

FAMSI © 2004: Ann Cyphers

Emergency Funding for the Protection of Monument 112 from San Lorenzo, Veracruz



Research Year: 2004
Culture: Olmec
Chronology: Pre-Classic
Location: Veracruz, México
Site: San Lorenzo

Table of Contents

[Final Report](#)
[Acknowledgements](#)
[List of Figures](#)
[Sources Cited](#)

Submitted 08/06/2004 by:
Ann Cyphers
Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
cyphers@servidor.unam.mx

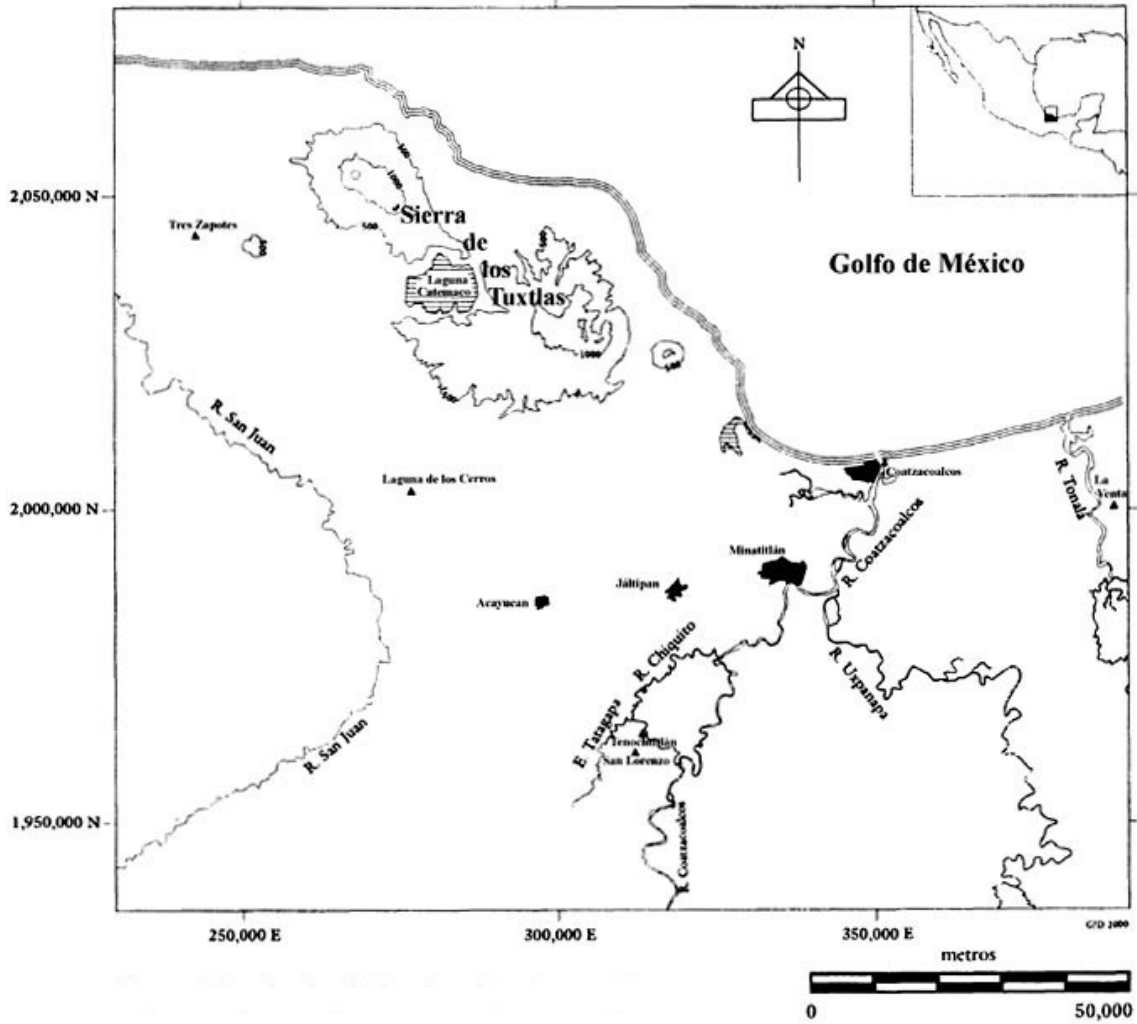


Figure 1. Map showing the location of San Lorenzo, Veracruz.



Figure 2. Monument 112, as discovered in 1996 by the San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán Archaeological Project (SLTAP).

Final Report

During the 1996 field season of the San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán Archaeological Project (SLTAP), a large oval monument with flat sides was located in situ in an Olmec structure at San Lorenzo ([Figure 1](#)). The monument is 2.1 m long, 1.4 m wide, 0.80 m thick, and weighs approximately 5 tons (Cyphers 2004). It contains a beautiful bas-relief representation of an Olmec male figure with a dagger in his belt, hence, its local nickname, "Pedro Navaja" ([Figure 2](#), shown above, and [Figure 3](#), shown below). This is one of the few monuments from San Lorenzo that has been found sealed beneath the floor of a structure.



