



Figure kneeling on one knee

Not on display**Title/Description:** Figure kneeling on one knee**Object Type:** Figure**Materials:** Earthenware, Paint**Measurements:** h. 264 x w. 170 x d. 160 mm**Accession Number:** 851**Historic Period:** Proto-Classic period (200 BC-AD 300)**Production Place:** Mesoamerica, Mexico, Nayarit, The Americas**School/Style:** Chinesco style**Credit Line:** Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1983

'Chinesco' (or 'Chinesca') is a sub style of Nayarit sculpture associated with the southern part of the state. The name is based on what was considered a Chinese appearance of the figures, particularly the eyes. Among the most subtly modelled of the West Mexican ceramics, a number of these works have been associated with a specific master or school (Furst, 1978: 25). This example of a hollow figure has the attributes of a Type C figure as discussed by von Winning (1974a: 69-71) and Gallagher (1983: 107-8), including a triangular rounded head with asymmetrical face painting, and thin, ropey arms which contrast with thick, heavy legs. The figure is shown with the left leg folded under and the right knee raised, with the left hand almost 'fused' to the right knee (a characteristic of this type). The eyes are widely spaced, and the thin eyebrows are painted in black. Diagonal lines in black and white paint are included on the cheeks. This female figure is shown with a cache-sexe painted with a cross-hatched pattern and two circles.

The significance of the position of this figure is unclear. Although there are indications of a certain amount of trade and perhaps other kinds of exchange between West Mexico and Central Mexico before the Classic period, the iconographic traditions of these region seem different from what is known from the rest of Mesoamerica. The extent to which the inhabitants of West Mexico engaged in the same sort of large-scale civic activities which were common in Central Mexico during this period is currently being re-evaluated (Weigand, 1985). While the interpretation of these ceramic figures as images of everyday life is possibly too simple (see UEA 866), it is difficult to state with any certainty the meaning of specific gestures.

Joanne Pillsbury and Ted. J. J. Leyenaar in Steven Hooper (ed.). 1997. Catalogue to the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection. University of East Anglia.
