Living in Ilopango’s Shadow: Using a Figurative Analysis of Grave Goods Excavated from Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán in El Salvador To Investigate the Community’s Relationship to the Ilopango Volcano

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The purpose of this thesis is to determine what can be learned about the people living near the Ilopango Volcano during the Classic period of Mesoamerican history by conducting a figurative analysis of the living subjects depicted on the ceramics and figurines excavated from the area, to determine what, if any, relationship the people there had with the volcano. I examine the frontier Mesoamerican village of Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán by analyzing grave goods found in the mortuary burials located in the area and determining the meaning of the figural subjects on each using established diagnostic elements from experts in the field. I then put these subjects and their meanings into a pantheon of beliefs to determine if a holistic view of their subject matter reveals a connection to the volcano. The contents of five burial features and a single figurine from a pile of backdirt were selected for analysis, resulting in 30 artifacts. Utilizing the iconography on the artifacts, nine subjects were identified as being representations of life: birds, breath or wind, crocodiles, God N or Pawahtuun, humans, monkeys, serpents, spiders, and toads. These subjects were then used as a window into the spiritual pantheon of the people who lived in the area. The results found that the people who repopulated the area after the Tierra Blanca Joven
eruption of the Ilopango Volcano had a spiritual pantheon focused on the central figure of Pawahtuu who was either a representation of the Ilopango Volcano, or who had control over it. They also practiced divinatory rituals to connect with Pawahtuu and other deities to interpret and predict the future activity of the volcano. The people living at CNC also participated in some of the artistic traditions from larger population centers in the region and had some artistic traditions which were unique to this community.

KEYWORDS: Archaeology, Mesoamerica, El Salvador, Maya, Ilopango Volcano, Grave Goods
LIVING IN ILOPANGO’S SHADOW: USING A FIGURATIVE ANALYSIS OF GRAVE GOODS EXCAVATED FROM CIUDAD NUEVO CUSCATLÁN IN EL SALVADOR TO INVESTIGATE THE COMMUNITY’S RELATIONSHIP TO THE ILOPANGO VOLCANO

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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2023
LIVING IN ILOPANGO’S SHADOW: USING A FIGURATIVE ANALYSIS OF GRAVE GOODS EXCAVATED FROM CIUDAD NUEVO CUSCATLÁN IN EL SALVADOR TO INVESTIGATE THE COMMUNITY’S RELATIONSHIP TO THE ILOPANGO VOLCANO

KARI O’DORAN

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kathryn Sampeck, Co-Chair

Abigail Stone, Co-Chair

Logan Miller
I want to thank Dr. Abby Stone for her constant support and guidance, and for being a kind and genuine person. I want to thank Dr. Kathryn Sampeck for her expertise and patience, and for making herself available to help with so much on her plate. I want to thank Dr. Logan Miller for being a calm voice among all the stress that comes with finishing a thesis.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In the early fifth century AD, the Ilopango Volcano (Figure 1) in what is now western El Salvador erupted in what would become one of the largest volcanic events in the Holocene era. The southeastern frontier areas of the Maya world in what is now Honduras and El Salvador were deeply affected by the event. Many villages and potentially even some large cities had to be abandoned as the people left for safety (Sheets 1979). Once the destruction ended the area was repopulated and the new residents built villages, in some cases literally, from the ashes of what was there before. This thesis analyses figurative representations of living entities from a subsection of artifacts found at the Classic period settlement of Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán (CNC) (Figure 1) on the outskirts of modern-day San Salvador (Figure 1) in El Salvador. This small village was built as part of the repopulation effort after the eruption of the Ilopango volcano less than 30 km from the caldera.

The primary focus of this thesis is to analyze figurative representations of living entities from a subsection of the artifacts found at the Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán archaeological site in El Salvador to examine their relationship to the Ilopango Volcano and, through analysis of the stylistic elements of the ceramics, their relationship to the other communities in the greater Maya Highland Frontier and more broadly, southern Mesoamerica. This examination of the artifacts and the themes studied show that the people living at CNC focused their spiritual pantheon around figures, particularly God N, because they were aware of the power the volcano possessed and to give them insight into any future dangers it may pose. I chose to focus on graves that contained figurines to conduct this analysis. I did this because, while all artifacts give information about the cultures that produced them, the functional purpose of ceramic vessels is different from that of figurines. A ceramic bowl may have elaborate decoration and have a
wealth of decipherable information on its surfaces, but it is still meant to function as a bowl. On the other hand, the functional purpose of a figurine is to be representative of the subject. A figurine of Pawahtuun is meant, very specifically, to represent Pawahtuun. Because of this distinction I thought this would be a good way to both limit my selection of features, keeping the scope at a more manageable size for a master’s thesis, and ensure that each feature I studied had at least a single example of a figural representation to examine.

This analysis is then followed up with a chronology and identification of the mortuary artifacts to determine how this community may have fit into the larger Maya and Mesoamerican world. It is my hope that this work can serve as a springboard for further research into the area and the people of the Classic period Maya frontier.

The only archaeological knowledge of Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán comes from survey and excavations in 1994 to 1995 that found remains of some buildings and hundreds of burials. Despite the abundance of well-preserved chamber and shaft-and-chamber tombs excavated into the volcanic ash, there were no preserved human remains. The acidic volcanic tephra that the settlement was built on dissolved the bodies over time. This soil composition makes demographic research difficult or impossible in many cases, and therefore this thesis will not be making assumptions about the individual in the graves. Fortunately, the same soil that destroyed the biological remains in the area also served to preserve remarkably well the carbonized plant remains as well as ceramic and stone artifacts that were grave goods. The ceramics found at CNC are vibrantly colored and their finishes are intact, making stylistic and iconographic analysis of the mortuary artifacts a fruitful avenue for investigating the people who lived there, their worldview, and their place within the broader Mesoamerican world.
Figure 1 Map showing approximate locations of the sites discussed in this thesis
I begin Chapter 2 of this thesis with a discussion of prior research, specifically a description of the excavations at Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán, and the Tierra Blanca Joven eruption of the Ilopango Volcano. I cover the operations of the archaeological operations that unearthed the cemetery and begin the discussion of the mortuary artifacts found there. I discuss the current literature surrounding the effects of the eruption and how it affected the Maya world, including the abandonment of the area and subsequent repopulation efforts. I consider this specific event within the wider established literature focusing on cultural response to volcanic events.

Chapter 3 focuses on methodology and the excavation process from CNC. I will also describe the difficulties regarding analysis of these artifacts, a description of how I identified the items I evaluate, go over my calculations for my mean ceramic date, and describe the theoretical framework I used for the analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the results of my research. I describe the information for each feature focusing on the contents I examined for content and iconographic analysis. This is followed by a categorization of the kinds of artifacts and where they were located. After this I give a descriptive analysis of the figural subjects found in the burial features and descriptive statistics for figurative subject frequency, ubiquity, and diversity. These statistics will illustrate how common or rare the artifacts and themes on them are throughout the features, and if there are patterns regarding their placement.

Chapter 5 is an interpretation of my research results. By holistically considering Mesoamerican figurative subjects as an interrelated nexus of meaning I demonstrate how they relate to each other and to the volcano itself. A framework of volcanic crisis studies provides a robust way to understand why the community at CNC would structure part of their beliefs around the Ilopango volcano. Furthermore, the nexus of relationships created by artistic style
both connected the people of CNC to peoples of the greater Maya frontier yet also fostered a unique community identity distinct from other regions of Mesoamerica.

I then wrap up my arguments in Chapter 6 with a summary of my findings in which I claim that CNC was a community with a close relationship to the Ilopango Volcano and focused at least part of their spiritual pantheon on respect for and communication with deities who might spare them, or warn them, of future volcanic disasters. I also describe how the people of CNC were both culturally similar to other communities in the Highland and Lowland Maya area and the greater Mesoamerican sphere, and had some distinct artistic traditions not yet found anywhere else. Lastly, I go over the broader implications of my research for archaeology, and Mesoamerican studies.

I have included my primary data in Appendix A at the end of this thesis which includes pictures and detailed descriptions of the artifacts present in the features discussed throughout.
CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND

This chapter presents the broader geographical, historical, archaeological, and conceptual contexts for my thesis. This presents the background and necessary context which enable me to analyze the figurative representations of living entities from Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán and examine the relationship that community had to the Ilopango Volcano and their relationship to the other communities in southern Mesoamerica. I review previous archaeological work in the region, give an overview of the Ilopango Volcano and the Tierra Blanca Joven eruption, and historical and archaeological processes that cultures go through when recovering from natural disasters.

Southern Mesoamerica in the Fifth to Sixth Centuries

Throughout its history, the central region of El Salvador was a vibrant participant in Mesoamerican networks and practices, although always also on the shifting southern edge of Maya realms. This region sat at a critical juncture between large cities in the central lowlands and communities and networks more focused on southern Central America. During the Preclassic and early Classic periods, El Salvador was the location of several middle-sized population centers such as Santa Leticia (Figure 1) and larger centers including Quelepa (Figure 1) and Chalchuapa (Figure 1) (Fowler and Earnest 1985). The Tierra Blanca Joven (TBJ) eruption of the Ilopango volcano (discussed below) destroyed and completely depopulated large swaths of El Salvador, with some people fleeing for safety to the cities farther north, east, and south, beyond the most severe effects of the eruption. At the same time, pockets of El Salvador, such as in western El Salvador in the vicinity of Sonsonate (Figure 1), were in a shadow that prevented significant ash deposits; the blast from Ilopango did not affect areas equally in all directions, but rather impacted the immediate vicinity in central El Salvador much more. This
eruption also cut off the major population centers of the Maya in the central lowlands from the people in southern parts of Central America and northern South America (Earnest 1999).

The subsequent repopulation effort in many parts of impacted zone probably took hundreds of years; however, my thesis study of an area close to Ilopango and with large deposits of tephra supports Earnest’s (1999) claim that the first pioneers began resettling this devastated zone less than one hundred years after the eruption. Repopulations efforts in Mesoamerica have been studied at length by Dr. Payson Sheets (1979), Dr. Robert Dull (2001), Dr. Howard Earnest (1999), Dr. Akira Ichikawa (2022b), and more. Sheets, Earnest, and Dull believe that the repopulation efforts generally started within the first 100 years after the eruption. Dr. Ichikawa believes that some population centers returned even quicker, possibly as early as 5-30 years after.

Shifts in settlement and growth occurred in areas that did not have large deposits of TBJ. At Chalchuapa, production in ceramics in the Xocco complex from 400-650 CE increased after a sharp decline during the Vec complex years 200-400CE (Sharer 1978). This confirms the claims that while the area was likely vacated by the majority of the population, it recovered quickly.

The clear establishment of dynastic Maya kingship at the city of Copan (Figure 1) spurred the city’s growth, eventually becoming one of the largest and most politically powerful cities in the southern Maya lowlands, with clear interaction networks that spanned much of western and central modern-day Honduras, southern parts of Guatemala, and western and central El Salvador. The eruption left Copan relatively unscathed, placing it in a prime position to capitalize on economic, social, and political shifts that the eruption made more likely.
This repopulation effort also brought a small number of people back to the upland cove in what is now central El Salvador named Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán. We know about Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán, referred to as CNC throughout this paper, is due to the archaeological project that took place on the south-west of modern-day San Salvador, the capitol of the country of El Salvador, from 1995 until excavations were completed by 1997. The impetus for the completion of the CNC project was the destruction of the local agricultural coffee operations to make way for the construction of a new residential district (Earnest 1999). The excavation took place over three operations, 20, 21, and 22, and included over 270 individual features. The artifacts found mostly fell within the artistic traditions of the southern Mesoamerica, including Maya lowlands and highlands, though, as will be seen, some unique pieces indicate distinctive community practices.

The results of each phase of fieldwork were submitted as series of reports to the Ministry of Culture of El Salvador as well as the property owners. Howard Hoyle Earnest Jr., the Principal Investigator of the project, evaluated the CNC Preclassic contexts in his doctoral dissertation, *A Reappraisal of the Ilopango Volcanic Eruption in Central El Salvador* (Earnest 1999). Mariana Aldana evaluated writing-related iconography on Classic phase ceramics in her undergraduate senior thesis titled *Mimicry, Decoration, or Dialect Variation? A comparative analysis of surface decoration and pseudo-glyphs on polychrome ceramics from Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán, El Salvador* (Aldana 2012). I have been granted access to the unpublished field data and the extensive photography taken of excavated materials, and of excavations at the site by Dr. Kathryn Sampeck, a professor of historical archaeology at Illinois State University and the surviving spouse of Dr. Earnest.
Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán is located on the southwest outskirts of modern-day San Salvador. The archaeological studies indicate that the area was populated by a small village during the Late Preclassic period from potentially as early as 400 BCE until the area was abandoned due to the Ilopango eruption in approximately 431 CE (Earnest 1999). Because of the meters of TBJ ash overburden in much of the zone, evidence for this phase of occupation is limited to erosive areas, primarily hilltops. What was found of the Preclassic ceramics was of considerable difference from areas even short distances away.

The artifacts examined here are from the subsequent repopulation of the area that might have included Ch’orti’ Maya immigrants (Fowler and Earnest 1985) who could have come from population centers in the north and west, potentially near Chalchuapa, in southern Guatemala, and/or central Honduras (Sheets 2009).

**The Ilopango Eruption**

The Tierra Blanca Joven (hereafter TBJ) eruption of the Ilopango volcano was one of the largest and most significant weather events of the Holocene. The date of the eruption has been long contested. Some of the widely accepted dates rage from the early to late sixth century (Dull et al. 2019). More recent data was published using state of the art dating techniques and puts the date at the beginning of the fifth century, around 431 CE (Smith et al. 2020). The mean ceramic date of the artifacts used in this thesis which came from the repopulation of the area is 512 CE. This is discussed at length in Chapter 3 and supports this earlier date and will therefore be used for the rest of this thesis.

