

## APPENDIX II

### NEW STONE MONUMENTS FROM LA VENTA, 1968

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During the 1968 field season at La Venta, a total of 28 previously unknown stone monuments, sculptured in the Olmec style, were encountered. Most of these were found in the course of our excavations in research of such pieces. The more portable of these particular pieces were taken to the Parque La Venta (sometimes referred to as Parque Olmeca) under the auspices of Arql. Carlos Sebastian Hernandez of the Museo de Tabasco in Villahermosa. Other pieces, such as the large columns or blocks of relatively unworked stone, were too large to be removed and so were left in situ. A small number of the monuments were brought to us by local residents who had encountered them in the course of their daily activities at La Venta. In these cases, it was determined where the pieces had originally been found and the location was then plotted on our map. These pieces, also, were taken to the Parque La Venta.

This paper presents a brief description of each of these monuments. As this is primarily an announcement of the most recent finds and the numbers which have been assigned to them, no great detail will be given in the descriptions, nor will detail be presented as to the exact condition or associations of the stones when recovered. Many of the photographs presented here were taken under unsuitable light conditions and are utilized only as an aid in identifying numbered monuments. The position of the pieces at the time of discovery is indicated on the general La Venta site map in the rear of this volume, and it is felt that such a presentation is sufficient at this time. A more detailed description of the monuments is now in preparation.

In addition to the newly recovered pieces at La Venta, it was decided to incorporate the unnumbered pieces now at the Parque La Venta into the present reference scheme. Thus, in the future any discussion of the monuments may be conducted with a standardized numerical referent, rather than with often confusing descriptive notations. A total of 14 pieces from the Parque La Venta were thus added to the list of monuments recovered during the 1968 field season. We were able to determine the original locations of some of these (Monuments 47, 56, 59, 61) and have indicated them on the map.

Four pieces which have been in the Museo del Estado, Villahermosa, for a number of years have also been incorporated into the present numerical scheme. While the exact provenience of these monuments is not recorded, there is good reason to believe that all came from the La Venta site.

The system used here to denote La Venta monuments was first utilized by Matthew W. Stirling who pioneered the systematic archaeology of the La Venta site in the early 1940's. Stirling (1943) divided the monuments into three groups which he called stelae, altars, and monuments. Each group had its own consecutive numbering system, beginning with number one. The monument group had the largest representation, and included colossal heads, seated human figures, and most miscellaneous categories. Drucker (1952) continued to use this system in his study of all then-known pieces from La Venta. The system was employed again by Drucker, Heizer and Squier (1959) to designate the new monuments found during their 1955 excavations. Although a slightly different numbering scheme has been used at the large Olmec site of San Lorenzo (Stirling 1955; Coe et al. 1966), it is felt that the La Venta system is adequate for the corpus of material from that site. For this reason it is continued in use in the present paper; unless serious theoretical or methodological points can be raised against it, it would seem unwise to change.

In the following description of the monuments, we have employed some of the terminology utilized in a study of the twelve colossal Olmec heads (Clewlow, Cowan, O'Connell and Benemann 1967). Should the reader be in doubt as to the specific meaning of such terms as nasion, drilled pits, axe-sharpening grooves, etc., he is referred to that work for clarification of the terminology.

#### Monument 28 (pl. 9a)

This basalt piece is a portion of the head of a snarling jaguar, and measures 45 cm. long, 39 cm. wide, and 40 cm. high. Although broken and somewhat eroded at present, it was originally well modeled. The piece shows an open, feline mouth with large canine teeth bared in a snarl. In the mouth corners are drilled pits. The eyes are deep depressions just below the nasion which, with the upper portion of the nose, recall the same feature on the La Venta colossal heads. The back of the head was completely sculptured, with the ears depicted in low relief as laid flat against the head. That the piece had been broken off at the neck is certain, although no clue is afforded as to the position or style of the rest of the body.

