OLMEC
THE ORIGINS OF ANCIENT MEXICAN CIVILIZATION

THURSDAY–FRIDAY,
NOVEMBER 20–21, 2008
AT&T EXECUTIVE EDUCATION AND CONFERENCE CENTER AUDITORIUM
MLK & UNIVERSITY AVENUE
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

All events are free and open to the public, no registration required.
Simultaneous translation provided at events held in Spanish.

For more information, contact the Mexican Center at
mexctr@uts.cc.utexas.edu or 512.232.2423
or visit http://www.utexas.edu/cola/insts/llilas/conferences/olmec/index/.

SPONSORED BY THE MEXICAN CENTER,
TERESA LOZANO LONG INSTITUTE OF LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES, COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN, JANE SIBLEY, TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY–SAN MARCOS, AND DAVID SCHELE
In November 2008, the Mexican Center of the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies receives as a gift from the Universidad Veracruzana in Mexico a full-scale stone reproduction of an Olmec colossal head, San Lorenzo Monument 1 “El Rey.” It is considered a signature piece of pre-Columbian Olmec culture and a world-class art object that represents New World civilization as emblematically as the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacán or the ruins of Machu Picchu. Its arrival at the University of Texas presents an opportune moment for LLILAS to host a major conference that focuses on the monuments and symbolism of the ancient Olmec, as well as on their place within the primary civilizations of both the Old and New Worlds.

In contrast to a public image that identifies the Olmec (1500–400 BCE) as merely an enigmatic people who sculpted colossal stone heads of unknown gods and carved exquisite jade figurines, current scholarship recognizes Olmec culture as the foundation of civilization in Mesoamerica. Unquestionably, the Olmec not only carved magnificent monolithic public monuments, but they also originated the first inter-Mesoamerican art style. Recent discoveries in the state of Veracruz, Mexico, strongly suggest that the Olmec even may have independently invented a system of hieroglyphic writing around 1000 BCE.

The impetus for this symposium is the recognition of ritual meaning and the presentation of archaeological and iconographic interpretations within the sculptural and symbolic corpus of the Mesoamerican Middle and Late Formative Periods. Papers presented in the symposium propose interpretations of archaeological materials as well as specific symbols, and identify specific ritual costumes and accoutrements within Olmec-style imagery in several mediums. Evidence is also presented of interaction between the Olmec heartland and other sites during the same period. We hope that the symposium will provide a useful forum for the discussion of the role of ritual and symbolism as a unifying ideology within the diverse political geography of the Mesoamerican Formative Period. Many of the symposium papers concentrate on iconographic data from the Olmec heartland, while others focus on objects created in the Olmec style from other Mesoamerican geographical areas.
SYMPOSIUM 2008

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Presentations will be in English and Spanish.
Simultaneous translation provided for sessions conducted in Spanish.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20

9:00–9:30 WELCOME
Bryan Roberts, Director, LLILAS, UT Austin
David Stuart, Director, Mesoamerica Center, UT Austin
F. Kent Reilly III, Director, Center for the Arts and Symbolism of Ancient America, Texas State University–San Marcos

9:30–10:20 SESSION I
La Blanca in the Olmec World
Julia Guernsey, Associate Professor, Department of Art and Art History, UT Austin (Michael Love, coauthor)

10:20–10:35 Coffee Break

10:40–11:30 SESSION II
Olmec Thrones: Seats of Power and Sources of Political Patronage
Ann Cyphers, Director, San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán Archaeological Project, and Senior Research Scientist, Instituto de Investigaciones Arqueológicas, UNAM

11:30–1:00 Lunch
SESSION III

Los monumentos de La Merced, Veracruz y el Bloque Labrado de El Cascajal

María del Carmen Rodríguez Martínez, Researcher, Instituto de Antropología e Historia (INAH), Veracruz

Los orígenes del culto a la montaña sagrada, manantiales, cuerpos de agua y el juego de pelota en El Manat

Ponciano Ortiz Ceballos, Researcher, Instituto de Antropología, Universidad Veracruzana