The scope of this event cannot be overstated. The surrounding areas were covered in several meters of volcanic tephra and a radius of approximately 80 kilometers around the caldera.
became largely uninhabitable. This time frame roughly corresponds to the transition from the Early Classic period to the Late Classic period of southern Mesoamerican archaeological periods, though the southeastern Maya highlands were experiencing a boom at the time with the expansion of Copan.

Earnest (1999) identified two archaeological phases for the Nuevo Cuscatlán area that clearly followed the TBJ eruption. Of note, the date ranges discussed for these phases may be off as the estimated date of the eruption at the time was still set in the early sixth century, at least a hundred years after the date used throughout this thesis. I consider materials from both phases. The first is the Regalado Phase between 550 and 650 CE. The second is the Dueñas Phase from 650 to 850 CE. The smaller quantity of features and distinctive material culture of Regalado phase indicates that a small number of people returning to the area after the TBJ eruption, who were then be followed by a larger growth in population by the Dueñas phase, indicated by stratigraphically superior features and deposits that were over a greater area and more numerous (Earnest 1999). The relatively fewer number of artifacts relating to the Regalado phase appear to be of a distinct tradition associated with the area of Chalchuapa in western El Salvador, while the subsequent, more plentiful Dueñas artifacts were more stylistically similar to the ceramic traditions of the greater Ulúa Valley, with significant similarity to those found at Copan as the frontier population began to grow and connect more (Earnest 1999). Following the Dueñas Period there was only sporadic and likely temporary occupation of the area, and while the modern city may be covering further evidence of habitation, “Nuevo Cuscatlán does not represent the continued occupation of a Pipil town” (Earnest 1999).
As will be discussed further in the following sections, the style of pottery and the materials used fall largely within the traditions of the Zapotitán Valley, including shared ceramic traditions with Chalchuapa. The artwork on the cylindrical vessels, however, is not so clear cut. Before the TBJ eruption, the region shared remarkable unity in motifs and iconography, even though the geographic area on the southeastern frontier of the Maya range may have limited interaction with much of the Maya lowlands (Demarest and Sharer 1986). After the Ilopango eruption, however, the pioneer population branched off into a more unique stylistic tradition (Earnest 1999).

Disaster Recovery

One aspect of the community who lived at CNC that might be gleaned from the artifacts found there is how the people of the region responded to the natural disasters they went through. Societies respond differently to environmental disturbances depending on many factors, including the type of disaster, the makeup of the society, and the resilience of the natural world around them (Sheets 2004).

Volcanic eruptions can do more than simply spread magma in the surrounding areas. Volcanic tephra, or the ashy deposits that area spewed forth from violent eruptions, as well as pyroclastic flows, toxic gasses, acid rains, atmospheric disturbances, and more can effect environments and communities over long ranges (Grattan 2006). The eruption of the Ilopango volcano was a life altering event for the Zapotitán Valley, an area not far from CNC (Dull, Southon, and Sheets 2001). It is possible that that there was an environmental indication of the eruption that the occupants were able to interpret and act on, such as earthquakes (Scarpa 2001).
The capability of a population center to respond to volcanic eruption is determined by several factors. The first is the severity of the eruption itself. The volcanic eruptions in Mesoamerica over the Holocene have had varying effects on the local populations as evidenced through archaeological findings. In many of those cases, the more severe the eruption, the most affected the local populations were (Sheets 2004). That might seem logical, however that is only one aspect of population response. If one looks at the rest of the society’s traits holistically a more nuanced picture can be seen.

The political and social complexity of a population center has a large effect on how they are able to respond to volcanic activity. While larger cities or population centers may have an abundance of resources and manpower, it is, perhaps surprisingly, smaller villages that are more able to adapt quickly to dramatic ecological disasters (Sheets 2012). This is due to the mobility of a smaller population, and an infrastructure that can, in theory, be more easily replaced (Oliver-Smith 2014). Because smaller, more egalitarian communities are able to react and make decisions faster, they are more able to adjust in time to have better chances of recovery (Sheets 2012). On the other side of the spectrum, once a large city or state population center is wiped out, it may never recover (Sheets 2004).

What we know so far about the community living in the area of CNC before the TBJ eruption is that it was likely a small agricultural community on the southern frontier of the Maya world, but well within Mesoamerica (Earnest 1999). Based on the CNC excavations and survey, the area was abandoned by the time the eruption occurred. The repopulation efforts could have started as early as 50 or as much as 100 years after the eruption (Sheets 2009). The area would still have been recovering ecologically and the population of large cities that were affected by the eruption, such as Chalchuapa would still be recovering from the fallout (Sheets 2020). Indeed, it
is likely they would still be dealing with agricultural difficulties from the damage a thick deposit of fresh TBJ tephra caused.

When the new residents of CNC arrived they would have been building their structures and burying their dead on top of, from, and into the volcanic tephra, which was 7 m or more in some areas around Ilopango’s surrounding area (Earnest 1999). As seen at San Andrés (Figure 1), the tephra was able to be highly compacted and made excellent building materials (Ichikawa 2022a). The structural remains at CNC, however, are masonry of laja and talpatate. It is very possible that other, now destroyed housing and community buildings incorporated the same building techniques using the volcanic tephra like some of the more grand monumental structures built at San Andrés (Ichikawa 2022a).

Predictive models for repopulation efforts after a disaster like this suggests that the population was likely a small community of settlers, likely from the surrounding larger polities, such as Copan or, central Honduras, taking advantage of the newly available land and resources (Sheets 2009; Aubry 2019). They brought with them cultural practices shared in the southern Maya frontier, with some of the material culture found at CNC also having at least some resemblance to that of the Ulúa Valley in what is now Honduras (Earnest 1999; Sheets 2009).

This concept of a repopulation by existing people setting out to build something new is reflected in the ceramic industries and figurative imagery on display (Earnest 1999). It is likely that the people who rebuilt the area came from a population which already inhabited other areas nearby. The ceramic traditions seen at CNC have been found at surrounding sites and larger population centers in southern Mesoamerica. The iconographic subjects studied here are also all present at other sites throughout the Maya world, and, while the decorative elements on some are
unique, they are not far enough removed to be considered a totally new culture (Personal Communication with Dr. Kathryn Sampeck 2023).

An important observation regarding the subjects represented on the ceramics and figurines studied in this thesis is the difference in the prominence of some subjects versus others. The presence of Pawahtuun (and iconographic subjects strongly connected to him), who in many other Maya contexts was depicted as a subordinate figure to rulers and more elevated gods, is notable (Taube 1992). However, potentially equally notable is the lack of large effigies or figurines of those gods viewed as superior in other communities. While the subsample of the total artifacts examined in this thesis is a small portion of the total number from the place, it does emphasize the presence of figurines, so if sculptures or figurines of the other deities were present, I would have identified them. The features examined here, particularly Feature 15 and Feature 105/105B, may represent burials of individuals who were especially important to the community. Therefore, the artifacts here may not account for a majority of the total, but I argue that they do represent an important window into the ideology of the people who lived at CNC.

What we see when we consider that the population of CNC was returning after a catastrophic volcanic eruption, they would have been aware of the dangers present and the intracommunity cosmology of figurative images present on their ceramics supports the idea that they were not only aware of the volcano’s destructive potential, but they had ideas about who theologically to give respect to prevent that kind of disaster from happening again. The relationship of Pawahtuun to volcanic disruption deserves a detailed discussion which takes place in Chapters 4 and 5. Before I get there, however, I discuss the methods and theoretical framework I use for this analysis.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

My primary research goals are two-fold. First, I am determining the relationship the people of Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán had with the Ilopango volcano. I do this by examining the figurative and iconographic imagery on the ceramic, and the subjects of the figurines found there. I use previous interpretations made by experts in the field of Mesoamerican symbolism, theology, and linguistics to determine possible meanings for the themes and motifs present at CNC. I then use a holistic view of all subjects to create a view into a pantheon of spirituality that uses communication with specific deities, Pawahtuun and Ix Chel, to interpret the potential of the volcano.

My second research goal is to determine how similar or dissimilar the community at CNC was to other, more well-known population centers in the area. To do this I perform a basic stylistic analysis of the ceramics to determine a mean ceramic date for the area and attempt to see how much this lines up with existing knowledge of southern Mesoamerica. I utilize classification schemes from established ceramic sequences. These studies give a basis for a qualitative comparison based on presence or absence. I do not attempt a quantitative study of relative frequencies of counts of ceramic types or iconographic elements. A quantitative comparison of CNC materials with archaeological evidence from other regions in southern Mesoamerica would be a productive next step to investigate these issues further. I also worked alongside Dr. Kathryn Sampeck, professor of Anthropology from Illinois State University, to ensure the accuracy of my interpretations.
The Excavation of Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán

Figure 2 Map of the Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán excavation indicating the location of features.
The Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán Archaeological Project

The Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán project began in 1994 as a survey operation that covered 287 hectares. After the testing phase, the area was limited to 4.65 hectares which would comprise the CNC operation. Excavations started in 1995 and continued until 1997 spanning Operations 20, 21, and 22. The totality of the CNC project data mostly exists on paper. The artifacts from the CNC project are curated by the Administración del Patrimonio Cultural in the National Museum “David J. Guzmán” of El Salvador, with some likely housed in National Museum bodegas and may await detailed typological sorting. The National Museum has a copy of all the project paper records and reports. The archive awaits digitization and cataloging.

Archaeological Data for This Thesis

I worked with excavation plan maps, photographs taken on 35mm film, permit forms, artifact inventories, and field notes. I have made note of the information I could not find. On the basis of the documents I examined, there were at least 270 features excavated in at least 509 lots. A lot designates either a stratigraphic level excavation or a feature (or portion of a feature) excavation. Each excavation unit measured 2x2m.

Methodological Challenges

The bulk of the CNC archaeological excavation was centered on a domestic zone with numerous burials covering an area of around 4 ha. Due to the high acidity of the soil that developed from the thick layer of TBJ tephra, little to no bone was preserved. Agricultural activity and other modifications of the landscape removed or disturbed upper levels of much of the zone, leaving just a few parts of some structures intact, including stacked talpatate and other dry laid stone wall foundations, stone paved floors, postholes, and bajareque wall features.
revealed through the excavation. Most of the information we have about the population that lived here thus comes from the excavation of levels below the ancient ground surface, where remarkably well-preserved burial features and their grave goods were located. All the artifacts studied within this thesis were found in these graves. What was not found in these graves, however, were bodies. That same tephra that preserved the mortuary architecture so well caused all the skeletons to dissolve, leaving no bodies to be examined. Research into the Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán population faces three unique challenges: an almost complete lack of human remains, a short span of habitation, and undigitized data about the excavation in various paper formats, genres, and states of organization.

The first and most primary of these is the complete lack of bodies. Due to the acidic nature of the volcanic tephra which made up the top several meters of soil when people resettled the area after the TBJ eruption the bodies of everyone buried at the site have deteriorated to nothing (personal communication with Dr. Sampeck). Indeed, the only trace of human bodies found at all was a small handful of teeth recovered from a few individual features spread throughout the site. While a lack of bodies may prove to be a challenge for certain aspects of archaeological investigation, I overcome this limitation by focusing exclusively on the artifacts found at the site using a materialist framework. The themes present on the artifacts at CNC provide information about the culture of CNC, and my analysis of how they illustrate a relationship between the community and the Ilopango volcano, therefore, does not necessitate demographic data.

Another challenge is that the area was abandoned during the Late Classic, estimated around 850 CE. Because the area was not continually occupied until modern times or even until Spanish invasion in the early 1520s, I cannot consult descendant populations about questions of
how ancestral generations may have interacted with the volcano or with neighboring communities. General knowledge about southern Mesoamerica due to excavations in nearby regions provide a basis for comparison, but southern Mesoamerica is well known for major differences between communities only a short distance apart (Schortman and Urban 2019). This local distinctiveness is still true even today despite technological gains made in the last hundred years that encourage people to be ever more connected. Try telling two people, one from New York and the other from New Jersey, that they have the same culture, and a fight is likely to break out, even though they are only on opposite sides of the Hudson River. In a similar fashion what was important to one village during the Classic might be trivial to another. In this case, CNC may have had a particularly distinct relationship to the Ilopango volcano not just because they were so close to it, but also because of specific cultural factors we may not have discovered yet. This goal of this thesis is to make this claim; that their relationship with the volcano was distinct and the imagery surrounding the key subject of Pawahtuun is evidence of this, and that they were also part of the greater Mesoamerican sphere in the stylistic traditions present in their ceramics.

The final challenge is accessibility to and state of information regarding the excavation. The information I examined included field notes, photographs, maps, and other documentation, which have been kindly and generously provided by Dr. Kathryn Sampeck who is the surviving spouse of Dr. Howard Hoyle Earnest Jr., the Principal Investigator for the CNC excavations. Due to Dr. Earnest’s passing, most of this information has not been digitized. Research and curation efforts that other scholars have conducted with the materials since Dr. Earnest’s death left portions of the archive in states that did not return them to the organization scheme that Dr. Earnest had established. Much of the research for my thesis involved flipping through dusty
papers still soiled with El Salvadoran dirt 25 years later. The same was true of the photographs available of the site and artifacts found. The pictures provided within this thesis are scans of the original 35mm photographs that were stored in archival boxes. The phases of the investigation and their results are thoroughly documented in periodic reports and a final report to the Administración del Patrimonio Cultural and are on file at that institution. Two academic writings rely on a small portion of the CNC project results. The first is Dr. Earnest’s doctoral thesis for the Anthropology Department of Harvard University, which is, in some cases, the only place to get some of the information provided in my thesis (Earnest 1999). The other academic writing drawing upon CNC data is an undergraduate thesis by Mariana Aldana that utilized some of the artifact photographs and information regarding the pseudo glyphs present on several vessels, information from the later Dueñas Phase that I do not examine because those examples do not directly relate to my research questions (Aldana 2012).

