



Palma

On display

Title/Description: Palma

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Basalt

Measurements: h. 280 x w. 92 x d. 150 mm

Accession Number: 819

Historic Period: Post-Classic period (AD 900-1520)

Production Place: El Tajin, Mesoamerica, Mexico, The Americas, Veracruz

Credit Line: Purchased with support from the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Art Trust, 1982

Judging from Classic period depictions of ballplayers, *palmas* may have served a similar role to *hachas* as attachments to *yugos*. It has been assumed that the curved indentation at the base of these sculptures was intended to secure them on *ayugo* or other supporting structure. The name *palma* derives from the earliest examples found, which were in the shape of palm fronds; perhaps these stone objects imitate actual palm fronds formerly worn in the leather belts (see Leyenaar and Parsons, 1988: nos. 67-82; Wilkerson, 1990: nos. 74'7)-

Most ballgame objects date to the Classic period (ad 300-900), but a few examples are known from the Postclassic period. This figure, illustrated in Ford (1964 : cat. 13), is a rare piece, not only for its stylistic attributes, which would suggest a Postclassic date, but also for the composition, consisting of a figure, now armless, shown with the right leg folded under the body and the left knee bent. The head appears to have been re-attached to the body in modern times.

Entry taken from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection 3 volume catalogue, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997).

Provenance

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from John A. Stokes Jnr., New York, on the advice of Robert Sainsbury in 1982 out of funds provided by the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Art Trust.
