Highlands, Medellín Zenil describes the events of a possible Contact-Period occurrence that, as he describes in his early Spanish text, was: "*A causa del paulatino empobrecimiento de las tierras de la zona semiárida y de la zona Río-Blanco-*

*Papaloapan, ciertos grupos totonacos del final del Horizonte Preclásico y de principios del Clásico...debieron emigrar hacia la cuenca de México, donde se mezclarían biológica y culturalmente...(en el aspecto cerámico)... este mestizaje renacerían esplendorosamente, sobre los fértiles lúgamos de la laguna mexicana*” (Translation: “Due to the gradual impoverishment of the lands of the semi-arid zone and the Río-Blanco-Papaloapan zone, certain Totonac groups from the end of the Preclassic Horizon and the beginning of the Classic...had to emigrate to the basin of Mexico, where they would mix biologically and culturally...(in the ceramic aspect)... this miscegenation...would be resplendently reborn on the fertile silt of the Mexican lagoon”) (Medellin Zenil, 1960:118.). Current sources now believe that this is not the case and argue that the Totonac were “relative latecomers” and instead can be placed within the Post-Classic Period, which has been supported by linguistic and epigraphic data (Arnold, 2008:11-12). Rather, as summarized in Arnold’s source, Herman Strebel’s study (1885-89) on the ethnic heritage of Central Veracruz “identified two cultural groups in Central Veracruz: Ranchito de las Ánimas and Cerro Montoso. ...associate[ing] the former with the Classic Period (i.e., Remojadas Superior) and the latter with Postclassic occupation. ...[Thus,] Strebel considered the Ranchito de las Ánimas group to be the original inhabitants of central Veracruz, while the Totonacs, represented by the Cerro Montoso materials, arrived much later” (Arnold, 2008:11, cites Daneels n.d. ([2002?]: 39-40). Thus, while the *Sonrientes* figurines were initially labeled as Totonac creations, the Ranchito de las Ánimas group should perhaps be a more appropriate classification for these figurines. Lastly, the boundaries of the intra- and interregional relationships with Classic Veracruz are considered or even reconsidered using settlement-pattern data and degrees of influence between the Classic cultures of the Gulf Lowland (Veracruz), the Central Highlands (Teotihuacan), and the Mayan Lowlands (Ibid: 12-15). Thus, depending on the case under

observation, defining certain cultural traits as Classic Veracruz or otherwise may still prompt discourse.

In sum, the exact definition of Classic Veracruz is multifaceted; some definitions may be preferred over others depending on the research context and others have been revised. The same approach can be applied to the *Sonrientes* figurines within the context and definitions of Classic Veracruz as they have been interpreted by previous scholars to represent multiple meanings and functions within the Remojadas ritual-cultural context. This catalog utilizes all these definitions in some degree to aid in understanding the spatial, temporal, artistic, ethnicity and intra- and interregional aspects of these figurines.

## **6 *Sonrientes* Figurines and the Remojadas Culture**

The regional provenience of the *Sonrientes* figurines is strictly within the Gulf Lowlands, specifically believed to have originated within the Las Remojadas area in the modern state of Veracruz. Thus, this figurine type has often been labeled as in the Remojadas style. Little academic and archaeological data is known on the Remojadas culture. The Remojadas people, whose origins date back to the Pre-Classic period (approximately 2500 BCE - 250 CE) of the region, occupied a small region of the South-Central part of Veracruz. The term “Remojadas” is confusing because it has been used to refer to the people, the individual culture, the region, the archeological site, the distinct style of figurines, and a sequence of ceramics limited to the Classic Period. In short, while the Remojadas culture did not build big pyramids they were considered great artisans as evident by their ceramic figurine creations through refined molds and the accomplishment of the portrayal of human expression rarely found in other early Mesoamerican figurines (e.g. Fernandez Barrera, 1960; Spratling, 1960; Emmerich, 1963: 108).

### **6.1. The Ceramic Complex:**

The Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* have been identified as one ceramic type within this larger figurine sphere from the Gulf lowland of Classic Veracruz, Mexico, which has been termed as the “Smiling Figurine” Complex (e.g. Drucker, 1943. Medellin Zenil and Peterson, 1954); this larger figurine sphere will be an important starting point for contextualizing these objects. For example, other ceramic artifacts that have been labeled or identified as Remojadas include figurines portraying priests, warriors and dancers, deities (including the Old Fire God [Huehuateotl Xiuhtecuhtli], Tlaloc, Xipe Totec, the Fat God, the Death God [Mictlantecuhtli], and Xochipilli-Macuilxochitl), larger terracotta figurines either sitting cross-legged or standing with realistic proportions, anthropomorphic vessels, whistles and rattles, and toy-like objects with wheels resembling dogs or deer creatures (Medellin Zenil and Peterson, 1954). Thus, the Remojadas people were most likely interested in materializing major themes depicting religion, nature, and realism. Like the *Sonrientes*, these ceramics were created in various sizes, standing in the round, in some cases the “style is realistic without horror vacui nor is it packed with scrolls, although often there is a desire to reproduce with great care the slightest details of an elaborate ornament or attire. The headdresses, varied and sometimes extravagant,...Frontality is the rule, gestures are monotonous but normally the liveliness of these works remains intact” (Berjonneau, 1985: 29-30). These ceramics are dated within the span of the Middle and Late Classic period and classified as Upper Remojadas due to the preferred mold-made methods as opposed to the hand-made creations of the Lower Remojadas sequence from the earlier Pre-Classic period (Adams, 1997: 206). The preferred decoration, which were methods that were continued from the Pre-Classic, included red and white slip paint, tar painted on their mouth and eyes, low relief, and applique with additional clay.

## 6.2. Figurine Types and Classifications:

The Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines are visually distinctive, vary in size, and offer a sense of artistic individuality and expression while still adhering to the uniformity of the mold. Evidently, the ceramic evolution and dating of the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines can be traced to some degree within the Classic period, though the exact chronology is still up for debate. Earlier types, which have been generally dated to either the later part of the Early Classic or the Middle Classic period, contained premature features similar to later versions (i.e. expression, pose, clothing), “particularly as all clues seem to indicate that, moving forward from its oldest known aspects, it reached an unprecedented artistic and technical maturity” (Covarrubias, 1957: 159). Among the earlier types are Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurine that were smaller hand-held pieces that functioned as instruments, like whistles, which were first recovered from Las Remojadas region. As one source comments, if used they would “[produce] a thin, high-pitched flutelike sound. [While] The purpose of the whistle is still undetermined. Some archaeologists have suggested...were merely an expression of playfulness, but it is also possible that they were intended to give magic life to the figurines by giving them sound, and thus a voice. ...[Overall] Sculptural form always retained its dominant role in these figurines” (Emmerich, 1963: 108). Evidently, these smaller *Sonrientes* figurine instruments may have also continued into the early Post-Classic period. The majority of Late Classic period types of *Sonrientes* figurines. can be described as “all curvilinear, baroque, and elegant, as contrasted [for example] with the geometric masses, the sharp and angular lines, of the awesome art of the highlands” (Covarrubias, 1957:159).

For a long time, the *Sonrientes* figurines were reasoned to be distinct to the Las Remojadas region, and, thus strictly labeled as Remojadas-style. However, it has now been established that a long tradition existed beyond that region with several variations that fit within



the later part of the Classic Period. Harold W. McBride's section in a 1971 exhibition catalog provides a somewhat thorough categorization of the *Sonrientes* figurines types into two complexes: the Remojadas Tradition and the Nopiloa Tradition; both can be further classified by manufacturing and decorative techniques (McBride, 1971: 23-30). For my thesis, I apply these complexes to the nine MPM figurines to distinguish them from each other in the following section. The main classification types include: Upper Remojadas II: Hand-Modeled Body Smiling Figures considered "the earliest of all the smiling figures," (some were even whistle types) and characterized by "hollow hand-modeled bodies with applique ornamentation which includes a simple loincloth and chest band. The heads are mold-made and show a pronounced frontal-occipital cranial deformation. There is usually a necklace with a clay representation of an olvia shell "bell" which was cut-off, hollowed out... The forehead band is plain with stylized hairlocks or simply decorated with low relief or engraved designs" (Ibid: 26-27); Nopiloa I: Plain Forehead Smiling Figures "The earliest of these figures was called the Chata Lisa (plain flat nose) type...distinguished by its close-set oval eyes, a wide, flat and plain forehead and a smile that is often a grimace. The bodies are mold-made with applique bead necklaces and wristlets which often have the shell "bell" attached...A variant of this type has a plain forehead also but the eyes and the smile are more natural. It has an inter-eyebrow adornment which serves to extend the nose line upward" (Ibid: 28. Also see Medellin Zenil, 1960:80); Nopiloa II: Decorated Forehead Smiling Figures, which initially only the heads were found but are characterized by "their natural features and postures, the full smile and wide range of realistic or symbolic forehead ornamentation. ...Two basic head shapes are portrayed...The wide triangular head type usually has a more "devilish" smile and the tongue frequently protrudes between the teeth... [and] The more naturally shaped head" (Ibid. Also see Medellin Zenil, 1952 and 1954); Nopiloa

III: Dicha Tuerta Style Smiling Figures, which were sometimes whistle types, are “defined as being carelessly made... [and] show some of the following characteristics: very stiff posture; head facing directly forward rather than tilting upward; hands almost always upraised to the side of the head with the palms turned outward and the finger separations rudely indicated; deeply but coarsely modeled hairdress decorations; very shallow decorations or decorations engraved after molding the figure; applique hair forelocks; pinched together facial features; ill shaped mouth; a grimace rather than a smile” (Ibid: 29); Isla de Sacrificios: Postclassic Smiling Figures, which McBride identifies only by their small size, created by a single mold, and that they are whistles types (Ibid).

### 6.3. Manufacturing Techniques:

The *Sonrientes* figurine, as with the majority of Classic Veracruz sculpture and other figurines, were made with coarse sandy clay; the color tones of this material range from light brown, reddish-brown, or orange. While it remains unclear exactly what these early ceramists’ processes were, there are indications that they used a combination of hand and two-part press mold techniques, which allowed for rapid production and hollow insides; smaller figurines are made in a single mold. Based on direct observations of the inside and outside of the larger figurines, the details of face, front of body, and its decoration were made with a mold while the backside, with little to no detail, were pressed, patted, smoothed, and sealed to the front as indicated by the presences of side seams (e.g. Medellin Zenil and Peterson, 1954:163; Emmerich, 1963: 108-109; Culpepper Belt, 1971: 40). Meanwhile, some features “are precisely drawn [in low relief], the faces, with their expressive mouths, are delicate and sharp” (Stierlin, 1982: 134). Depending on the pose, the arms, hands, and legs were either part of the mold or created separately and attached later. Additionally, several holes of varying sizes and shapes are

usually cut or poked into the sides or backside of the head, body, and limbs. These holes, either small and round or large rectangular or triangular shaped were most likely “air holes...to hasten drying and avoid the buildup of steam during firing” (Culpepper Belt, 1971: 40). It should also be mentioned that, as noted by Medellín Zenil, on some figurines the presence of “*agujeros, ranutas rectas o curvas frecuentes en lo alto de la frente deben haber servido para insertar adornos de plumas, pelo o flores*” (Translation: “frequent holes, straight grooves or curves high on the forehead must have served to insert feather, hair or flower decorations” (Paz and Medellín Zenil, 1962: 41); regardless, without these materials visibly present scholars have not agreed on their exact function. Lastly, at one point the *Sonrientes* figurines were “painted with red, yellow, blue and white paint,” and even black tar on the face, but “unfortunately only traces remain today” (Emmerich, 1963: 109).

#### 6.4. Features and Decoration:

Since their archaeological recovery, the later Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines, who are either male or female, have been well-recognized for their short, small doll or child-like sized appearance which measure up to ten inches, large triangular head shape with pointed chin facing upward, straight and rigid standing, posing with their arms (if attached) outstretched upward or in angled positions toward their face, hands (sometimes small or large) either open and outward or sometimes grasping a rattle like instruments in one hand, legs spread out with small feet (if attached), low relief designs on their headdress, chest bands, and full skirt or loincloth garments (if applicable), and overall animated expressions from which they get their name. Specifically, their expressions appear either frozen in a grotesque manner or in a laughter or smile with teeth or tongue sticking out. Besides their expressions, other features that aid in distinguishing these figurines should be mentioned. First, many scholars have noted body manipulation in the head and

smile in the form of a frontal-occipital cranial deformation that give it its triangular distinctive shape and dental mutilation along the upper rows of teeth, which have been sawed to a point. (e.g. Covarrubias, 1957:195; Fernandez Barrera, 1960: 181; Paz and Medellin Zenil, 1962: 40-41; Bernal, 1968: 111; Smith, 1968: 106). One study by Vladimiro Rosado Ojeda comments on how the flat and oval heads reflected in these figurines may depict two types of real practices of body mutilation, specifically two types from southern Veracruz known as “‘Tete, trilobee’ y ‘Tete bilobee’” (no translation) (Rosado Ojeda, 1941: 56-57); the same can be applied to their teeth, which may have been performed by using tools to sharpen the teeth (Ibid: 57-58). Second, the decoration on their headdress and garments are numerous and vary depending on the archaeological site they were recovered. Scholars have noted that the most prominent decoration include geometric designs, intertwining scrolls (arguably similar to the Classic Veracruz or scroll style from El Tajin), storks, fish, monkeys, men, etc., which may hold further symbolism or clues to their cultural and religious iconography (e.g. Covarrubias, 1957:195; Emmerich, 1963: 108). Citing Medellín Zenil, who is among the first to analyze these types of decoration, he summarizes the following: “*las virgulas son estilizaciones del mono, doble o nahual de Xochipilli; los dibujos geométricos [simple o dobles] son variaciones del signo nahui ollin, sol del movimiento; la serpiente emplumada, es casi innecesario decirlo, designa a Quetzalcoatl, en su primera forma, como dios del viento; la greca escalonada alude a la serpiente, símbolo de fertilidad... Criaturas danzantes que parecen celebrar al sol y a la vegetación naciente, embriagadas por una dicha que se expresa en todas las gamas del júbilo*” (Translation: “the virgulas are stylizations of the monkey, double or nahual of Xochipilli; the [single or double] geometric drawings are variations of the nahui ollin sign, sun of movement; the feathered serpent, it is almost unnecessary to say, designates Quetzalcoatl, in his first form, as god of the

wind; the stepped fretwork alludes to the snake, a symbol of fertility... Dancing creatures that seem to celebrate the sun and the nascent vegetation, intoxicated by a joy that is expressed in all ranges of joy” (Paz and Medellín Zenil, 1962: 13, 42-44). Thus, Medellín Zenil’s reading of these decorations reveals, at least in part, the religious pantheon and belief systems of the Classic groups of the Gulf Coast including for the Remojadas culture.

#### 6.5. Archaeological Recovery and Provenience:

I will now turn to how the *Sonrientes* came to our attention and why they are so plentiful but so poorly studied. The Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* have been found primarily in Central and South-Central Veracruz and are generally dated to the Classic period (approximately from 200-900 CE), though the more elaborate examples of this figurine style have been specifically placed within the Late Classic periods, specifically within 600-900 CE. Medellín Zenil first identified this new style of ceramic figurine and attributed it to the Classic period based on the stratigraphy he observed in excavations during the early 1950s (Medellín Zenil and Peterson, 1954). It is now generally agreed that these figurines belonged to the Classic Veracruz period, however, there has been minimal debate or confirmation through other archeological methods on exact chronological dating.



Figure 2: Map of Veracruz pinpointing major archaeological sites in the South-Central regions where Remojadas-style Sonrientes figurines have been recovered including Las Remojadas, El Zapotal, Los Cerros, Nopiloa, and Dicha Tuerta.

The *Sonrientes* figurines gained attention under unfortunate circumstances, specifically, a mass looting event. In 1952 reports came in that “the antiquity market of Mexico City was suddenly flooded with sculptured pieces of which the ‘Laughing Faces,’ or ‘Smiling Heads,’ formed the chief part...[however,] the Presidente Municipal (Mayor) of the village of Joachin, in

the municipality of Tierra Blanca, Veracruz, denounced illegal excavations [and looting] in his territory” (Medellin Zenil and Peterson, 1954: 162-163, 167). Alfonso Medellin Zenil and his team were sent by the Department of Anthropology from the Universidad Veracruzana shortly after to excavate and collect any remaining un-looted artifacts, which include the *Sonrientes* figurines, from the nearby archaeological sites at Los Cerros and Dicha Tuerta (or Nuevo Porvenir de Hidalgo) in that territory. Medellin Zenil’s report surveyed complete or partial ceramic figurines with almost all of them depicting the characteristic of a smiling or laughing head. These artifacts were found near the surface layers of ancient “dumping places” or “rubbish heaps” that had been already disturbed by looters (e.g. Medellin Zenil, 1952; Paz and Medellin Zenil, 1962: 35, 36-37). Similarly, Medellin Zenil had conducted several other expeditions that unearthed earlier versions of *Sonrientes* from similar burial mounds or dump/rubbish places in Veracruz (Fig 2). These sites include the Las Remojadas archaeological site located in the municipality of Soledad de Doblado, Veracruz in 1951, the Loma de Los Carmona archaeological site located in the municipality of Manlio Fabio Altamirano, Veracruz in 1952, and also later in El Apachital archaeological site located in the municipality of Jamapa in 1961-1962 (Paz and Medellin Zenil, 1962: 34-38); most of these reports were unpublished. Likewise, the *Sonrientes* figurines, and other Remojadas artifacts, were also recovered farther south at the El Zapotal (El Zapote?), a Mixtequilla archaeological site located in the municipality of Ignacio de la Llave, Veracruz (e.g. Adams, 1977: 206; Wyllie, 2010) as well as at the Nopiloa archaeological site also located in the municipality of Tierra Blanca, Veracruz in 1957-1958 (see Paz and Medellin Zenil, 1962: 37).

