

THE DONAHUE DISCOVERY, AN ANCIENT STELA FOUND NEAR ILAVE, PUNO

John Howland Rowe and John M. Donahue

In June, 1971, John M. Donahue, then a graduate student in social anthropology at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Father Inocente Salazar, an Aymara-speaking Maryknoll priest, discovered two large fragments of an ancient stela at a place called Wilaqollu ("blood hill"), southeast of Ilave in the Province of Chucuito, Department of Puno, Peru. They were led to this discovery by a report of an earlier one first published in 1621.

In the account which follows, all field information was provided by Donahue, who also supplied the photographs, the sketch map, and a set of rubbings on which the outline sketches (figs. 5 and 6) are based. Rowe has not been to Ilave. The text was written by Rowe, who is also responsible for the sketches, the presentation of historical data, and commentary on the sculpture.

The story begins in 1619, at a time when the Spanish church in Peru was much concerned with the "extirpation of idolatry," the expression used by churchmen to describe their largely unsuccessful campaign to stamp out the surviving practices of native religion. This campaign was directed by the bishops and archbishops, who sent out inspectors (visitadores) to find and destroy cult objects and identify and punish native religious leaders. There is a considerable literature dealing with the subject.¹

Our most extensive account of what happened in 1619 is in the pages of a manual on the "extirpation of idolatry" written by Father Pablo Joseph de Arriaga of the Society of Jesus and published in Lima in 1621. Here is a translation of Arriaga's account:

The Right Reverend Dr. Pedro de Valencia, Bishop of Chuquiavo [La Paz], who was promoted to that seat from the position of Precentor of this capital [Lima], with the experience of what he had seen in this archbishopric and the zeal which our Lord has given him for the good of his flock, assigned the idolatry inspection to a very reliable priest. A few days after he began the inspection, the priest wrote him the following, of which his Reverence sent me the original, so that I could show it to the Viceroy.

"I have informed your lordship of the diligent action I continue to take against Indian sorcerers, principally in relation to a very abominable stone idol three times the height of a man. I discovered this idol two leagues from this town of Hilavi. It was on the highest hill in this entire area on a steep slope which faces toward where the sun rises. At the foot of the hill there is a large

clump of trees and in it some huts of the Indians who guard it. There are also many very large ancient Indian tombs, sumptuously constructed of fitted stone, which they say are the burial places of the chief rulers of the town of Hilavi. There was a small flat place made by hand and on it a stone statue carved with two monstrous figures, one of a man, which looked toward sunrise, and the other, with another face and figure, of a woman, on the back side of the same stone facing west. These figures have some thick snakes which go up from the foot to the head to the right and left, and they also have other figures like those of toads. This huaca was uncovered from the breast to the head, and all the rest was below ground. More than thirty people took over three days to clear the whole area around the idol, and they found a square stone located in front of each of the two faces of the statue. The square stones were a palm and a half high [approximately 30 cm.] and seemed to have served as altars. They were well set, and when, with much difficulty, they were torn from their places, there were found some very delicate bits of gold leaf scattered some distance from one another which glittered in the sun. I have endured much labor to tear out this idol and break it up, and more to undeceive the Indians...."

The inspector Alonso García Cuadrado writes this....²

Another and much briefer report of the same or a similar discovery was published in the same year by the Augustinian Father Alonso Ramos Gavilán, who had apparently not seen García Cuadrado's original report. Ramos Gavilán says:

In the year 1619, Father Diego García Cuadrado, a very God-fearing and diligent parish priest, who is endeavoring to establish the true religion among the barbarous people between Juli and Hilavi, where he lives and teaches, discovered a stone idol on the hill called Tucumu, facing Lake Titicaca. The idol was three and a half varas high [at least 2.80 m.] and had two faces, almost the way they depicted Janus, except that one face was that of a man and the other of a woman, with two snakes which climbed up it from the feet, and in the crown a large toad in the form of a headdress. They were worshipping it as god of food and kept it on a large slab.³