Figure 3. Close-up of Monument 112.

At the close of the field season, the monument was left in its original location, since further excavation is planned. Given its depth, at 2.5 mbs, as well as its considerable size and weight, it seemed unlikely that it could be stolen. However, recent illicit excavations were conducted at the monument's location and, based on information from local inhabitants early in 2004, it became apparent that looters intended to remove and sell the monument. Because of this urgent situation, emergency funding was requested from FAMSI in order to extract Monument 112 and transport it to the Tenochtitlán community museum. The Consejo de Arqueología del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) granted authorization for the operation.



Figure 4. As the monument was uncovered, a thick blanket of dirt was left atop it as protection.

In April of 2004, the fill from the 1996 excavations was removed in order to assess damage to the archaeological context ([Figure 4](#), shown above, and [Figure 5](#), shown below). It was determined that strata located above and to the north of the monument had been damaged during the illicit activities and that it had several nicks from metallic tools used by the looters to uncover it. Luckily, the monument's context was not disturbed.



Figure 5. Workers uncover the monument minutes before its transport.

In preparation for the placement of the monument in the Tenochtitlán community museum installations, a pedestal was constructed in strict accord with the specifications given by the Centro Regional INAH-Veracruz. Although the Regional Center was unsuccessful in coordinating the participation of heavy machinery and specialized personnel from Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX), the removal and transport of the monument was achieved due to the excellent relations maintained by the SLTAP with PEMEX's Refinería General Lázaro Cárdenas in Minatitlán, which graciously has aided in the protection of other Olmec monuments from the site over the years.



Figure 6. PEMEX personnel prepare the monument for removal.



Figure 7. Careful extraction of the monument prior to placing on the transport vehicle.



Figure 8. The monument's arrival at the community museum in Tenochtitlán.

On Sunday, April 18, the townspeople, local INAH guards, and newspaper reporters gathered at the site to witness PEMEX's impeccable removal, transport, and placement of the monument at the community museum ([Figure 6](#), [Figure 7](#), and [Figure 8](#), shown above, and [Figure 9](#), [Figure 10](#), and [Figure 11](#), shown below). Following its placement, a roof was built to protect it from the elements ([Figure 12](#), shown below).



Figure 9. Removal of the monument from the vehicle.



Figure 10. Prior to placement of the monument on its base, local inhabitants of Tenochtitlán gathered around it in order to discuss its importance and meaning.



Figure 11. Placement of Monument 112 on its pedestal.

As in so many places, the San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán region is plagued by looting and trafficking in archaeological pieces. Over a period of 15 years, the SLTAP has attempted to counteract this tendency by the creation of two community museums and by maintaining a constant dialogue with the local people. A slow, yet growing awareness and concern for the sites and artifacts can be perceived in the region. The recent, enthusiastic support of Monument 112's rescue by the inhabitants included numerous public statements by influential community members regarding the importance of the town's archaeological heritage. This long-awaited trend will continue as long as appropriate attention is placed on education and cooperation programs designed to enhance community participation and foment local commitment to the national patrimony.



Figure 12. Monument 112, resting in front of the Tenochtitlán community museum.

Acknowledgements

This emergency operation was made possible through FAMSI's generosity, the conscientious collaboration of PEMEX and the Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, and the federal authorization granted by the Consejo de Arqueología-INAH. I would like to thank the following people: Judith Zurita-Noguera for her expert collaboration; Ranulfo González for building the sturdy pedestal; the Junta de Padres de Familia de la Escuela Primaria de Tenochtitlán for their unwavering support; the local INAH personnel for their assiduous cooperation; Ing. Protasio Villalobos and the PEMEX team for their crucial assistance; and all the splendid local people who worked with us and those who selflessly guarded the monument at night even as the looters and coyotes lurked in the shadows.

List of Figures

[Figure 1](#). Map showing the location of San Lorenzo, Veracruz.

[Figure 2](#). Monument 112, as discovered in 1996 by the San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán Archaeological Project (SLTAP).

[Figure 3](#). Close-up of Monument 112.

[Figure 4](#). As the monument was uncovered, a thick blanket of dirt was left atop it as protection.

[Figure 5](#). Workers uncover the monument minutes before its transport.

[Figure 6](#). PEMEX personnel prepare the monument for removal.

[Figure 7](#). Careful extraction of the monument prior to placing on the transport vehicle.

[Figure 8](#). The monument's arrival at the community museum in Tenochtitlán.

[Figure 9](#). Removal of the monument from the vehicle.

[Figure 10](#). Prior to placement of the monument on its base, local inhabitants of Tenochtitlán gathered around it in order to discuss its importance and meaning.

[Figure 11](#). Placement of Monument 112 on its pedestal.

[Figure 12](#). Monument 112, resting in front of the Tenochtitlán community museum.

Sources Cited

Cyphers, Ann
2004 *Escultura olmeca de San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán*. Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.