The Late Classic *Sonrientes* figurines have been found in different conditions. Scholars have interchangeably referred to them as either heads or figurines due the fact that “[f]or years,”

before the excavations at Los Cerros and Dicha Tuerta in south-central Veracruz, “only the beautiful hollow clay heads with smiling faces were known; no complete figures of this type had ever come out of the earth until the discovery of these two sites.” (Covarrubias, 1957:195). Of course, some figurines have been recovered with missing heads or limbs. Moreover, it was previously thought that the presence of only the heads indicated that they used as some sort of decoration such as for “architectural ornaments,” but since these structures were never identified and full body examples were later found this theory has been debunked. (Emmerich, 1963:106; also see Peterson, 1954: 81). There are several probabilities for the presence of the heads only, especially in large quantities: 1. poor construction; 2. long term effects from their environment and recovery; 3. part of the Remojadas ritual process. The first two theories may hold ground especially considering that these figurines “were buried directly in the heavy soil...Thus, during burial and again during excavation, Veracruz figures twice ran the risk of serious breakage, with the result that there are virtually no unbroken figures larger than about twelve inches” (Emmerich, 1963: 114). However, the third theory can be supported by previous patterns of Mesoamerican behaviors and beliefs with pottery and ceramics and object scarification. Specifically, the initial archaeological recovery of the *Sonrientes* heads, and later incomplete figurine bodies, could have been meant “to be offered to the [Remojadas] gods as sacrifices in rituals which called for the destruction of the body and the interment of the head alone. ...This was based on an ancient Indian belief going back to earliest archaic times that a vessel or a figure had to be ritually "killed" by being broken or having a hole punched in it so that its spirit would be freed to accompany the dead on their voyage to the after life” (Ibid: 110-114).

6.6. Current Academic Setbacks:



Unfortunately, while the existing scholarship on other Mesoamerican ceramics is plentiful, that on Remojadas culture and specifically the *Sonrientes* figurines has been limited; this includes any academic interpretation of them. Thus, the scholarship on these figurines fails to capture all the information that the figurines can tell us. Overall, archaeologists have not been able to obtain accurate or clear data about where and how the *Sonrientes* were deposited by Remojadas makers and users. The conditions of the original proveniences where any remaining figurines have been recovered were usually found tampered with by looters or in the poorest conditions. Likewise, the provenance records of those looted *Sonrientes* figurines are either missing or have gaps. So, it has been up to scholars to fill in these missing gaps with the *Sonrientes* figurines—some of which are replica casts—that have turned up in institutional and private collections (e.g. Easby, 1970: 173; Sarro, 2018; Parsons, 1980; Barakat, 1986: 11).

#### 6.7. Literature Review of their Previous Interpretations:

Only a few scholars have attempted to interpret Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines, and each formulated a different interpretation. Each scholar used analytical methods to document the physical properties, features, and ornaments of *Sonrientes* figurines. Medellín Zenil (1954) would look closely at their facial expressions to understand their meaning and interpret them as nothing more than a form of greeting. Six years later, William Spratling (1960) read the *Sonrientes* as depicting human beings whose expressions reflected open-ended interpretations. In that same year, Josefina Fernández Barrera's short analysis (1960) similarly read *Sonrientes* figurines from the Mixtequilla region of Veracruz as individual portraits of young people from that culture. Then, three years later Carl B. Campton (1963) associated the nature of their treatment with ritualistic use. Lastly, Doris Heyden (1970) examined their facial expressions and identifying iconography on their headdresses to link them to specific gods. I synthesize their

methods to produce a more holistic reading of the figurines and subsequently a richer understanding of the Remojadas culture and other cultures were similar types have been recovered. Additionally, a more general reading of the *Sonrientes* figurines related to burial practices and death cults also provide support for interpreting their function or purpose.

Medellin Zenil speculated that the smiling or laughing symbolized “an old greeting habit meaning ‘I come in peace,’ or, ‘I have nothing to hide’” (Medellin Zenil and Peterson, 1954:166). However, this may have been far-fetched since “[t]he smile is rarely found on Mesoamerican artifacts, as they usually, represent the viewpoint of a theocratic-militaristic group, and the serious or grim expression is the reigning fashion (Fig. 55, L)” (Ibid.). I find Zenil’s initial interpretation the most important because it offers the first real reading of these figurines as he was recovering them. I think his article could have further pushed for a closer reading and given his own explanation as to how he came to see them as communicating a peaceful greeting or statement. Additionally, Zenil makes no mention of the possible purposes that these figurines would have served, especially at the sites that they were recovered from, and why they were discovered in dumping areas. Were these rejects that did not make the cut for ritual uses? I do not think that we should assume that these figurines were rejects. Instead, and following Zenil’s interpretation, I believe the faces and poses of the *Sonrientes*, such as those in the MPM collection, do communicate some meaning of emotion or message which the Remojadas people formulated through these ceramics figurines and served in their rituals.

Spratling proposed an alternative interpretation of the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines in that they depict the more human attributes of their culture; they are human representations, rather than divine or God representations (Spratling, 1960). This theory, however, is arguably uncommon when compared to other cultures. This unique art style was

personified through evolutions of early and later epochs and may reflect mutual interregional interactions and influences with their neighbors as similar styles have been found at other previously mentioned archaeological sites. As was initially coined by Medellín Zenil, their facial expressions are considered a smiling head complex, which may be seen not as a single form, but several individual components (eyes, eyebrows, cheeks, and mouth) working together to communicate multiple meanings for viewers to interpret for themselves, since no written records were left by the Remojadas culture. (Ibid: 13). Spratling proposed that their facial expressions are “the most smiling people,” to be archeologically discovered in Mesoamerica, but a comparative analysis between the *Sonrientes* figurines and other similarly expressive artifacts may be needed to prove this true. That said, Spratling believed that the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines “were created for their own domestic delectation” with the intended purpose “to be passed around and enjoyed in daily life” (Ibid: 11). I agree with this alternative interpretation because the characteristics of the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines are visually more human; there is arguably nothing that indicates that they are divine or spiritual in nature. If anything, any divine or spiritual affiliations may be interpreted through their final placement in burials or ancient dumping areas after fulfilling ritual functions or purpose. However, Spratling, like Zenil, only gives a visual analysis of these figurines in connection to domestic use and not to ritualic use. What remains missing are theories of who or what social class these figures are meant to represent and why they reflect actions of substance consumption as opposed to a more neutral pose. And if the *Sonrientes* figurines are in fact human representations, this raises the question as to why the Remojadas people focused on reflecting the mortal realm in their figurines, and other artifacts, and not directly on the spiritual realm as other Mesoamerican cultures did. Thus, using Spratling interpretation, I look at methods of representation with the

MPM objects to learn about reality, social status, and ritual performance as viewed by the Remojadas maker.

Looking specifically at Mixtequilla-style *Sonrientes* heads, Fernandez Barrera proposed that the expressive faces “*no tienen...signos mitológicos que las puedan identificar como representaciones de deidades, entran en el campo de la escultura laica y llegan a ser positivos retratos, tal es el grado de personalidad impresa en cada una de ellas*” (Translation: “do not have mythological signs that could identify them as representations of deities, they enter the field of secular sculpture and they become positive portraits, such is the degree of personality imprinted on each one of them”) (Fernandez Barrera, 1960: 179-180). Fernandez Barrera specifically notes that the uniformity of their features such as the shape of head, forehead, eyes, cheeks, ears, nose, lips, teeth, smile, dress and jewelry were also distinctive and personalized when compared to each other. The craftsmanship of these *Sonrientes* heads were “*hecha por hombres excesivamente observadores que ya habían dominado plenamente la técnica de la escultura. ...Aunque están todas ellas dentro de un patrón generalizado, cada una posee diferentes caracteres que la singularizan de las demás... Son el retrato de determinada persona, ... a la fidelidad con que expresaron la sonrisa; en especial la sonrisa de gente joven (porque no tienen las características de vejez como el mentón pronunciado o arrugas en el rostro)*” (Translation: “done by excessively observant men who had already fully mastered the technique of sculpture. ...Although they are all within a generalized pattern, each one has different characters that distinguish it from the others... They are the portrait of a certain person, ...to the fidelity with which they expressed the smile; especially the smile of young people (because they do not have the characteristics of old age such as a pronounced chin or wrinkles on their face)” (Ibid: 181). The aspect of individuality is convincing and perhaps answers the question that these

*Sonrientes* represented real life individuals from the Mixtequilla culture; the same argument could be made for the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines. Additionally, the observation of youthful traits does hold some ground when considering other figurine examples from the “Smiling Figurine” complex do possess older-like features, as mentioned above, when compared to the *Sonrientes* figurines. However, what this interpretation does not answer is who these individuals were within the social sphere of their culture and why they were chosen to have their portrait reflected as *Sonrientes*. While these questions may never fully be answered, I believe Fernandez Barrera’s perspective on the uniformity of their features can be further used to push the argument that these figurines portray a social religious group or cult (i.e. youthful priests) from the Remojadas culture. Likewise, the focus of their youthful traits may point to the importance or responsibility of individuals within a certain age range chosen to represent their culture and, thus, reflected in the *Sonrientes*.

Campton observed *Sonrientes* figurines faces as “contortions [that] seem somewhat more like grimaces of pain but most of have a genuinely happy appearance” (Campton, 1963: 16-17). Interestingly, the presence of pulque bowls were found in several groups of offerings with the *Sonrientes*, which were excavated from the Apachital archaeological site in Tierra Blanca, Veracruz between 1961-1962 by the University of Veracruz Institute of Anthropology, and were “perhaps the reason for the smiles on the faces of the figurines” (Ibid: 17, cites Medellin Zenil). Overall, Campton interpretation is based on archaeological context and suggests their cultural purpose, how they were treated after they were used, and possible substances that were used during rituals that involved these smiling figures (Ibid.). I would agree that their archeological context can contribute to the overall reading of these figurines as it pertains to the ritual activity and treatment of these objects. The latter certainly speaks to how the user valued the *Sonrientes*

figurines—either placed in burials or thrown to the dumping or rubbish areas. Further, I think it is interesting that Campton is the first scholar to interpret their expressions as painful, but I would have to disagree with that observation. Likewise, Campton considers other artifacts found close to the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines. If other similar situations were found, then it would be of interest to explore these relationships and understand what other objects were used or distributed among the *Sonrientes* figurines as the Remojadas people carried out their rituals. The questions that remain unexplained in Campton’s interpretation are what kind of rituals were Remojadas people carrying out and how did they do them? I believe these rituals focused on sensory output, which is indicated, at least in part, to the pulque bowls. Unfortunately, the probability that the MPM has any archaeological records pertaining to other artifacts found with their *Sonrientes* figurines is most likely nonexistent. However, Campton can be used as a model to assess the MPM objects’ conditions—i.e. breakage points, burnish residue, firing burns—to learn creation and ritual treatment carried out by the Remojadas people.

Heyden introduced a new reading of the *Sonrientes* figurines in that they are individuals from the Remojadas culture dressed to represent the “likeness” of gods and mimic positive behaviors of worship within the context of festivities for specific gods. (Heyden, 1970: 159-162; also see Heyden, 1971: 37-38). First, Heyden agreed with previous scholars that some *Sonrientes* figurines may actually represent earlier or primitive versions of Xochipilli, the Aztec god of dance, music, joy, love, etc., specifically through two identifying attributes: the first is the “*el simbolo ollin que lleva muchas figuras sonrientes en su tocado esta asociada con el sol, y...una de las advocaciones de Xochipilli es su asociacion con el sol*” (Translation: “the ollin symbol that many smiling figures wear on their headdress is associated with the sun, and...one of Xochipilli's invocations is his association with the sun”), and the second attribute is that some

figurine bodies were created as rattles and whistles. (Ibid: 159; also see Rosado Ojeda, 1941; Peterson, 1953: 63, Peterson, 1954: 81, Medellin Zenil, 1960: 83-84, Paz and Medellin Zenil, 1962: 13). The existence of these two physical attributes that can be matched to this god, who is better known within the Post-Classic era, is convincing but it also raises questions as to whether we can argue if some sort of influential relationship between the cultural groups within Classic and Post-Classic existed, why, and to what degree. Of course, these attributes cannot be applied to all *Sonrientes* figurines since those currently known come in a variety of sizes and possess other unique or different iconography on their dress attire, which may be dependent on or linked to the regions from which they were archaeological recovered. Using several short anecdotes of Aztec festivals and rituals that involved mortal worshipers or sacrificial victims, Heyden argues that: “las figuras sonrientes representan a las semejanzas de los dioses mas que a los dioses mismos: “*los hombres y las mujeres que representaban a las deidades en las fiestas mensuales y quienes fueron sacrificados durante estas fiestas. A cada semejanza o vivtima se le daba el caracter del dios, "poniendole sus aderezos y la tiara en la cabeza"* (Translation: “the smiling figures represent the likenesses of the gods rather than the gods themselves: the men and women who represented the deities at the monthly festivals and who were sacrificed during these festivals. Each likeness or victim was given the character of the god, ‘putting his decorations and the tiara on his head’”) (Ibid: 159). Arguably, this is very similar to Spratling’s earlier interpretation in that these figurines represent human characters who were part of specific religious group(s) instead of the actual deities. Unfortunately, Heyden does not provide further iconographic examples of the other deities they are supposedly portraying, so as of now the only deity that has been identified is Xochipilli. As for their expressive nature, this can be explained by the ritual processes that these characters took part in during celebratory or sacrificial events. It

was believed that the men and women from these groups were supposed to exert happy and expressive expressions because for the purpose of the festival or ritual “[e]ra indispensable que no se pusiera triste esta aictima porque la tristeza traia mala suerte. For lo tanto, se ejercía mucho cuidado en tener alegre a la semejanza, que cantara y bailara; al ver que se le decaia su animo, se le administraba algun embriagante, para volverle a alegrar” (Transalation: “It was essential that this victim not be sad because sadness brought bad luck. Therefore, great care was exercised to keep the likeness happy, singing and dancing; Seeing that his spirit was failing, some intoxicant was administered to him to cheer him up again” (Ibid: 159-160). This observation supports my argument that some sort of intoxicant, like pulque, may have been purposefully used and explains the reason behind the *Sonrientes*’ expressions. Additionally, we would have to acknowledge that the Remojada-style *Sonrientes* figurines are, in fact, sacrificial victims from the Remojadas culture, but further research on and evidence of sacrificial practices and beliefs from this culture is needed.



Figure 3: Drawing by Wyllie of *Sonrientes* figurines with human remains from an El Zapotal secondary burial from Wyllie’s 2010 text on page 216.



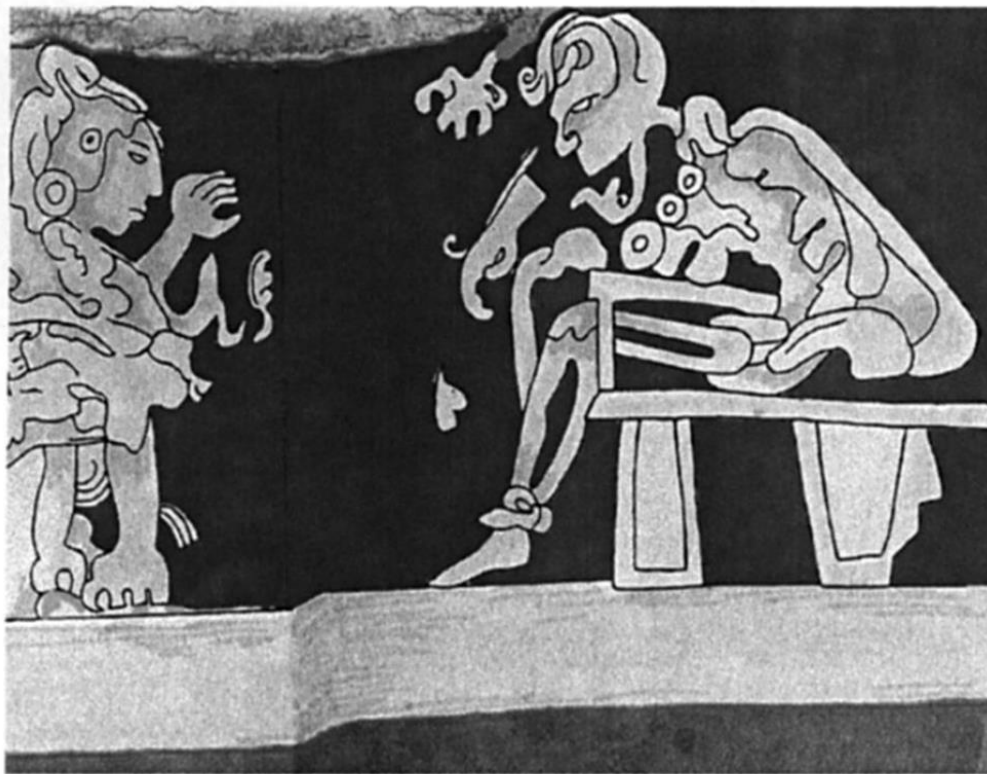


Figure 4: Drawing by Wyllie of El Zapotal mural panels B and C depicting a “dwarf-like attendant” (most likely a *Sonrientes* figurine based on the headdress iconography and raised arm stance) interacting with the Death God from Wyllie’s 2010 text on page 216.