There are interesting discrepancies between this account and the one published by Arriaga, not least in the dimensions of the "idol," since Ramos Gavilán's report suggests a carved stone about half the size of the one described by the discoverer. We shall come back to this matter below. Ramos Gavilán does not give us the source of his information, but he was in the area at the time of García Cuadrado's discovery, could have talked with him or with the Bishop of La Paz or both, and could

have seen the stela.⁴

The references to the passages in Arriaga and Ramos Gavilán quoted above have been available to any archaeologist interested in Andean stone sculpture since 1957 at least. They appeared that year in an article on a carved stone from Chiripa published by Carlos Ponce Sanginés.⁵ Sergio and Karen L. Mohr Chávez picked them up from this source in 1970 for an earlier version of their paper on the definition of an early style of stone sculpture from Peru and Bolivia.⁶ They thought from the description that the stela near Ilave probably belonged to the style they were attempting to define. When Rowe saw their discussion of the new style in 1971 he thought so too, and sent them more complete transcriptions of the passages from Arriaga and Ramos Gavilán for use in a subsequent revision. These transcriptions appear below as an appendix.

Donahue's wife, Simone, read an English translation of Arriaga for a course she took at Columbia University given by Dr. Karen W. Spalding.⁷ The Donahues went to Ilave in June of 1971 in the course of summer field work among migrants in southern Peru who were moving between the country and the city of Tacna. Donahue resolved to look for the site described by García Cuadrado and enlisted the assistance of Father Inocente Salazar. The account of the search which follows is partly in Donahue's own words. A likely spot to begin seemed to be a zone called Wilaqollu, southeast of Ilave where there is a group of hills. The largest one has three peaks in a line, according to Donahue's sketch map (fig. 1), and its long axis runs roughly northwest to southeast. The highest peak is the one at the southeast end, now called Calvario de Santa Cruz; the middle peak, Cerro Kawawipata, is the lowest.⁸ The northeast side of this hill faces the plain of the Ilave River and beyond it the shore of Lake Titicaca. At the foot of the hill and on the plain between it and the river are a number of chullpas (tombs), indicated on the sketch map. There are also the ruins of two rectangular structures at the foot of the hill, and Donahue thought the northern one was a small Inca temple. Large worked stones are strewn around, some being built into fences. One stone was carved in relief with a representation of a serpent and a ring (fig. 2).⁹

Donahue and Father Salazar inquired of local residents where there were other sculptured stones, and a group of young men directed them to the middle peak of the large hill. On the northeast slope of this peak they found two fragments of a stela which had been carved on both sides (fig. 7). Donahue refers to these two fragments as the "top" and "middle" of the original stela, because he thinks it probable that these fragments fit together. A fit would be reasonable in terms of proportion. It seems likely that what he calls the "top" fragment is indeed the original top of the stela. The thickness tapers markedly. There is obviously at least one piece missing at the base.

The original relief carving is much better preserved on one side of the stela than on the other. The main figure on the better preserved side is in human form and standing posture. Donahue identified it

as male, but it has no distinctively male features preserved. This figure and the others on the better preserved side will be discussed in more detail below. The other side is so worn that little of the original carving can be made out. Donahue could see traces of a face on the top fragment but reported that the lower part of the figure on the middle fragment was indistinguishable. Whatever traces of the face may be visible on the original are indistinguishable in the rubbing Donahue brought back; one eye is barely discernable in the photograph (fig. 8). Donahue suggests that the greater wear on the second side may be due to the fact that it faced the prevailing westerly winds when the stela was standing and was the side in contact with the earth when it was found.

Donahue and Father Salazar collected sherds in the area where the stela fragments were found, and identified some of them as Qaluyu style and others as Inca. Surface associations of this kind are of no value for dating, however, especially since, as we shall see, there is reasonable doubt that the two fragments are at or near the place where the stela originally stood.

