

Contextualizing the Akan Figurine

a discussion of effigies, deities, caves, and ontology

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Archaeology and Environmental Geoscience



Photo by Juan Carlos Pérez Calderon

WHO AM I?

DES SMITH



Double Major Archaeology and
Environmental Geosciences

– Maya Archaeology

- Wooster Local
 - Northwestern High School
- First Generation
- Nature lover and forever curious

NICE TO MEET YOU!

What do I study?

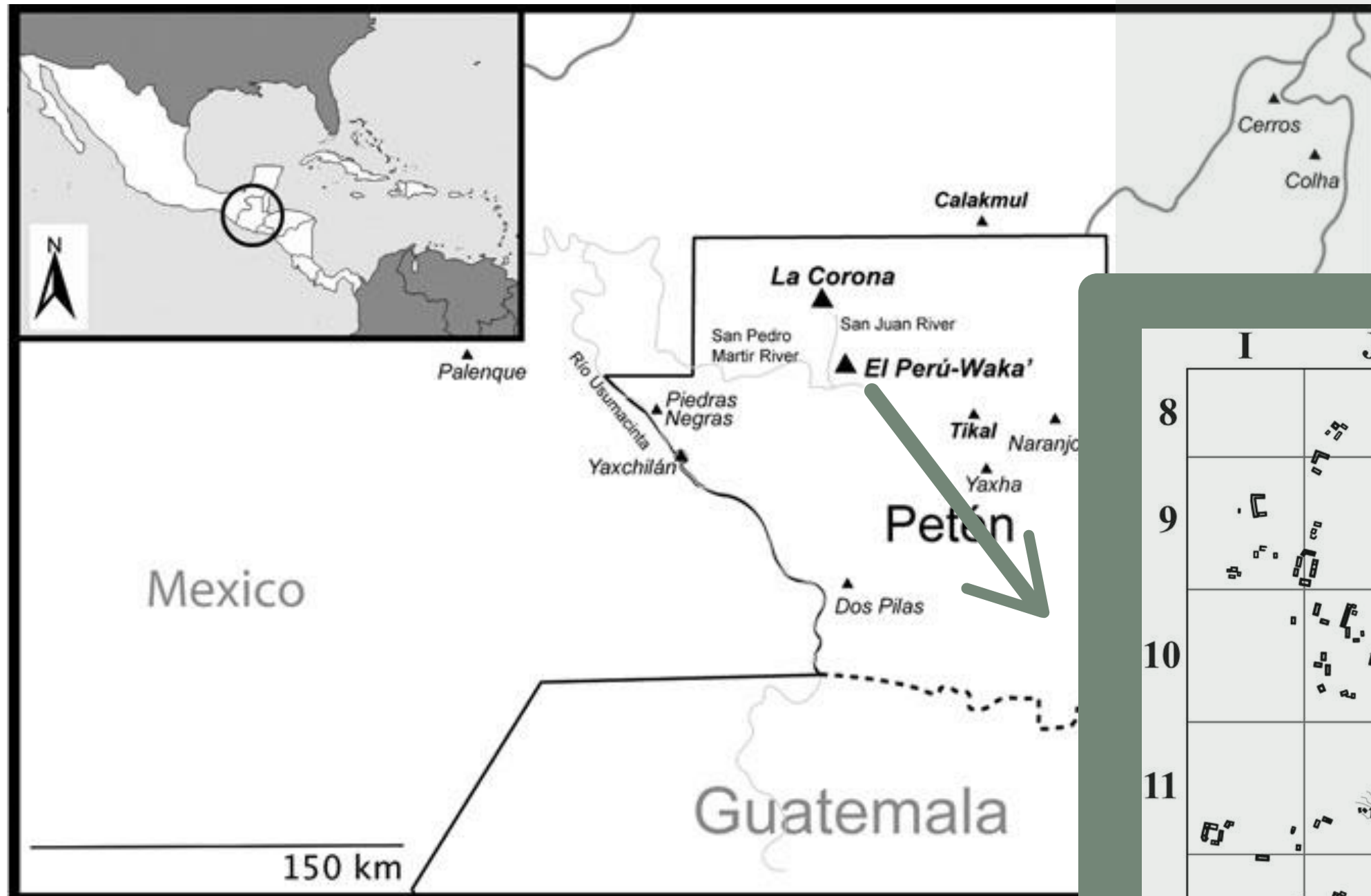
- Earth Sciences and Systems
 - How our world's system interacts with itself and us!
 - Classic Maya Archaeology
 - Material Culture from the Classic Period, currently focused on Waka' and the Akan Figurine
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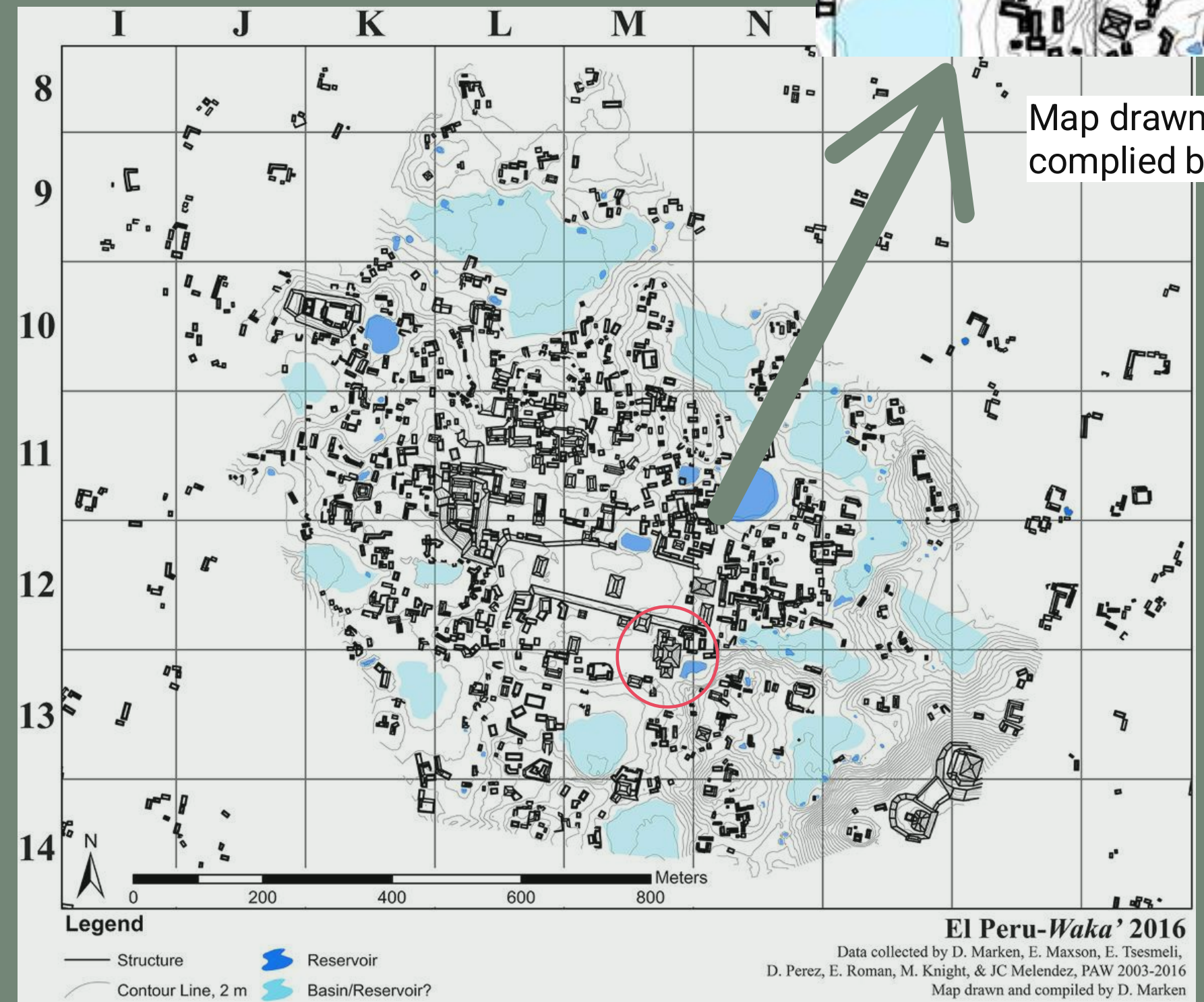
Map by J.C. Melendez

WHERE DID WE FIND IT?