Lastly, other interpretations of the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* relate to the archaeological context in which they were found. In general, there are cases where these figurines were found in near complete forms as grave goods, leading some scholars to connect the *Sonrientes* figurines with death; or more specifically companions to the dead (e.g. Easby, 1970: 165. Ochoa, 2001. Diehl, n.d [2001?]). One specific case for this interpretation was in the mid 1970s from the El Zapotal site where *Sonrientes* figurines were found in several death contexts: either within initially undisturbed human burial mounds or in murals that were connected to a large clay model of the death god (Wyllie, 2010. Also see Wyllie, 2017) (Fig. 3 and 4). These figurines in the burial mounds were viewed as guarding these burials as evident by the fact that they were found with “brandished knives in their hands, as if warding off the many hazards of the afterlife to which Mesoamerican souls were subject” (Adams, 1977: 206). Other

archaeological sites in Veracruz in which Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines were found in mostly burial contexts include Cerro de las Mesas to the south of the Remojadas region. Despite these findings, scholars have not found a clear answer as to if the *Sonrientes* figurines represented the dead they were buried with or what their social status was when they were alive, specifically if they were “persons dying normal deaths, or the remains of bodies of sacrificial victims disposed of in a ritual manner” (Ibid). Likewise, it is unclear if these figurines portray adults or children; due to their short stature, some scholars have argued for the latter. While strong evidence and themes of sacrifice have been found in burials and on artworks from neighboring regions (i.e. Teotihuacan, El Tajin) and even later during the Post-Classic period (i.e. Aztecs), “[t]he fact that the comparatively few human sacrifices offered during the Classic Period often were of children and the belief that sacrificial victims were immediately granted eternal, superlatively blissful existence among the Gods might explain why the Smiling Head faces show such ecstatic happiness and why virtually all represent children. ...and all the more evidence of the high level of civilization attained by the people of Remojadas” (Emmerich, 1963: 110). However, I find this interpretation does not have strong support. Considering that their proportions are child-like in nature, who these children were within social sphere or why these children were sacrificed has yet to be determined.

#### 6.8. Contextualization of Figurines in Burial Mound: Offerings or Companions?:

A recent 2017 source by Cherra Wyllie reconsiders the contextualization of figurines within an archaeological perspective asking the questions: *¿Cómo puede el contexto extender el marco narrativo más allá de las consideraciones artísticas de representación figurativa, iconográfica, estilo y secuencia? ¿Existe una relación directa entre el tipo de figurillas y los contextos arqueológicos asociados?*” (Translation: How can context extend the narrative

framework beyond artistic considerations of figurative, iconographic, style, and sequence representation? Is there a direct relationship between the type of figurines and the associated archaeological contexts?” (Wyllie, 2017: 162). Possibly identifying an answer to these questions, Wyllie cites Latin American archaeologist, Joyce Marcus, who makes the general argument that *“las figurillas deben ser examinadas en relación a su contexto, preferiblemente figurillas completas en contextos primarios. Lo cual incluye figurillas en entierros, en hogares y en arreglos funerarios en edificios públicos”* (Translation: “figurines should be examined in relation to their context, preferably complete figurines in primary contexts. Which includes figurines in burials, in homes and in funerary arrangements in public buildings” (Ibid: 161; cites Marcus, 2009: 26-31). Specifically looking at the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines and regardless of previous interpretations, the majority were unearthed from mounds found at the excavation sites in either complete or partial forms.



Figure 5: El Zapotal Ossuary Replica from the Museo de Antropología de Xalapa, Universidad Veracruzana.

As previously mentioned, while the *Sonrientes* figurines were found ceremonially discarded with other ceramic figurines and artifacts that were part of the “Smiling Figurine” Complex, there are some cases in which they were found in association with human burials. As part of the ceremonial process, it may very well be that the *Sonrientes* in these burials, “perhaps were clay companions for the deceased,... Since so many were obviously broken at the time of burial, with only the heads, which were buried separately, left intact, their funerary function may well have been secondary to their ceremonial use” (Easby, 1970: 165). Because the artifacts in these burials were either looted or disturbed and collected by archaeologists in the past, it is hard to envision the original placement of these figurines in relation to the rest of remains. However, during my travels to Mexico, I visited the Museo de Antropología de Xalapa located in Xalapa, the capital of Veracruz, which has a very impressive collection of *Sonrientes* figurines; all were in display cases. In one display case, the museum curators have recreated an *osario*, or group burial, with four *Sonrientes* figurines and human remains that include skulls, limbs, parts of ribs and spine, and other smaller bone fragments (Fig. 5). The display also includes Mayroid-type figurines, beads, ear spools, obsidian razors; all objects are dated to approximately 600-900 A.D. According to the label, the organization of this *osario* is similar to the one found at the archaeological site at El Zapotal. Interestingly, the human remains and objects appear mixed together, almost as if they were “tossed” into the burial. On the other hand, the *Sonrientes* figurines have been gently placed among these materials against small man-made dirt hills/mounds. Arguably, the handling of these figurines communicates their sacred value, yet it still does not bring us closer to inferring their role as either offering or companion to the deceased. From this example, my interpretation would be that that they meant to act as

companions due to their close proximity to the remains. Unfortunately, this is the only example that I came across during my travels that put the *Sonrientes* figurines in contexts.

### 7 My Interpretation of the Remojadas-style Sonrientes Figurines:

I believe that their expressions and construction/placement can be read as intoxication due to the consumption of pulque to achieve other worldly connections to the sky deities and related iconography represented on their dress attire. Considering the interpretations discussed in the previous section, I find Campton's the most convincing because it uses other archaeological artifacts, specifically the presence of pulque bowls, found in proximity to the *Sonrientes* figurines as supporting evidence for ritualistic use and expression, thus, connecting it as one possible explanation to their overall demeanor. We can relate this reading by looking at the construction of these figurines. Most *Sonrientes* figurines have small and unstable bottoms and feet (if attached). Because of their disproportionate bottoms, or lack of, most figurines are unable to stand up on their own and would need to be leaned against another surface or laid flat on its back. Also considering their stretched-out pose, the *Sonrientes* figurines appear as if they fallen over or intentionally lying flat on their back with arms and legs spread out in a drunken manner; it may also suggest that they not in control of their body movement. To add, within this specific example of archaeological context and as it relates to the Remojadas cultures' ceremonial and ritual processes, some *Sonrientes* figurines that have been found "*en ensamblajes que contienen instrumentos musicales y huesos cremados. ...[Eran] Sin duda, ...parte de ritos multi-sensoriales intensificados por el sabor del pulque y del cacao, el aroma nublado del incienso, el calor del fuego ritual y el poder animador de la música*" (Translation: "in assemblages containing musical instruments and cremated bones. ...[Were] Without a doubt, ...part of multi-sensory rites intensified by the flavor of pulque and cocoa, the cloudy aroma of incense, the heat of the ritual

fire and the animating power of music” (Wyllie, 2017: 173). With these components in mind, and as Wyllie specifically questions regarding the *Sonrientes* figurines, I also consider: “¿Fueron percibidos como seres sensibles animados a través de la transición o del ritual? (Translation: Were they perceived as sentient beings animated through the transition or ritual?” (Ibid: 174).

Similarly, if we consider their poses and dress attire in relation to similar figurines within the “Smiling Figurine” Complex, I also believe that the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines represent priests and priestesses from the Remojadas culture who were tasked with performing acts of worship and rituals. The open and outward pose of the arms, legs, and overall body indicates a ritualistic stance. Specifically, the fact that the head is usually turned upward suggests that their attention is directed skyward. In this respect, I am drawn to Heyden’s methods of reading these figurines as mortal cult members partaking in worship of certain deities through the expression of both dress attire and performing ritualistic stances. Could these figurines depict real characteristics of the people who made them? One observation from The Mexican National Museum of Anthropology’s 1968 catalog summarizes that the *Sonrientes*, among other figurines, portray:

that the [Remojadas] people were of short stature, had straight hair and aquiline noses, that they practised cranial deformation, dental mutilation, and scarification on the chest and shoulders, and often blackened their teeth with tar and painted their hair and cheeks with the same substance; other figures again have shaven heads. They were fond of dressing in braids and showy head-dresses, decorative turbans with [various] motifs...and tall conical caps; items of clothing included...skirts, sashes, [chest bands]...loin-cloths,... Personal appearance was enhanced by necklaces,...ear-plugs, bracelets,...and other ornaments (Bernal, 1968: 111).

Comparatively, other standing Remojadas-style figurines from the Late Classic period, and within the same ceramic complex, depict poses and dress attire similar to the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines; the only missing component is the smiling expressions. Though stylistically different from the *Sonrientes* figurines, these figurines that have been identified as “[d]ignified, aristocratic priests...shown in the full garments of their office, representing the personification of their gods. Often they stand with arms spread out in giving and consoling gestures, their hands beautifully detailed and fingers held in ritual positions whose exact meanings still remain to be interpreted. Details of headdresses, garments and ornaments were represented with loving attention to all the intricate symbolic details” (Emmerich, 1963: 113). Likewise, their heads face front or upward. Thus, the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines can be similarly identified as representations of Remojadas priests “*[d]ebido a que todas estas figuras están ataviadas en forma tan elegante, de ninguna manera pueden ser gentes del pueblo. ...[y] poner de manifiesto la indiscutible belleza, sentido humano y armoniosa ejecución plasmadas en estas pequeñas cabecitas*” (Translation: “[b]ecause all of these figures are dressed so elegantly, there is no way they can be townspeople. ...[and] highlight the indisputable beauty, human sense and harmonious execution captured in these little heads” (Fernandez Barrera, 1960:182). As will be described in the next section, the nine *Sonrientes* figurines from the MPM depict these same attributes that support my argument and interpretation.

## **8 Nine Sonrientes Specimens from the MPM:**

### Figurine 1:

Catalog Number: A55065

Accession Number: 20523



Figure 6: Front view of Tajin "Smiling Boy" from the Milwaukee Public Museum.



Figure 6.1: Back view of Tajin "Smiling Boy" also showing damage and repair.





Figure 6.2: Detail of Tajin “Smiling Boy” intoxicated expression and broken jewelry.

*My Initial Observations:*

This is a fully complete figurine. The dress attire is simple consisting of a headdress, jewelry, body bands, and loincloth. There are no immediate features to indicate the sex or gender, however, the loincloth may be one indicator that this figure is male. The headdress and ear spools indicate an elite or high status (Fig. 6). Similar in appearance to Figures 5 and 6 (see Fig. 10 and 11).

*Title (given by MPM):*

Standing Figure or Tajin “Smiling Boy”

*Physical Description/Analysis:*

This is a standing terracotta figurine measuring approximately 10.25 inches (height) x 8 inches (wide from arm span). The feet stand apart approximately 4.75 inches and the headdress

from the top measures 5 inches wide. The maker used a mold to create the head and base of the body and hand-building techniques, such as coiling, to create ornamentation and dress attire. Additionally, they used some applique in certain areas such as slip method as well as tools for incising and modeling the figure's hands. The back is bare and flat except for several small vertical rectangular punctured niche holes on the legs, back, and head (either to release pressure when fired or to attach the figure to something and each measuring to approximately 0.5 inches long) as well as a small hinge piece that comes out from the back of the neck, perhaps to help it be propped against a surface (otherwise, it is not stable to stand on its own) (Fig. 6.1) Moreover, there is a sound of loose debris or broken clay pieces inside this figure, which may confirm that it is hollow. The overall clay color is a terracotta brown-red. No paint or burnishing is visible, however, there are several areas on the front and back that have some black residue, which may be tar or from firing. The surface is smoothed over and may have been sanded down at least.

While the head is larger and triangular shaped, the body is disproportionate to it (i.e. the arms are shorter compared to the body and legs. The hands and feet are also proportionately small for this figurine). This figurine stands straight with short arms that are extended straight out, palms facing out and upward, on either side. The fingers are indicated by long incised lines. The figure's legs and feet stand wide apart. The legs are short and plump-like and the feet are barefoot with no indications of toes; they point outward. The figurine's head, which is almost an upside-down triangle due to the wideness of the headdress and the narrowness of the chin, is positioned upward as if looking up (Fig. 6.2). The eyes are a low relief in an almost almond shape and are open, but the maker did not add any other decorative physical features, such as irises. Also, it almost looks as if the figurine's eyes are squinting or closed. There is a very faint indication of a brow bridge, which is visible at certain angles. Likewise, the mouth is a wide and

open smile to show what appears to be the top and bottom rows of teeth. The two front teeth have been mutilated, perhaps sharpened using a sawing method. The top lip is thin while the bottom lip is thick. The smile lines, or Nasolabial folds, around the mouth are just barely visible. The cheeks are visibly puffed out from said smile. The bridge of the nose is long, well-defined; the maker has even added one nostril. Overall, the face is bare and round.

On top of the head, the figure wears a short isosceles trapezoid-shaped headdress with rounded corners. A low relief wide vertical band (1.5 inches x 1 inch) with no decoration is in the center of the headdress, and a symmetrical double line pattern at the bottom also in low relief; there are no other decorative elements on the headdress. Interestingly, there are small round holes (approximately little less than 0.25 inches) drilled on the ends of the rounded corners of the headdress, but they do not seem to go through to each end. Likewise, there is a small horizontal rectangular niched hole dilled at the very top of the headdress (approximately 0.25 inches long). The ears are indicated by incising and have large plain triangular ear spools that are attached to the ends. On the neck there is a necklace that has been physically worn and broken (Fig. 6.2). The cord, attached by slip, is a thick coil around the neck, almost appearing to be choking the figure's short, wide neck. The center ornament may have been an *oliva* shell "bell" and the other four ornaments, perhaps beads, are a little over a quarter of an inch in size, which are circular with incised holes in their center; these were also attached using slip. At the chest to mid-area are two parallel horizontal bands that may have been clay coils attached with slip; this may be part of the overall attire to indicate a cloth to cover the chest or it may be some type or form of body jewelry since these coils are the same width as the necklace cord. Around the genital area hangs a flat elongated isosceles trapezoid-shaped loincloth hangs by clay coils that are loosely strung around below the figure's hips; the loincloth and coils were perhaps created separately and then

attached via slip as indicated by clay that was smeared from the back of the loincloth to the legs to “stick” together. At the bottom of the loincloth are two circular embellishments, attached using slip, similar to those on the necklace; no other decorative elements are visible.

*Condition/Damage Report:*

This figurine is in fair condition. There is evidence that some areas or parts have broken/chipped off and were reattached (i.e. one of the smaller circular embellishments on the necklace has glue residue. The embellishment that was once in the middle of the necklace has since broken off and has gone missing. The proper right arm has also been reattached as indicated by the glue ring from around the should and armpit. The proper right foot has been reattached at the ankle) (Fig. 6.1 and 6.2).

*Acquisition History:*

This figurine was part of a small group of Mexico figures that was gifted/donated to the museum in 1967 by New York collector, Mr. Allan Gerdau.

*Provenance:*

The museum records label this figurine as Tajin and originating from Veracruz, Mexico.

*Appraisal:*

\$850.00

*Object Authenticity:*

The museum records are scarce and only give information on the last known collector/owner before arriving at the MPM. Unfortunately, these records do not indicate if this figurine was institutionally recovered or looted before coming into Mr. Gerdau’s possession. The provenance research only cites it from Veracruz, Mexico, but does not give an exact archaeological location or approximate dating. Interestingly, while this figurine is labeled as

“Tajin,” which could indicate the region where this could have been recovered, this information is inconsistent with previous provenance research since most *Sonrientes* figurine were recovered in south-central Veracruz and not in north Veracruz. While this figurine’s traits are stylistically consistent with the common features, decoration, and manufacturing techniques of the *Sonrientes*, it is unclear if we can determine if it is an authentic piece or a forgery without proper scientific analysis or dating.

*Current Location in MPM:*

In storage. MPM Building - Basement - BE07 (Middle Room) - Mexico Archaeology - Drawer 26.1 - 0007274

*My Classification:*

I would classify this figurine as Upper Remojadas II: Hand-Modeled Body Smiling Figures because his dress attire (i.e. jewelry, chest bands, and loincloth) are handmade. Other features that fall under this classification include his mold-made head, body, and headdress and pronounced frontal-occipital cranial deformation head shape.