After a hasty recording of the stela fragments, Donahue and Father Salazar made some inquiries among the workers of the Cuentas Hacienda at the foot of the hill on the northeast side. They talked with an old woman who told them that she remembered that when she was a child people worshipped the stela fragments as holy things, but that they no longer did so. However, when Father Salazar went back to look for the stela fragments a few days later, they had disappeared. It is a reasonable inference that the fragments had been hidden precisely because they were still holy things. Donahue realized subsequently that he had made a mistake in taking a priest with him as his interpreter; he was not fully aware at the time of the frequency with which ancient sculptures serve today as cult objects in the Titicaca Basin.

Because of the immediate disappearance of the two stela fragments, our only record of them is provided by the color photographs and rubbings which Donahue made on the day the fragments were found. The photographs, which are reproduced here in black and white, leave something to be desired. The best preserved side of the top fragment is photographed at such a low angle that it is difficult to make out details, particularly in the area of the headdress (fig. 3). The nose and part of the mouth of the principal figure have been destroyed, and it is not easy to distinguish the original carving from later breakage. The rubbings show so little detail as to be nearly useless. Rowe reduced them photographically and made sketches based on them, with details filled in from the photographs (figs. 5 and 6). The sketch of the head on the top fragment is the least reliable; other reconstructions could be made which would probably fit the evidence equally well. Two other competent observers thought the face had a mouth mask; Rowe can see no mask.

The surface of the upper half of the middle fragment above the legs of the principal figure is completely destroyed, but Patricia J. Lyon noted that faint traces of the arms can still be distinguished (fig. 4). Both arms are bent at the elbows and the forearms cross the body. The

figure's right forearm is bent up at an angle; the left forearm crosses the body almost horizontally with the hand below the right elbow.

The legs of the principal figure are almost parallel-sided. The knees are indicated by circles, and four or five toes were apparently indicated. The subsidiary figures beside the legs probably represent snakes with their heads at the top.

Donahue gives the dimensions of the top fragment as 35 x 25 inches (89 x 63.5 cm.) and those of the middle fragment as 49 x 25 inches (124.5 x 63.5 cm.). If the two fragments join, the total height of the two together comes to 213.5 cm.

When Donahue found the stela fragments, he was at once convinced that they corresponded to the "idol" described by García Cuadrado in Arriaga's book. That was what he was looking for, and the surviving relief carving seemed to fit García Cuadrado's description. There is indeed some likelihood that Donahue's stela is the "idol" discovered by García Cuadrado, but the identification presents some problems. The first problem is the height measurements. García Cuadrado's text, as transmitted by Arriaga, says that his "idol" was three times the height of a man. The Spanish word which Rowe has translated "the height of a man" is *estado*, a "natural" unit of measure which, in common usage, was approximate. It was later standardized at about 169 cm. (5 feet 6½ inches). Three of these units add up to about 5 m. Five meters is not an inconceivable height for an ancient stela; "Monolith 1" at Huancani in Bolivia measures 5.38 m., for example.¹⁰ However, so much of the carving described by García Cuadrado is present in the fragments preserved that it seems somewhat unlikely that more than half its original height is missing. The measurement given by Ramos Gavilán, 3½ varas or about 283 cm., seems much more reasonable.

One possibility is that Donahue's stela is the "idol" described by García Cuadrado, but that the seventeenth century discoverer exaggerated its height. It is also possible that Ramos Gavilán saw only fragments of the "idol" and underestimated its original height. Another possibility is that there were two similar stelas, one of 5 m. described by García Cuadrado, and a smaller one of 2.8 m., found after García Cuadrado's letter to the bishop had been written, and seen by Ramos Gavilán. If the last possibility is the right one, it is more likely that Donahue found the smaller stela. The large toad in the crown mentioned by Ramos Gavilán could have been on the badly eroded side of the Donahue stela.

Another problem is the location of the Donahue stela. From García Cuadrado's description, the "idol" he found should have been on the east slope of Calvario de Santa Cruz on an artificially leveled platform. It is, of course, possible that the two fragments found by Donahue were moved by the natives to a less conspicuous position on Kawawipata. Again, there is the possibility we considered above, that there were actually two stelas.

