

# The Williams enigmolith

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An *Oopart* (Out Of Place ARTifact) is a term applied to dozens of prehistoric objects found in various places around the world that, given their level of technology, are completely at odds with their determined age based on physical, chemical, and/or geological evidence. Ooparts often are frustrating to conventional scientists and a delight to adventurous investigators and individuals interested in alternative scientific theories.

In 1998, electrical engineer John J. Williams discovered what looked like an electrical connector sticking up out of the ground. He began digging and found that the three-pronged plug was embedded in a small rock.

According to Williams, the curious stone was unearthed during an excursion in a rural location in North America, far from human settlements, industrial complexes, airports, factories, and electronic or nuclear plants. While it may hurt the credibility of his discovery, Williams refuses to give the exact location of his find, for fear that the site might be plundered of other mysterious relics.

Known as the "Enigmolith" (a combination of the words enigma and monolith) or "Petradox," the device presents the undeniable appearance of an electronic component embedded in a naturally formed, solid granite stone composed of quartz and feldspar (including very small percentages of mica.)



**CONCRETE EVIDENCE?** A stone embedded with a three-pronged plug could be either evidence for a technologically advanced ancient civilization or a hoax. COURTESY OF JOHN J. WILLIAMS

Due to the secrecy surrounding the find, its \$500,000 price tag, and an extraterrestrial theory surrounding the object, many from the scientific community have categorized the Enigmolith as a hoax manufactured solely for the fame and fortune of its owner.

However, Williams explains that his unusual stone is available to any researcher for analysis. Scientists have so far shied away from testing the rock, despite the open invitation.

According to Williams, who has consulted an engineer and geologist to examine the specimen, the electronic component embedded in the granite reveals no trace of having been glued or welded in any form

known; it is clear that the object already existed at the time of the formation of the rock.

After the stone was found, geological analysis found it to be about 100,000 years old—a technical impossibility according to conventional understanding of mankind's technological development.

The instrument caught in the Petradox has been compared by some investigators to an electronic XLR connector or similar component. It presents a weak magnetic attraction, and ohm meter readings reveal that it has a strength approaching that of an open circuit.

The three-pronged plug is held by a matrix of a thus-far indeterminate

origin. The 0.3-inch diameter piece does not appear to be manufactured out of wood, plastic, rubber, metal, or some other recognizable material.

While Williams forbids the specimen from being broken open, he has employed a powerful X-ray, revealing that the matrix component extends into an opaque internal structure within the stone.

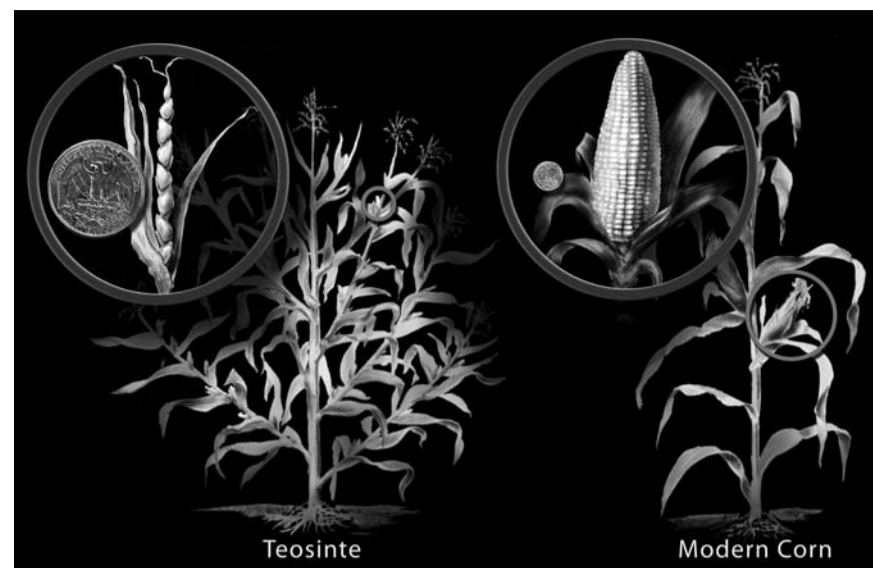
While skeptics believe it to be a sham, Williams is convinced that he has unearthed a genuine relic of either ancient manmade or alien technology, and is eager to have scientists authenticate it. However, Williams insists that he be present during analysis, the rock remains unharmed, and that he does not have to pay for the research involved.