#### Monument 29 (pl. 9b)

This piece, also of basalt, is a broken top portion of a human face and head. The line of fracture runs between the eyes and the lower end of the nose. The head wears a sort of helmet which appears rather like a turban, and is connected to a flat background which is probably a portion of a larger geometric portion of the sculpture. On the forehead and left side of the face are 13 small drilled pits which may be representations of

pockmarks or some sort of decoration. The eyes are shown as slight depressions, with the irises represented by incision and flattening. The nasion is subrhomboidal in shape.

It is possible that the piece is a broken portion of a niche figure and part of the background of a large rectangular altar such as has been reported from the site (cf. Drucker 1952). The sculpture is 37 cm. high, 26 cm. wide, and 48 cm. long.

#### Monument 30 (pl. 9c)

This is a seated human figure, made of basalt, with the head broken off. The right leg is crossed in front, while the left leg is tucked to the side in much the same posture as the famous Olmec "Wrestler" (Corona 1962). The toes of the right foot are crudely depicted by incising, while the left foot appears to have been only roughly blocked out. The arms arch forward to grasp the right leg. The figure wears a small abdomen wrap which is shown in low relief, and a rectangular plaque with a St. Andrew's cross (a common Olmec motif, Coe 1965:760) appears on the upper center of the chest. On the bottom of the figure are 11 axe-sharpening grooves of the type often found on La Venta monuments (Clewlow et al. 1967:71-78). The piece is 40 cm. high, 45 cm. wide, and 44 cm. at its thickest point (the base).

#### Monument 31 (pl. 9d)

This is another seated, basalt figure with the head broken off. Both arms are fractured off at the shoulders. The left leg is broken off at the upper thigh, the right one at the knee. No decoration or clothing appears on the piece except for the puffy rectangular incised section covering the area of the genitals. Three long sharpening grooves appear on the back, and one is present on the outside of the right thigh. The figure is 52 cm. high, 66 cm. wide, and 40 cm. thick.

#### Monument 32 (pl. 9e)

This is a cylindrical stone drum of welded tuff or ignimbrite, and is hammer dressed all around. It measures 64 cm. high and is 33 cm. in diameter. Two drilled pits with dimples appear on the front and side of the piece.

#### Monument 33 (pl. 9f)

This piece measures 41 x 39 x 32 cm., and is probably a fragment of a basalt stela. One face is carved in low relief, but it is not possible to discern the nature of the design or scene presented.

Monument 34 (pl. 10a)

Although broken and somewhat worn, Monument 34 probably depicts a large right hand grasping a more or less cylindrical object. It is made of basalt and measures 27 x 54 x 25 cm.

Monument 35 (pl. 10c)

This is a large green schist column which was shaped and dressed, but was apparently unworked except for a grooved rim 46 cm. from the north end. Its maximum diameter is 54.00 cm., and it is 3.53 meters in length.

Monument 36a (pl. 10b)

This is a large boulder of greenish schist measuring 163 cm. long, 77 cm. wide, and with a maximum thickness of about 49 cm. Twenty-one randomly placed axe-sharpening grooves appear on the east face; the rest of the piece is unworked. It is roughly fractured at the end.

Monument 36b (pl. 10e)

Lying 5.3 meters due north of Monument 36a was Monument 36b, a large piece of greenish schist. Both were once part of the same piece. It is 162 cm. long, 87 cm. wide, and 49 cm. thick. One face of the piece has about 25 axe sharpening grooves.

Monument 37

This large piece of sandstone is so eroded and covered with lichen that no features are discernible. It is 1.83 meters high, 78 cm. wide, and 28 cm. thick. At Parque La Venta, where the piece is presently displayed, it is designated No. 13.

Monument 38 (pl. 10d)

This is a badly damaged fragment of what was probably the lower right portion of a cross-legged seated figure. The piece is made of basalt, and is 48 cm. thick, 45 cm. high, and 59 cm. wide.

Monument 39 (pl. 10f)

This is a fragment of a larger monument of undetermined size and nature. The piece shows two human hands held flat against the chest; portions of the forearms and biceps are present. Above the hands a small rectangular plaque is incised against the chest. No trace of a decorative element is present. The fragment is 25 x 40 x 10 cm. in size, having been fractured on all surfaces save the sculptured one. It is made of green schist.