Whatever the historical identity of the Donahue stela may be, it is of great interest that he was led to find it by a seventeenth century description.

December 12, 1975

APPENDIX

Arriaga, 1621, cap. IX, pp. 52-53 (of the 1910 facsimile)

El Illustrissimo Señor doctor Don Pedro de Valencia Obispo de Chuquiavo, que de Chantre de esta Metropoli fue promovido a aquella silla, con la experiencia de lo que avia visto en este Arçobispado, y el zelo que nuestro Señor le à dado del bien de sus ovejas, encomendò la visita de la idolatria a vn Sacerdote de mucha sasisfacion [sic], y a pocos dias despues que començò la visita le escribiò la siguiente, la qual me embiò su Señoria originalmente, paraque la mostrase al Señor Virrey.

/p. 53 [56 of the 1621 original]/ Avisado tengo a vuestra Señoria la diligencia, que quedo haziendo contra Indios hechizeros, y principalmente en razon de vn Idolo de piedra de tres estados en alto muy abominable, que descubri, dos leguas de este pueblo de Hilavi, estava en vn cerro el mas alto, que ay en toda esta comarca en vn repecho que mira hazia donde nace el Sol, al pie del cerro ay mucha arboleda, y en ella algunas choças de Indios que la guardan, ay tambien muchas sepulturas antiguas muy grandes, de entierros de Indios muy sumptuosamente labrados de piedra de encaxe, que dizen ser de las cabeças principales de los Indios del pueblo de Hilavi. Estava vna plaçuela hecha a mano, y en ella vna estatua de piedra labrada con dos figuras monstruosas, la vna de varon, que mirava al nacimiento del Sol, y la otra con otro rostro de muger a las espaldas, que mirava al Poniente con figura de muger en la misma piedra. Las quales figuras tienen vnas culebras gruessas, que suben del pie a la cabeça a la mano derecha, y yzquierda, y assi mismo tienen otras figuras como de sapos. Estava esta Huaca del pecho a la cabeça descubierta, y todo lo demas debaxo de tierra. Tres dias tardaron mas de treinta personas en descubrir todo el sitio al derredor deste Idolo, y se hallaron de la vna parte, y otra delante de los dos rostros, a cada parte vna piedra quadrada delante de la estatua, de palmo y medio de alto, que al parecer servian de aras, o altares muy bien puestas, y arrancadas de su asiento con mucha dificultad, se hallò donde estava asentada la ara de la estatua, con vnas hogillas de oro muy delicadas, esparcidas vnas de otras, que relucian con el Sol. Mucho trabajo è pasado en arrancar este Idolo, y deshacelle, y mas en desengañar a los Indios....

Esto escribe el Visitador Alõso Garcia Quadrado....

Ramos Gavilán, 1621, libro primero, cap. XXXII, p. 168

El año de 1619, el padre Diego Garcia Quadrado, Sacerdote muy temeroso de Dios, y diligēte en su oficio de Cura, q̄ con sus continuos

sermones, procura entablar la verdadera Religion entre aquella barbara gente, entre Iuli, y Hilabi, dōde el reside dotrinando. En el cerro llamado Tucumu, frontero de la isla Titicaca, descubrio vn Idolo de piedra de tres baras, y media de altor q̄ tenia dos rostros, casi a la traça en q̄ pintaron a Iano, saluo que el vn rostro era de varon, y el otro de muger, con dos culebras q̄ le subiã de los pies, y en la corona vn sapo muy grande en forma de tocado. Adorauanle por Dios de las comidas, y tenianle sobre vna losa grande.

NOTES

¹See especially Rowe, 1957, Duviols, 1971, and references given in these two works.

²Arriaga, 1621, cap. IX, pp. 52-53 (pagination from the 1910 facsimile), translation by Rowe. The Donahue discovery was based on another translation (see note 7).