SESSION IV

Olmec-inspired Influences on the Nature of Early Maya Divine Kingship

Virginia Fields, Curator of Pre-Columbian Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

SESSION Break

SESSION V

A Glimpse at Olmec Rituals at La Venta, Tabasco

Rebecca González Lauck, Project Director, La Venta Archaeological Project, Instituto de Antropología e Historia (INAH), Tabasco

SESSION VI

Olmec and the Middle Formative Ceremonial Complex on the Río Balsas Frontier

F. Kent Reilly III, Director, Center for the Arts and Symbolism of Ancient America, Texas State University–San Marcos

Friday, November 21

9:00–9:30 WELCOME

Steve Bourget, Associate Professor, Department of Art and Art History, UT Austin

9:30–10:20 SESSION VII

Flesh of God: Maize and the Consolidation of Power in Mesoamerica

David Freidel, Professor of Archaeology, Washington University in St. Louis

10:20–11:10 SESSION VIII

Votive Axes and Celts in Formative Mesoamerica

John Clark, Director, New World Archaeological Foundation, Brigham Young University

11:10–11:25 COFFEE BREAK

11:30–12:20 SESSION IX

Símbolos de poder entre los Olmecas: la escultura monumental

Sara Ladrón de Guevara, Director, Museo de Antropología de Xalapa, Universidad Veracruzana

12:20–12:30 CLOSING REMARKS

F. Kent Reilly III, Director, Center for the Arts and Symbolism of Ancient America, Texas State University–San Marcos
JOHN E. CLARK

John E. Clark has conducted research in southern Mexico for the past thirty-one years, with particular attention to Formative societies in Chiapas and their development. His interest in stone tools and their functions goes back even further. He received B.S. and M.A. degrees from Brigham Young University and a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. None of his mentors should be blamed for his career path or activities. For the past two decades, he has been director of the New World Archaeological Foundation with headquarters in Chiapas, Mexico. His current research focus is the origins of hereditary social inequality among the earliest villagers of proto-Mesoamerica. Of equal interest are subsequent developments among the Olmec of cities, complex government, and the rituals and beliefs that went along with them, as most clearly evident in their art and ritual practices.

ANN CYPHERS

Ann Cyphers is Senior Research Scientist at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) and Research Associate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She specializes in Formative period archaeology of Mesoamerica, with particular interest in the central Mexican highlands and Gulf Coast regions. Her research has concentrated on ceramic classification and chronologies, figurine analyses, Olmec settlement pattern studies, iconographic and contextual analysis of monumental art, domestic spaces, and heritage preservation. She has performed fieldwork in the Midwest, as well as in the Mexican states of Morelos and Veracruz, and has conducted research at the San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán Archaeological Project since 1990.

VIRGINIA FIELDS

A specialist in early Mesoamerican art and archaeology with a Ph.D. in Latin American Studies from the University of Texas at Austin, Virginia Fields joined the staff of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1989 as its first curator of pre-Columbian art. She has taught pre-Columbian and Native American art history at UCSB, UCLA, and other California state universities. At LACMA, she co-curated the nationally touring exhibitions Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period (1994–95), The Road to Aztlan: Art from a Mythic Homeland (2001), and Lords of
David Freidel is Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis. He studies the emergence and florescence of government institutions among the lowland Maya of southeastern Mexico and Central America. He has several publications and has worked on major archaeological projects in Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico. Currently, he is directing long-term research at the royal city of El Perú, ancient Waka’, in northwestern Petén, Guatemala. His interests include material symbol-systems and religion, monumental architecture, political economy, dynastic history, and warfare. At a broader level, he is interested in the agency of divine rulers in the evolution of civilization in southeastern Mesoamerica. Dr. Freidel obtained a B.A. (1968) and a Ph.D. (1976) in anthropology from Harvard University.