*My Overall Analysis:*

This figurine possesses the headdress, chest bands, decorative jewelry, and loincloth that I consider as priestly or elite dress attire; it is not representing the dress attire or nudity usually consistent with a lower-class individual or group. His expression, which is both content yet distant or far-away, suggests intoxication (Fig. 6.2). Specifically, I am looking at the half open or close shape of his eyes, the lack or absence of pupils (hazy or glossed over vision?), the high arch of his eyebrows, and the partially open mouth that appears as if he is smiling or about to laugh. The open and outward pose of his arms, legs, and overall body indicates a ritualistic stance. Likewise, the fact that his head is turned upward suggests that his attention is directed

skyward; it may also suggest that he is not in control of his body movement. Lastly, because the feet are proportionately small this figurine is unable to stand up on its own and would need to be leaned or laid flat on its back (the latter is how the figurine was photographed). Again, if we consider his stance, the figurine looks as if he has fallen over or intentionally lying flat on his back with his arms and legs spread out in a drunken manner.

Figurine 2:

Catalog Number: A55098

Accession Number: 20655



*Figure 7: Front view of small nude whistle mold from the Milwaukee Public Museum.*



Figure 7.1: Back view of small nude whistle mold.



Figure 7.2: Detail of small nude whistle mold's buzzed or intoxicated expression and headdress decoration and iconography of a *virgulas* or *nahual* of Xochipilli.

*My Initial Observations:*

This is a nearly complete figurine. While its features are worn, the dress attire can still be viewed, which consists of a headdress, jewelry, and a belt at the waist. The headdress and ear spools indicate an elite or high status (Fig. 7). Similar in appearance to Figurines 4 and 9 (see Fig. 9 and 14).

*Titles (given by MPM):*

Whistle (mold made)

*Physical Description/Analysis:*

This standing terracotta figurine measures approximately 5.5 inches (height) x 4 inches (wide from the arm span). The feet stand apart at 3 inches and the top of the headdress is 3.25 inches wide. The maker used a single mold to create the whole figure. The features and decoration such as facial features, hands, headdress decoration, and dress attire are in low relief. The back of the figure is completely flat, which means it can be laid down facing up (it is not stable to stand on its own), and overall bare except for a deliberately made vertical rectangular niche hole (approximately 0.5 inches long) with a lip funnel (approximately 0.5 inches long) at the back of the head/headdress (Fig. 7.1). Besides these holes, it is confirmed to be hollow based on the openings at the bottom of the feet. Additionally, a label on the back states that it is a whistle mold, which may point to its overall purpose and contribute to why it was created hollow. The clay color is dark-brown and orange terracotta. The surface is rough, grainy, and worn, perhaps from age and where/how it was excavated. No burnish or paint appears to have been applied.

While the head is larger and triangular shaped, the body is disproportionate to it (i.e. the chest area appears short/small compared to the limbs. The arm and hand are larger compared to



the body, but similar in size to the face). While one arm is missing (broken and long lost), the remaining proper left arm, short and bent at the elbow, is raised out with palm open showing individual fingers, carved using lines, over its head. The legs, which stand apart, are short, curvy, and bulgy, which may be leg muscles. The feet are either rounded stumps or may have broken off. The head is upside-down triangular (the headdress is wide at the top while the chin is a narrow point) and looks straightforward (Fig. 7.2). The face is in a smiling expression in low relief that is open and may show teeth (it is hard to tell, and there is no distinction of tongue sticking out). The smile lines, or Nasolabial folds, around the mouth are visible and very prominent. The cheeks are visibly puffed out from said smile. The almond-shaped eyes appear to be half open with no pupils present. Very faint eyebrows in low relief are visible. The nose is represented by a flat triangular shape. The proper right ear is the only one intact (the left ear has broken off) with a round spool earring hanging from it. Overall, the face is bare and round, but very small and squished.

On top of its head is the depiction of the characteristic short isosceles trapezoid-shaped headdress with rounded corners. On this headdress is decorative double-line in a sort of partial dentil pattern that undulates around what appear to be crescent shape markings at the corners in low relief; these markings are also symmetrical. At each end corner there are some extended flaps (this is more evident on the proper left side). Additional jewelry is a necklace, which has a thick cord and single round ornament that rests on the center of the chest. The only sign of a garment is at the waist, which may be a belt or sash with short vertical lines carved at equal distances across. The genitals are clearly visible between the legs, thus, this figure is nude and a male.

*Condition/Damage Report:*

This figurine is in poor condition. There is evidence that some areas or parts have broken off (i.e. the proper right arm/hand has been lost. Additionally, the bottom of the feet looks to have been previously attached to something).

*Acquisition History:*

This figurine, one in a group of 42 objects from Mexico, was purchased for the museum in 1967 by Milwaukee-based collector and dealer of antiquities, Mr. Robert Huber.

*Provenance:*

The museum records indicate that this object as originating from central Veracruz.

*Appraisal:*

\$35.00

*Object Authenticity:*

The museum records are scarce and only give information on the last known person to purchase this figurine before arriving at the MPM. Unfortunately, these records do not indicate if this figurine, which was part of group of miscellaneous objects from Mexico, was institutionally recovered or looted before coming into Mr. Huber's possession. The provenance research only cites it from central Veracruz, Mexico, but does not give an exact archaeological location or approximate dating. While this figurine's traits are stylistically consistent with the common features, decoration, and manufacturing techniques of the *Sonrientes*, it is unclear if we can determine if it is an authentic piece or a forgery without proper scientific analysis or dating, especially considering its poor surface condition.

*Current Location in MPM:*

In storage. MPM Building - Basement - BE07 (Middle Room) - Mexico Archaeology -  
Drawer 27 -0006132

*My Classification:*

This figurine may fall under two classification types. The most likely would be the Nopiloa III: Dicha Tuerta Style Smiling Figures because of how the mold appears to be undefined or carelessly made with a coarse texture and features, he has a stiff or unnatural pose with hands raised to the side of his head with indication of fingers, his head facing more forward with a grimace smile, pinched facial features, and that he is a whistle type. Second, while not certain, this figure could also be classified as a Isla de Sacrificios: Postclassic Smiling Figures, which are also characterized by their whistle forms.

*My Overall Analysis:*

While nude, this figurine possesses the headdress and decorative jewelry that I consider as priestly or elite dress attire. Specifically looking at the headdress decoration, the symmetrical crescent shape marking on the headdress may be virgulas (or stylizations of the monkey) or symbolize the double or nahual of Xochipilli indicating that this figurine is a cult member who worships this deity (Fig. 7.2). His expression, while worn away, displays a content look that is arguably intoxicated (Fig. 7.2). Specifically, I am looking at the half open or close shape of his eyes, the barely visible pupils (hazy or glossed over vision?), the arch of his eyebrows, the puffy cheeks, and the smile with full rows of teeth. The open and outward pose of his bent arm, legs, and overall body indicates a ritualistic stance. Additionally, the fact that this figurine is a whistle, giving him a “voice,” also contributes to the ritualistic nature. Lastly, because the feet are rounded or possibly broken off this figurine is unable to stand up on its own and would need to be leaned or laid flat on its back (the latter is how the figurine was photographed). Again, if we consider his stance, the figurine looks as if he has fallen over or intentionally lying flat on his back with his arms and legs spread out in a somewhat buzzed or drunken manner.

Figurine 3:

Catalog Number: A58370

Accession Number: 28459



*Figure 8: Front view of large Laughing boy figure from the Milwaukee Public Museum.*



Figure 8.1: Back view of large Laughing boy figure.



Figure 8.2: Detail of large Laughing boy figure's buzzed or intoxicated expression and headdress decoration and iconography of a virgulas or nahual of Xochipilli.



Figure 8.3: Second detail of large Laughing boy figure's loincloth with very faint iconography.

*My Initial Observations:*

This is a nearly complete figurine. The figurine's dress attire consists of a headdress, jewelry, a very faint band over the chest, and a loincloth. There are no immediate features to indicate the sex or gender, however, the loincloth may be one indicator that this figure is male. The headdress and ear spools indicate an elite or high status (Fig. 8).

*Titles (given by MPM):*

Laughing boy figure (large)

*Physical Description/Analysis:*

This standing terracotta figurine measures approximately 13.5 inches (height) x 7.5 inches (wide by arm extension). The bottom with his feet apart measures out to 4.5 inches and the top of the headdress is 5 inches wide. The maker used a mold to create the whole figure. The features and decorations (the eyes, mouth, and faint features on the dress attire) are in low relief.

The back of the figure is bare and flat except for two punctured holes that are approximately 0.25 inches: one behind the head and the other behind the chest (either to release pressure when fired or to attach the figure to something) (Fig. 8.1). Moreover, the figure can be confirmed to be hollow based on the openings where the limbs would be. The figure is unable to stand on its own without being supported, so it must remain flat on its back. The color of the clay is an earthy brown. Overall, the surface is grainy, and no burnish or paint appears to have been applied. There are also no immediate surface marks, cracks, residue, etc. The only dark area is around the concave stomach area, but this could be due to darker minerals mixed into the material or tar residue.

The head and body length appear proportionate to each other (i.e. the head shape is more naturally shaped. The chest and belly area are approximately the same length to the legs. Since the arms/hands/feet have been broken off it is hard to determine their length when compared to the rest of the body). The figurine stands tall with a slight curve of the back. The legs are standing apart. The chest/belly areas are concave, which may have been deliberate on the maker's part. The head is a bit more rounded than triangular, but it still possesses a wide headdress at the top and a narrow chin (Fig. 8.2). The neck is long, which may indicate that the figure is extending it to perform the motion of looking up. The eyes and mouth are very faintly indicated in low relief. The eyes appear to be open while the mouth is in the characteristic wide smile and may be slightly closed. The smile lines, or Nasolabial folds, around the mouth are visible. The cheeks are also rounded and puffed out, confirming the smiling expression. The nose, which has a long bridge and is triangular shaped, is the only feature that protrudes from the face. Overall, the face is bare and round.

The short headdress is not isosceles trapezoid-shaped, instead, it is rounded at the top. The proper left corner of the headdress is curved while the proper right corner has two protruding points facing different directions (almost like horns?). At the center of the headdress is a large faint low relief swirl shape. Positioned right underneath said symbol is a small, punctured hole about less than a quarter of an inch wide. This hole may have been used to hold some sort of decorative adornment (i.e. feather) or to release pressure when fired. Likewise, to the proper right of the swirl is a shallow surface hole similar in size to the other hole. On the proper left side of the headdress is a short flap extension with a fringe or tassel-like feature (the other side appears to have broken off). The ears are modeled on either side of the face with medium-sized triangular- shaped spools. There is a very faint irregular surface of round bumps strung in a row around the neck, which appears to be a necklace in low relief. Additionally, wrapped around the chest is a very faint band with horizontal lines in low relief. A flat elongated isosceles trapezoid-shaped loincloth in low relief with decoration, hung loosely over the hips, covers the genital area, which is also concaved in. The decoration, in faint low relief, cannot be identified but can be described as either organic or geometric shapes (Fig. 8.3).

*Condition/Damage Report:*

This figurine is in poor condition. There is evidence of major breakage and instability (i.e. The figure is missing both hands and feet but retains the shoulders and half of the tibia portions. The breaks on each of the legs and arms are angled.)

*Acquisition History:*

This figurine, one in a group of 14 objects (12 of which were from Mexico and 2 from Brazil), was personally gifted/donated to the museum in 1992 by Dr. Gerard R. Wolfe, who was



also associated with the UW-Milwaukee Outreach Programs. However, records indicate that this figurine was cataloged into the museum's collection in early 1993.

*Provenance:*

The museum records state that this figurine is originated from Veracruz, Mexico.

*Appraisal:*

\$500.00

*Object Authenticity:*

The museum records are scarce and only give information on the last known collector/owner before arriving at the MPM. Unfortunately, these records do not indicate if this figurine, which was part of group of miscellaneous objects from Mexico, was institutionally recovered or looted before coming into Dr. Wolfe's possession. The provenance research only cites it from Veracruz, Mexico, but does not give an exact archaeological location or approximate dating. While this figurine's traits are stylistically consistent with the common features, decoration, and manufacturing techniques of the *Sonrientes*, it is unclear if we can determine if it is an authentic piece or a forgery without proper scientific analysis or dating, especially considering its poor condition.

*Current Location in MPM:*

In storage. MPM Building - Basement - BE07 (Middle Room) - Mexico Archaeology -  
Drawer 27 – \_0006132

*My Classification:*

This figurine may be classified as some variation of Nopiloa II: Decorated Forehead Smiling Figures due to the obvious decoration on his headdress and natural head shape. His head

and body, however, are made from a single mold, which fits under the Nopiloa I: Plain Forehead Smiling Figures.

*My Overall Analysis:*

This figurine possesses the headdress, chest band, decorative jewelry, and loincloth that I consider as priestly or elite dress attire; it is not representing the dress attire or nudity usually consistent with a lower-class individual or group. Specifically looking at the headdress decoration, the center low relief swirl shape may be a virgulas (or stylizations of the monkey) or symbolize the double or nahual of Xochipilli indicating that this figurine is a cult member who worships this deity (Fig. 8.2). His expression, which is both content yet distant or far-away, suggests mild intoxication (Fig. 8.2). Specifically, I am looking at the half open or close shape of his eyes, the lack or absence of pupils (hazy or glossed over vision?), the high arch of his eyebrows, and the closed half smile. The open and outward pose, and overall body, indicates a ritualistic stance. Likewise, the fact that his head is turned upward suggests that his attention is directed skyward; it may also suggest that he is not in control of his body movement.

Considering what is left of his arms and legs, whether it was intentional breakage (since the breaks are clean and angled) or due to poor construction, I would even argue that this figurine is demonstrating an example of body dissociation. Lastly, because the feet are nonexistent this figurine is unable to stand up on its own and would need to be leaned or laid flat on its back (the latter is how the figurine was photographed). Again, if we consider his stance, the figurine looks as if he has fallen over or intentionally lying flat on his back with his arms and legs spread out in a somewhat buzzed or drunken manner.

Figurine 4:

Catalog Number: A58371

Accession Number: 28459



*Figure 9: Front view of small Laughing boy figure from the Milwaukee Public Museum.*



Figure 9.1: Back view of small Laughing boy figure.



Figure 9.2: Detail of small Laughing boy figure's headdress with faint or eroded iconography and damage.



Figure 9.3: Second detail of small Laughing boy figure's body with breakage of arms and attachment to base.

*My Initial Observations:*

This is a nearly complete figurine. This figurine wears a headdress, jewelry, and a long wide skirt. There are no immediate features to indicate the sex or gender, however, the skirt may be one indicator that this figure is female. The headdress and ear spools indicate an elite or high status (Fig. 9). Similar in appearance to Figurines 2 and 9 (see Fig. 7 and 14).

*Titles (given by MPM):*

Laughing boy figure (small)

*Physical Description/Analysis:*

This standing terracotta figurine is approximately 6.25 inches (height without base) x 3.25 inches (wide at the top of the headdress). The arm span measures out to be 2.75 inches wide. Additionally, the feet stand apart at 2 inches wide. The maker used a single mold to create

the whole figure. The facial features, headdress decoration, and dress attire are in low relief. The back of the figure is bare and flat except for a small deliberately made vertical rectangular niche hole (approximately 0.5 inches long) at the back of the head/headdress and another smaller horizontal rectangular niche hole (approximately 0.25 inches long) at the top of the head/headdress, which may mean this is a whistle mold and is hollow (Fig. 9.1). This figure is supported by and attached to a custom-made base that allows it to stand upright instead of laying down. The clay color is light brown terracotta. The surface is rough, grainy, and some features are eroded perhaps from age and where/how it was excavated. No burnish or paint appears to have been applied.

Compared to the shape and size of the head/headdress, the body (chest and legs) appear proportionally longer. The figurine stands straight, ridged stance. The figure's arms, which are only up to its shoulders due to a past breakage, may have been extended out. The proper left arm/hand has been broken off at an angle while the proper right arm is also missing/broken off but has been sealed up. The head is the characteristic upside-down triangular (the headdress is wide at the top while the chin is a narrow point) and looks straightforward (Fig. 9). The face is in a smiling expression in low relief that is open and may show teeth (it is hard to tell, and there is no distinction of tongue sticking out). The smile lines, or Nasolabial folds, around the mouth are just barely visible. The cheeks are visibly puffed out from said smile. The almond-shaped eyes appear to be half open or squinting. The proper right eye has a very slight indication of an eyeball or iris (?) but no pupils present. The proper left eye has since eroded away. Very faint eyebrows in low relief are visible. The bridge of the nose is short, not well defined, and was perhaps modeled on. Overall, the face is bare and round, but very small and squished.

The headdress is larger than the face and in the isosceles trapezoid-shape and has rounded corners. On this headdress, there are also decorative double-line in a sort of partial dentil pattern that undulates around unidentifiable and faint markings at the corners in low relief; these markings, which may either be organic or geometric shapes, may also be symmetrical (Fig. 9.2). There may have been extended flaps of some sort at each end corner of the headdress, but these areas have also been either broken or eroded. The proper right ear is still visible with a round spool earring hanging from it. The proper left ear and earring have either broken off or eroded away. Additional jewelry is a necklace in low relief with about six round ornaments, which are perhaps beads: one large one at the center (approximately 0.50 inches) and two or three smaller ones on either side of it (approximately 0.25 inches); there are no distinctive decorative elements to these ornaments. The only sign of a garment is at the waist, which appears to be a wide skirt that covers the entire genital area and legs (Fig. 9.3). It looks like it is long enough to reach the figure's feet, which are rounded, non-distinctive, stand apart, and stick out from under the skirt. The skirt has no decoration, but there is a faint indication of a border along the edges of the skirt in low relief.