³Ramos Gavilán, 1621, libro primero, cap. 32, p. 168, translation by Rowe. This passage was not known to Donahue. Ramos Gavilán gives García Cuadrado a different first name from the one mentioned by Arriaga. Arriaga had García Cuadrado's original letter, but he or the printer could, of course, have made a mistake in transcribing the name. We have no basis at this time for saying which author is correct.

⁴Espinoza Soriano, 1973, pp. 131-134.

⁵Ponce Sanginés, 1957, p. 135. The passage from Arriaga was used earlier in an archaeological comparison by Casanova (1942, p. 348).

⁶Chávez and Chávez, 1976. In the present version, they have substituted a reference to our paper.

⁷Arriaga, 1968, pp. 78-79. This translation, while adequate for Donahue's purposes, contains some inaccuracies.

⁸Donahue got a translation of "triumphal dance place" for this Aymara place name.

⁹Another relief stone from the Pampa de Ilave is illustrated by Kidder (1943, pl. VII, 1); both should be compared with the sculptures from Cancha-cancha Asiruni illustrated by Chávez and Chávez (1970, pp. 25-30). The Cancha-cancha Asiruni site has Pucara style pottery on the surface.

¹⁰Rydén, 1947, p. 90.

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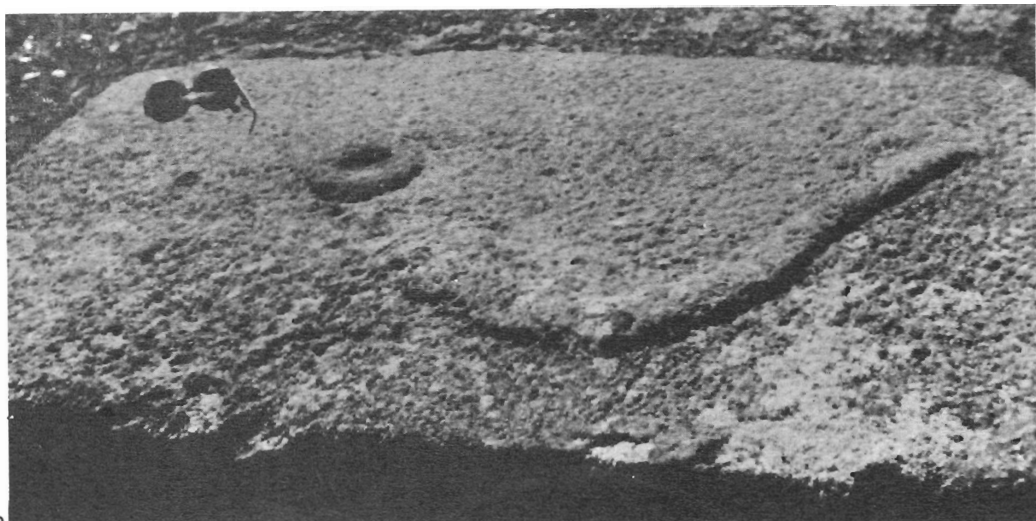
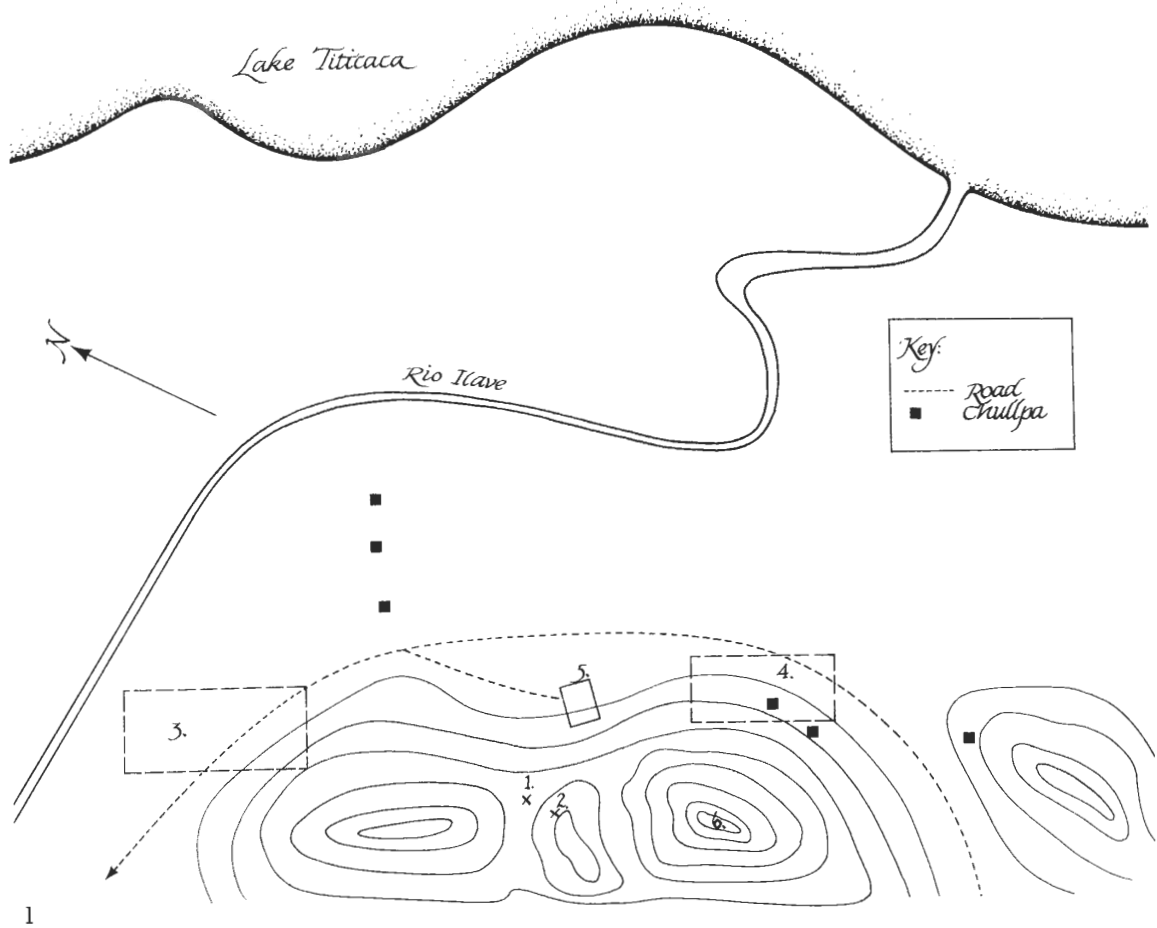