Some believe that scientists distance themselves from the specimen because they are afraid of what they might discover. While scientific analysis could confirm it as an elaborate hoax, it might also radically change our understanding of human history.

If the specimen is determined to be genuine, researchers would also have to consider its design. Why would such a component be embedded in a rock? What purpose would such an object serve?

Williams believes that the location of his stone offers further evidence of a bygone civilization or extraterrestrial evidence. He is currently seeking a team of open-minded investigators to thoroughly examine the site.

More information and photos can be found at: [www.tsc-global.com/petradox.htm](http://www.tsc-global.com/petradox.htm)



**CULTIVATING KERNELS:** Indigenous peoples living in the lowland areas of southwestern Mexico may have cultivated corn or maize more than 8,700 years ago, according to new research. NICOLLE RAGER FULLER/NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

## Wild grass became maize crop more than 8,700 years ago

National Science Foundation

The earliest physical evidence for domesticated maize, what some cultures call corn, dates to at least 8,700 calendar years ago, and it was probably domesticated by indigenous peoples in the lowland areas of southwestern Mexico, not the highland areas.

This new evidence comes from an international team of researchers, who report the findings in two companion papers in last week's Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. They place maize domestication in Mexico about 1,500 years earlier than previously documented there, and 1,200 years earlier than the next earliest dated evidence for maize in Panama.

"Our primary goal was to document the early history of maize domestication in the homeland of its wild ancestor," said Anthony Ranere, Department of Anthropology at Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa. He acknowledged the timelines make a good deal of sense because the wild ancestor of maize is native to the regions of southwestern Mexico where the team worked, and these regions had not been previously explored by archaeologists.

Researchers focused on the Xihuatoxtla Shelter in an area of the Balsas Valley that is home to a large, wild grass called Balsas teosinte that molecular biologists recently identified as the ancestor of maize. The shelter contained early maize and squash remains as well as ancient stone tools used to grind and mill the plants.

"We found the remains of maize and squash in many contexts from the earliest occupation levels," said Dolores Piperno, senior scientist and curator of archaeobotany and South American archaeology for the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. "This indicates these two crops were being routinely consumed nearly 9,000 years ago."

Ranere and Piperno discuss both the archaeological context and botanical evidence for maize and squash domestication in the papers published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Ranere is the first author of the archaeological paper, while Piperno is the first author of the botanical paper.

Both papers result from work by the same five investigators, including Irene Holst, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, Panama; Jose Iriarte, University of Exeter, U.K.; and Ruth Dickau, Temple University. The research is partially funded by the National Science Foundation.

"Finding early human settlements in this part of Mexico is also very important, as it shows people were becoming well adapted to tropical forest settings early on," said Piperno. The findings suggest domestication of maize in Mexico's lowland areas as opposed to highland areas as has long been thought.

