A000-AM,C-Guatemala-Palenque-Ball Player with Jaguar Ears- Ceramic Whistle- Early Classic-400-700 CE



Fig. 1. Guatemala-Ball Player with Jaguar Ears- Ceramic Whistle-Early Classic-400-700 CE

**Case no.: 14**

**Accession Number:**

**Formal Label:** Guatemala-Ball Player with Jaguar Ears- Ceramic Whistle- Early Classic-400-700 CE

**Display Description:**

This ceramic depicts a standing Mayan Ball Game player, wearing a cap attached to over-sized jaguar ears that may indicate his team or status. Since the jaguar was associated with warriors and hunters, those who excelled in hunting and warfare often adorned themselves with jaguar pelts, or ears and were regarded as possessing feline souls (Saunders 1998: 26). This player is wearing a traditional loincloth tied in front. He has ear spools indicating his prominence, probably as a champion or as an official. He is posed with hands resting on his thighs, and his mouth is persed as though he is whistling for a time-out on the field, and this may have been the function of a whistle such as this.

According to the Popul Vuh, the Mayan Ball Game originated ca 1,000 BCE among the Quinche Maya and their rulers. Metaphorically, the game re-enacts the conflict between the dualistic forces of darkness and light, and it was the twin brothers, Hun Hunaphu and Xbalanque, who played ball when they were on Earth. After the game, Hunaphu was decapitated, and from his decapitated trunk, blood flowed as a tangle of snakes, a symbol of eternity since snakes regularly shed their skins and assume new life. This scene is depicted in reliefs on the walls of ball game courts, such as the most famous example in Chichen Itza in Mexico.

**LC Classification:** [F1445.A63](http://library.mit.edu/F/AFIBQ5MAXK1BUXP96EYDJ73R4MVRM86JQNF25HS91Y4G4S6PS6-01045?func=item-global&doc_library=MIT01&doc_number=001249822&year=&volume=&sub_library=HUM)

**Date or Time Horizon:** Early Classic-400-700 CE, possibly Palenque or Copan.

**Geographical Area:** Palenque

**Map:**

**GPS coordinates:** [17°29′2.32″N92°2′46.78″W](https://tools.wmflabs.org/geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Palenque&params=17_29_2.32_N_92_2_46.78_W_type:landmark)

**Cultural Affiliation:**

**Medium:** ceramic

**Dimensions:** H 5.5 in.

**Weight:**

**Condition: original;** good mineral deposits.

**Provenance:** Ex Toledo estate.

**Discussion:**

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**Appendix: AP** 3.