Another point to mention is that there are related difficulties to only having pictures available for study, and not the artifacts themselves. Perhaps the most obvious is that only one side of each artifact is shown in most instances. There may be other figural illustrations not visible in the pictures which, therefore, did not get examined here. Furthermore, most of the pictures did not have measurements of any indication of scale. Where they were available the information is included in Appendix A at the end of this thesis. As I focus more on the figures represented on the artifact than the artifacts themselves, this problem was minimized, however future research on the site may necessitate more thorough examination of the physical objects.

Included in this thesis are artifacts from six features and one artifact found in the backdirt from Lot 432. This sample only includes a small subset of the total artifacts found at CNC and may not be representative of the overall presence of specific kinds of artifacts found, the
frequency of ceramic or artistic groups, or the typical presence or number of artifacts per grave of the burial grounds. Instead, in consultation with Dr. Kathryn Sampeck, and with the goal of choosing an appropriately sized subsample, I focused on analyzing features that contained complete or partial figurines. This is to ensure the artifacts being examined serve the purpose of analyzing the representations of life at CNC, and to limit the total artifacts examined here to a sample size more in line with the scope and timeframe of master’s level work.

Photographs and basic descriptions of each artifact are included in Appendix A. This sample includes 39 artifacts and a small number of associated sherds. The primary focus of this research will be on 15 artifacts. These are five figurines, three vessels shaped to represent living things, and seven pieces of ceramic with illustrations of living things, two of which are of the same type, with matching decoration. The remaining co-occurring artifacts were decorated with geometric patterns, single-colored slips or bands, or were not decorated at all. As this collection only includes artifacts from features that included figurines, they should not be interpreted as the only pieces representing life in Classic period Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán. There are many more vessels with iconography that have been beautifully preserved by the TBJ tephra. The total excavation of the CNC project took place over three largescale operations. These three operations, 20, 21, and 22, had over 270 features, and unearthed hundreds more artifacts. The scope of such a large sample size would be overwhelming for a graduate thesis and there remains a lot of analytical work to be done.

Scope and Nature of Samples

To keep the scale of this thesis realistic, I study a subsample of the total features and artifacts that the CNC project recovered. There were hundreds of features at CNC and hundreds of artifacts within them. To evaluate the entire collection would be far beyond the scope of a
single master’s thesis. Beyond that, the focus of my work is the subjects that represent the living world within this population, so selecting a sample of features specifically because their contents is needed to address my research questions. The first, and most decisive criterion to be included in my study was that a feature had to have at least one carved or hand sculpted figurine as part of its inventory. This was a way to ensure that my sample included features with at least one figural representation to examine for a potential relation to the volcano. I then analyzed every artifact from those selected features for their iconography and style to record the full suite of content and stylistic expression.

I made two exceptions to this rule. The first was to add Feature 14, which did not have any figurines in it. Feature 15 was likely discovered and excavated first and had already been selected due to the presence of the jade pectoral figurine, overlapped with parts of Feature 14. It is likely that Feature 14 was an antechamber to Feature 15, though that determination was not made in the documentation I had access to.

The second exception to my selection criteria was the addition of the Pawahtuun figurine, whose provenience could not be associated with a specific feature as it was recovered from the backdirt pile from the excavation of nearby features at Unit 264 which was at least four meters from the nearest burial feature. I found the preservation and artistic expression of the piece too valuable to exclude.

Because my research studies a sample of the total collection of artifacts found at CNC, my results are not necessarily representative of the site as a whole. The six features I study will not be compared to the rest of the CNC collection in terms of the total number of all artifacts recovered by the project, the quality of artwork or technical qualities of artifacts, or the overall frequency of imagery, symbolism, or artistic tradition of CNC. This sample is a window into the
kinds of entities represented to try and determine what subjects were important to the people living there during the Classic period and whether those interests had any connection to the volcano or to cultures from surrounding areas.

**Mean Ceramic Date**

As part of my ceramic analysis, I calculated the mean ceramic date of 512 CE for the artifacts included in this collection. I used the US Department of the Interior National Park Service system to calculate this date. This included determining the Mean Production date for each artifact by dividing the beginning and end date of production for each ceramic tradition, as defined by Sharer (1978), Joyce (2017), and with the help of Dr. Kathryn Sampeck, by two. I then added all these dates together and divided them by the number of artifacts to arrive at the 512 CE figure. This number was earlier than I expected and supports the earlier date of the TBJ eruption as calculated by Smith et al (2020).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Beginning of Production</th>
<th>End of Production</th>
<th>Mean Production Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feature 14, Vessel 1</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 14, Vessel 2</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 14, Vessel 3</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 15, Vessel 4</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 15, Vessel 8</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 15, Vessel 5</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 15, Vessel 3</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 15, Vessel A</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 15, Vessel B</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 15, Vessel 7</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 20, Vessel 1</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 105, Vessel 1</td>
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<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 105, Vessel 6</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 105, Vessel 3</td>
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<td>850</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 105, Vessel 2</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table Continues)
Table 1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature 105, Vessel A</th>
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<th>400</th>
<th>300</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feature 105, Vessel 4</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 105B, Vessel 4</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 105B, Vessel 6</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 105B, Vessel 5</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 105B, Vessel 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 270, Monkey Whistle</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 270, Vessel 2</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 270, Vessel 4</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 270, Vessel 5</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature 270, Vessel 3</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>16600</td>
<td>13300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>385</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Calculation of Mean Ceramic Date

**Theoretical Framework**

My theoretical framework going into my interpretations could be loosely defined as new materialist, or perhaps post-modernist. New materialism is the theory that objects by their very nature of existence are important. The complexities of society that create individual artifacts, the methods they use to produce them, and the artwork on them are equally as important as the objects themselves (Knappett 2015). This is an ontological approach that implies relationships between not just the objects and the people, but also between their spiritual and ritual lives, the other objects in the area, and the surrounding landscape (Johnson 2020). An example of this would be the Classic Maya sweat baths found at Cerro Palenque. These were not only places related to rejuvenation of the physical body, but were also places of spiritual meaning related to births of gods and a place where pre-birth medical practices would take place, relating both spiritual and physical health to the physical structure and the cultural and sociological aspects of the community (Meskell and Joyce 2003).
Postmodernism is a more controversial theoretical framework, because at the heart of it is the claim that there is no one universal truth; that to understand archaeological findings one must be willing to accept information from sources which would have been seen as unreliable historically (Johnson 2020). An example here would be using the Popol Wuj as a scientific source of information, where some may turn it away because of the belief that oral tradition is somehow less valuable than numbers.

I do not spend time here debating the need for multiple viewpoints and instead combine the concepts of materialism and postmodernism to say that the artifacts at CNC are important on their own and by focusing on them one can discover aspects of a people absent their other material culture or relative context. That is to say, I am creating a new explanation for the presence of themes on the ceramics and figurines here based on a holistic reading of the subjects to create an explanation for their presence. The fact that these themes are present means they are important, and because they are important, they should be considered as part of a complete picture. While I do break things down feature by feature and look at the thematic ubiquity and diversity of each subject, I do so not to determine importance of one over the other. Instead, the subjects are considered together as parts of a whole picture of what mattered to the people who once lived at CNC.

It is in this way that the lack of bodies to examine is a benefit. If, say, we had guesses at gender, or age, or physical ability of the people in the graves these artifacts were excavated from, that could color or directly inform the judgements of the value of these objects, for better or worse. Might the interpretation of the contents of Feature 105/105B, which had artifacts which may have been used for divination to the gods, be different if it had been determined that the person, they were buried with was an elderly man? A young woman? A small child? The fact
that the demographic information is not available affords a freedom from gendered or age-based assumptions and allows for analysis wholly dependent on the themes on the artifacts.

Instead of determining importance, I focus here more on relationships. Are the themes and subjects on the ceramics and figurines related to each other, and if so, how? By approaching the themes in this way, I develop a pantheon of related characters working together to serve the people of CNC in a way which may have been useful to them. If they were moving back to an area near a volcano that has very recently destroyed everything around it, then perhaps having a way to communicate with an entity that had control over it, or at least had influence over it, would have made sense. In the God N, The Keeper of the Volcano section of Chapter 5 I outline this argument more fully.
CHAPTER IV: PRIMARY RESEARCH RESULTS

After carefully examining the artifacts in the included features I have arrived at the following results. I begin with in-depth reviews of each individual feature. I then recount the applicable information about each subject with an eye toward interconnected relationships, the ways each subject relates or interacts with the others within the Classic Mesoamerican spiritual cosmology. Following that I determine the frequency, diversity, and ubiquity of each subject within the features here to find patterns. Those patterns would be how common was a theme in general, were specific themes clustered together in single or nearby burial features, and which themes were in burial features that had many vs. few artifacts.

Feature Information

The following is an accounting of each feature examined in this thesis. They are presented directionally from north to south starting with the Northeast Cluster, a collection of features tightly packed together, in some cases even overlapping. Included in the Northeast Cluster are Features 14, 15, and 20. Following that are Features 105/105B. These are associated features which through the process of excavation were determined to be either an entryway and chamber or chamber and antechamber. They are examined as a set throughout the discussion here in this thesis, however a breakdown of the artifacts found in each can be found in Appendix A. Next is Unit 264, the location of a layer of backdirt in which the Pawahtuun figurine (Figure 12) was found. Finally, Feature 270 was the furthest south of the features covered by this thesis. Further details follow in their respective sections.
Northeast Cluster

The features in this area were tightly packed and, in some cases, such as with Features 14 and 15, overlapped with each other (Figure 3). Features 14, 15, and 20 were in the middle of a large group of features that was a major part of early Operation 20.

*Figure 3 Map of Northeastern cluster which includes Features 14, 15, and 20.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature 14</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Number of Grave Goods</th>
<th>Number of Different Subjects</th>
<th>Number of Vessels with Chosen Themes</th>
<th>Ratio of Theme Count to Grave Good Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feature 14 (Figure 3) is part of the northeast cluster, which contains the first three features discussed here, 14, 15, and 20. Feature 14 is partly overlapping on the south of Feature 15 and the two of them together are roughly two square meters, one meter from east to west, and two meters from north to south. It contained three grave goods which is slightly below the mean of 4.6. One of them, Vessel 1, had three subjects, a serpent, a human, and breath, which fell within categories examines in this thesis. With a ratio of theme count to total grave goods of 1 this feature had more themes present, though again they were only on one vessel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature 15</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Number of Grave Goods</th>
<th>Number of Different Subjects</th>
<th>Number of Vessels with Chosen Themes</th>
<th>Ratio of Theme Count to Grave Good Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The northern wall of Feature 14 overlapped with the southern wall of Feature 15 (Figure 3). Features 14 and 15 were approximately the same size, though Feature 15 had more grave goods at eight, opposed to 14’s 3. The grave goods present also had more subjects, and more grave goods had subjects, at four for both. This is the second highest total number of subjects in a single feature, and it is tied with Feature 20 and Feature 105/105B for the ratio of grave goods to subjects at .5, though Feature 20 only had two artifacts. In general, Feature 15 is the second most populated, following Feature 105/105B, in terms of both number of artifacts and subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature 20</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Number of Grave Goods</th>
<th>Number of Different Subjects</th>
<th>Number of Vessels with Chosen Themes</th>
<th>Ratio of Theme Count to Grave Good Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29
A small zone with no masonry, Feature 20 (Figure 3) was only about 4m northeast from Features 14 and 15, separated by large, complex tombs of Features 19 and 23. Two artifacts were found in Feature 20 and one of them had two selected themes. This makes the ratio of themes to artifacts high, but only because of the low numbers.
Feature 105/105B

Features 105 and 105B (Figure 4) together compose a stone-lined chamber and associated offering adjacent and exterior to the northeast corner of the tomb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature 105 and 105B</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Number of Grave Goods</th>
<th>Number of Different Subjects</th>
<th>Number of Vessels with Chosen Themes</th>
<th>Ratio of Theme Count to Grave Good Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Features 105 and 105B (Figure 4) are associated features located about 14 m south of the previous cluster of features. Feature 105 was uncovered first. During excavation of Feature 105, field crew encountered a wall covered with a large, flat stone (laja). This masonry covered access to a large, stone-lined chamber. The removal of the laja revealed that 105 was connected to 105B likely as a point of entry or small antechamber. Feature 105B turned out to have many more artifacts than 105, and the Feature 105 &105B combination had the most artifacts of any of the sample of features I studied in this thesis. Those artifacts also tied with Feature 15 for the highest number of subject representation, and had a high number of artifacts with studied themes, with a ratio of .4. I examine 105 and 105B together throughout my analysis, but the artifact distribution of covered in Appendix A.

The Northeast Cluster, by comparison, was more densely populated with several mortuary features right next to each other and in the case of Features 14 and 15, even overlapping with each other. Feature 105/105B, on the other hand, was more distinct with the large stone lajas covering parts of it.
Unit 264

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 264</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Number of Grave Goods</th>
<th>Number of Different Subjects</th>
<th>Number of Vessels with Chosen Themes</th>
<th>Ratio of Theme Count to Grave Good Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Pawahtuun figurine was not found in a feature, though it was found during Operation 21, and the location was stated in the field notes. Unit 264 (Figure 5) was 12 m west and about
10 m south of the Northeast Cluster. This figurine was found at least 5 m from the closest feature in a pile of backdirt that combined both feature and level excavations.