Monument 40 (pl. 11a)

This is a seated human figure depicted as being perched atop a throne or bench, with legs hanging down the front of the piece. The head has been broken off and the fracture worn smooth. Feet and fingers are vaguely shown. A small triangular cape is incised within the area of what would have been the shoulder blades. No other clothing or decoration is present. The piece is made of basalt, and is 74 cm. high, 46 cm. wide, and 28 cm. thick.

Monument 41 (pl. 11b)

This is a small crouched jaguar realistically carved on the front of a roundish, basalt stone rich in large black augites. The stone comes from Cerro El Vigía in the Tuxtla Mountains. This source supplied the sculptors of Tres Zapotes. This specimen is the first recorded occurrence of El Vigía basalt at La Venta. Although badly eroded, it is still possible to note that the nose is well executed and very feline in appearance, as is the mouth. No trace of costume or design is present. The piece measures 45 x 32 x 25 cm.

Monument 42 (pl. 11d)

This piece is a fragment of basalt with low relief carving present, and is most probably a portion of a stela. A hand, part of an arm, and possibly part of the leg of one human figure are clearly visible, and part of the body and leg of another may be present. No clues are available as to the scene depicted. In sculptural style and in the apparent portrayal of a large central figure flanked by smaller-sized figures, it is like Stela 2 and Stela 3 of La Venta (Heizer 1967). The piece is made of basalt, and measures 36 x 46 x 16 cm.

Monument 43 (pl. 11c)

This piece, the so-called "mushroom stool," is a short cylindrical column with a marked widening of the platform at one end. This expanded top gives the piece its character as a seat or stool. Made of hornblende andesite, the monument is 41 cm. high and has a maximum diameter of 30 cm. No design or incision is present, but one drilled pit with a dimple is apparent on the upper surface near the center.

Monument 44 (pls. 11e, 12a)

This is the most interesting and important piece to be recovered during the 1968 field season. It is significant not only as a work of art in itself, but also because of the remarkable similarities it bears to the famous *Idolo de San Martín Pajapan* (Blom and La Farge 1926, fig. 433; Covarrubias 1946:80) now in the museum at Xalapa Veracruz. (See pl. 15 c and 15d.) Although the

San Martín piece is complete while the La Venta monument consists only of the head and headdress, the pieces display so much in common that it would not be difficult to imagine they were the work of a single artist.

Monument 44 is a large human head atop which rests an elaborate headdress consisting of a face with decorations, and with two "were-baby" faces, one below each ear of the main human head. The main face is, unfortunately, somewhat eroded, but it is possible to see that the eyes were executed as incised and flattened, and with tear ducts present in the inner corners. The nose is broad, with the nasion subrhomboidal in form. The lips are bow-shaped and slightly parted; no teeth are showing in the mouth. The entire face is extremely well modeled and realistic.

The front of the headdress displays a large anthropomorphic face on which detail is somewhat difficult to discern due to erosion. The eyes are shown as incised, angular slits on either side of a broad, flat nose. The mouth exhibits the characteristic Olmec snarl. The gum is apparent beneath the upper lip but no trace of fangs can be detected. The chin, jowls, and the puffy flesh around the eyes are sculptured with a convincing and delicate precision.

On the sides, the main portion of the headdress was decorated by a series of upward and backward projecting parallel incised lines, possibly representing feathers. There are 10 of these lines on the right side, and 11 on the left. Below these, a head band is present, eroded on the right but shown as being divided in three identical-sized rectangular sections on the left. These sections once bore incised decoration but it is not now possible to ascertain what details were originally present.

In the back, the upper portion of the headdress is divided into four parts by the intersection of two deep V-shaped channels—one running horizontally, the other vertically—through the center. Below this, the head band is plain at the end, but in the center it supports a raised rectangular border within which is a much-worn face about which it is only possible to say that the upper lip is bow-shaped, that gums are present, and that the eyes appear to have been inset rectangles. Below this an indistinctly incised piece appears as draping on the back of the neck.