*Condition/Damage Report:*

This figurine is in poor condition. There is evidence of major breakage (i.e. a large gaping hole [approximately 1 inch x 0.75 inches] at the top of the figurine right in the center of the headdress, the arms/hands are no longer attached and are most likely lost as are parts of the corners of the headdress) (Fig. 9.2 and 9.3).

*Acquisition History:*

This figurine, one in a group of 14 objects (12 of which were from Mexico and 2 from Brazil), was personally gifted/donated to the museum in 1992 by Dr. Gerard R. Wolfe, who is

also associated with the UW-Milwaukee Outreach Programs. However, records indicate that this figurine was cataloged into the museum's collection in early 1993.

*Provenance:*

The museum records state that this figurine is originated from Veracruz, Mexico.

*Appraisal:*

\$200.00

*Object Authenticity:*

The museum records are scarce and only give information on the last known collector/owner before arriving at the MPM. Unfortunately, these records do not indicate if this figurine, which was part of group of miscellaneous objects from Mexico, was institutionally recovered or looted before coming into Dr. Wolfe's possession. The provenance research only cites it from Veracruz, Mexico, but does not give an exact archaeological location or approximate dating. While this figurine's traits are stylistically consistent with the common features, decoration, and manufacturing techniques of the *Sonrientes*, it is unclear if we can determine if it is an authentic piece or a forgery without proper scientific analysis or dating, especially considering its poor condition.

*Current Location in MPM:*

In storage. MPM Building - Basement - BE07 (Middle Room) - Mexico Archaeology -  
Drawer 27 – \_0006132

*My Classification:*

I would classify this figurine under the Nopiloa III: Dicha Tuerta Style Smiling Figures because the mold appears to be undefined or carelessly made with a coarse texture and features, her stiff or unnatural pose, her head facing more forward with a grimace smile, pinched facial



features, and that she is a whistle type. This figure could also be classified as a Isla de Sacrificios: Postclassic Smiling Figures, which are also characterized by their whistle forms.

*My Overall Analysis:*

This figurine possesses the headdress, decorative jewelry, and dress attire (skirt) that I consider as priestly or elite dress attire; it is not representing the dress attire or nudity usually consistent with a lower-class individual or group. The expression, while worn away, displays a content look that is arguably intoxicated (Fig. 9). Specifically, I am looking at the half open or close shape of his eyes, the lack or absence of pupils (hazy or glossed over vision?), the arch of eyebrows, the puffy cheeks, and the wide, open smile. The open and outward pose, and overall body, indicates a ritualistic stance. Additionally, the fact that this figurine is a whistle, giving him a “voice,” also contributes to the ritualistic nature. Considering what is left of the arms, whether it was intentional breakage (since the breaks are clean and angled) or due poor construction, I would even argue that this figurine is demonstrating an example of upper body dissociation. Lastly, because the feet are attached to a base this figurine is unable to stand up on its own; without the base it would need to be leaned or laid flat on its back (the latter is how the figurine was photographed). If we consider the ridged stance and unstable construction, the figurine looks as if it has fallen over or intentionally lying flat on his back in a somewhat buzzed or drunken manner.

Figurine 5:

Catalog number: A50761

Accession Number: 17744



Figure 10: Front view of Totonac Smiling Figurine from the Milwaukee Public Museum.



Figure 10.1: Back view of Totonac Smiling Figurine



*Figure 10.2: Detail of Totonac Smiling Figurine's intoxicated expression and headdress decoration and iconography of a virgulas or nahual of Xochipilli.*

*My Initial Observations:*

This a fully complete figurine. The dress attire is simple consisting of a headdress, jewelry, body bands, and loincloth. There are no immediate features to indicate the sex or gender, however, the loincloth may be one indicator that this figure is male. The headdress and ear spoons indicate an elite or high status (Fig. 10). Similar in appearance to Figurines 1 and 6 (see Fig. 6 and 11).

*Titles (given by MPM):*

Standing Figure or Totonac Smiling Figurine

*Physical Description/Analysis:*

This standing terracotta figurine is approximately 11 inches (height) x 7.75 inches (wide by arm extension). The bottom with the feet apart measures out to 5 inches and the top of the

headdress is 5.5 inches wide. The maker used a mold to create the head and base of the body and hand-building techniques, such as coiling, to create ornamentation and dress attire. Additionally, they used some applique in certain areas such as slip method as well as tools for incising and modeling the figure's hands and headdress decoration. The back is bare and flat except for several punctured hole areas on the legs and back (either to release pressure when fired or to attach the figure to something and each approximately between 0.25 and 0.5 inches) as well as a deliberately made vertical rectangular niche hole at the back of the head/headdress (approximately 0.5 inches long), likewise, there is a small horizontal rectangular niched dilled at the very top of the headdress (approximately 0.25 inches long); all of these holes indicate that the figure is hollow (Fig. 10.1). The figure is not stable to stand on its own. The overall clay color is a terracotta brown, and the surface mildly rough. No paint or burnishing is visible, however, the figure's surface looks to have been sanded down at least and several areas on both the back and front have a white (dusty?) residue on the surface (perhaps from the sanding??). Lastly, the proper left eye is black inside, which could have been from firing or from debris mixed into the material.

While the head is larger and triangular shaped, the body is disproportionate (i.e. the arms are shorter compared to the body and legs. The hands and feet are also proportionately small for this figurine). This figurine stands straight up with short arms that are extended straight out, palms facing out and upward, on either side. The fingers are indicated by long incised lines. The figurine's legs and feet stand wide apart. The legs are long and plump-like and the feet are barefoot with no indications of toes; they point outward. The head, which is almost an upside-down triangle due to the wideness of the headdress and the narrowness of the chin, is positioned upward as if looking up (Fig. 10.2). The eyes are short horizontal slits (that looks to have been

carved in a quick motion with a tool) appearing as if the figure's eyes are squinting or closed. The maker did not add any other decorative physical features, such as irises. There is a very faint indication of a brow bridge, which is visible at certain angles. Likewise, the mouth is a wide and open smile to show what appears to be the top rows of teeth. The two front teeth have been mutilated, perhaps sharpened using a sawing method. His top and bottom lips are the same thickness. The smile lines, or Nasolabial folds, around the mouth are visible and very prominent. The cheeks are visibly puffed out from said smile. The bridge of the nose is short, well-defined, and was perhaps modeled on. Overall, the face is bare and round.

On top of the head, the figurine wears a short isosceles trapezoid-shaped headdress with rounded corners. A low relief wide vertical band (1.5 inches x 1.25 inch) with 5 vertical incised lines is in the center of the headdress, and a symmetrical double line pattern at the bottom also in low relief. There are two very faint incised swirl shapes with one on each side of the central vertical band. Interestingly, there are small round holes (0.25 inches) drilled on the ends of the rounded corners of the headdress, but they do not seem to go through to each end (they appear to have been filled in from debris). The ears are indicated by incising and have large plain triangular ear spools that are attached to the ends. However, the proper right ear spool has broken off. On the neck there is a necklace. The cord, attached by slip, is a thick coil around the neck, almost appearing to be choking the figure's short, wide neck. There are four embellishments (two on each side), perhaps beads approximately a little over a quarter of an inch in size, which are circular with incised holes in their center were also attached using slip. At the center of the necklace is a short funnel shaped piece (1 inch long and approximately 0.75 inches wide at the bottom), perhaps a oliva shell "bell," which is attached using slip indicated by clay that had been smeared around its sides to keep it on the chest. The funnel is hollow but appears to have been

filled in at the other end. At the chest to mid-area are two parallel horizontal bands that may have been clay coils attached with slip; this may be part of the overall attire to indicate a cloth to cover the chest or it may be some type or form of body jewelry since these coils are the same width as the necklace cord. Around the genital area a flat elongated isosceles trapezoid-shaped loincloth hangs by clay coils that are loosely strung around below the figure's hips; the loincloth and coils were perhaps created separately and then attached via slip as indicated by clay that was smeared from the back of the loincloth to the legs to "stick" together. There is no decoration on the loincloth.

*Condition/Damage Report:*

This figurine is in good condition. There is evidence that in some areas there is cracking, flaking, and chipping (i.e. at the back along the waist is a long-curved crack. At the neck, just under the chin, is cracking and flaking of the surface. From back to front on the proper left leg and part of the loincloth there appears to have been clay added at one point to repair some sort of cracking or as a filling if part of the surfaces had chipped or broken off. Additionally, at least one area around one of the ears has broken off).

*Acquisition History:*

This figurine, one in a group of 13 objects from Mexico, was collected/purchased for the museum by MPM anthropologist Dr. Robert Ritzenthaler in 1957 while in Mexico during ethnographic fieldwork ("Donor Biographies," 2023).

*Provenance:*

The museum records label this figurine as Totonac and originating from Veracruz, Mexico.

*Appraisal:*

\$48.00

*Object Authenticity:*

The museum records are scarce and only give information on the last known person to collect and purchase this figurine before arriving at the MPM. Unfortunately, these records do not indicate if this figurine, which was part of group of miscellaneous objects from Mexico, was institutionally recovered or looted before coming into Mr. Ritzenthaler's possession. The provenance research only cites it from Veracruz, Mexico, but does not give an exact archaeological location or approximate dating. While this figurine is labeled as "Totonac," this information is simply outdated and incorrect since previous research has concluded that Totonac sculpture postdates the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines. Lastly, the fact that Ritzenthaler collected this figurine during ethnographic fieldwork may contribute to this object's authenticity.

*Current Location in MPM:*

On view. [3CM049] MPM Building-Floor 3—Center Mezzanine- 3CM049-0006160

*My Classification:*

I would classify this figurine as Upper Remojadas II: Hand-Modeled Body Smiling Figures because his dress attire (i.e. jewelry, chest bands, and loincloth) are handmade. Other features that fall under this classification include his mold-made head, body, and headdress and pronounced frontal-occipital cranial deformation head shape.

*My Overall Analysis:*

This figurine possesses the headdress, chest bands, decorative jewelry, and loincloth that I consider as priestly or elite dress attire; it is not representing the dress attire or nudity usually consistent with a lower-class individual or group. Specifically looking at the headdress decoration, the center low relief swirl shape may be a virgulas (or stylizations of the monkey) or

symbolize the double or nahual of Xochipilli indicating that this figurine is a cult member who worships this deity (Fig. 10.2). His expression, which is both content yet distant or far-away, suggests intoxication (Fig. 10.2). Specifically, I am looking at the half open or close shape of his eyes, the lack or absence of pupils (hazy or glossed over vision?), the high arch of his eyebrows, and the partially open mouth that appears as if he is smiling or about to laugh. The open and outward pose of his arms, legs, and overall body indicates a ritualistic stance. Likewise, the fact that his head is turned upward suggests that his attention is directed skyward; it may also suggest that he is not in control of his body movement. Lastly, because the feet are proportionately small this figurine is unable to stand up on its own and would need to be leaned or laid flat on its back (the latter is how the figurine was photographed). Again, if we consider his stance, the figurine looks as if he has fallen over or intentionally lying flat on his back with his arms and legs spread out in a drunken manner.

Figurine 6:

Catalog Number: A53692

Accession Number: 18991





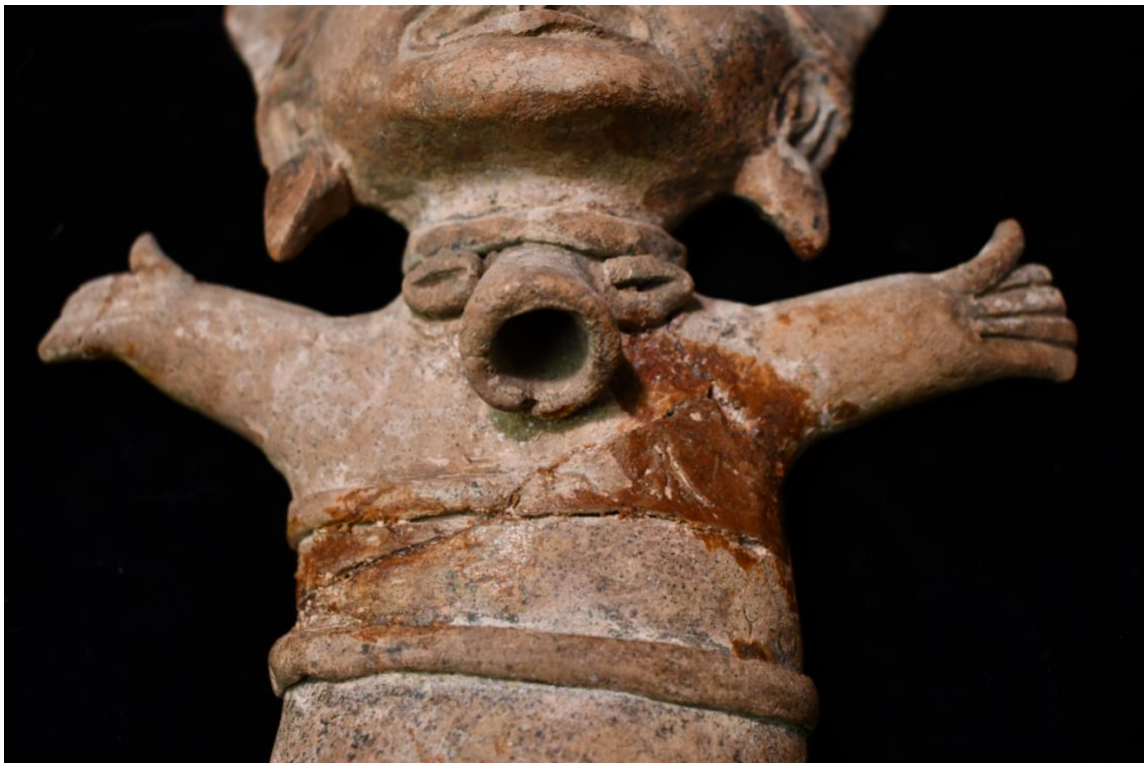
Figure 11: Front view of Totonac Smiling Face Figure Top Whistle from the Milwaukee Public Museum.



Figure 11.1: Back view of Totonac Smiling Face Figure Top Whistle also showing damage and repair.



*Figure 11.2: Detail of Totonac Smiling Face Figure Top Whistle's intoxicated expression and headdress decoration and iconography of a virgulas or nahual of Xochipilli.*



*Figure 11.3: Second Detail of Totonac Smiling Face Figure Top Whistle's damage and repair on chest.*

*My Initial Observations:*

This is a fully complete figurine. The dress attire is simple consisting of a headdress, jewelry, body bands, and loincloth. There are no immediate features to indicate the sex or gender, however, the loincloth may be one indicator that this figure is male. The headdress and ear spools indicate an elite or high status (Fig. 11). Similar in appearance to Figurines 1 and 5 (see Fig. 6 and 10).

*Titles (given by MPM):*

Standing Figure or Totonac Smiling Face Figure Top Whistle

*Physical Description/Analysis:*

This standing terracotta figurine is 10.5 inches (height) x 7.5 inches (wide by arm extension). The top of the headdress is 5.25 inches wide, and the feet measure out to approximately 4.5 inches apart. The maker used a mold to create the head and base of the body and hand-building techniques, such as coiling, to create ornamentation and dress attire. Additionally, they used some applique in certain areas such as slip method as well as tools for incising and modeling the figure's hands and headdress decoration. The back is bare and flat except for several vertical rectangular punctured niches on the legs, back, and head (either to release pressure when fired or to attach the figure to something and each measuring to approximately 0.5 inches long) as well as at the top of the head/headdress is a deliberately made horizontal rectangular niche hole (approximately 0.25 inches); all of these holes indicate that the figure is hollow (Fig. 11.1). Additionally, a small hinge piece comes out from the back of the neck, perhaps to help it be propped against a surface (otherwise, it is not stable to stand on its own). The overall clay color is a terracotta brown, and the surface is mildly rough. The overall clay color is a terracotta brown, and the surface is mildly rough. No paint or burnishing is visible,

however, the figure's surface looks to have been sanded down at least. Lastly, there are several areas on the front and back that have some black residue, which may be tar, from firing, or from debris mixed into the material.

While the head is larger and triangular shaped, the body is disproportionate (i.e. the arms are shorter compared to the body and legs. The hands and feet are also proportionately small for this figurine). This figurine stands straight up with short arms that are extended straight out, palms facing out and upward, on either side. The fingers are indicated by long incised lines. The figurine's legs and feet stand wide apart. The legs are long and plump-like and the feet are barefoot with no indications of toes; they point outward. The head, which is almost an upside-down triangle due to the wideness of the headdress and the narrowness of the chin, is positioned upward as if looking up (Fig. 11.2). The eyes are short horizontal slits (that looks to have been carved in a quick motion with a tool) appearing as if the figure's eyes are squinting or closed. The maker did not add any other decorative physical features, such as irises. There is a very faint indication of a brow bridge, which is visible at certain angles. Likewise, the mouth is a wide and open smile to show what appears to be the top rows of teeth. The two front teeth have been mutilated, perhaps sharpened using a sawing method. His top and bottom lips are the same thickness. The smile lines, or Nasolabial folds, around the mouth are visible and very prominent. The cheeks are visibly puffed out from said smile. The bridge of the nose is short, well-defined, and was perhaps modeled on. Overall, the face is bare and round.