Plate XVII. Fig. 1, sketch map of the Wilaqollu area (not to scale).
 Key: 1. Top section of the stela. 2. Middle section of the stela.
 3. Ruins identified as Inca. 4. Other ruins. 5. Cuentas Hacienda
 house. 6. Calvario de Santa Cruz.
 Fig. 2, carved stone at Wilaqollu with snake and ring in relief.



Plate XVIII. Fig. 3, head and shoulders of the figure on the better preserved side of the stela; fig. 4, torso and legs of the figure on the better preserved side of the stela.

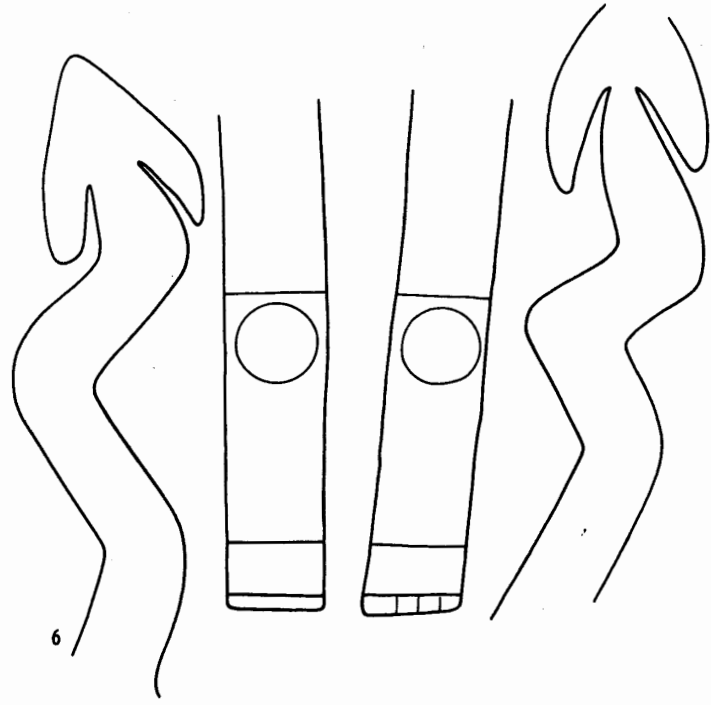