Operation 22

Most of Operation 22 was located far to the south of Operation 20, where the Northeast Cluster and Feature 105/105B were located. The features in this area were less densely packed together than those of Operation 20. The only feature from Operation 22 covered in this thesis is Feature 270.

Figure 6 Map of the area around Feature 270
Feature 270

Feature 270 (Figure 6) is the only one from Operation 22 discussed in this thesis. It is also the farthest away from the Northeast Cluster, at 48 meters south and 30 meters west of . While it had six artifacts, only one of them had a subject discussed here: the monkey whistle. The ratio of grave goods to themes is low, with only one out of six artifacts having a chosen theme.

**Iconographic Content Analysis and Semantic Contexts**

The research covered by this thesis is on living subjects, or subjects that represent life, specifically in figural imagery, and how those subjects relate to the Ilopango Volcano and the TBJ eruption. The subjects here are birds, breath or wind, crocodiles, God N or Pawahtuun, humans, monkeys, serpents, spiders, and toads. There are symbolic stylistic elements present on many of the artifacts included here that will not be studied in this thesis and further research on them is encouraged. They are presented in this chapter in alphabetical order, therefore the order in which they discussed is not meant to infer any special meaning such as rank or importance.

My knowledge of these subjects comes from the research of existing experts in the field of Maya and Mesoamerican symbolism and theology such as Dr. Karl Taube and Dr. Karen, Bassie-Sweet. I also utilized interpretations of the Popol Wuj, a telling of Maya mythology which was recorded in the 16th century by Spanish invaders. The stories contained within the Popol Wuj were created by the indigenous people of Mesoamerica, though misinterpretation in translating the stories into 16th century Spanish, and then into modern English are inevitable.
Birds

Birds have maintained an essential role within the Maya culture. Feathers, bird regalia, and bird imagery were common subjects for artists and performers during the Classic. The most prevalent bird iconography during the Classic period Maya was of the Principal Bird Deity as a representation of Itzamnaaj went through several artistic iterations during the Classic period though elements of serpent heads either on wings or as the head or headdress were common (Bardawil 1976). The Principal Bird Deity is also likely not a single bird, or even a single species of birds, but rather a classification of supernatural birds that served in similar roles (Bassie-Sweet 2008). During the Classic period the Principal Bird Deity first began to be equated with the entity God D, frequently referred to as Itzamnaaj (Taube 1992). This fusion consolidated a great deal of the Maya pantheon under this single deity. Itzamnaaj was responsible for the connection between sky and earth, gave humans writing and education, lorded over the practice of scrying and divination, maintained the world tree, and at times served both the god of heaven and the god of the underworld (Taube 1992).

Itzamnaaj was seen as pre-eminent among the gods, especially in the Late Classic through Spanish colonialism, standing above even God N and God L (Taube 1992).

Besides birds, God D iconography also takes the form of jaguars, serpents, peccaries, the moon, and mirrors (Moyes, Christenson, and Sachse 2021; Taube 1992). The overlap of jaguar and serpent imagery with both God D and God N, also known as Pawahtuun and discussed further in that section of this chapter, is notable when considering that...
the two gods at times served the same role or were the same being. I discuss these points further in the Pawahtuun, Keeper of the Volcano section of Chapter 5.

Within my sample of artifacts, three vessels have bird imagery. Two, Vessel 3 and 5 in Feature 15, are highly similar bowls of the same ceramic type with similar iconography, a bird with a short beak and ornamental feathers on the head and tail (Figure 7). The third vessel, Vessel 4 in Feature 15, is a large cylindrical Ulúa Polychrome vessel that features a person in bird regalia (Figure 8). The front-facing figure has feathers hanging from outstretched limbs, like a bird taking flight. The entity wears a headdress is a sign that figure is the Principal Bird Deity or perhaps a fusion of the Principal Bird Deity and God D.

Breath/Wind

Breath and wind are viewed as the same phenomenon in Maya culture. While breath is the force emanating from humans, wind is the same force emanated from the world (Stone 2011). In fact, the Mayan word “ik” means both breath and wind (Miller and Taube 2003). For humans, breath was the soul and it was the presence of breath that denoted the life given to them by the gods, and death was often written and symbolized as the departure of the breath (Bassie-Sweet 2008). The grandparents of creation were “the giver(s) of breath and the giver(s) of heart,” and were the source of life given to humans (Bassie-Sweet 2008). The youthful wind god, God H, or the number 3 deity, has the diagnostic trait “ik” of the “Wind-Breath” sign (Taube 1992).
Wind or breath is often indicated on pottery or sculpture by the diagnostic “T” shape or by swirling shapes, usually emitting from the mouth of a beast or person (Joyce 2017, p. 73). Vessel 1 from Feature 14 (Figure 13), discussed in the snake section later in this chapter, depicts a shaman emitting a breath or smoke, as part of the processes of communing with the vision serpent. While this is the only visual representation of breath within my sample, breath and wind are characteristic of two whistle figurines, because they require breath to operate. A whistle with a human form occurred in Feature 20 (Figure 20), while a whistle with a monkey form (discussed above) occurred in Feature 270 (Figure 9). While visual representations of breath have visual context to assist in interpreting their meaning, the act of creating wind by blowing into the whistles had a significant role within Mesoamerican spirituality, such as the rain ceremonies performed near Dos Pilas during the Classic in which whistles were often used to create music to encourage rainstorms (Ishihara 2008).

Crocodile

Crocodile imagery was common in Maya artwork. Primarily the crocodile served two purposes. One was as the roots of the World Tree as they both represent the underworld. The story of Zipacna in the Popol Wuj states that the wooden people who inhabited the earth before humans had cut down a massive tree, but they were unable to carry it, so they asked a great crocodile named Zipacna. Once the crocodile carried the tree to where the people wanted to erect it, the wooden people dug a great hole to put it in, but they were worried the crocodile would eat them, so they decided to kill it by having it go into the hole to finish digging, and when it did,
they planned to put the tree in and crush it. Zipacna saw through this plan and carved out a wall to hide in, so it was safe when the tree filled the original hole. This is the first of the primary images of the crocodile: the roots of the World Tree. (Bassie-Sweet 2008)

Illustrations and carvings of the crocodile as the roots of the World Tree show up throughout Classic Maya depictions and some rulers even had depictions of themselves with crocodile feet or legs to symbolize their power (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 2001). Because of its place deep beneath the ground, the crocodile is also responsible for earthquakes due to Zipacna’s brother Cabracan, who stomped about the earth breaking down mountains (Bassie-Sweet 2008). Crocodiles also represent the earth itself, as their form floating in water with the ridges of the back floating above the surface is the same as the way the land floats up above the sea (Moyes, Christenson, and Sachse 2021).

The other primary image of the crocodile is as the Cosmic Monster or as the Milky Way. When Maya people gazed up at the sky, they saw a great beast with a wide open maw that resided in the cosmic river in the heavens (Bassie-Sweet 2008). Water pouring from Cosmic Monster’s mouth was the source of the water Pawahtuun called from the sky to cause the great flood that wiped out the wooden people so the world could be reborn for humans (Bassie-Sweet 2008).

In my study collection, crocodile in profile along the outer rim occurs on Vessels 3 and 5 in Feature 15 (Figure 10). These two bowls also feature art of diving birds perhaps representing a connection to the underworld.
God N/Pawahtuun

The primary subject of the artifacts within this sample is God N, or Pawahtuun, Pawahtun, or later and in certain cases Bakab (Martin 2015). At the most basic level, Pawahtuun is the quadripartite god who holds up the sky at the four cardinal points (Martin 2015). The presence of Pawahtuun or a similar figure has been a major iconographic element in southern Mesoamerica since at the least the Preclassic, and the belief in four deities holding up the sky has been common throughout Mesoamerica (Miller and Taube 2003; Taube 1992). God N is depicted as an old man, often missing teeth, dressed in only basic clothes with a head wrap, often made of fishing net, wrapped cloth, or in later periods, spiderweb. If he has adornments they are normally mollusk shells on a necklace or a turtle carapace or snail shell on his back, or, if he is being linked to water, a flower or lily may be tied around his head (Martin 2015). The imagery of God N with a turtle carapace or mollusk shells a most often found at Postclassic period sites, after CNC would have been abandoned (Taube 1992). At nearby Copan, God N is depicted on ceramics and carvings to be responsible for holding up the heavens and is closely associated with sacred mountains (Taube 1992). In some Maya creation myths, God N is responsible for the great flood that wiped out the people of the world, making way for the rise of modern people (Taube 1993).

God N has also been associated with several animals, some of which are present in the artifacts at CNC. He has often been associated with spiders, by either using webs in depictions of his duties, or in having spider like features (Taube 1992). In the Popol Wuj, a recounting of Maya religion in the time of the Spanish invasion, the Old God is closely linked with several other creatures, many of which appear in this collection. birds, breath or wind, crocodiles,
humans, monkeys, serpents, spiders, and toads are all commonly featured alongside Pawahtuun in art and story (Moyes, Christenson, and Sachse 2021) He is also featured with turtles or tortoises, and birds, when related to omens, the sea, or to storms (Moyes, Christenson, and Sachse 2021).

Other deities within the Maya pantheon are related in either direct or tangential ways to God N. His relation to storms has been illustrated as either control of lightning, or as sharing work with Chac, the rain and lightning deity, in some cases even being depicted as the same being, though they are generally seen as two (Taube 1992). God D, the god of the sky and the coinciding Principal Bird Deity, has a natural relationship with God N who holds the sky up. In modern interpretations of these entities, God D and God N may be seen as the same entity, both inhabiting the position of paternal grandfather of Maya cosmology under the name Itzamnaaj (Bassie-Sweet 2008).

At least two examples of God N occur within the artifacts discussed here. The first is a jade pectoral from Feature 15 (Figure 11). His carved face has deep wrinkles on the cheeks and under the eyes. The proximal and distal ends of the pectoral are missing and may have had more iconographic details. The second example is the Pawahtuun Figurine from Lot 95-9/21/432 (Figure 12). His appearance in this figurine is atypical for the time and place with striking differences from those seen in the Pawahtuun heads found at Copan. His cheeks are sunken,
indicating loss of teeth; however, his lips are closed whereas all the Copan heads have open mouths showing the missing teeth. The headdress is also different from the Copan heads which have a wrapped cord tied in a knot in the front as opposed to the more sizable headdress seen here. His face is deeply wrinkled, and he has thick eyebrows and wide opened eyes. He wears large ear flares, a sign of his nobility and power. Neatly pulled back hair (or perhaps a head band) is indicated by an even row of lozenge shapes, upon which rests a large, folded and knotted head wrap. The large cylindrical shape on the front of the wrap, just above his nose, is dissimilar to the standard knotted rope depicted on the carved Pawahtuun heads found at Copan (“Schele Photograph Collection” n.d.). The ornamentation on his chest, a curving pectoral, is also distinctive. He is more often depicted as having a turtle shell on his back, but on this figurine, he has a turtle plastron on his chest in a swirling pattern. The pictures and negatives available during my research do not show the back, but the chest piece is unusual for the time and place.

Humans

The inclusion of humans as an artistic subject is not unique to Mesoamerica. Humans have been drawing themselves as long as they have been drawing. Some of the earliest cave art was of human hands in negative and as time and technique went on representing our species in visual for has continued (McDermott 2021). The nature of human representation in art is a subject too large, and for the most part out of scope, for this thesis however it is important to understand that the inclusion of humans alongside the other subjects discussed here matters. In Mesoamerican art a few things are paramount to keep in mind when discussing human representation in the figural elements of ceramics and figurines.
First, Humans are not always humans. In Maya art, for instance, humans often represent animals, and animals represent humans (Personal Communication with Dr. Kathryn Sampeck, 2023). In this thesis there are many instances of animals representing deities, such as the spider or toad being representative of Ix Chel, or Goddess O.

Second, the positioning of humans are often used to convey specific emotions which may not be intuitive to modern American viewers (Houston 2001). This subject is also too large to cover completely in a single thesis. Because of these complications the examination of humans in this thesis will be primarily in context with the other subjects studied. For instance, on Vessel 1 in Feature 14 (Figure 13) there is a human which I have interpreted to be a shaman with a serpent, perhaps as an illustration of a ritual of summoning the Vision Serpent which granted divinatory insight to the intentions of supernatural entities. The inclusion of the human is in context with the rest of the artwork on the vessel and derives meaning from this context. The human may have an intended meaning divorced from the rest of the iconography on the vessel, but that will not be explored here.

Within this collection of artifacts there are five which have representations of humans: Vessel 1 in Feature 14, the human whistle in Feature 20, Vessel 1 of Feature 105, Vessel A of Feature 105, and Vessel 4 of 105B.

Monkeys

Depictions of two types of monkeys commonly occur in the long span of Maya art. The two kinds of monkeys, howler monkeys and spider monkeys, represent contrasts in behavior and meaning. The Maya related the slower movement and loud calls of the howler monkeys to their role as scribes and storytellers (Miller and Taube 2003). Maya people saw spider monkeys as
playful, mischievous, and licentious and they took the role of dancers, thieves, and tricksters within Maya folklore and imagery (Stone 2011).

Monkeys also played a significant role in the creation of the world according to Maya belief. The wooden people of the second creation were turned into monkeys by the flood called by God N as punishment for not taking care of their world (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 2001). The Popol Wuj also tells the story of the monkey twins One B’atz and One Chouen who were “musicians, singers, writers, carvers, jewelers, and ball players,“ (Bassie-Sweet 2008). During the Ritual of the Bacabs monkeys dance through the crowds playing the fool and giving the example of how drunkenness, sexual impropriety, and unpredictable behavior are human traits to be fought against (Stone 2011; Freidel, Schele, and Parker 2001).