On top of the head, the figurine wears a short isosceles trapezoid-shaped headdress with rounded corners. A low relief wide vertical band (1.5 inches x 1.25 inch) with 5 vertical incised lines is in the center of the headdress, and a symmetrical double line pattern at the bottom also in low relief. There are two very faint incised swirl shapes with one on each side of the central

vertical band. Interestingly, there are small round holes (0.25 inches) drilled on the ends of the rounded corners of the headdress, but they do not seem to go through to each end. The ears are indicated by incising and have large plain triangular ear spools that are attached to the ends. On the neck there is a necklace. The cord, attached by slip, is a thick coil around the neck, almost appearing to be choking the figure's short, wide neck. There are two embellishments (one on each side), perhaps beads of the same size, which are ovals shaped with horizontal line incised openings in their center (they might have been more circular at one point but may have been squished by the maker's fingers when attaching them) and were also attached using slip. At the center of the necklace is a short funnel shaped piece, perhaps a oliva shell "bell," which is attached using slip indicated by clay that had been smeared around its sides to keep it on the chest. The funnel is hollow but appears to have been filled in at the other end. At the chest to mid-area are two parallel horizontal bands that may have been clay coils attached with slip; this may be part of the overall attire to indicate a cloth to cover the chest or it may be some type or form of body jewelry since these coils are the same width as the necklace cord. Around the genital area a flat elongated isosceles trapezoid-shaped loincloth hangs by clay coils that are loosely strung around below the figure's hips; the loincloth and coils were perhaps created separately and then attached via slip as indicated by clay that was smeared from the back of the loincloth to the legs to "stick" together. At the bottom of the loincloth are two embellishments, attached using slip, similar to those on the necklace but more circular; no other decorative elements are visible.

*Condition/Damage Report:*

This figurine is in fair condition. There is evidence that in some areas there is cracking (i.e. a large crack that had been initially repaired using some sort of adhesive is still visible on

the front of the chest which circles around the side under the proper right armpit, extends the length of the back, and circles around the proper left armpit and shoulder (Fig. 11.1 and 11.3). Additionally, there is some minor surface flaking/chipping).

*Acquisition History:*

This figurine, one of two objects from Mexico, was donated to the museum in 1964 by Dr. Geza Schutz from Sun City, Arizona.

*Provenance:*

The museum records label this figurine as Totonac and originating from Veracruz, Mexico.

*Appraisal:*

\$150.00

*Object Authenticity:*

The museum records are scarce and only give information on the last known person who donated this figurine to the MPM. Unfortunately, these records do not indicate if this figurine was institutionally recovered or looted before coming into Mr. Schutz's possession. The provenance research only cites it from Veracruz, Mexico, but does not give an exact archaeological location or approximate dating. While this figurine is labeled as "Totonac," this information is simply outdated and incorrect since previous research has concluded that Totonac sculpture postdates the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines. It should be noted that it is unclear when this figurine's damage and repair on the chest area occurred, but it does not affect this object's authenticity.

*Current Location in MPM:*

On view. [3CM049] MPM Building - Floor 3 - Center Mezzanine -3CM049 - 0006160

*My Classification:*

I would classify this figurine as Upper Remojadas II: Hand-Modeled Body Smiling Figures because his dress attire (i.e. jewelry, chest bands, and loincloth) are handmade. Other features that fall under this classification include his mold-made head, body, and headdress and pronounced frontal-occipital cranial deformation head shape.

*My Overall Analysis:*

This figurine possesses the headdress, chest bands, decorative jewelry, and loincloth that I consider as priestly or elite dress attire; it is not representing the dress attire or nudity usually consistent with a lower-class individual or group. Specifically looking at the headdress decoration, the center low relief swirl shape may be a virgulas (or stylizations of the monkey) or symbolize the double or nahual of Xochipilli indicating that this figurine is a cult member who worships this deity (Fig. 11.2). His expression, which is both content yet distant or far-away, suggests intoxication (Fig. 11.2). Specifically, I am looking at the half open or close shape of his eyes, the lack or absence of pupils (hazy or glossed over vision?), the high arch of his eyebrows, and the partially open mouth that appears as if he is smiling or about to laugh. The open and outward pose of his arms, legs, and overall body indicates a ritualistic stance. Likewise, the fact that his head is turned upward suggests that his attention is directed skyward; it may also suggest that he is not in control of his body movement. Lastly, because the feet are proportionately small this figurine is unable to stand up on its own and would need to be leaned or laid flat on its back (the latter is how the figurine was photographed). Again, if we consider his stance, the figurine looks as if he has fallen over or intentionally lying flat on his back with his arms and legs spread out in a drunken manner.

Figurine 7:

Catalog number: A50856

Accession Number: 18037



*Figure 12: Front view of Smiling Head from the Milwaukee Public Museum.*





*Figure 12.1: Back view of Smiling Head also showing damage and repair.*



*Figure 12.2: Detail of Smiling Head breakage point and silver residue on neck.*



Figure 12.3: Second detail of Smiling Head's intoxicated expression and headdress decoration and iconography which may indicate a geometric variation of the nahui ollin.

*My Initial Observations:*

This is only a head, not a complete figurine. The dress attire is simple, consisting of a headdress and jewelry. There are no immediate features to indicate the sex or gender. The headdress and ear spools indicate an elite or high status (Fig. 12). Similar in appearance to Figurine 8 (see Fig. 13).

*Titles (given by MPM):*

Figurine head or Smiling Head

*Physical Description/Analysis:*

This is just a terracotta head of what may have been once a standing figurine. It is approximately 4.75 inches (height from head to neck) x 7.5 inches (wide by top of headdress). The maker used a single mold to create the head and the ornamentation, which are all in low

relief. The back is bare except for a small, punctured hole (either to release pressure when fired or to attach the figure to something, and that measures 0.25 inches) at the center of the head; from the opening at the neck and mouth, the figure head is hollow (Fig. 12.1 and 12.2). The head is not stable to stand on its own. The overall clay color is a terracotta brown-red, and the surface appears mildly rough but is smoothed over. No paint or burnishing is visible, however, the figure's surface looks to have been sanded down at least. There is some silver paint residue around the breakage point of the neck, a speck of white on the chin, and a red mark on the forehead.

The head, which is an upside-down triangle due to the wideness of the headdress and the narrowness of the chin, is positioned upward as if looking up (Fig. 12.3). The eyes are a low relief in an almost almond shape and are open and appear to be almost squinting or half closed. The maker did not add any other decorative physical features to the eyes, but there is a faint indication of an iris (though it is slightly more prominent in the proper right eye. There is a very faint indication of a brow bridge, which is visible at certain angles. The mouth is carved inside, all the way through to the inside of the figure, to create a wide and open smile to show a protruding tongue between the teeth. The two front teeth (both top and bottom) have been mutilated, perhaps sharpened using a sawing method. The top and bottom lips are the same thickness. The smile lines, or Nasolabial folds, around the mouth are visible and very prominent. The cheeks are visibly puffed out from said smile. The bridge of the nose is short, well-defined. Overall, the face is bare and round.

On top of the head, the figure wears a short isosceles trapezoid-shaped headdress with rounded corners. It is extravagantly decorated with low-relief patterns: A wide vertical band (1.75 inches x 1 inch) with about 15 thin vertical incised lines in the center of the headdress and

a set of symmetrical double interweaving vertical lines on each side of this central band. Additionally, double lines in a dentil line pattern undulate around the central band and the interweaving set. Lastly, a single line extends horizontally at the bottom of the headdress also in low relief. Interestingly, there are small round holes (approximately 0.25 inches) drilled on the ends of the rounded corners of the headdress, but it is hard to tell if they even go through to each end. The ears are indicated by incising and have large plain circular ear spools that are attached to the ends. At the center of each ear spool is a deliberately punctured hole (though it does not go all the way through and each measure to be approximately 0.25 inches.) Also, there is a small deliberate puncture hole right above these larger holes (it also does not go all the way through and each measure to 1/6 of an inch).

*Condition/Damage Report:*

This figurine head is in good condition. However, there is evidence of major breakage and cracking (i.e. a forked crack [approximately 4 inches or more in length] is at the back of the head and just barely curves around the side of the headdress toward the front; it has been initially repaired with adhesive. Likewise, the ear spool on the proper right has a 1-inch crack that runs across the surface. Also, the body has been broken off, either deliberately, on accident, or from poor craftsmanship, and is most likely lost) (Fig. 12.1 and 12.2).

*Acquisition History:*

This figurine head, one in a group of 71 objects from Mexico, was purchased for the museum in 1960 by Mesoamerican archaeologist and field assistant in ethnography at the MPM, Frederick Peterson, who was from Chiapas, Mexico (Brzosko, 2000).

*Provenance:*

The museum records label this figurine as Totonac (circa 700 A.D. (?)) and originating from Veracruz, Mexico.

*Appraisal:*

\$35.00

*Object Authenticity:*

The museum records are scarce and only give information on the last known person to collect and purchase this figurine before arriving at the MPM. Unfortunately, these records do not indicate if this figurine, which was part of group of miscellaneous objects from Mexico, was institutionally recovered or looted before coming into Mr. Peterson's possession. The provenance research only cites it from Veracruz, Mexico, but does not give an exact archaeological location. However, there is an approximate date, which places this figurine head within the Late Classic. While this figurine is labeled as "Totonac," this information is simply outdated and incorrect since previous research has concluded that Totonac sculpture postdates the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines. It is unclear if Peterson collected this figurine during ethnographic fieldwork. It should be noted that it is unclear when this figurine's damage and repair occurred, but it does not affect this object's authenticity. Lastly, while this figurine's traits are stylistically consistent with the common features, decoration, and manufacturing techniques of the *Sonrientes*, it is unclear if we can determine if it is an authentic piece or a forgery without proper scientific analysis or dating, especially considering its current incomplete condition.

*Current Location in MPM:*

On view. [3CM049] MPM Building-Floor 3—Center Mezzanine- 3CM049-0006160

*My Classification:*

Because it is only a head, this figurine would be classified as Nopiloa II: Decorated Forehead Smiling Figures with its natural features, symbolic forehead ornamentation, full smile with protruding tongue between its teeth, and triangular head shape (pronounced frontal-occipital cranial deformation).

*My Overall Analysis:*

This figurine possesses the headdress and decorative jewelry that I consider as priestly or elite dress attire. Specifically looking at the headdress decoration, the interweaving patterns may indicate a geometric variation of the nahui ollin sign or the sun of movement indicating that this figurine is a cult member who worships this sign (Fig. 12.3). His expression, which is both content yet distant or far-away, suggests intoxication (Fig. 12.3). Specifically, I am looking at the half open or close shape of his eyes, the lack or absence of pupils (hazy or glossed over vision?), the high arch of his eyebrows, and the partially open mouth that appears as if he is smiling or about to laugh. If we look at the upturn direction of the neck/head it suggests that his attention is directed skyward; it may also suggest that he is not in control of his body movement (if a body was attached). Because this figurine is only a head, this figurine is unable to stand up on its own and would need to be leaned or laid flat on its back (the latter is how the figurine was photographed).

Figurine 8:

Catalog Number: A50893

Accession Number: 18037



Figure 13: Front view of Totonac Smiling Head (Flattened) from the Milwaukee Public Museum.



Figure 13.1: Back view of Totonac Smiling Head (Flattened) also showing breakage point.





*Figure 13.2: Detail of Totonac Smiling Head (Flattened)'s intoxicated expression and headdress decoration and iconography which may depict an oceanic or aquatic theme.*

*My Initial Observations:*

This is only a head, not a complete figurine. The dress attire is simple, consisting of a headdress and jewelry. There are no immediate features to indicate the sex or gender. The headdress and its ornamentation may indicate an elite or high status (Fig. 13). Similar in appearance to Figurine 7 (see Fig. 12).

*Titles (given by MPM):*

Figurine head or Totonac Smiling Head (Flattened)

*Physical Description/Analysis:*



This is just a terracotta head of what may have been once a standing figurine. It is approximately 4.5 inches (height from head to neck) x 5.5 inches (wide by top of headdress). The maker used a single mold to create the head and hand-building techniques to create the ornamentation. Additionally, they used some applique in certain areas, such as slip method, to attach the ornamentation as well as tools for incising the figurine's headdress decoration. The back of the head is bare except for when ornamentation from the front curve around to the back, and obviously hollow due to the opening at the neck (Fig. 13.1). The head is not stable to stand on its own. The overall clay color is a brown terracotta, and the surface appears to be smoothed all over. No paint or burnishing is visible, however, the figure's surface looks to have been sanded down at least. There is a darker area at the center of the face, perhaps from firing or from debris mixed into the clay.

The figurine head is naturally shaped with its chin positioned upward as if looking up (Fig. 13.2). The eyes are a low relief in an almost almond shape and are open but look to be almost squinting. The maker even added what looks like an iris in each of the eyes. There is a very faint indication of a brow bridge, which is visible at certain angles. The mouth is in low relief and shows a top row of straight teeth. The top and bottom lips are the same thickness. The smile lines, or Nasolabial folds, around the mouth are visible and very prominent. The cheeks are visibly puffed out from said smile. The bridge of the nose is short, well-defined. Overall, the face is bare and round.

For this figure head, the headdress is very different from the other figures' headdresses. Its features are like the short isosceles trapezoid-shaped headdress with rounded corners like on the other figures, but the headdress appears to almost fuse into the head or is the actual head. There are decorative features incised on the forehead area, and which extend to the eye areas

(this is more prominent on the proper right eye side); the shapes are organic: the center shape appears to reference an aquatic mammal (turtle?) and the shape near the proper right eye is organically curved as well. Additionally, thinly made terracotta coils extend from the ear and curve all the way around the rounded corners of its head/headdress and create an almost spiral end. Interestingly, there are small round holes (a little less than 0.25 inches) drilled on the ends of the rounded corners of the headdress/head, but it is hard to tell if they even go through to each end as they are filled with debris. At the figure's short and wide neck, just above the breakage point, sits a less intricate necklace attached with slip. There are eight round embellishments (perhaps beads and approximately 0.25 inches) and one long vertical rectangular embellishment at the center (approximately 1 inch long); each are lined up across the neck (there is no coiled cord). The ears are indicated by incising in low relief and do not have ear spools; instead, there is a single tiny hole (approximately 1/16 of an inch) that is punctured all the way through on the ear lobe on each ear (this may indicate that terracotta ear spools were made and attached separately but are now lost).

*Condition/Damage Report:*

This figurine head is in fair condition. However, there is evidence of major breakage and cracking (i.e. on the proper left side of the headdress is a long crack [approximately 2.5 inches or more in length] that extends to the eye and ear on that side. Additionally, the part of the ornamentation (coil) on the proper left side has since broken off. There are some minor scuffs on the surface of the face and a tiny hole at the bottom of the proper right eye. The body has been broken off, either deliberately, on accident, or from poor craftsmanship, and is most likely lost) (Fig. 13.1).

*Acquisition History:*

This figurine head, one in a group of 71 objects from Mexico, was purchased for the museum in 1960 by Mesoamerican archaeologist and field assistant in ethnography at the MPM, Frederick Peterson, who was from Chiapas, Mexico (Brzosko, 2000).

*Provenance:*

The museum records label this figurine as Totonac and originating from Veracruz, Mexico.

*Appraisal:*

\$150.00

*Object Authenticity:*

The museum records are scarce and only give information on the last known person to collect and purchase this figurine before arriving at the MPM. Unfortunately, these records do not indicate if this figurine, which was part of group of miscellaneous objects from Mexico, was institutionally recovered or looted before coming into Mr. Peterson's possession. The provenance research only cites it from Veracruz, Mexico, but does not give an exact archaeological location or approximate dating. While this figurine is labeled as "Totonac," this information is simply outdated and incorrect since previous research has concluded that Totonac sculpture postdates the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines. It is unclear if Peterson collected this figurine during ethnographic fieldwork. It should be noted that it is unclear when this figurine's damage occurred, but it does not affect this object's authenticity. Lastly, while this figurine's traits are stylistically consistent with the common features, decoration, and manufacturing techniques of the *Sonrientes*, it is unclear if we can determine if it is an authentic piece or a forgery without proper scientific analysis or dating, especially considering its current incomplete condition.

*Current Location in MPM:*

On view. [3CM049] MPM Building-Floor 3—Center Mezzanine- 3CM049-0006160

*My Classification:*

Because it is only a head, this figurine would be classified as Nopiloa II: Decorated Forehead Smiling Figures with its natural features, symbolic forehead ornamentation, full smile, and natural head shape.

*My Overall Analysis:*

This figurine possesses the headdress and decorative jewelry that I consider as priestly or elite dress attire. Specifically looking at the headdress decoration, it may suggest oceanic or aquatic life indicating that this figurine is a cult member who worships sea life (Fig. 13.2). His expression, which is both content yet distant or far-away, suggests mild intoxication (Fig. 13.2). Specifically, I am looking at the half open or close shape of his eyes, the faint pupils (hazy or glossed over vision?), the arched eyebrows, the smile with a full row of teeth. If we look at the upturn direction of the neck/head it suggests that his attention is directed skyward; it may also suggest that he is not in control of his body movement (if a body was attached). Because this figurine is only a head, this figurine is unable to stand up on its own and would need to be leaned or laid flat on its back (the latter is how the figurine was photographed).

Figurine 9:

Catalog Number: A55097

Accession Number: 20655



Figure 14: Front view of small fully dressed whistle mold from the Milwaukee Public Museum.