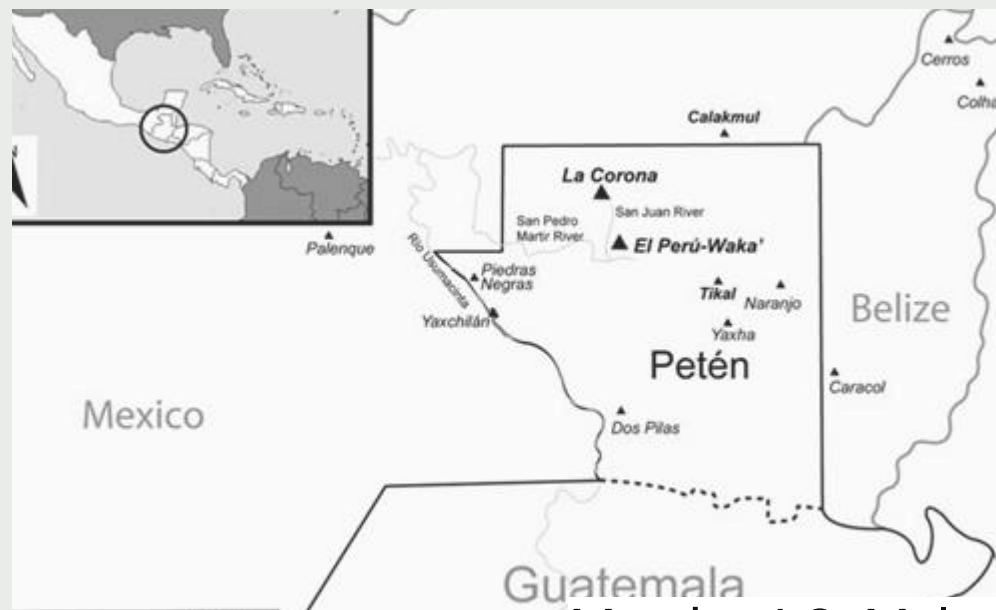
A royal burial inside a civic-ceremonial shrine



Map by J.C. Melendez



Map drawn and compiled by D. Marken



Map by J.C. Melendez

WHERE DID WE FIND IT?

A royal burial inside a ceremonial palace

WHAT IS IT?

A figurine, an effigy, (possibly) a bundled item, grave good, representation of an element of the Akan Complex



Photo by Juan Carlos Pérez Calderon



Map by J.C. Melendez



Photo by Juan Carlos Pérez Calderon



akan

WHERE DID WE FIND IT?

A royal burial inside a ceremonial palace

WHAT IS IT?

A cavestone figurine, an effigy, (possibly) a bundled item, grave good, representation of an element of the Akan Complex