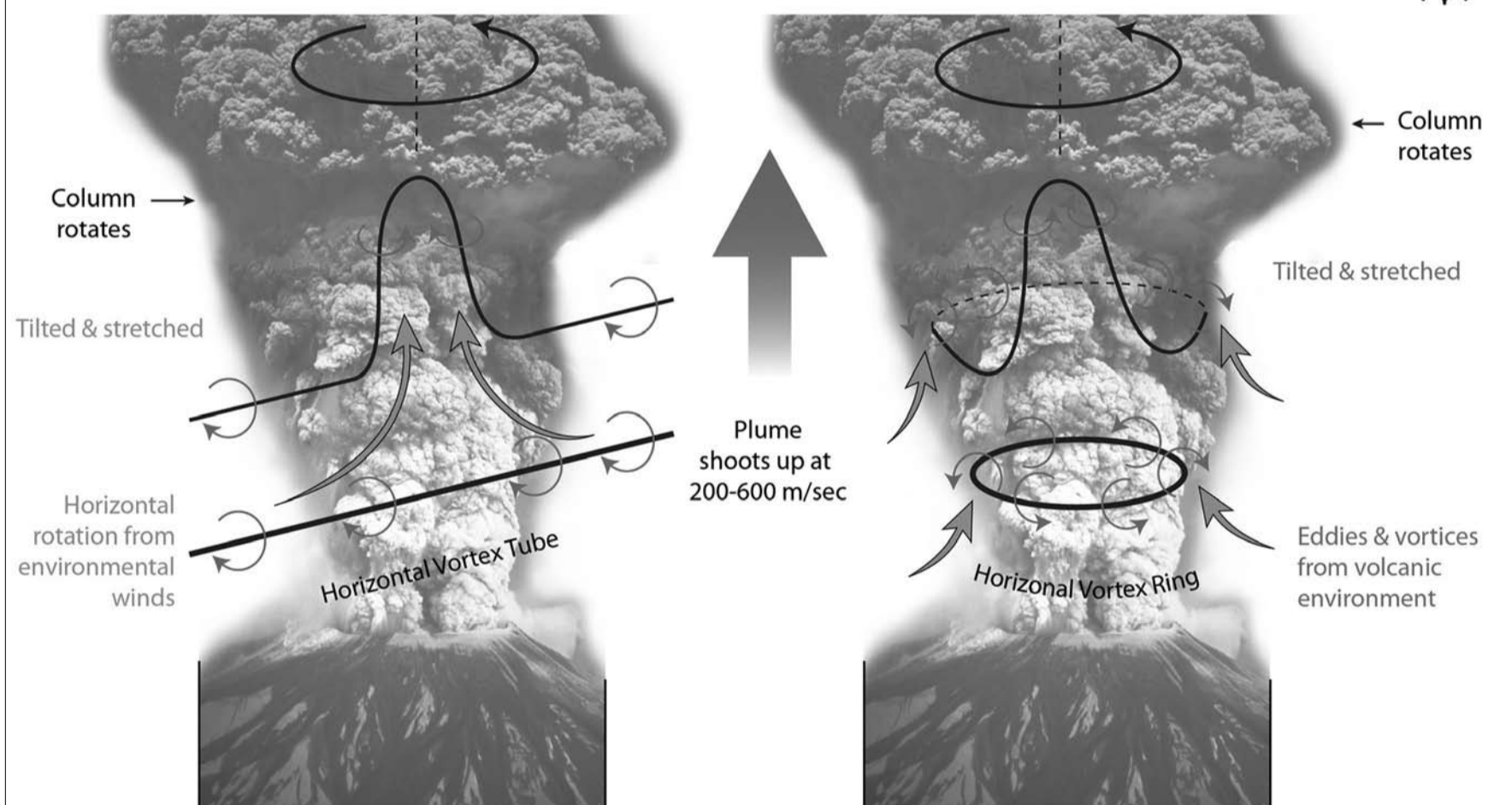
The search for maize origins in the 1950s through the 1970s focused on arid or semi-arid regions in the Mexican highlands where preservation of dried-out plant remains was common. Not surprisingly, the earliest maize remains in the form of maize cobs and kernels came from highland caves and rock shelters.

But search locations shifted when molecular biologists began to study where the ancestor of maize, teosinte, grows today and when researchers began using phytoliths and starch grains to identify maize and other plant species, both domesticated and wild, in the 1990s. Starch grains and phytoliths are microscopic particles that occur in leaf, stems, and roots of many plants and, unlike whole seeds and roots, are well preserved in tropical forest environments, such as those in lowland areas of Mexico and Panama.

Even more, phytolith and starch grain evidence allowed researchers to trace the dispersal of maize as a domesticated crop from its origin in or around the Balsas Valley to Panama by 7,600 years ago and shortly thereafter to Colombia and Ecuador, and to Uruguay by 4,600 years ago.

The researchers acknowledge, however, that maize already appears to have been domesticated in the earliest occupation of the Xihuatoxtla Shelter. "We did not find evidence for the earliest stages in the domestication process," said Ranere. "We need to find more ancient deposits in order to document the beginning of the process."

### 2 MECHANISMS FOR GENERATING ROTATION IN A VOLCANIC PLUME



**TELLING TWISTER:** Two mechanisms for generating rotation in a volcanic plume. ZINA DERETSKY, NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION, AFTER CHAKRABORTY ET AL., VOLCANIC MESOCYCCLONES, NATURE, 3/26/09

## Tornado-like rotation is key to understanding volcanic plumes

Sea captain's historic report, modern photographs lead scientists to new conclusions

National Science Foundation

A 200-year-old report by a sea captain and photographs of the 2008 eruption of Mount Chaiten are helping scientists better understand strong volcanic plumes.