Monkeys were the single most popular animal to be illustrated on pottery from the southern Maya lowlands as well as the Ulúa valley of central Honduras, on the southern Maya frontier (Joyce 2017). The CNC collection has monkey imagery is present on two artifacts: Vessel 2, Feature 105 which is a ceramic jar with effigy elements, and monkey whistle, Feature 270 which may represent a howler monkey with its distinct calls able to be heard over long distances.

Serpents

Serpents hold a special place in Mesoamerican mythology. They are one of the most represented animals in artwork, statuary, and writing, so much so that the quantity of references to serpents or parts of serpents in Maya iconography and writing make it impossible to cover it all in one thesis. Instead, this is a quick overview of the ways that the serpent relates to the other subjects covered here.
The serpent is related to many elements of the Maya world. A serpent was the primary representation of the sky band, the embodiment of the heavens, and a personification of caves (Stone 2011). A serpent could also represent a river, the ocean, rope, a penis, a fertile woman, or staves (Stone 2011). They were messengers and escorts for the dead, for gods, leaders, and according to a well-known story from the Popol Wuj, a companion to a louse and a toad before a bird named Wak swallowed them in a “there was an old lady who swallowed a fly” situation (Bassie-Sweet 2008).

Snake iconography is common to refer to the realm of the Maya Deities. Chac, the deity of thunder and rain, and sometimes Pawahtuun, hurled serpents as lightning bolts (Taube 1992). The Principal Bird Deity had serpent heads as wings, and carried serpents in its talons (Bardawil 1976). Priests used rituals to attune themselves with vision serpents and many religious headdresses were shaped like serpent heads (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 2001). The toxins from a serpent’s mouth were well known, however the process of skin shedding made them not just representations of death, but also of rebirth as they shed away their previous selves or forms to emerge shining and new (Miller and Taube 2003). Gods B, H, K, and O have all been represented as serpents (Taube 1992).

In my CNC study sample, serpents appear on one ceramic vessel. On Vessel 1 from Feature 14 (Figure 13), a figure, probably a shaman, summons the vision serpent, which has a long tongue sticking out perhaps representing speech or venom that is related to “Snake Illness,” a
condition that caused body cramps and indicated a person was destined to become a diviner (Bassie-Sweet 2008).

Spider

In Maya systems of meaning, spiders were commonly seen as symbols for divination, childbirth and midwifery, medicine, and weaving (Miller and Taube 2003). Goddess O, or Ix Chel, was often associated with the spider as well. She was the ancient grandmother associated with the moon and divination, and was the wife or partner to God N, who himself sometimes adorned spiderwebs as his clothing or in his duties in holding up the sky (Taube 1992). The stones commonly used by Maya diviners were called Am, which is also the name for spiders in the Chol Tumbalá dialect (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 2001). While spider imagery is not as common as some of the other animals in my study collection, they were invoked for many important aspects of life.

Within my sample collection, a spider occurs on Vessel 6 in Feature 105B (Figure 14) is a repeating design above the shoulder of a low, open jar. Also found in the same archaeological feature was a censer, a vessel for burning resin incense, usually copal. Feature 105/105B, where those were both found, also had more grave goods than all other features considered in this thesis, which gives the impression that this person likely had a divinatory role in their community.

Toad

Toads played an enduring role in Mesoamerican life, with references going back to at least the Olmecs (Miller and Taube 2003). Their most important feature was their poison. The
cane toad, *Bufo marinus*, produces a powerful toxin that diviners often used as a hallucinogen to see visions in religious ceremonies (Miller and Taube 2003). Ix Chel, who taught divination to humans, had a toad form in some instances (Bassie-Sweet 2008). The toad’s calls were seen as a sign of the coming rainy season (Bassie-Sweet 2008). Toads often carried things in their mouths, including lords, gods, and goddesses, and in the case of the Popol Wuj, the louse that was to deliver a message to the monkey twins in the portion of the Hero Twin story summarized in the serpent section above (Bassie-Sweet 2008; Moyes, Christenson, and Sachse 2021).

Only one representation of a toad occurs in my study collection, on Vessel 1 in Feature 105B, which shows the cloaca and hind legs of a toad modeled onto the exterior of the jar.

**Frequency, Ubiquity, and Diversity of Iconography**

The first section of this chapter described the individual archaeological contexts for my study, including examples and basic descriptive statics of counts of grave goods, frequencies of iconographic subjects, and a basic ratio of the two. The following section of this chapter describes the broad classes of the subjects of iconography related to life found in my study collection as a whole: kinds of animals, substances, deities, and humans. This section now assesses descriptive statistics to compare relative frequencies of each of the subjects in terms of presence in terms of frequencies of occurrences per artifact, how frequently those subjects were present in different contexts, and the relative diversity of the subjects within features as collections of meanings related to life in a mortuary context. These analyses give a finer grained view of the broader categories described previously.
Frequency of Iconographic Subjects

The primary focus of this thesis is the frequency of iconography that indicates a living subject. Although the descriptions of each subject show the range of meanings associated with it, an evaluation of the relative frequency, how many times is an iconographic subject present, gives an idea of how common a subject may be within the visual culture of the area. The frequency at CNC of a subject among artifacts that were buried with the dead may be more or less common because the subject is more common for burials but rare in life, or it may be common in everyday life as well as in mortuary contexts; assessing the latter scenario is beyond the scope of this study. My focus is on the presence of arrays of meaning relating to life within and among mortuary contexts. Each artifact is illustrated and described in detail in Appendix 1.

Frequency of Each Subject

Table 2: Percentage frequency of each subject from examined subsections
The sample size is small yet still shows patterns. Humans are the most common subject for this sample representing 23% of the, with five individual artifacts depicting them. A clear example of a human in this subsection of artifacts is the scribe or shaman on Vessel 1 in Feature 14 (Figure 15).

The next most common subject are birds and breath or wind, which both have three representations each, a frequency that is a little more than half as common as humans. Three artifacts have representations of birds, however two of them are a pair of bowls of the same type. Vessel 3 and Vessel 5 in Feature 15 (Figures A-8 through A-11) have highly similar styles and identical subjects though one is more faded than the other. They were also in the same feature, and, notably, in the same feature as Vessel 4 (Figure 8), with depictions of a person in elaborate bird regalia.

The occurrences of breath or wind always co-occur with a living entity, in this case a human or a monkey. Of the three objects with breath or wind subjects, two are figural whistles, one of a human (Figure 20), and the other of a monkey (Figure 21). Whistles were common during the Classic period and in southern Mesoamerica (Lopiparo and Hendon 2009). The third artifact included in this count is Vessel 1 of Feature 14 (Figure 15), which has a person with a volute emitting from his mouth, representing, breath, smoke, or words.

Crocodiles, God N, and monkeys each are 9% of the corpus of subjects. Crocodiles are present on the matching set of bowls, Vessels 3 and 5 of Feature 15 (Figures A-8 through A-11) which they share with representations of birds.
I have included a category for non-specific representations. Two vessels, 8 and 7, both found in Feature 15 (Figures A-7 and A-14) had imagery whose subjects could not be determined due to the condition of the artifacts. Vessel 8 (Figure A-7) is a bowl with colorful artwork, however there is too much chipping on the surface to make a positive determination of what the art is representing. Vessel 7 (Figure A-14) is an effigy vessel, but the facial features have been broken off making it unclear what the subject was supposed to be. Their inclusion in Feature 15, which was already rich with subject representations, is notable even if they cannot be specified because it is further evidence that Feature 15 was remarkable compared to other features which had fewer subjects.

There are two representations of God N. The jade pectoral (Figure 11) and the Pawahtuun Figurine (Figure 12). I found these to be the most visually striking of the items at CNC, and, as will be discussed in Chapter 5’s discussion of God N, all the other subjects present on the artifacts examined here have direct ties to Pawahtuun and the environment at the base of a very recently active and dangerous volcano.

Monkeys are represented in Vessel 2 of Feature 105 (Figure A-22), and the monkey whistle in Feature 270 (Figures A-31 and A-32). The vessel in Feature 105 is part of that larger collection which includes representations of humans, spiders, and toads; however the monkey whistle is the only artifacts with a selected subject in Feature 270.

Serpent imagery is present on Vessel 1 in Feature 14 (Figure 15), which also features human and breath imagery.
The spider is represented on one artifact, Vessel 6 in Feature 105B (Figure 14). The depiction is notable because its context is Feature 105, a stone-lined tomb with numerous grave goods, some of which are also related to the practice of divination.

The toad is also featured on one vessel, in this case Vessel 1 in Feature 105B. The only picture available of the artifact (Figure A-29) shows a toad cloaca and hind legs as effigy moldings.

Ubiquity of Each Subject

While the frequency of subjects gives a view of overall occurrences of subject matter, it does not tell us how often they occur in different contexts. How much do themes cluster, or are they found everywhere? Determining how widespread a subject occurs across features gives an idea of how much one context varies compared to another. Data that indicates the degree of sharing across or distinctiveness of mortuary events gives context into how they were used and by whom.

![Relative Ubiquity of Subjects](image)

*Table 3 Percent of features in which each subject was present*
Several artifacts had multiple subjects, such as Vessel 1 from Feature 14 (Figure 15), which had human, serpent, and breath imagery, or the monkey whistle in Feature 270 (Figures A-31 and A-32), which had both a monkey and breath subjects. These multisubject items are in each subject category that they have present, therefore this is not a reflection of the frequency of each subject, which is covered in the previous section. This evaluation concerns the ubiquity of subjects and not the number of artifacts per subject.

Breath/wind and humans were the most ubiquitous subjects in the analyzed collection, both occurring in 50% or 3 of included contexts. In two of these contexts humans and breath were present in the same artifacts. The first is Vessel 1 from Feature 14 (Figure 15), which also had serpent imagery on it. The other is the human whistle from Feature 20 (Figure 20). The third feature which included breath is the monkey whistle in Feature 270 (Figures A-31 and A-32), and the third feature which included human imagery is Feature 105 with Vessel 1 (Figure A-18).

Both Pawahtuun and monkeys were features in two separate features. The jade pectoral was from Feature 15 (Figure 11) which also had all the bird and crocodile imagery, and the Pawahtuun figurine (Figure 12) was from further away in Unit 264, within the excavated zone of Operation 21.

The first instance of a monkey came from Feature 105 in the form of Vessel 2 (Figure A-22). When examining Features 105 and 105B together the monkey joins humans, spiders, and toads making Feature 105/105B as packed with subjects as Feature 15. The second feature with monkey representation is Feature 270 with the monkey whistle (Figures A-31 and A-32), which was also an example of breath.
While three different artifacts had bird imagery, they all were in Feature 15. All representations of birds in the same feature as the jade pectoral make a case for the person to have some social importance and that bird imagery had particular meaning for this person or their social role.

Crocodiles are only present on the pair of matching bird-themed bowls, Vessels 5 and 3 found in Feature 15 (Figures A-8 through A-11), again adding to the evidence that the person buried there may have had a pronounced social or spiritual role in the community.

Both artifacts featuring non-specific imagery, Vessels 8 and 7 (Figures A-7 and A-14), were found also in Feature 15.

Serpents are present in Feature 14 on Vessel 1 (Figure 15), which as discussed also includes breath and human imagery.

Spiders are only found on one artifact, Vessel 6 of Feature 105/105B (Figure 14). Also included in this feature are the sole example of the toad on Vessel 1 (Figure A-29) and the censor, Vessel 6 (Figure A-19 and A-20), both of which are associated with the act of divination giving evidence that the person buried there had a social or spiritual role related to divination.
Diversity of Subjects Per Feature

To complete the analysis of the iconography in the collection examined in this thesis it is important to know how many different subjects were in each feature. A feature with a diverse set of subjects may or may not indicate social or spiritual significance, but I would be remiss to exclude this information from a thorough analysis.

Feature 14 contained the much-discussed Vessel 1 (Figure 15) which contained breath, human, and serpent imagery. All these subjects were only present on this single vessel.

Feature 15 included bird, crocodile, and God N as well as both examples of non-specific imagery resulting in 25% of all representations of the subjects studied. This is also where all examples bird and crocodile imagery were found. The artwork of the figure dressed in bird regalia, as well as the rest of the subjects present and the number of artifacts present may indicate that the person buried there had a distinct role, either socially or spiritually, within the community. If future study can identify the subjects present in the non-specific examples Feature

Table 4 Relative diversity of subjects per feature ordered by Operation number and then numerically

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Relative Diversity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105/105B</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot 264</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>270</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=16
15 may be the feature with the most diverse set of subjects examined. For now, it shares that title with Feature 105/105B.

Feature 20 has breath and human subjects, though like Feature 14, they are both in the same artifact, this time the human whistle (Figure 20).

Feature 105/105B ties with Feature 15 for the most diverse set of subjects with humans, monkeys, spiders, and toads all present. Like birds and crocodiles in Feature 15, all instances of spiders and toads are found in Feature 105/105B. As mentioned in the last section this is also where the censor was found, potentially indicating that the person buried here may have had a social or spiritual role related to divination.

Lot 264 was the location the Pawahtuun figurine (Figure 12) was found. It was not a burial feature and therefore no other artifacts were included from this location.

Feature 270 is another in which one artifact had all of the subjects represented there. The monkey whistle (Figures A-31 and A-32) displayed both monkey and breath subjects.
CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS

My research on the artifacts found at Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán has focused primarily on two questions. The first is what relationship did the community have with the Ilopango Volcano? My initial impression was that a group of people moving back into an area that had so recently been devastated by an enormous volcanic eruption would at least be wary of it, if not make it a central theme to their lives in one way or another. To answer that question, I need to find a pattern of themes and their relation which could be related to the volcano or its eruption through traditional symbolic meaning related to environmental conditions related to volcanic eruption, or to meaning which can be inferred from the interconnected web of subjects within the spiritual cosmology of Classic period Mesoamerican belief systems.