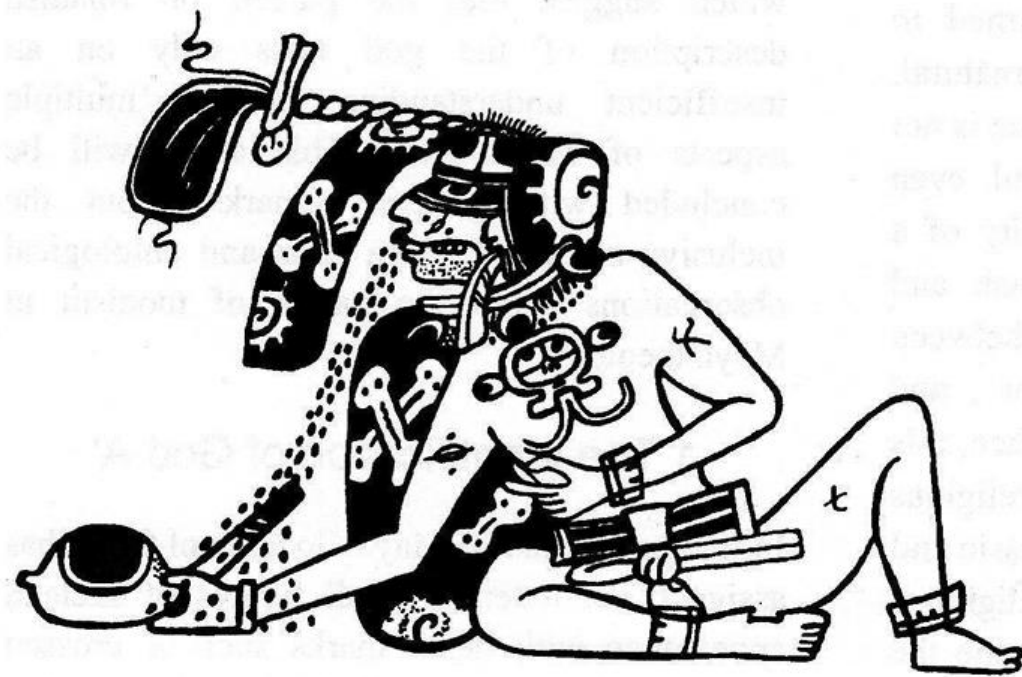
WHO IS AKAN?

A deity of the ancient Maya, a patron to the site of Waka'

Akan



Photo by Juan Carlos Pérez Calderon



Vomiting God A' (Schellas Gods designation for Akan) with an enema syringe. Depicted a Late Classic polychrome vase from Naranjo (Pearman 60, Drawing by Nikolai Grube) (Grube 2004, Stone and Zender 2011on)



Akan smoking a cigar, depicted on an incised cache vessel. Early Classic (Stone and Zender 2011)



Akan decapitates himself, Early Classic painted vase (Grube 2004; Stone and Zender 2011)



Photo by Juan Carlos Pérez Calderon

Why is a little
statue of a
drunk god so
important?

Goals

- Explore the nature of the Akan figurine in the context of an effigial figure, and to contextualize this nature in the sphere of ritual and spiritual themes present with the Classic Maya (more specifically at Waka').
- Discuss the importance of indigenous worldview in archaeology where they are available, and acknowledge the need for decolonized thought, analysis, and action

Ontological Theory

- Discussing these ideas and themes within a scope of ontological theory
- People in different places, times, and cultures think about how the world works in a different way
- It is important to consider and make space for non-western and indigenous perspectives in the field of archaeology

on-tol-o-gy

noun

1. The branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being

Here is where a little Geoscience comes in!

- Caves and cavestones are really important to the Maya
- Constructed and believed in a living, animated sacred landscape
- It is only a guess that this figurine is made of “cavestone”
 - PXRF will determine mineral composition WITHOUT damaging
 - What is a cavestone (geologically speaking? And what is the red substance on the surface of the object?)

