



Ceremonial Mace Head

Date

ca. 1-500

Primary Maker

Greater Nicoya

Medium

limestone

Description

Mace heads have been called “art-weapons” and “art-tools” because they channeled symbolic information via a utilitarian form. Very common in high status graves, they

are tied to the emergence of a ruling class dependent upon agricultural intensification and territorial land claims. The anthropomorphic face of this mace head suggests characteristics of both a human and a monkey, and it may represent a shaman in the process of transformation from human to spirit form. It also shows a very strong similarity to the jaguar mace head, which suggests that they were made by the same artist or were part of the same grave. Together, they demonstrate a social transition during this time period, in which a greater reliance upon powerful people rather than dependence on the natural world determined the prosperity of the group.

Dimensions

Overall: 4 x 3 7/8 x 4 7/8 in. (10.2 x 9.8 x 12.4 cm)