My second question was how unique was this community compared to their neighbors? Were the intrepid people daring to settle at the foot of a world ending mountain largely the same as the people living in the surrounding area? Did their relationship to the volcano make their cultural or spiritual practices different? To answer that question, I need to determine types and traditions of ceramics at CNC and compare those to the surrounding region paying attention to comparative examples in nearby population centers.

At the heart of these questions was a simpler one which other researchers have been asking about this community for a while: who were the people of CNC? In some ways this proved too big a question for a single master’s thesis, however these questions did lead to an interesting discovery. The figurative elements of the artifacts included in this collection builds an interconnected web of entities which were closely related to each other and revolve around a central figure, Pawahtuun, which I argue is tied to the population’s relationship to the Ilopango volcano. In addition, the ceramic complexes and artistic traditions found at CNC were similar to
the greater Maya world as well as other communities in southern Mesoamerica, though the people of CNC did have a distinctive iconographic inventory and scope especially regarding the figurines studied here.

**Pawahtuun, Keeper of the Volcano**

One of the primary roles of Pawahtuun is that of world bearer. As part of that role, he once destroyed the world by causing a massive flood. He was also regarded as an entity with close relation to sacred mountains. I argue here that Pawahtuun was seen by the population at CNC as either a representation of the volcano, or a being that had control over the volcano. He worked alongside the other subjects covered here which created the environmental phenomena related to volcanic eruptions, and the people of CNC utilized divinatory rituals to communicate with him to either prevent or predict future eruptions. Pawahtuun, or God N, is depicted in two figurines, the jade pectoral (Figure 11) and the Pawahtuun figurine (Figure 12). While these figural representations are not the most common subject in my thesis sample, Pawahtuun is directly connected to the rest of the subjects either through relation within the Mayan religious system, interaction regarding the actions Pawahtuun performed in the stories presented in the Popol Wuj, or related natural phenomena concerning weather and geological effects which occur alongside volcanic explosions. I will first outline each subject’s relationship to Pawahtuun and to each other.

The Principal Bird Deity, or God D, and often called Itzamnaaj, being a creator god was featured heavily in Maya art from other regions (Bardawil 1976). All representations of birds in my CNC sample were included in Feature 15. Also present in Feature 15 was the jade pectoral, a representation of Pawahtuun. This feature had the second highest number of artifacts of the features selected for this thesis and had other subjects as well, including the crocodile and
serpent. Jade, a valuable substance within the Maya world (Andrieu, Rodas, and Luin 2014) in a form that was likely ceremonial or status-based regalia, was present in the same feature as depictions of a man in bird regalia. In the Popol Wuj, God D as Itzamnaaj created 13 children with Ix Chel, the Spider Grandmother (Coe 1977). Ix Chel and Itzamnaaj were as husband and wife (Bassie-Sweet 2008). Furthermore, Itzamnaaj, and Pawahtuun, were sometimes depicted as the same entity on Late Classic vessels (Bassie-Sweet 2008). In some iterations of the spiritual hierarchy, Itzamnaaj represents the highest overarching deity and Pawahtuun is either a servant or his son (Thompson 1970). In others they both form different aspects of the same being whose appearance changes depending on what role he is performing (Thompson 1970). So, birds, God D, and God N are a tight knit, and at times interchangeable, iconographic set (Bassie-Sweet 2008).

Breath and wind are the souls of the living things given to humans by Pawahtuun so that they do not make the same mistakes as the wooden people before them (Bassie-Sweet 2008; Miller and Taube 2003). Pawahtuun is also a creator of storms and wind (Taube 1992) where Pawahtuun bearing the sky would have played a part in spreading the volcanic ash far and wide making the wind itself toxic, and perhaps signaling another calamity such as the world ending flood he caused before.

The water that poured forth from the mouth of the crocodile as the Cosmic Monster was called forth by Pawahtuun to flood the world and make it new for humans (Moyes, Christenson, and Sachse 2021). Crocodiles live in the watery sky band that is held aloft by Pawahtuun (Bassie-Sweet 2008). They also play a leading role in Maya explanations for earthquakes and the cracking open of the earth (Moyes, Christenson, and Sachse 2021). I assert that these meanings
would be important in the regional explanations for the volcanic eruptions, which frequently foretell or cooccur with volcanic activity (Scarpa 2001).

Monkeys played a large role in Maya cosmology. For example, in the Popol Vuj One B’atz and One Chouen, the step brothers of the Hero Twins, were tricked into becoming monkeys (Tedlock 1996). Monkeys were also seen as representations of the transformed wooden people who were punished by Pawahtuun during the great flood and are therefore reminders of people’s baser instincts and desires that should be fought (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 2001).

Serpents are also very closely tied to God N. Serpents serve as the lightning bolts hurled to the ground by Pawahtuun during storms, and in some depictions as his walking stick (MacLeod 2021). Lightning frequently occurs with volcanic eruptions (Thomas et al. 2007). At the Temple of Jaguars in Chich’en Itza, Pawahtuun is depicted as an earth-bearer entwined with two snakes to represent a vine-covered world tree (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 2001) once again an indication of Pawahtuun responsible for the stability of the earth. Serpents also play a role in the practice of divination during the Classic period as the Vision Serpent seen on Vessel 1 in Feature 14 (Figure 15).

Spiders are not only linked with Pawahtuun, but the Spider Goddess O, or Ix Chel. Ix Chel was depicted as both the wife of Pawahtuun and Itzamnaaj, serving as the ancestral grandmother (Coe 1977). Ix Chel was the goddess of divination, including playing a major part of the Ritual of the Bacabs later during the colonial period, Bacab being another name for the entity Pawahtuun (Karl Andreas Taube 1992). Pawahtuun makes good use of his wife’s gifts as he is depicted occasionally wearing spider webs on his back or using spiderwebs to help him hold up the heavens (Miller and Taube 2003). Ix Chel and spiders are also responsible for the practice of divination (Taube 1992).
Ix Chel also has a toad form, as toads were seen as divinatory due to the poison secreted by the toad genus Bufo, which was used as a hallucinogen during divination ceremonies (Miller and Taube 2003). Toads are connected to many of the other animals through folklore as indicated in the Popol Wuj story in which Xmucane sends a messenger louse to the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque. The louse moves too slowly, so it is swallowed by a toad, which is in turn swallowed by a serpent, which is swallowed by a falcon and when it arrives they each regurgitate the other so the louse can relay the message (Tedlock 1996). Toads also served as heralds of rain and storms which were, in some cases, brought by Pawahtuun (Bassie-Sweet 2008; Taube 1992).

Figure 16 shows how all the subjects present in CNC iconography are connected to Pawahtuun. The picture these relationships illustrate show a pantheon focused, at least in part, on a god who was responsible for holding up the sky, by people who, either themselves or through their ancestors, experienced the sky actually falling due to the destruction from the TBJ eruption.
Pawahtuun in his role as world ender would have also related to the full spectrum of subjects outlined here. God N, God D, and Goddess O are all closely tied, and in some cases are all seen as the same entity (Bassie-Sweet 2008). One of the main features they all have is the power to create storms or other forms of destruction (Taube 1992). God D, in the form of Itzam Cab Ain, the great caiman or crocodile, would have been able to split the earth apart (Tedlock 1996; Moyes, Christenson, and Sachse 2021). Goddess O in the form of Ix Chel, or Chak Chel, could throw lightning and bring death (Bassie-Sweet 2008; Taube 1992). God N brings all of this about by letting the sky band fall to the earth as he did before (Tedlock 1996).

Pawahtuun has many traits that line up with natural phenomena characteristic of volcanoes. The grey boxes in Figure 16 show the subjects which are also related to environmental effects of volcanic eruption. Pawahtuun could bring about earthquakes, as could crocodiles and Itzamnaaj, which would precede volcanic activity (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 2001). He throws lightning, as does Ix Chel which is a common cooccurrence with volcanic eruptions (Taube 1992). He brings great winds and gives breath to believers (Tedlock 1996; Moyes, Christenson, and Sachse 2021). He also wipes the world clean to make way for a new beginning (Tedlock 1996; Taube 1992), which is what the area surrounding the volcano may have looked like when covered in tephra and ash.

Goddess O and God D also play divination roles for the Maya during the Classic period (Taube 1992). Goddess O was a common oracle for birth, death, and rebirth (Miller and Taube 2003). Itzamnaaj was also a god of the moon and associated with water scrying (Taube 1992). Both serve as ways to connect to and interpret the will of the gods. It was common practice to turn to divination of Itzamnaaj, who would create storms, to foresee disaster or inclement weather (Karl Andreas Taube 1992). It would make sense that the same would be true when
trying to keep abreast of volcanic activity, and to live so close to a volcano which so recently caused such destruction would perhaps necessitate this type of communication for the public good.

Supporting this claim are the contents of the two features with the largest collections of grave goods: Feature 15 and Feature 105/105B. Feature 15 contained the jade pectoral, a figurine of Pawahtuun, as well as all the depictions of birds, including the man dressed in bird regalia likely connected to the Primary Bird Deity which was the primary animal form of Itzamnaaj during the Classic period. If Feature 14, which overlapped a portion of Feature 15, was contemporary to Feature 15, and the artifacts were purposefully laid out as two chambers of the same burial or belonged to two separate but related people though status or relation, then the inclusion of the Serpent Bowl with its divinatory imagery would further support this idea.

Feature 105, and its associated Feature 105B, had the largest number of artifacts in this collection, had a two-chamber burial which accounts for the two associated portions, and contained a censer, a common tool used for divination, and a spider-decorated bowl which would be closely related to Goddess O and her direct connection to spiders and divination. It also contained the miniature toad vessel, Vessel 1 of Feature 105B (Figure A-29), which with the toad’s connection to Ix Chel and Pawahtuun may have been used for the Bufo toxin used for divination. Further chemical analysis of the vessel itself would be needed to confirm this. This again supports the idea that the population of CNC was interested in monitoring the intent of the gods.

Artistic Differences

Besides the subjects of the iconography, the artifacts found at CNC also indicate both a continuation of regional ceramic and artistic traditions, and a unique stylistic element at CNC.
The ceramic categorization for each artifact is included in Appendix A. All the subjects depicted at CNC in my thesis sample can be found elsewhere in the Maya world, but the way that some are depicted differs even from relatively close larger communities. A notable degree of stylistic variation has been observed in communities even within the Copan pocket and in valleys near Copan, as well as in central Honduras, plus the Maya highlands.

Elements of the rendering of Pawahtuun, are some of the clearest examples of this unique art style. Pawahtuun as depicted in the Pawahtuun figurine is a different style from many lowland Maya Pawahtuun representations. Most of the Classic period lowland Maya imagery of Pawahtuun has a diagnostic net or knotted headdress. However, the CNC example wears a smooth wrap with a roll in the front. The swirling pattern in his chest also likely represents the plastron of a turtle. He is depicted as having a turtle carapace on his back in the Classic, and while we do not know if that is the case with this figurine because I only had access to photographs of it from the front, the inclusion of the plastron on the front is unusual. The style of bird
depictions is also notable within this collection. Comparing the imagery on Vessel 44 of Feature 15 (Figure 18) to other depictions from the Ulúa Valley of the Principal Bird Deity reveals some notable distinctions. The headdress has several elements which are difficult to determine and the artwork itself has some similarity to Teotihuacan style artwork with the forward-facing man as seen in Figure 8. The diagnostic elements on the headpiece are also not easily distinguished with a possible depiction of the long lipped serpent, though it does not appear in a way that is similar to the rest of the Maya highlands (Bardawil 1976).

The birds on the inside of the bird bowls are also different from those from the rest of the Maya frontier during the Classic. While the bird present on Vessels 3 and 5 from Feature 15 (Figure 19) show many similarities to diving bird illustrations from other highland sites, the beak of these are distinctively short (Personal communication with Dr. Kathryn Sampeck 2023). It is possible that these unusual proportions depict a local bird species (from wherever the ceramic was made), a composite bird with features from several species, or an artistic creation not meant to represent a specific bird species.

The whistle figurines found at CNC also have a distinctive style for the time and region. Whistle figurines were
common during the Classic period and many examples have been found at Cerro Palenque (Figure 1) (Lopiparo and Hendon 2009) and Chalchuapa (Sharer 1978). The details on the whistles found at CNC have longer proportions and the details of the faces are more exaggerated. Both whistle figurines found at CNC were hand modeled, with many separate pieces of clay rolled and added to the body.

Another part of the artistic tradition at CNC which is not in line with surrounding communities, or the Maya world at large is the writing on the ceramic which uses pseudo glyphs as opposed to standard Mayan glyphic writing. While pseudo glyphs were used in Codex Style vessels at Chamá (Figure 1), some contexts in the Baja Verapaz (Figure 1), and Quirigua (Figure 1), they were accompanied by legible glyphs (Personal communication with Dr. Kathryn Sampeck 2023). Aldana (2012) found that the glyphs on many pieces found at CNC are not legible. While pseudo glyphs have also been found elsewhere in the Maya area, this may indicate another point of removal from the general Maya artistic traditions where glyphs are meant to give context or narrative to the figurative imagery present on their ceramics (Calvin 2006).