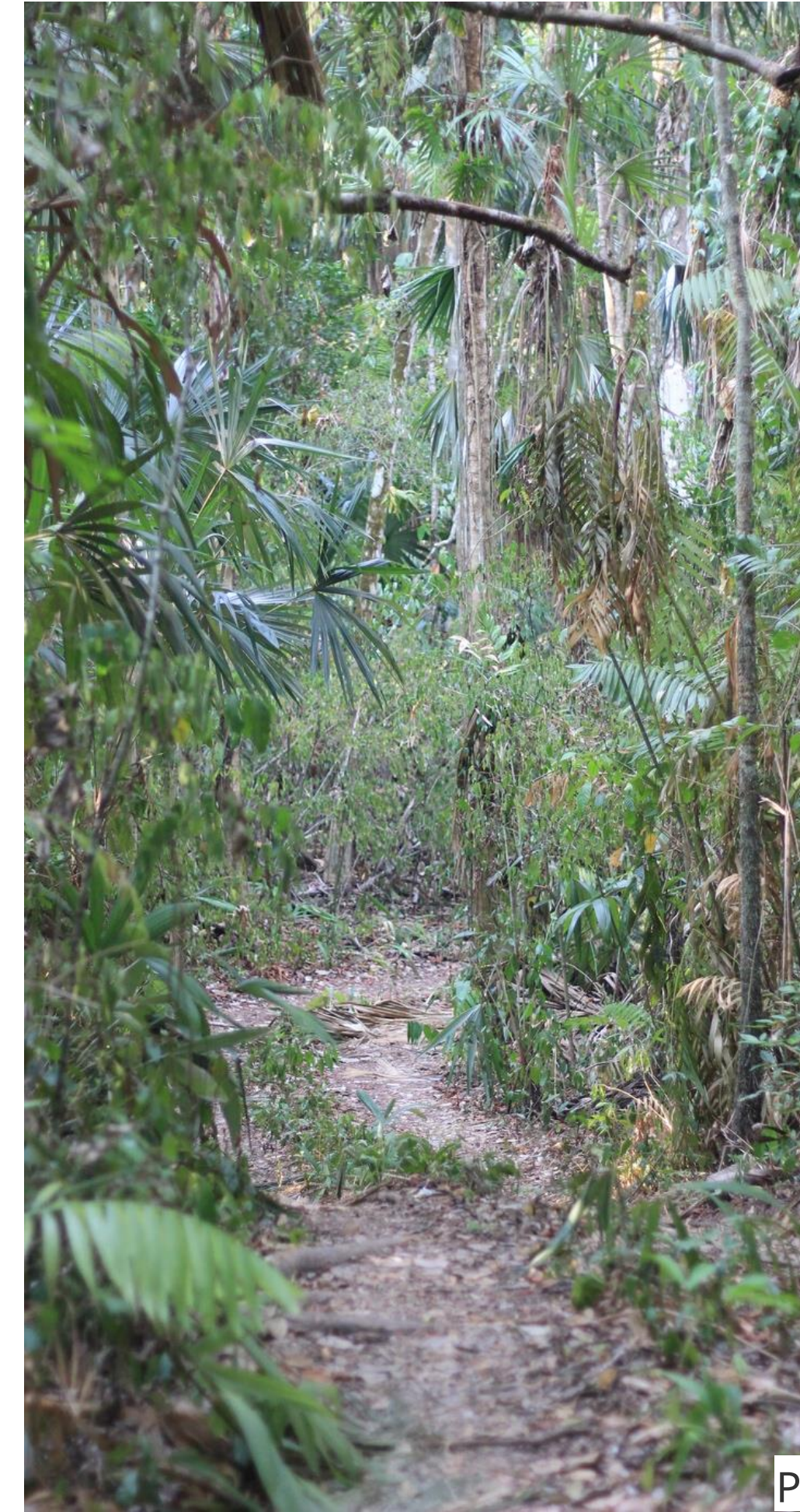


Photo by Des Smith

Results

- A bit of a curveball

- Goal:
 - Identify for certain the surficial treatment
 - Identify composition of the figurine
- Curveball:
 - In this context, this test isn't very effective
 - Why?