In a paper published last week in the journal *Nature*, the scientists show that the spontaneous formation of a "volcanic mesocyclone"—a rotating, column-shaped vortex—causes the volcanic plume to rotate on its axis.

The rotation, in turn, triggers a sheath of lightning and creates waterspouts or dust devils. The origins of these volcanic phenomena were previously unexplained.

"These results solve a long-standing mystery about the relationship between volcanic plumes and associated tornadoes, waterspouts, and lightning, showing for the first time that rotation of a volcanic plume may be the primary cause of these

effects," said Sonia Esperanca, program director in the National Science Foundation's (NSF) geosciences directorate.

**'What happens in tornadic thunderstorms is analogous to what happens in strong volcanic plumes.'**

—Pinaki Chakraborty, computational scientist and engineer at the University of Illinois

The research is supported by NSF, via three directorates: geosciences, mathematical and physical sciences, and engineering.

"Rotation is an essential element of a strong volcanic plume," said Pinaki Chakraborty, a computational scientist and engineer at the University of Illinois and the paper's lead author. "By taking into account the rotation, we can better predict the effects of volcanic eruptions."

In 2008, a photograph of the Mount Chaiten eruption in south-

ern Chile showed what appeared to be a volcanic plume wrapped in a sheath of lightning.

A search for references to other occurrences of lightning sheaths led Chakraborty, mechanical engineer Gustavo Gioia, and geologist Susan Kieffer to an obscure paper by a sea captain, published in 1811.

In that paper, the sea captain reported his observations of a volcanic vent that emerged from the sea in the Azores archipelago and formed a large volcanic plume.

According to the captain, the plume rotated on the water "like an [sic] horizontal wheel" and was accompanied by continuous "flashes of lightning" and a "quantity of waterspouts."

This conjunction of rotation, lightning, and waterspouts (or dust devils on land) is characteristic of a familiar meteorological phenomenon seemingly unrelated to volcanic plumes: a tornadic thunderstorm.

The same process that creates a mesocyclone in a tornadic thunderstorm also creates a volcanic mesocyclone in a strong volcanic plume, Chakraborty said. "What happens in tornadic thunderstorms is analogous to what happens in strong volcanic plumes."

A strong volcanic plume consists of a vertical column of hot gases

and dust topped with a horizontal "umbrella." A volcanic mesocyclone sets the entire plume rotating on its axis.

The mesocyclone spawns waterspouts or dust devils, and groups the electric charges in the plume to form a sheath of lightning, as was so prominently displayed in the eruption of Mount Chaiten.

On June 15, 1991, the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines was recorded by a satellite snapping hourly images. The images show that the edge of Pinatubo's umbrella was rotating about its center, consistent with the presence of a volcanic mesocyclone, say the scientists.

Satellite images of future volcanic plumes taken at intervals of a few minutes would make it possible to trace the evolution of umbrellas in detail, Gioia said.

In addition, some of the tools commonly used in the study of thunderstorms could be deployed for the study of volcanic eruptions.

"The structure and dynamics of volcanic mesocyclones, as well as the presence of lightning sheaths, might be verified with Doppler radar and lightning mapping arrays, two technologies that have been scarcely used in volcanology," Gioia said.

## Venice seaport eyes algae to fuel energy needs

ROME (Reuters)—Venice's seaport plans to become self-sufficient in its energy needs by building a power plant fueled by algae, in what would be the first facility of its kind in Italy, the port authority said.

The plant will be operative in two years and produce 40 megawatts of electricity, Venice's port authority said, adding that an emissions-free energy source would help preserve the historic lagoon city's delicate ecological balance.

The plant—only the third of its kind being planned in Europe—will be built in collaboration with renewable energy services company Enalga at a cost of 200 million euros (\$272.6 million), a port authority spokeswoman said.

Several companies are in the race to find economic ways to turn

algae, one of the planet's oldest life forms, into vegetable oil that can be made into biodiesel and other fuels.

In Venice, the algae will be cultivated in laboratories and put in plastic cylinders where water, carbon dioxide, and sunshine trigger photosynthesis. The resulting biomass will be treated further to produce a fuel to turn turbines.

The carbon dioxide produced in the process is to be fed back to the algae, resulting in zero emissions from the plant.

The port needs about 7 megawatts to satisfy its energy needs, so the excess energy could be supplied to ships docked at the harbor, it said.

The port is also considering a photovoltaic park that could produce 32 megawatts of solar energy.