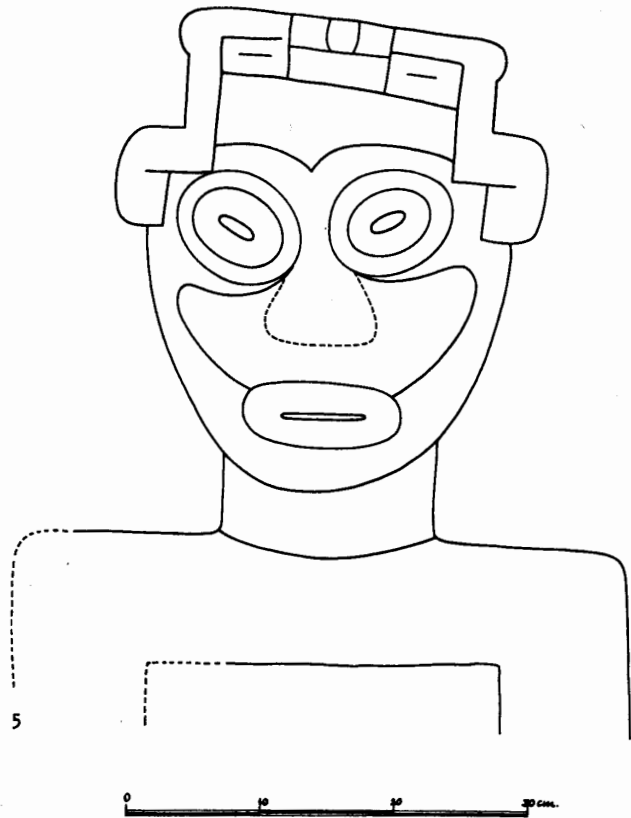
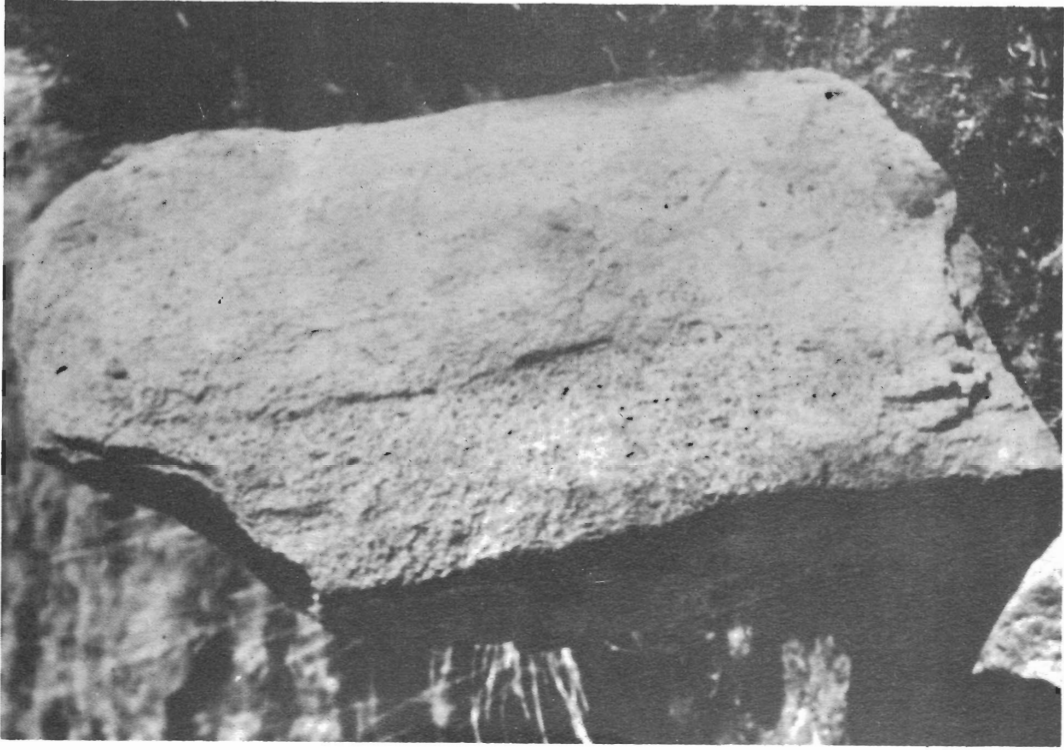
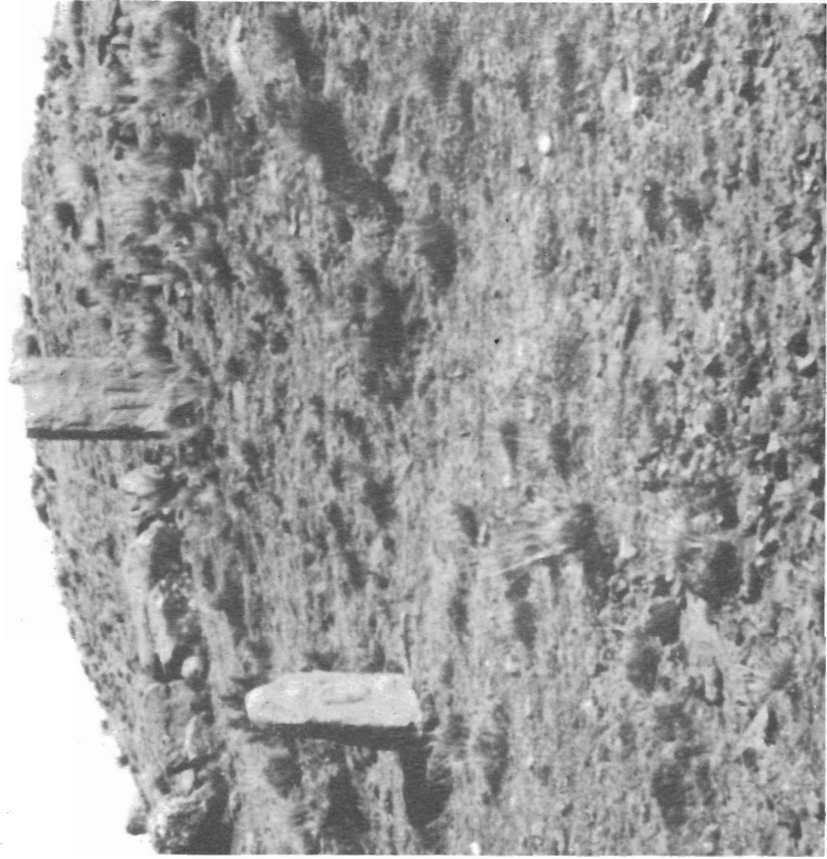


Plate XIX. Fig. 5, sketch of the head based on a rubbing, details supplied from fig. 3; fig. 6, sketch of the legs and accompanying snakes based on a rubbing, details supplied from fig. 4.



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Plate XX. Fig. 7, the two sections of the stela on Kawawipata, in place as found, but standing; fig. 8, traces of the head on the more damaged side of the stela.