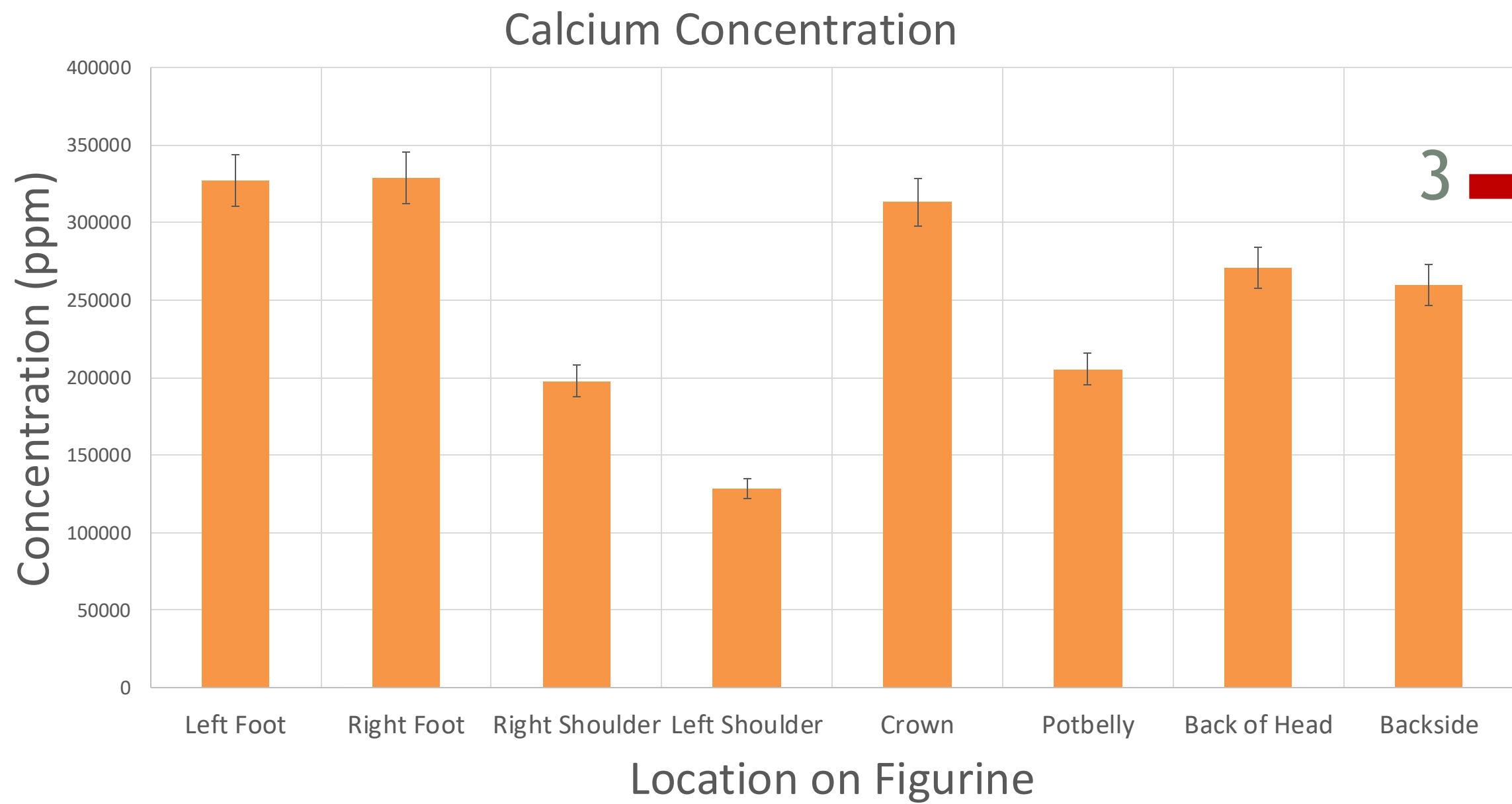


Photo by Juan Carlos Pérez Calderon

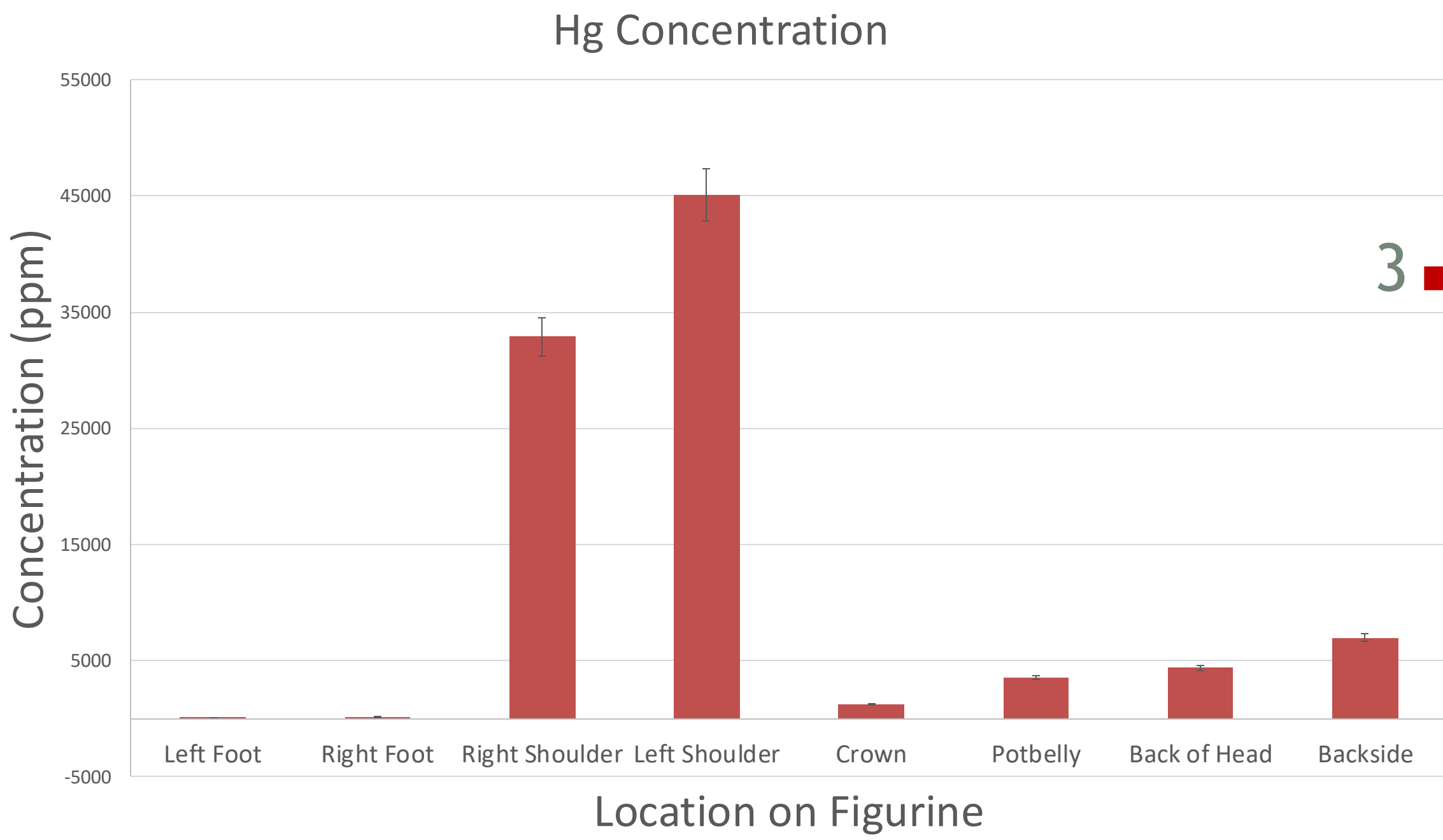


Photo by Juan Carlos Pérez Calderon

Conclusions

1. Based on ethnographic and archaeological information, it can be concluded that with the onset of agriculture and sedentary life, the significance of the doll increased. During the Classic period, the highest number of polychrome figurines was found in the Yucatán Peninsula, particularly in the region of the Maya. The figurines found in the region of the Maya are characterized by their polychrome color and their representation of human figures. The figurines found in the region of the Maya are characterized by their polychrome color and their representation of human figures. The figurines found in the region of the Maya are characterized by their polychrome color and their representation of human figures.
2. The figurine found in the region of the Maya is a representation of the human figure, which is a common motif in Maya art. The figurine is a small, polychrome object, which is a common motif in Maya art. The figurine is a small, polychrome object, which is a common motif in Maya art.
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4. It is possible for the figurine to be a speleothem, removed from the cave via human action due to the appearance of the figurine, however, the data collected in this research neither supports nor disproves this idea.

Why is this work important?

A Special Thanks



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Thank You!

Questions?