Figure 14.1: Back view of small fully dressed whistle mold.



*Figure 14.2: Detail of small fully dressed whistle mold's intoxicated expression and headdress decoration and iconography which may indicate a geometric variation of the nahui ollin.*

*My Initial Observations:*

This is a fully complete figurine. This figurine wears a headdress, jewelry, and a long wide skirt that covers the body. There are no immediate features to indicate the sex or gender, however, the skirt may be one indicator that this figure is female or even male. The headdress and ear spools indicate an elite or high status (Fig. 14). Similar in appearance to Figurines 2 and 4 (see Fig. 7 and 9).

*Titles (given by MPM):*

Whistle (mold made)

*Physical Description/Analysis:*

This standing terracotta figurine is approximately 5.25 inches (height) x 4.25 inches (wideness of arm span). The top of the headdress measures out to be 3.75 inches wide.

Additionally, the bottom of the skirt is 3 inches wide. The maker used a single mold to create the whole figure. The features and decoration such as facial features, headdress decoration, and dress attire are low relief. Additionally, a small tool was used to incise the fingers and toes. The back of the figure is bare except for a small deliberately made vertical rectangular niche hole (approximately 0.75 inches long) at the back of the head/headdress and another smaller horizontal rectangular niche hole (approximately 0.25 inches long) at the top of the head/headdress, which may mean this is a whistle mold and is hollow; another smaller deliberately made vertical rectangular niche hole (approximately 0.5 inches long) is near the bottom behind the proper left leg (Fig. 14.1) The figure is not stable to stand on its own. The clay color overall is light brown terracotta. The surface is rough, grainy, and some features are eroded perhaps from age and where/how it was excavated. No burnish or paint appears to have been applied. Lastly, several areas around the body have black areas that may be from firing or from debris mixed into the material. Likewise, there is white dusty residue on the proper right hand and right side as well as specks of paint on the face. Interestingly, the proper left hand appears to be of a different grey color or material, perhaps from mixing of materials or from some other unknown reason.

While the head and headdress are larger and triangular shaped, the body is disproportionate (i.e. the hands and feet are shorter compared to the body. Additionally, the body is also proportionately small compared to the head). Specifically, the figure has no arms, only hands which are attached right up to the shoulders. The hands are extended out, palms facing straight out, and the fingers are indicated by long incised lines. The feet are large, rounded, slightly stand apart, and stick out from under the garment (almost appearing talon like). Overall, the figurine stands straight, ridged stance. The head is the characteristic upside-down triangular

(the headdress is wide at the top while the chin is a narrow point) and looks straightforward (Fig. 14.2). The face is in a smiling expression in low relief that is open and may show teeth. The two front teeth (both top and bottom) have been mutilated, perhaps sharpened using a sawing method. The smile lines, or Nasolabial folds, around the mouth are just barely visible. The cheeks are visibly puffed out from said smile. The almond-shaped eyes appear to be half open or squinting; there is a very faint indication of eyeballs or irises (?) but no pupils are present. Very faint eyebrows in low relief are visible. The bridge of the nose is short, somewhat defined, and was perhaps modeled on. Overall, the face is bare and round, but very small and squished.

The headdress is larger than the face and in the isosceles trapezoid-shape and has rounded corners. On this headdress, there are also decorative double-line in a sort of partial dentil pattern that undulates around faint symmetrical “x” markings incised on either side at the corners in low relief. Additionally, there are four or five vertical lines (approximately 1.5 inches) symmetrically incised on each end of the headdress as well. Lastly, a single line extends horizontally at the bottom of the headdress also in low relief. The circular ear spools cover where the ears would be; each as a 0.25-inch hole incised in the center of the spool. The proper right ear spool is slightly more eroded. Additional jewelry is a necklace in very faint (eroded) low relief; the only notable ornamentation hangs at the center of the necklace, which look like the end of a cord (or some other kind of vertical embellishment) and has two circular attachments, perhaps beads, of the same size at the end (approximately 0.25 inches each). There are no other distinctive decorative elements to these ornaments on the necklace. The garment covers the figurine’s body, almost appearing as a dress, thus covering the entire genital area and legs. There is incised decoration on the garment: a thick three-sided boarder at the center in low relief; there is no other distinctive decoration.



*Condition/Damage Report:*

This figurine is in good condition. However, there is evidence of major breakage and cracking, (i.e. there is a 2.75 inch long [or more] forked crack at the center of the back of the figure. The proper left corner of the headdress appears to have broken off but then reattached as indicated by the adhesive residue.)

*Acquisition History:*

This figurine, one in a group of 42 objects from Mexico, was purchased for the museum in 1967 by Milwaukee-based collector and dealer of antiquities, Mr. Robert Huber.

*Provenance:*

The museum records indicate that this object as originating from central Veracruz.

*Appraisal:*

\$50.00

*Object Authenticity:*

The museum records are scarce and only give information on the last known person to purchase this figurine before arriving at the MPM. Unfortunately, these records do not indicate if this figurine, which was part of group of miscellaneous objects from Mexico, was institutionally recovered or looted before coming into Mr. Huber's possession. The provenance research only cites it from central Veracruz, Mexico, but does not give an exact archaeological location or approximate dating. While this figurine's traits are stylistically consistent with the common features, decoration, and manufacturing techniques of the *Sonrientes*, it is unclear if we can determine if it is an authentic piece or a forgery without proper scientific analysis or dating, especially considering current condition.

*Current Location in MPM:*

On view. [3CM049] MPM Building-Floor 3—Center Mezzanine- 3CM049-0006160

*My Classification:*

This figurine would be classified under the Nopiloa III: Dicha Tuerta Style Smiling Figures because the mold appears to be undefined or carelessly made with a coarse texture and features, she has a stiff or unnatural pose with hands raised to the side and with indication of fingers, her head faces more foreword with a grimace smile, pinched facial features, and, lastly, she is a whistle type. This figure could also be classified as a Isla de Sacrificios: Postclassic Smiling Figures, which are also characterized by their whistle forms.

*My Overall Analysis:*

While nude, this figurine possesses the headdress and decorative jewelry that I consider as priestly or elite dress attire. Specifically looking at the headdress decoration, the “x” markings may indicate a geometric variation of the nahui ollin sign or the sun of movement indicating that this figurine is a cult member who worships this sign (Fig. 14.2). His expression, while worn away, displays a content look that is arguably intoxicated (Fig. 14.2). Specifically, I am looking at the half open or close shape of his eyes, the barely visible pupils (hazy or glossed over vision?), the arch of his eyebrows, the puffy cheeks, and the partially open mouth that appears as if he is smiling or about to laugh. The open and outward pose of the arm, legs, and overall body indicates a ritualistic stance. Additionally, the fact that this figurine is a whistle, giving him a “voice,” also contributes to the ritualistic nature. Lastly, because the feet are rounded this figurine is unable to stand up on its own and would need to be leaned or laid flat on its back (the latter is how the figurine was photographed). Again, if we consider his stance, the figurine looks as if he has fallen over or intentionally lying flat on his back with his arms and legs spread out in a somewhat buzzed or drunken manner.

## 9 Other Comparative Figurines and Cultures in Mesoamerica:

### 9.1. Classification of Figurines:

I will now look at three separate cases on Mesoamerican material culture focusing on the classification of ceramic figurines as it pertains to the social structures, regional preferences, and ideologies that led to their making, using, and depositing within their cultural context. Using these examples, I apply, compare, and contrast these cases to the Remojadas peoples' way of thinking to further contribute to the interpretation and ritualistic use of the *Sonrientes* figurines. First, Stephan F. de Borhegyi (1954) analyzed comparative figurine types classified by specific movement or positions from Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Second, Elizabeth M. Brumfiel's article (1998) served as one example of how other Mesoamerican cultures, like the Aztecs, perceived ideology and how it was applied to objects, like figurines, to classify and contextualize them within certain social groups. Lastly, Donald McVicker recent study (2012) on Jaina-style figurines reveal social organization and distribution through appearance and archaeological context.

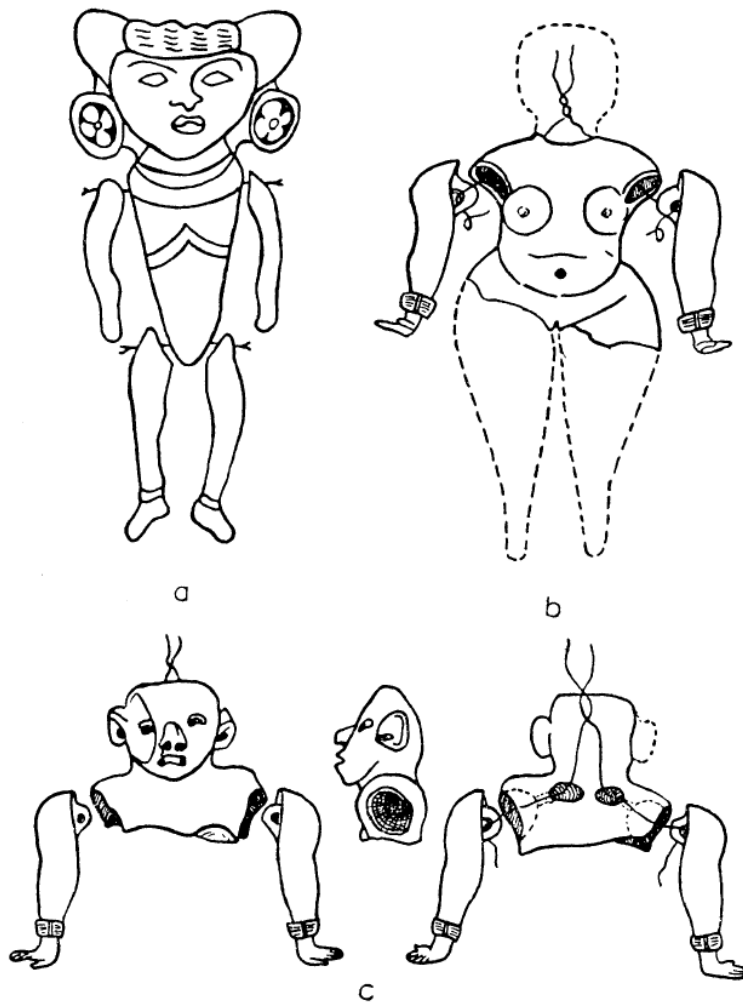


Figure 15: Examples of Type A and B jointed figurines from Borhegyi's 1954 text on page 271. Figures labeled b and c are Type A while the figure labeled a is Type B.

First, Borhegyi looked at formal components of two types of jointed ceramic figurines beyond just dress attire, specifically, at their gestures to hypothetically reconstruct ritual (De Borhegyi, 1954) (Fig. 15). Specifically, he makes a point about the upward hand positions of the Type A jointed figurines, from the areas of Kaminaljuya in Guatemala and Tazumal in El Salvador, in which “the hands is sufficiently unusual to suggest some ritual or magical significance” (Ibid: 273. See Figure 1 on page 271). Regardless, through their jointed limbs, both Type A and Type B—the latter deriving from across the Central and Gulf Coast of Mexico—are perceived to have been possibly “utilized by certain initiated members of the diviner class to

fulfill arm gestures required by the ceremony or perform magical tricks to frighten their enemies” (Ibid: 275). Arguably, Borhegyi’s approach is more expansive in analyzing ceramic figurines because his reading on jointed figurine’s limb position, regardless of the subtleties, offers a lot of information and answers on how to interpret ritual poses and performance within ceramic figurines. While these figure types he analyzes are obviously very different from the general *Sonrientes* figurine types, these same upward, and even outward, hand positions/motions are present. Consequently, if we pay particularly close attention to the MPM’s *Sonrientes* arm and leg positions they communicate an open and delightful invitation. These positions may very well reflect what the ritual movements and performance looked like within the Remojadas and other cultures that made them and how these features contributed to the overall ritual, especially within the context of intoxication. Alternatively, this concept of movement is especially applicable to the few examples of *Sonrientes* figurines with articulated limbs and heads, which are similar to the jointed figurines in that they could be controlled to perform certain movements for the purposes of the ritual.

Brumfiel examined provenience, distribution, and defined formal qualities as ideology within the Aztec archaeological record (Brumfiel, 1998). The Aztecs were a Mesoamerican empire that existed in the Post-Classic period and expanded throughout the north and central parts of Mexico, and at some point, even resided in the same Gulf Coast region using the militaristic force and influence of the Aztec Triple Alliance. Specifically, through the utilization of material culture, “the role of ideology in the Aztec state. ...contributes to the debate over the ways in which systems of [social] inequality are constructed and maintained. ...dominant groups exercise power through coalitions or factions, that is, alliance groups that can use coercion to enforce their will on others...[thus,] ideology can be defined as a system of values and ideas that

promotes social behaviour benefitting some classes or interest groups more than others” (Brumfiel, 1998: 3, cites Gilman, 1989, 68; Thompson, 1990, 73; and Brumfiel, 1994. Also see DeMarais, 1996). In agreeing with an earlier article by Elizabeth DeMarais *et al.* (1996), Brumfiel acknowledged that ideology can be materialized to contribute to the goals of these dominant groups or individuals in the forms of ceremonial events, symbolic objects or icons, public monuments and landscapes, and writing systems. Thus, these methods directed the messages and targeted audiences of specific ideological themes to benefit and “enhance the unity of an elite coalition in three ways. First, it can prescribe the responsibilities and rewards that fall to actors who assume membership in such groups. Second, it can establish the value of these rewards, making them prizes worthy of sacrifice. And third, it can place certain forms of behaviour in cosmological contexts that make them seem morally worthy” (Brumfiel, 1998: 3-4, cites Kelly, 1993:13-17). Arguably, these same concepts can also be applied to the material culture of other earlier Mesoamerican societies, like the Remojadas culture. While scholarship on the Remojadas material and religious ideologies is minimal, the *Sonrientes* figurines, such as the examples from the MPM collection, may provide us with indirect answers to their social structures and the direction of ritual practice and performance that contributed to their ideologies and behaviors. Arguably, the creation of these figurines were meant to serve the ideology of one type of group within the Remojadas or similar culture; this is evident by the *Sonrientes*’ clothing, which include decorative headdresses, skirts, loincloths, girdle band on the chest, and jewelry such necklaces and earplugs, and open poses. Thus, these figurines read more as priests or elite social members than sacrificial captives, though the act of being buried or discarded may be perceived as a title of worthiness or reward for the sake of the ritual.



Figure 16: Two examples of Jaina-style figurines from Campeche, Mexico from McVicker's 2012 text on page 218. The figure labeled a is of a Jaina priest while the figure b is of a Jaina priestess.

Donald McVicker examined dress style and burial placement of ceramic figurines to interpret social organization and methods of social distribution within the larger cultural group (McVicker, 2012). Specifically, he argued that directly analyzing Jaina-style figurines' dress attire and style can reveal a lot about their social structures (Fig. 16). Likewise, he links Jaina-style figurine deposits found in burials as significant to understanding their functions and roles during ceremonial rituals as well as who owned or used them. Scholars have argued that they

served to be companions to the dead in the final stages of ceremonial events since they were unearthed from tombs (Ibid: 218). This interpretation also focused on “the ‘lives’ of the figurines,” which indicated that these figurines “lived” through their participation in religious, social, and domestic rituals with the living (Ibid: 218-219). Like McVicker, these interpretations allow me to understand who performed the Remojadas rituals and how the *Sonrientes* were used or participated in those rituals. The description of the *Sonrientes*’ dress attire in the preceding sections reveal who these figurines may have reflected or represented participants in the real life Remojadas people, which were most likely priests or priestesses, and, thus, answer my question about who the participators were in their rituals. Because of their archaeological contexts, I highlight the importance of the *Sonrientes* according to their final placement in burial mounds or dumping or rubbish areas; though few have been found in association with human remains. Thus, it would appear that the *Sonrientes* figurines were used as offerings perhaps meant to be created and then discarded ritually.

## 9.2. Ritual and Intoxications Practices Associated with Pulque in Other Cultures:

Pulque is an ancient alcoholic beverage that was used for ritualistic and ceremonial purposes. The term “pulque” is of colonial origin; a similar or earlier version may have been used in the Aztec and even with the earlier Remojadas culture though I was not able to locate such term for the latter during my research. To briefly summarize the production process, sap from the maguey plant/tree, called *necutli* (or *aguamiel*), was collected and used as a primary ingredient, which produced its intoxicating and fermenting properties (e.g. Goncalvez de Lima, 1956: 24; Sheehy, 2001: 255). Today, the pulque drink is still produced using a combination of ancient and modern methods, however, it no longer carries the same ritualistic significance as it once did for Pre-Colombian groups who made it. Evidence of early pulque ritual use and



iconography can be found within three different Mesoamerican groups spanning from the Classic and Post-Classic eras.