Two axe-sharpening grooves appear on top of the headdress, toward the rear. A fractured portion in the center top of the piece is probably the remaining evidence of what was once a cross-like projection, such as may still be seen on the *Idolo de San Martín*.

Monument 44 is 55 cm. high, 43 cm. wide, and approximately 50 cm. in length. Preliminary x-ray fluorescence tests on the basalt from which it

is made indicate that it came from the same stone source as did the basalt of the Idolo de San Martín (Dr. F. H. Stross, personal communication).

#### Monument 45 (pl. 12b)

This piece is a large stone bowl, 44 cm. high and with a maximum diameter of 109 cm. The sides and bottom are 8 cm. thick. Made of basalt, the piece is complete but cracked into four large pieces. Another photograph of this monument may be seen on page 194.

A large lid of badly decomposed sandstone was found near the bowl and was left in situ. The lid may be seen in the left foreground of Plate 12b.

#### Monument 46 (pl. 12c)

This unusual piece is a basalt drain block, peculiar for the fact that at both ends a female socket is inset into the stone. Traces of asphaltum (chapapote), presumably used for sealing the connection, remain in the sockets. The piece is 56 cm. long, 38 cm. wide, and 17 cm. high. The walls are 12 cm. thick.

#### Monument 47 (pl. 12f)

This monument is a long, reddish basalt column now standing in the Parque La Venta in Villahermosa. It is roughly 3.5 meters long, with a circumference of 1.4 meters. Eight small sharpening grooves are to be found near the present foot of the piece.

#### Monument 48 (pl. 12d)

This is a badly eroded fragment of a larger piece with nothing more than a foot crudely sculptured in the lower right corner. At one time the piece was probably a fat, squatting figure of an animal or man. Made of basalt, the fragmentary monument is 40 cm. high, 35 cm. wide, and 28 cm. thick.

#### Monument 49

This is a green schist column, neatly flattened on one end. It is about 2.74 meters long, with a diameter of 48.00 cm.

#### Monuments 50 and 51

These two pieces are large rectangular blocks of decomposed sandstone, badly exfoliated but obviously worked to rectangular shape. No sculpturing or relief is apparent. They lie next to each other in heavy undergrowth on the east slope of the Stirling Group, just south of the ball court. The larger (Monument 50) measures 109 x 80 x 40 cm., while the smaller measures 90 x 90 x 70 cm.

Monuments 52, 53 and 54

These pieces were found by Matthew Stirling in 1942, and are reported on elsewhere in this volume (pp. 35-39).

Monument 55 (pl. 12e)

This is a large stone bowl found in association with Drain No. 2. It is 29 cm. high and has a diameter of roughly 58 cm. The walls and bottom are 9 cm. thick. The piece is not quite complete, being in three fragments. Its original shape was not circular but more or less subrectangular.

Monument 56

This monument is an upright standing monkey with its head tilted back and its hands clasped behind its head. Made of basalt, the piece is roughly 124 cm. high, 54 cm. wide, and 43 cm. thick. It was recovered from the La Venta site some years ago and now stands in the Parque La Venta in Villahermosa. While it has been referred to as a "priest" (cf. Westheim 1963, fig. 6), we are convinced that it is in fact a monkey. (For another photo see Williams and Heizer 1965, pl. 1c.)

Monument 57 (pl. 13a)

This is a much-altered headless torso, 73 cm. high, 52 cm. wide, and 28 cm. thick. It is of an unusual greenish serpentine-like stone, and is very smoothly polished over all surfaces. This polishing is applied over the fracture caused by removal of the head and neck, and over the sculptured front portion and five axe-sharpening grooves as well. This original sculptured portion, very indistinct at present, consists of the upper part of a human chest and parts of the arms on either side. Very faint traces of a rectangular pectoral plaque suspended on a thin necklace remain. At the bottom center of the piece a U-shaped channel -also smoothly polished- has been cut, extending 20 cm. up the body of the monument.