Another interesting element of the collection selected for study here is the abnormally high number of miniature vessels, which were relatively rare in other locations in the highlands. Vessel 3 Feature 14 (Figure A-3), Vessel 1 Feature 20 (Figure A-17), Vessel 1 Feature 105 (Figure A-18), Vessel 1 Feature 105B (Figure A-29), Vessels 2 and 4 Feature 270 (Figure A-33),
Vessel 5 Feature 270 (Figure A-35), and Vessel 3 Feature 270 (Figure A-36) are all miniatures. While the study of miniatures is not within the scope of this thesis, this is a subject that deserves future attention.
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS

This analysis of Ciudad Nuevo Cuscatlán gives a window into the lives of the people from the area surrounding the Ilopango Volcano. First, the people of the area had knowledge of the destructive powers of the volcano and structured part of their cultural and spiritual lives around it. This is made clear by their close relationship to Pawahtuun, a deity known to have destroyed the world before by causing a massive environmental disaster in the form of a great flood. He was also seen as an entity related to sacred mountains, storms, and earthquakes, natural phenomena which often cooccur with volcanic eruption. The spiritual pantheon illustrated by the figural representations on their grave goods show an interconnected web of symbols which can all be traced back to Pawahtuun who may have been seen as the deity who caused the TBJ eruption, or at least he could potentially prevent another eruption like it.

To that end, the contents of Features 15 and 105/105B show divining ritual to be an important part of their life. This is due to these two features being the most complex with each containing a main chamber and likely an entry or antechamber. These features also had the largest number of artifacts when compared to the other features examined. The artifacts themselves give the impression of ritual as well with Feature 15 containing the jade pectoral, artistic renderings of people dressed in ceremonial regalia, and all the representations of birds from the sample. Feature 105/105B contained the most artifacts of any of the features examined and had the vessel with spider imagery (Figure A-26 and A-27) which is a symbol of divining activity, the toad vessel (Figure A-29) which could have held the Bufo toxin used for divinatory rituals, and the censer which would have been used to burn offerings.

A more complete inventory of artifacts from CNC may help develop this idea further and more research on the CNC site as a whole is necessary. Furthermore, to fully support these
hypotheses a larger scale comparative study of the ubiquity and frequency of the subjects studied in this thesis to that of surrounding population centers could help illuminate how unique this assemblage really is. A project of that scale is beyond the scope of a single graduate thesis; however, it would be a valuable addition to the current knowledge of Classic southern Mesoamerican theology.

This kind of holistic figurative analysis, viewing all subjects together as one connected system of beliefs, could be applied to both new archaeological finds throughout Mesoamerica, and as a part of a reevaluation effort into already known population centers.

This analysis also shows that the artistic traditions of the area were connected to the greater Maya frontier with a high percentage of the ceramics found at CNC fitting established typology from other sites in the Ulúa Valley. There were, however, some examples of artistic expression in ceramic art or figurines which do not fit within other classification. There are also no legible Maya glyphs on the ceramics, and instead illegible pseudo glyphs are present on several pieces. This combination of similarities and differences gives a picture of a frontier town with some contact to nearby cities though the general culture of the village was distinct.

There remains a lot of work to be done regarding the CNC excavation. Analysis of the artifacts found throughout the rest of the area is still needed. There is also the task of figuring out exactly who the people were who repopulated the area, whether they are Maya from Copan or another large city in the area, people spreading south from Teotihuacan, or a population from further south settling in the area.
Another large project which would aid in the efforts of future researchers is the full
digitization of the field data from the site. Being able to easily sort data would make the process
of analyzing the CNC project more streamlined and accessible.

Further study of the effects of the TBJ eruption could also bring more information to
light. Debate continues regarding the date of the eruption and nailing that down once and for all
could make comparative efforts between CNC and other villages in the area more fruitful.

As archaeology in El Salvador continues to grow as its own field of study, more light will
be shed on the people who once lived in the shadow of the Ilopango Volcano. I hope that this
work can be a window into the world of those people for researchers in the future.
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APPENDIX A: ARTIFACT CATALOGUE

Feature 14

Vessel 1, Operation 20, Feature 14,
Lot 95-9/20/67/1
Measurements:  Height: 7.6 cm,
Diameter: 13.5 cm
Ceramic Type:  Chancala
Polychrome (Boggs 1972)
Polychrome
Date Range: 600-900 CE

This polychrome ceramic bowl has three short, rounded legs. The outflaring rim has alternating buff and black strips, thick horizontal stripes of a consistent length. Below the rim is a strip of repeating lazy-S patterns in buff and defined in black. This band has a lower border of a thin light circumferential red stripe. Below this red line is the main decorative panel of the bowl exterior. This section has an ornate painting of a seated human and a serpent with a large volute extending from its open mouth. The feet of the bowl have black horizontal stripes. Both the snake and the scribe are facing the same direction. The snake has its long slender tongue sticking out, and the red bloom above its head indicates its breath or the venom. The human is also in action and has a volute emanating from his mouth which likely represents spoken words or breath. There is a clear parallel being drawn between the venom or breath of the snake and the words or breath of the human sharing an effect or power. This could be a depiction of a ritual of a shaman and the Vision Serpent.
Vessel 2, Operation 20, Feature 14, Lot 95-9/20/67
Ceramic Type: Cutuco red on cream (Sharer 1978, p 45)
Date Range: 200-400CE
Cream-slipped bowl with a red painted rim.

Vessel 3, Operation 20, Feature 14, Lot 95-9/20/67
Ceramic Type: Miniature Finquita Red (Sharer 1978, p 45)
Date Range: 200-400CE
This is a miniature red-slipped, polished vessel. The tiny jar has a flaring rim and restricted neck. The shoulder of the jar has a single, horizontal row of fingernail indentations.
Jade Pectoral, Operation 20,
Feature 15

This piece is a jade pectoral carving. The features of this piece are carved lightly into the surface and the jade has irregular color and inclusions, so details can be difficult to see in the photograph. Carved figures like these were commonly parts of jewelry worn by dignitaries or other high-ranking officials as part of their regalia in many regions of Mesoamerica. The top of this piece has been broken off; however, it likely would have had holes drilled in it so that it could be woven or fastened to the rest of the chest piece. The carved face has heavy eyelids and a distinct large nose and lips, which were common during the Classic period. The headdress is missing part of the top, but it does still show the central square element, part of a diadem, on the forehead and the headband that holds it in place. The heavy features of the face create a similar appearance to the Pawahtuun Figurine (Figure A-
Ornaments of this type would be worn at celebrations or ceremonies as part of a more elaborate costume that could have been decorated with more carved stone and other precious materials. Other pieces of jade that may have been part of the same regalia were recovered in Feature 15.

Vessel 4, Operation 20, Feature 15, Lot 95-9/20/73
Height 26.2 cm
Diameter: 20 cm
Ceramic Type: Santa Rita: Paloma (Joyce 2017, p 36-37)
Date Range: 550-650CE
A cylindrical with a black band with a lower border of three thin horizontal black stripes. The next lowest register is a series of rectangular pseudo glyphs which resemble the pseudo glyphs PG89 from the collection Calvin (2006) has produced, spaced evenly in a pattern around the vessel. Two thin black lines form the lower border of this register. The main register of the exterior has a large, detailed, fine line painting of a
person wearing a bird costume. The entity is squatting down with their arms raised to each side. The figure is in front view, as opposed to the side view, which is most common in Classic Maya depictions. The wings are lined on top with alternating black and white circles, and there are red feathers, each ending in a small black circle, along the bottom. The body is covered by a hatch (net or flayed skin) pattern. Three small black circles line up horizontally in front of the face, which is turned to the left, and they are wearing ear flares consisting of three concentric circles. Long, white, black-tipped (Heron) feathers drape from each side and a loincloth hangs from the waist area. Short feathers are indicated by small tick marks with black dots at the ends extend along the anterior side of each leg. Below this illustration are three thin horizontal stripes followed by another band of the same pseudo glyphs as the upper register, though at least one of these is painted light red. This is followed by three more horizontally thin black lines with a thick red stripe at the basal angle. There are three unpainted feet on the vessel.

Figure A-6 shows a close-up of an image on a portion of the central register of Vessel 4. Between the top and bottom layers of thin black lines is a rectangular red frame with a black border, slightly taller than it is wide. The frame consists of three thin concentric rectangles, the first black, then red, then another black.
Inside the frame is a picture of a person’s head wearing an elaborate headdress. They are facing to their left and have an arm raised in front of their face. On the top are lines ending on the right of the frame in a downward hook. This is followed by a thicker black section starting behind the head, looping around and the ending above the face. There is a small black circle in front of this shape. Below that, still above the face, are another three black circles with a small spiral to their right. Below that and in front of the eyes are four thin black lines running horizontally from the face towards the right of the frame which turn downward shortly before they reach it. Below are two black circles. Behind the head are several vertical lines between two of which are short diagonal marks. Starting from where the ears would be, then going down, are two long stripes which start a light red and the end in a black “U” shape which connects them at the bottom. Below that where the neck starts is this horizontal strip as wide as the neck would be with diagonal marks inside it. This is set upon a bowl-like shape with four rounded half circles inside it which connect to the underside of the strip. Three thin lines come out of each side of this shape which immediately turn downward and connect to the bottom of the frame. The arm in front of the face has three black circles on it. Below the arm in the bottom right corner of the frame are two concentric circles.

The iconography of the vessel as a whole shows a figure with regalia which likely indicates a distinct social or religious role, at least ceremonially. This is supported by the rest of the artifacts in Feature 15 as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.
Vessel 8, Operation 20, Feature 15, Lot 95-9/20/73/8
Measurements: Height 5 cm
Diameter 13.5 cm, base 9 cm
Ceramic Type: Chancala Polychrome (Boggs 1972)
Date Range: 600-900CE

This straight-walled bowl is slightly outflaring. Wear and paint loss makes much of the pattern difficult to see. This vessel has been included in the non-specific category of analysis in Chapter 4.

Vessel 5, Operation 20, Feature 15, Lot 95-9/20/73,
Ceramic Type: Chanseñora Polychrome (Earnest 1999)
Date Range: 650-850E

This ceramic bowl has a medial break so that rim to the break is slightly incurvate but nearly vertical, while below the break is hemispherical. The vertical rim band is about a third of the total height. The top of the rim is painted red, while the first register (above the medial break) has long rectangles going around the vessel, with each containing different iconography. From this picture’s angle, the most visible is a thick orange rectangle with a stripe of red inside. Also visible is another rectangle which appears to have the back half of an
animal. Immediately below the medial break is another circumferential red band. In the bottom register, below the medial break, are four panels, two of which are visible. One of the panels is a circular pattern with concentric circles and with diagonal hatch marks between the first and second. The third thinner circle contains 5 dots arranged in a “t” pattern with one in the middle and one to each cardinal direction. The other visible panel contains a diagonal hatched pattern bordered on each vertical side with a thick red stripe. The hatched pattern resembles a (net or mat) weaved texture resembling the surface of a basket. Figure A-9 shows the inside of Vessel 5. The interior surface is a smooth hemisphere.

The interior has a red rim band, below which is a register of long rectangles with iconography like the outside upper register. The one visible motif is of a bird with a long beak or bill with dots along the top of it, a water bird. Below these rectangles is a thick red band followed by two other red bands that are lighter in color. There is a large space next without decoration until the bottom of the bowl which has a sun pattern of a large red circle with small red marks along the outside. The surface of the inside of the bowl is worn and hard to see in many places and there are cracks and chips throughout.
Vessel 3, Operation 20, Feature 15, Lot 95-9/20/73
Ceramic Type: Chanseñora Polychrome (Earnest 1999)
Date Range: 650-850E

A hemispherical bowl with a small medial flange about a third down the vessel exterior. The iconography on this vessel is the same as Vessel 5 of Feature 15 above, though the red paint is better preserved here. Figure A-11 is a close-up of one of the illustrations on the inside of Vessel 3. It shows a geometric pattern resembling an upside-down pyramid, in fact the iconography of a mountain, followed by a bird, possibly a water bird, with a long, feathered tail.

Figure A-10 Vessel 3, Feature 15

Figure A-11 Vessel 3, Feature 15 Detail
Vessel A, Operation 20, Feature 15

Ceramic Type: Yojoa, Glyphic

(Henderson and Beaudry-Corbett 1993, p 271)

Date Range: 600-900CE

A large open jar with two small, rounded handles, one on each side. The rim is not painted but has a sublabial thin black band. Below that are black pseudo glyphs, two in front of each handle with a large blank space in the middle. The glyphs consist of thick black lines and small black dots. Below the glyphs is a thick black circumferential band. Below that are three red bands, the first and third being very thin, and the second middle one being thick. Below that is the bottom register, which has a pattern of two concentric circles, one large and one smaller, with a large space in between them, and a large black dot inside of the innermost circle. The spaces between the two circles and the dot are painted red. Outside of the circles the pot is also painted red and, on each side, just in front of the handles are two thick, vertical black stripes.
Vessel B, Olla, Operation 20, Feature 15

Ceramic Type: Guazapa Group
(Sharer 1978, p 49)

Date Range: 200-900CE

This large, red-slipped cookpot has two small vertical loop handles, one on each side. There is no other decoration on the pot and the bottom is dark with soot from use.