9.2.1. El Tajin (Late Classic):

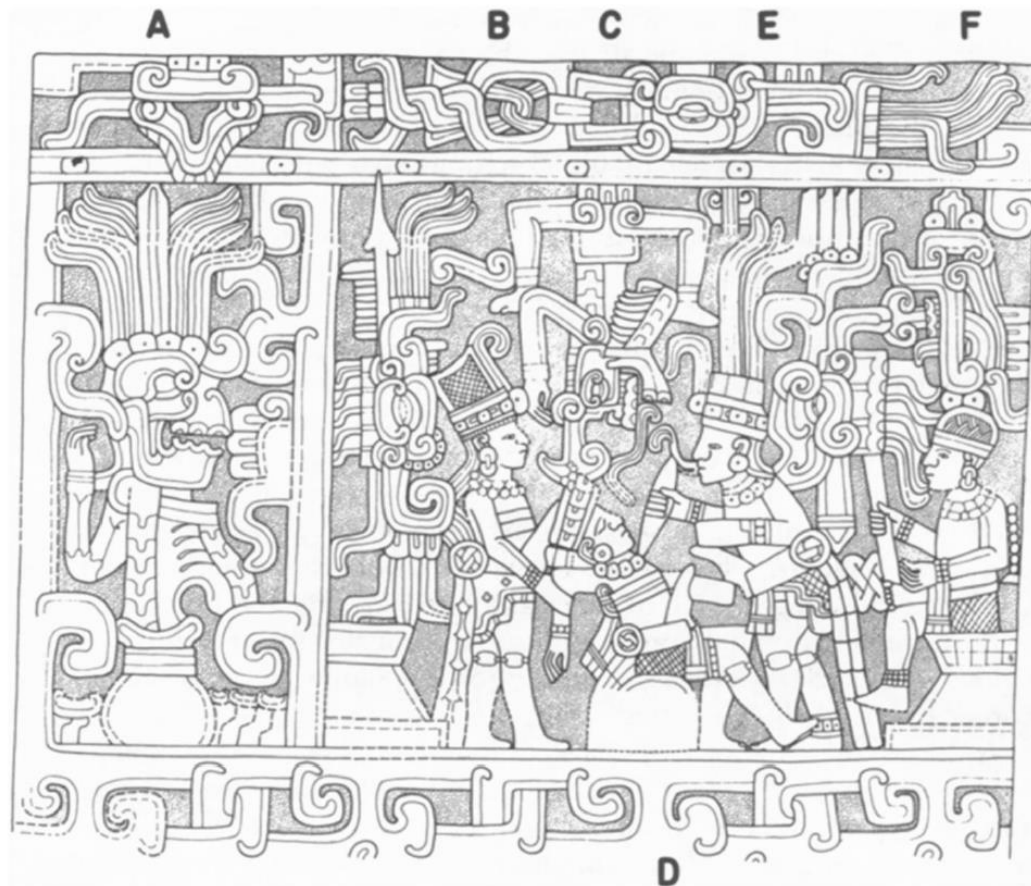


Figure 17: The six carved panels depicting pulque ritual and iconography from the walls of the El Tajin South Ballcourt from Diehl's 2000 text on page 178. The same image is in Kampen's 1978 text on page 124.



Figure 18: Sculpture 6 of the Building Columns depicting the mortal cult leader, 13 Rabbit, to the left indicated by his hieroglyphic date (a naturalistic rabbit silhouette over three dots and two bars) above his head from Kampen's 1978 text on page 122.

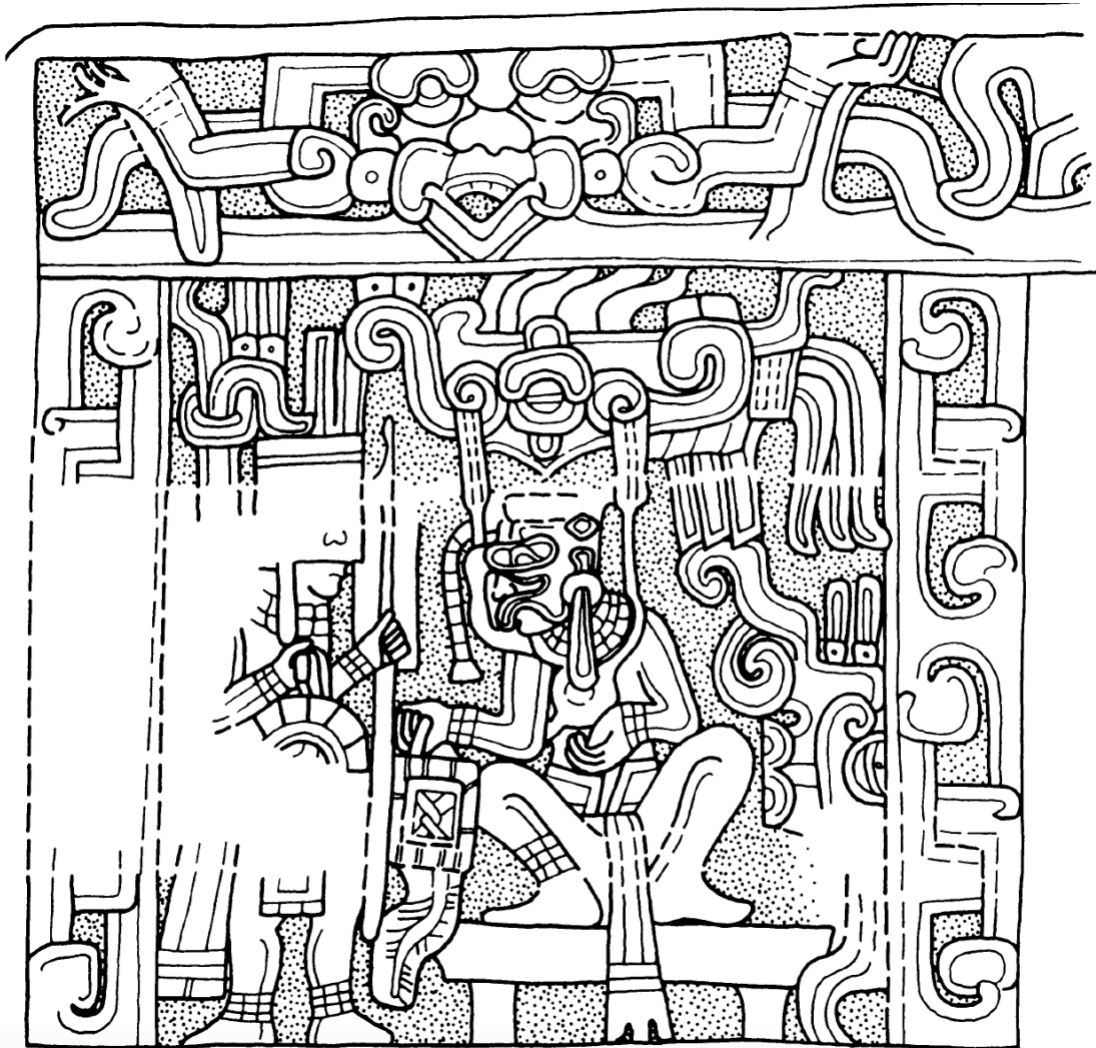


Figure 19: Carved panel from the South Ballcourt depicting a variation of the pulque-rabbit deity (two bodies in profile coming together to form one frontal face) hovering above the rest of the scene from Kampen's 1978 text on page 125.

The ritual and ballgame center of El Tajin, located in the north-west portion of Veracruz, contain mural scenes and iconography on the walls of their most significant monumental architecture that are thought to be associated with pulque. Despite the far geographical distance between El Tajin and other Classic groups from the central and southern regions where Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines were recovered from burial mounds, would it be improbable to assume that some sort of interregional relationship involving pulque could have occurred? (This answer may never be known). One better known example pulque iconography is on the walls of the South Ballcourt, which Diehl recounts:

[in] its preoccupation with death and the underworld. ...The six panels on the walls...portray sequential stages in a ball game and sacrifice ritual. The account begins with (1) ceremonial preparation in which the protagonist dresses, followed by (2) music and dance prior to a ball game, (3) the actual playing of the ball game, (4) the end of the game with sacrifice of one of the players, (5) the descent of sacrificial victim into the underworld to obtain pulque, an intoxicating fermented cactus sap with sacred qualities. In the last scene (6) a god refills the pulque container by perforating his penis and allowing the blood to enter the pulque vat, thus completing the cycle. [Thus,] The Mesoamerican ball game was [more] a ritual rather than a sport in the modern sense. ...[Yet,] The precise relationship among the ball game, human sacrifice, death,” and the act of retrieving and drinking pulque “at El Tajin...is not clear” (Diehl, 2000: 176-179) (Fig. 17).

From this summary, the ritual process of the ballgame included many important characters to reach the end goal(?) of pulque consumption; this includes ballplayers, spectators, performers, and deities. M.E. Kampen (1978) had specifically examined the iconography of the anthropomorphic pulque-rabbit deity of El Tajin who appears in the last two mural scene panels

(5 and 6) of the South Ballcourt and in sculptures 1 and 6 of the Building Columns. Referred to as 13 Rabbit, he is identified by his hieroglyphic dates over his head, but also by “naturalistic rabbits, rabbit-headed creatures with anthropomorphic bodies, flying gods with human bodies and ritual actors wearing costume elements of the rabbit pulque symbolism” (Ibid:121) (Fig. 18). Within these scenes, 13 Rabbit observes, either represented by a mortal cult leader or ruler who stands to one side or the literal deity itself suspended over the event, as the “holy intoxicant, pulque. ...[is] consumed by priests and other persons represented that are associated with this cult. Certain ritual attendants and the god of pulque appear to be [already] heavily intoxicated;” acts of bloodletting sacrificial victims are also stimulatingly being performed (Ibid: 121-123). Could consuming this sacred drink and becoming intoxicated allow these priests and other ritual attendants to perceive the full image of the pulque deity who is nearby? Could this be applied to the *Sonrientes* figurines whose smiling faces and outstretched poses communicate that they are embracing their own deities who may also be near? Interestingly, Kampen comments on another version of the pulque-rabbit deity, made up of two identical bodies in profile coming together to form a single frontal face (in flight above the ritual scene), who is depicted with an “open mouth, a gleeful grin or drunken yawn, and squinting eyes, [which] may represent an advanced state of intoxication” (Ibid: 123) (Fig. 19). In other instances, this same deity is also shown “hav[ing] long extended tongues... [or] upraised arms” (Ibid: 124). Arguably, these characteristics match the *Sonrientes* figurines’ expressions and poses.

#### 9.2.2. Teotihuacan (Middle Classic):

Teotihuacan, considered one the largest and most influential metropolis in the highlands of Mexico during the Middle Classic period, maintained many interregional relationships through art and trade. Specifically focusing on the latter, Diehl states that “[c]ommerce was the

driving force behind Teotihuacan's ventures into distant lands as far away as highland Guatemala, the Peten jungles of the Maya lowlands, and west Mexico. Teotihuacan merchants were [also] naturally attracted to the Gulf Coast lowlands where they could obtain highly prized tropical commodities” (Diehl, 2000: 173). Could this relationship be how pulque drinking was introduced/traded in the Gulf Coast region? According to one source, maguey and pulque imagery were found in murals within several Teotihuacan residential compounds such as Techinantitla, Tlacuilapaxco, Atetelco, Tepantitla, and Teopancaxco (Sheehy, 2001: 257). Specifically, Teopancaxco mural depicts the only example of pulque ritual with “[s]everal ritual pots...associated with the symbol for foaming liquid, as is a speech scroll of a person participating in what appears to be a ritual offering of "pulque" to the earth” (Ibid). The status and description of the participant is unclear. The fact that maguey and pulque imagery existed within these social contexts meant that lower class residences were allowed to view, consume, and even perform domestic rituals with these sacred products; they were also responsible for the cultivation and distribution of pulque for the rest of the city’s population, which may have included the Teotihuacan elite (Ibid: 257-264, 266-267).

### 9.2.3. The Aztecs (Post Classic):

Oswaldo Goncalvez de Lima (1956) studied maguey and pulque iconography in *las codices mexicanos* (the Mexican Codices), primary pictorial sources documenting pre-Hispanic life and information, to understand how the Aztec culture valued and used these substances within their religious sphere. In chapter 2, he begins by defining this cultural group as “*una ‘civilización del maguey.’ ...De ahí que el pulque, como el máspreciado de los productos...se hubiese constituido desde muy temprano en el centro de un complejo que se podría nombrar ‘complejo del maguey.’*” (Translation: “a ‘maguey civilization.’...Hence, pulque, as the most

precious of the products...had been constituted from very early on in the center of a complex that could be called ‘maguey complex’”) (Ibid: 24). Moreover, within the context of its use it was considered many things such as, “[e]l licor, el intoxicante ritual, la bebida-medicina, el líquido sacrificial, el vino blanco —leche de Mayáhuel, la legendaria madre nutricia de los mexicanos (Lehmann) — el teómetl, vino sagrado para los guerreros vencidos que se iban a inmolar, bebida de los valientes y de los sabios, eso fue el octli de los aztecas” (Translation: “[t]he liquor, the ritual intoxicant, the drink-medicine, the sacrificial liquid, the white wine - milk of Mayáhuel, the legendary nurturing mother of the Mexicans (Lehmann) -the teómetl, sacred wine for the defeated warriors who were going to sacrifice themselves, drink of the brave and the wise, that was the octli of the Aztecs”) (Ibid). Like in El Tajin, the pulque beverage is again associated with death and sacrifice for the Aztecs. However, it is also associated with individuals who are considered “the wise,” which may be referring to the religious elite such as priests; this can very well be connected to my own argument regarding the *Sonrientes* figurines and pulque rituals.

The discovery of the maguey, its sap, and the overall production of pulque are linked to Nahuatl deity myth and legend. For these priests, it was the necutli sap that “*tuvieron los honores de la veneración...en el sitio que tenían en el panteón nahua, ...se relacionaba una gran multitud de dioses, correspondientes a la numerosa familia de los centzontotochtin, ‘los cuatrocientos conejos,’ ‘los muchos dioses del pulque,’ ...De ahí que el necutli se elevara pronto a la categoría de un regalo divino*” (Translation: “had the honors of veneration...in the place they had in the Nahua pantheon,... a great multitude of gods were related, corresponding to the numerous family of the centzontotochtin, ‘the four hundred rabbits,’ ‘the many gods of pulque,’ ...Hence, the necutli was soon elevated to the category of a divine gift”) (Ibid: 26, 30). The deities presented in the codices were usually depicted with maguey plant imagery on or around them; pulque was

usually symbolized by the presence of pottery vessels or groups of individuals in the processes of drinking from cups or bowls. Arguably, the priests, who consumed pulque as part of their ritual process, had access to the sacred knowledge of these deities as opposed to those who did not and were instead subjected to death. The knowledge gained would have revealed that “*Los innumerables dioses del pulque se tornaron, así, también, en dioses agrarios, ...protectores del trabajo agrícola, simbolizando, de esta manera, la abundancia y la alegría de las fiestas de la cosecha, ... [y] fueron, sobre todo, ‘la propia expresión del fenecer y de la eterna renovación de la vida, ‘el símbolo de...el signo Malinalli...el cual se halla en conexión con [la diosa] Mayáhuel’*” (Translation: “The innumerable gods of pulque also became agrarian gods,... who protected agricultural work, symbolizing, in this way, the abundance and joy of the harvest festivals,... [and] were, above all, ‘the very expression of dying and the eternal renewal of life,’ the symbol of...the malinalli sign...which is in connection with [the goddess] Mayáhuel” (Ibid: 111). While the Nahua pantheon greatly differs from the Gulf Coast pantheon (whose iconography revealed the worshipped of sky deities), the consumption of pulque in both cultures may very well act as a nexus for the religious elite to their deities.

## 10 Conclusions:

In sum, I proposed that the Remojadas-style *Sonrientes* figurines represent Remojadas individuals from an elite religious group who ingested the sacred Pre-Columbian beverage known as pulque to undergo experiences of ritualistic intoxication and body disassociation. My overall research on the *Sonrientes* figurines, in the Remojadas and other styles, follows the general scholarship, tracks several debates and alternative interpretations of their physical characteristics, and presents the analysis and data that scholars have used to support my own argument on these figurines. Utilizing all known research, and nine *Sonrientes* figurines from the

MPM to guide my thesis, I have concluded the following answers for each question: What kind of rituals did the Remojadas or other people carry out? The Remojadas and others were carrying out pulque drinking rituals to become intoxicated and experience body dissociation. However, this conclusion remains subject to additional revision because there is only one instance where archaeological evidence supports this answer. Additionally, the figurines were mostly collected without provenance, and additional contextual information could support this preliminary conclusion. Why did they do them? These people performed these rituals because they wanted to attribute worship and connection to coastal or sky deities; this is indicated by their open and upward poses and the iconography represented on their headdress. Who did them? Based on my research, I believe that both men and women did these rituals. If we consider their dress attire and poses, both were part of a Remojadas religious group. Interestingly, the MPM group only reflects males, thus, further studies and findings may be needed to find the male to female figurine ratio. How did they do them? The rituals were performed using pulque, a Pre-Colombian alcoholic beverage. Ritualistic reference and consumption of pulque has also been found within other cultural groups and contexts from both Classic and Post Classic periods. How did the people and these rituals relate to other better-studied groups who neighbored them in space and time? These people and their rituals relate to other studied groups in several ways that suggest some sort of shared interregional relationships and influences: first, similar figurines have been found that depict similar poses, dress attire, iconography, and emotion; the concept and creation of these sculptures remains connected to communicating certain ritual processes and actions. Second, the use or reference of pulque in rituals across other Pre-Columbian groups indicate a shared end goal to become intoxicated and relate to themes of death.



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