Monument 58 (pl. 13b)

Fractured at both ends, sides, and back, Monument 58 is an 82 x 47 x 29 cm. fragment of a once larger piece of green schist. Most of the upper portion of the extant piece has exfoliated away, leaving only the lower lip and part of the fangs of a stylized jaguar mask in low relief at the bottom. The lower lip is bow-shaped, and the corners of the mouth are depicted with rectangular depressions.

Monument 59 (pl. 13c)

This interesting piece depicts a crouching jaguar body with a typically Olmec anthropomorphic face and head supporting a largish table or platform.



Made of basalt, it was found in the same general area as Monument 58 some years ago and was taken to the Parque La Venta. It is 95 cm. high, 65 cm. wide, and 113 cm. long. The piece is designated as No. 3 in the Parque La Venta.

#### Monument 60

Made of basalt, this small, hunched jaguar figure was first published by Williams and Heizer (1965, pl. 2a, 2b). It is badly eroded so that details are difficult to ascertain. It stands 60 cm. high, is 45 cm. wide, and 35 cm. thick. It is presently at the Parque La Venta.

#### Monument 61 (pl. 13d)

This is a round stone disc 32 cm. thick and with a diameter of 88 cm. On the front panel is carved a cross-legged, seated figure in low relief. The piece was once quite handsome but has been badly weathered, the relief now being difficult to discern. Nevertheless, it is possible to see that the seated figure wears a large, flowing headdress which recalls that of individual R in Stela 3, La Venta (Heizer 1967:29, fig. 1), and of the central figure in the El Viejon stela (Medellin 1960, pl. 9). Made of basalt, the monument was found in what is now the airstrip near Complex A.

#### Monument 62 (pl. 13e)

This is the exceptionally long basalt column presently in front of the Caseta at the Parque La Venta in Villahermosa. Made of basalt, the piece is 6.63 meters long and has a circumference of 1.35 meters. At least 23 axe-sharpening grooves appear at random along its exposed upper surfaces.

#### Monument 63

This designation has been assigned to the basalt stela with the low relief engraving "of a bearded man hugging a monster" (Pellicer 1959). It has been described by Williams and Heizer (1965:19, pl. 2d).

#### Monument 64 (pl. 13f)

This is a badly defaced, standing figure with a squat head, almond-shaped eyes, a short body wrapped in an indistinct garment, and two squatty, geometrically-proportioned legs. It is probable that the piece was once much larger and of entirely different appearance, but it has been heavily damaged, with the present eyes being relatively recent additions. Made of basalt, the monument is 54 cm. high, 40 cm. wide, and 31 cm. thick.

Monument 65 (pl. 14a)

This piece consists of a small human head with hands in front beneath it. The head carries a helmet-like headdress with indeterminable design, and circular lobe plugs. Made of heavily eroded basalt, the piece is 66 cm. high, 43 cm. wide, and 40 cm. thick.

Monument 66 (pl. 14b)

This is a large slab of greenish schist with a few geometric lines in incised low relief on the front. The piece is fractured sharply all around, and is badly exfoliated on most of the once-worked surface. It is 1.03 meters high, 1.73 meters long, with a thickness of 37 cm. This monument was probably once part of a stylized jaguar mask motif. The piece is designated No. 11 in the Parque La Venta.

Monument 67 (pl. 14c)

A large block of basalt which has been hammer dressed into its present shape as a bench-like object; no other decoration or sculpturing appears on the piece. It is 90 cm. high, 207 cm. long, and has a maximum thickness of 90 cm. This piece is designated No. 15 at Parque La Venta where it serves today as a bench for tourists viewing the monuments.

Monument 68

A large circular boulder with numerous axe-sharpening grooves, this piece has been described and illustrated by Williams and Heizer (1965:19, pl. 2c).