The pieces of jade found in this feature were excavated from inside this vessel.
Vessel 7, Operation 20, Feature 15, Lot 95-9/20/73/7

Ceramic Type: Tapagua Molded (Sharer 1978, p 46)

Date Range: 200-400CE

This round-bottomed jar has a restricted neck and a flaring rim. It has two handles, one on each side, which seem proportionally large for the size of the vessel. It is smoothed with no painted designs. On the neck is two eyes and a protruding mouth that has broken off. This vessel was included in the Non-Specific category of analysis of Chapter 4 due to the fact that the subject could not be determined because the face was broken off.
Feature 20

Human Whistle, Operation 20,
Feature 20

This figurine whistle has ornate decorations. The subject is in a sitting position with fine details of the face and costume made from rolled and modeled clay. They are wearing a helmet with a prominent ridge above the brow which encircles the face under the chin which might be a personification of Venus as the War Deity. There is a scalloped decoration which runs along the coronal plane on the top of the head. The right arm is sticking out with the hand placed on the hip. On the upper portion of the right arm is a series of small ellipsoid shaped balls arranged one after the other as an armband, likely of jade, just past the shoulder. On the wrist is a simple bracelet. The fingers each have fingernail details. There is an ornamentation on the chest consisting of two rope-like sections, each starting near the center of the chest and then proceeding toward the shoulders giving a collar appearance, then turning back in the direction it came and meeting in the center mass of the figure below where they started. There is a knot shape that is then followed by a single cord which drapes down the right side of the legs, terminating just above the ankles. The face of the figure has heavily lidded eyes which protrude slightly from the face. The nose has a wide base, lining up approximately with the pupils of the eyes, however the tip is broken off. The lips are puckered into a small “O” shape, mimicking the appearance of a person whistling. The bottom of the feet has an opening one could blow into to create the whistle sound. Whistle

Figure A-15 Human Whistle, Feature 20
figurines were common during the Classic period throughout the Maya area and were usually used in celebrations (Taube 1988). They were produced in large numbers with clay molds. There are many examples in museums and private collections. This example seems to be of a different method of production than most. This example was not made using a mold, a characteristic shared with another figurine in this collection, the Monkey Whistle (Figures A-31 and A-32).

The details in this piece are predominantly hand rolled and applied. The facial features too are distinct from those of the rest of the region. The nose, while broken off, is very wide and the eyes and lips are large. This piece stands out even among the rest of the artifacts at CNC because of the number of hand-rolled accents.

Figure A-16 shows the Human Whistle sitting up on the edge of a table. From this angle it is evident that the left arm is missing.

*Figure A-16 Human Whistle, Feature 20 Detail*
Vessel 1, Operation 20, Feature 20
Lot 95-9/20/100,
Ceramic Type: Cutuco red on cream (Sharer 1978, p 45)
Date Range: 200-400CE

This miniature vessel is a round-bottomed jar with a restricted neck and flaring rim. There are small, punctated and grooved appendages on each side where handles would be. The outside has a light red slip on the neck and in large ovals just above the basal break, one around one appendage.

Figure A-17 Vessel 1, Feature 20
Vessel 1, Operation 20, Feature 105, Lot 95-9/20/355

Height 10.3 cm
Diameter: 5.7 cm
Thickness 5mm
Ceramic Type: Cutuco red on cream (Sharer 1978, p 45)
Date Range: 200-400CE

This miniature vessel is a jar modeled to resemble a head. The whole pot is covered with red paint, though it has been worn away in some sections. It is a round-bottomed jar with a restricted neck and a flaring rim with a sublabial bolster. Where there would normally be handles on either side there are ears, each wearing a hoop earring or ear flare. The face consists of coffee bean eyes, a narrow nose with punctate nostril holes on both sides at the bottom, and protruding lips in an unsmiling position. The cheeks have dents, potentially to represent cheekbones.
Vessel 6, Operation 20, Feature 105, Lot 95-9/20/355/6

Measurements: Height 6.5 cm
Diameter: 15.5 cm
Ceramic Type: Guazapa Group
Ladle Censer with loop handle
(Sharer 1978, p 49)
Date Range: 200-900CE

This is a frying pan censer with a long, looped handle. The rim of the bowl and the proximal part of the handle are red, and the rest is buff. There is a red circle on the bottom of the inside of the bowl. There is some black discoloration from use. The rim has a sublabial bolster. Ladle censers like these were often discarded with trash when they were used or broken, though occasionally they were purposefully broken and placed in graves during sacrificial rituals (Voorhies and Arvey 2016). It is possible that Feature 105/105B, however that would need to be determined through a separate research effort in the future.

Figure A-20 shows the bottom of Vessel 6. The bottom side has zones of red paint and has three legs, two on the bowl, and one on the handle.
Vessel 3, Operation 20, Feature 105, Lot 95-9/20/355

Measurements: Height, 19.9 cm
Diameter: 12.6 cm
Ceramic Type: Sovedeso Resist
(Aimers, Chase, and Chase 2013, p 40)

Date Range: 750-850CE

This is a flat-bottomed, cylindrical vessel. The upper register has vertical gray resist stripes at irregular intervals and of irregular thickness. The next lower register is an unslipped, carved pseudo glyph band that is dark brown. The main register of the body is covered in circle patterns which resemble the Mayan glyph “po” with smaller circles in the spaces between them.
Vessel 2, Operation 20, Feature 105, Lot 95-9/20/355

Ceramic Type: Finquita Red
(Sharer 1978, p 45)
Date Range: 200-400CE

This miniature vessel is shaped like a monkey. The rim has decorative ears and a muzzle with eyes on either side of the face. The handles could be seen as arms. The whole thing has an uneven red slip.

Vessel A, Operation 20, Feature 105, Lot 95-9/20/355

Ceramic Type: Cutuco red on cream (Sharer 1978, p 45)
Date Range: 200-400CE

This round-bottomed jar with a restricted neck and outflaring rim has no handles. The surface is a polished buff, The red geometric patterns along the upper part of the
body are usually interpreted as the design of a huipil or shirt, so the vessel as a whole refers to a person.

Vessel 4, Operation 20, Feature 105, Lot 95-9/20/355

Ceramic Type: Cutuco red on cream (Sharer 1978, p 45)

Date Range: 200-400CE

This cream-slipped hemispherical bowl has an orange tint, and a darker red rim band.
Feature 105 B

Vessel 4, Operation 20, Feature 105 B, Lot 95-9/20/275
Height, 20.8 cm
Diameter: 18.6 cm
Ceramic Type: Santana
(Henderson and Beaudry-Corbett 1993, p 261)
Date Range: 750-850CE

This large ornately painted cylindrical vessel has three small feet. The rim of the vessel has dark brown paint in a thick band followed by a thinner layer of red, then another even thinner stripe of black. The register below the rim has a series of the same pseudo glyph, a right facing head which has been shot with an arrow and is bleeding. The most visible one in the center of the picture has a black border on the left with three white circles with black dots in their centers lined up vertically with a little space between them. The head is a large square shape in white with the first half split between four sections. The center right section of the head is a red box with a white dot inside it, an ear. The top and bottom section are both delineated by thin black lines, the top one originating from the top of the square near the upper left corner and then connecting to the left side of the red ear, about a third
of the way down, with a rounded line. The bottom section is connected similarly with a thin rounded line starting from the bottom left corner of the square and then connecting to the left side of the red square ear about a third of the way from the bottom. Each of the three white sections has a red dot inside it. The other half of the large square is separated into two smaller squares, one on top of the other. The top square is sectioned off in an “X” pattern by small dots, like perforations, and in the center of the box is a red circle with a white dot in the center, the eye. The bottom most perforation dot on the right side has a red circle around it. The bottom of the two squares has a rounded shape with thin lines, inside which are tiny dots like the perforations above, going in an arch from the bottom left to the top right, a snarling mouth. Inside this shape it is painted red and there is a white dot in the middle. Below that, and filling the bottom right corner of the square, are three thin vertical lines, the teeth. To the right of the large white square decoration is a large black zone. In the top left corner is a square separated into two halves vertically, the left side painted red, and the right side painted white with two thin horizontal lines running through the middle. Coming out of the right side of that small square are two lines, the top white and the bottom red. The top white line runs to the right a couple centimeters and then curves up making a shape like a pipe, the shaft of an arrow. The end that turns up has a black dot in the middle. The red part goes to the right for a shorter distance and then splits in two and goes down. Once about two thirds of the way to the bottom of the section the two red lines turn light red and split off in opposite directions each turning into a tentacle shape with a thin white layer on top with tiny dots running along the surface, volutes of blood. Below the layer of illustrations is a thin black band, followed by a light red band, then followed again by a thin black band. The remainder of the vessel is covered in a complex pattern resembling knotwork or weaving, a mat pattern of black lines bordered on both sides by a thin
white line and a thin black line. Because of the pseudo glyph this vessel was included in the Human category.

Vessel 6, Operation 20, Feature 105 B
Measurements: Height, 9 cm
Diameter: 12. Cm
Ceramic Type: Chanseñora Polychrome (Earnest 1999)
Date Range: 650-850E

This squat composite shape jar with a restricted neck, rounded base, and sharp shoulder angle has a vertical loop handle on both sides that extends from the vessel shoulder to the slightly outflaring rim. There are decorations in red and dark brown across the surface and handles. The rim has a thin band of dark brown, followed below by a register from the rim band to the shoulder of alternating squares of red and dark brown. This register just above the shoulder angle has illustrations of spiders. The register below the shoulder angle has artwork toward the bottom of the vessel, but the picture does not give a good view.
of it. Figure A-27 shows Vessel 6 with different lighting. Here it is easier to see the spider designs. The interior of the vessel is also visible which shows a red band around the interior opening.

Vessel 5, Operation 20, Feature 105 B, Lot 95-9/20/275
Measurements: Height, 13.7 cm
Diameter: 11.7 cm
Ceramic Type: Chanseñora Polychrome (Earnest 1999)
Date Range: 650-850E

This jar has a restricted neck, outflaring rim, sharp shoulder angle, and rounded bottom. The vertical loop handles reach from the shoulder angle to the rim on either side. There is a darker red stripe along the rim, on the neck just below the upper join of the handles, and the shoulder. There are also red vertical strokes on the body in a cluster below the shoulder angle.
Vessel 1, Operation 20, Feature 105 B

Ceramic Type: Coatepeque

Modeled (Sharer 1978, p 34)

Date Range: 0-200CE

This miniature jar has a recurved neck with a flaring rim and restricted neck base. The circular boss in the middle of the design on the body, just below a ridge at the base of the neck is likely a toad cloaca, while the curved ridges on either side would represent the rear legs (Personal communication with Dr. Kathryn Sampeck, 2023). The rest of the surface is smooth with a polished cream slip.
This is a Pawahtuun, or Pawahtun, figurine. The Pawahtuun, or God N, were quadripartite gods who were responsible for holding the sky up at the cardinal directions (Taube 1992). The exact nature of these deities is largely dependent on timeframe with later iterations being combined with the Bacab who represent the passage of time and the new year’s birth. Regardless of time period, the Pawahtuun are characterized by their aged appearance, exemplified here by the delicately carved lines in the face, and the sunken cheeks indicating loss of teeth. The headdress here is atypical of most Pawahtuun imagery, which usually has a simple rope tied around the head, as is seen in many other examples such as the Pawahtuun heads found at Copan (“Schele Photograph Collection” n.d.), or in later Postclassic periods with more ornately decorated headdresses (Taube 1992). It is possible that this type of
rounded cloth-roll headpiece is an intermediary between the different styles, however further examples of this kind would need to be studied to determine this for sure. The detailed surface of this piece indicates it was likely made using a clay mold and is the only figurine of this kind of build which was found at CNC. The fact that this piece was also found outside of a major feature or grave also adds to the complexity of nailing down the exact nature of this figure. It is possible that this piece was not included in a grave at all and its presence in this collection could be a coincidence of the right time and the right place. This figurine is also the only clear example of a deity among the carved or molded artifacts found at CNC. Arms bend at the elbow and stick out a bit and hands are on its hips. Some of the left leg remains, but the right leg has broken off. The decoration on the chest may be the plastron of a turtle.

Feature 270

Monkey Whistle, Operation 22, Feature 270, Lot 95-9/22/536/8
Date Range: 750-850CE
This whistle of a monkey laying on the side and from a frontal view was found inside Vessel 1 from this feature. The whistle openings are on the back. The head has wide ears. The face has clearly outlined eyebrows, lidded coffee bean shaped eyes, slightly prognathic face with no defined nose, and simple mouth crease. The arms are held against the body and end in simple ball-shaped hands. The chest has a thick ridge below the neck appearing like a shirt collar. On the center of the chest are two rounded crater-
shaped divots placed roughly at nipple position. The knees have similar divots which may represent kneecaps. The round belly of the animal is the wind chamber, and the mouthpiece is on the rear of the figure. This whistle stands on a tripod of the two legs and the tail in the back as can be seen in Figure A-32. The features and details were formed and applied by hand, similar to the first whistle in this section.

Vessel 2 (right), Vessel 4 (left)
Operation 22, Feature 270, Lot 95-9/22/536/35
Ceramic Type: Chiquihuat (Sharer 1978, p 47); Cutuco red on cream (Sharer 1978, p 45)

Date Range: 200-900CE; 200-400CE

These two miniatures were both found in Vessel 1 of this feature. Vessel 2 is a flat-bottomed, straight-walled, outflaring bowl with three legs and an orange-red slip. Vessel 4 is a miniature round-bottomed jar with a restricted neck and flaring mouth. The shoulder has diagonal fingernail scalloping along the and it has an even, polished, black slip.
Vessel 1, Operation 22, Feature 270
Ceramic Type: Unknown
Date Range Unknown
This large olla with a slightly restricted neck with a round base.
This vessel contained the other vessels from this feature and thus may have been an urn burial.

Vessel 5, Operation 22, Feature 270, Lot 95-9/22/536/6
Ceramic Type: Chinchontepec
Unslipped (Sharer 1978, p 43)
Date Range: 200-400CE
This miniature bowl has a flat base and straight outflaring walls.
Vessel 3, Operation 22, Feature 270, Lot 95-9/22/536/4,
Ceramic Type: Finquita Red
(Sharer 1978, p 45)
Date Range: 200-400CE
This highly polished, red slipped vessel has an outflaring rim,
restricted neck, sharp shoulder angle, and vertical walled body.
The body has a simple wave-like pattern carved into the surface.

Figure A-36 Vessel 3, Feature 270