Rebecca González Lauck is an archaeologist at the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Tabasco. She has worked at the Olmec site of La Venta intermittently since 1984, undertaking archaeological research as well as carrying out protection and conservation programs at the site and its associated museum. She studied anthropology at Tulane University (B.A.) and the University of California, Berkeley (M.A. and Ph.D.). She also has worked on archaeological projects in Louisiana, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Bolivia, as well as in various parts of Mexico.

Julia Guernsey is Associate Professor in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research and publications focus on the Middle and Late Preclassic periods in ancient Mesoamerica, in particular on sculptural expressions of rulership during this time, and she is project iconographer for the La Blanca Archaeological Project. Her most recent research appears in her book Ritual and Power in Stone: The Performance of Rulership in Mesoamerican Izapan-Style Art (University of Texas Press, 2006), the journals Antiquity and Ancient America, the Memorias de la Segunda Mesa Redonda Olmeca, and the proceedings of the annual Simposio de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala.

Sara Ladrón de Guevara is Director of the Museo de Antropología in Xalapa, Veracruz. She has taught at the Universidad Veracruzana and the Universidad de Guadalajara, and has been a visiting professor at Smith College and the Sorbonne. Ladrón de Guevara has participated in numerous archaeological projects in both Mexico and Europe, with a special emphasis on the iconography and symbolism of Mesoamerica. She has published more than sixty texts, among them *Imagen y pensamiento en El Tajín* and *Diseños precolombinos de Veracruz*. She holds a B.A. in anthropology from the Universidad Veracruzana, an M.A. from the Sorbonne, and a Ph.D. from UNAM, also in anthropology.

Michael Love is Associate Professor of Anthropology at California State University, Northridge. He is Director of the La Blanca Archaeological Project, and his research focuses on Middle and Late Preclassic Mesoamerican household economy and ritual along the Pacific Coast of Mesoamerica. His most recent research appears in Antiquity and the Journal of Archaeological Research, the Memorias de la Segunda Mesa Redonda Olmeca, the proceedings of the annual Simposio de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala, and in his New World Archaeological Foundation monograph on Early Complex Society in Pacific Guatemala: Settlements and Chronology of the Río Naranjo, Guatemala (2002).

Ponciano Ortíz is a full-time researcher at the Instituto de Antropología at the Universidad Veracruzana, where he received an M.A. in anthropology in 1975. He has carried out archaeological investigations at several sites on the Gulf Coast, in Chiapas, and on the coastal plain of Belize. Currently he codirects the Manati Archaeological Project, supported by the Instituto de Antropología e Historia (INAH) of Mexico. The project also has received support from the National Geographic Society and the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection of Harvard University. His research interest is the archaeology of Mesoamerica, with an emphasis on the study of Olmec culture and the dynamics of change among established societies in the Formative period on the Gulf Coast.

F. Kent Reilly III is Director of the Center for the Arts and Symbolism of Ancient America at Texas State University–San Marcos, where he has taught since 1994. He is
a graduate of LLILAS at UT Austin, where he received both his M.A. and Ph.D. He received his B.A. from the University of West Florida. Reilly has written extensively on Mesoamerica in such publications as *The Olmec World: Ritual and Rulership*; his forthcoming book, *Visions to Another Realm: Art, Shamanism, and Political Power in the Olmec World* (with James Garber), will be published by the University of Texas Press. He has curated or co-curated exhibitions on the ancient Americas at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Princeton University Art Museum, among others. His research interest is the role of shamanism and rituals of rulership in Olmec society.

**MARÍA DEL CARMEN RODRÍGUEZ MARTÍNEZ**

María del Carmen Rodríguez is a full-time investigator at INAH Veracruz. She graduated in anthropology from the Universidad Veracruzana. She has collaborated on archaeological projects at Tula, the Papoloapan River basin in Oaxaca, and Las Higueras, Veracruz. She also was responsible for the maintenance and conservation of the archaeological zone of Castillo de Teayo in Veracruz. Currently, she codirects, with Ponciano Ortíz, the Manatí Archaeological Project in southern Veracruz. Her research interest is the study of early civilizations along the Gulf Coast, particularly the development of the Olmec culture in southern Veracruz.