Monument 69 (pl. 14d)

This is a broken piece of greenish schist, badly fractured and scaled, with some low relief design remaining on a small portion of the flat surface. It is one meter long, 44 cm. wide, and 19 cm. thick.

Monument 70 (pl. 14e)

This is a fat, squatting "Janus" figure holding a metate(?) in its hands. On both sides of the head and on the back are carved almost identical faces; thus the "head" of the figure actually consists of four similar faces. Made of basalt, the figure is 83 cm. high, 56 cm. wide, and 73 cm. thick. It is illustrated by Williams and Heizer (1965, pl. 4c). The piece is somewhat like La Venta Monument 5, the so-called "Abuelita" (Stirling 1943).

Monument 71 (pl. 14f)

This is a large, roundish stone, somewhat head-shaped, with a stylized

jaguar nose and mouth executed in front. Seven small faces in low relief appear on the sides and top. There may have been more at one time, but if so they are now obliterated. The entire piece is smoothly polished and worn over most of its surface. It is 83 cm. high, 65 cm. wide, and 67 cm. thick.

Monument 72 (pl. 15a)

This piece is badly eroded; it is a large squatting figure, probably human. It wears a helmet over the head, but details of this portion are not discernible. It is apparent that ears and ear ornaments were present, but details have been obliterated. The arms rest upon the knees, which reach the level of the chest as the figure squats on its haunches. Five low relief small faces are faintly visible on the back of the piece, perhaps at one time having been part of the ornamentation of a cape. These faces are somewhat like those on Monument 71. It is unfortunate that the piece is so badly worn as it must have been quite impressive at one time. It stands 126 cm. high, is 70 cm. wide and 44 cm. thick.

Monument 73 (pl. 15b)

A seated, cross-legged human figure, this piece is small and well modeled. No decoration or clothing is present. It is 32 cm. high, 25 cm. wide, and 28 cm. at its thickest point.

Although each of the well preserved pieces described above displays certain unique qualities which set it apart from any other Olmec piece (this unique variability is in fact a defining feature of Olmec monumental sculpture), the new pieces from La Venta may be roughly grouped into a variety of broad categories. These categories, and the monuments which we have placed in each, are summarized in Table 1. As may be noted, the predominant category (aside from Miscellaneous) is that of seated or squatting figures. Four of the 1968 pieces and three pieces from the Museo de Tabasco fall into this category. From the frequency with which they occur at other Olmec sites (cf. Stirling 1965) it would appear that this category contains the most common type of monument presently known. No discussion is required here of the other broad categories of new monuments from La Venta since these are also known from other Olmec sites (ibid.)

In 1955, before Drucker and Heizer's major excavations at the site, 18 numbered stone monuments, 7 altars, and 5 stelae were known from La Venta. The 1955 work of Drucker and Heizer produced 9 more large numbered monuments. Since that time 18 pieces of sculpture from La Venta have made their way to either one of the two museums in Villahermosa. The 1968 field season at the La Venta site yielded 28 additional sculptures. Thus the present total of known pieces from La Venta is 73 numbered monuments, plus 7 numbered

altars, and 5 numbered stelae. Indications from several other Olmec sites are that they also contain large numbers of monumental worked stones or fragments thereof (cf. Medellin 1960; Coe 1966). As the corpus of known Olmec pieces grows, it is hoped that discussion may be facilitated by the use of standardized referent systems such as that provided above for the sculptures from La Venta.

TABLE 1

## Categories of Newly Found or Newly Numbered La Venta Monuments

	Monument Number		
	Discovered 1968	In Parque La Venta	In Museo del Estrado
Seated or squatting figures	30, 31, 38, 40		70, 72, 73
Low relief fragments	33, 42, 58	66, 69	
Torsos	39, 57		
Heads	29, 44	65	71
Jaguar representations	28, 41	59, 60	
Bowls	45, 55		
Cylinders	32, 43		
Columns	35, 49	47, 62, 63	
Boulders	36a, 36b	68	
Miscellaneous	34, 46, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54	37, 56, 61, 64, 67	
Totals	28	14	4
Grand total:	46		