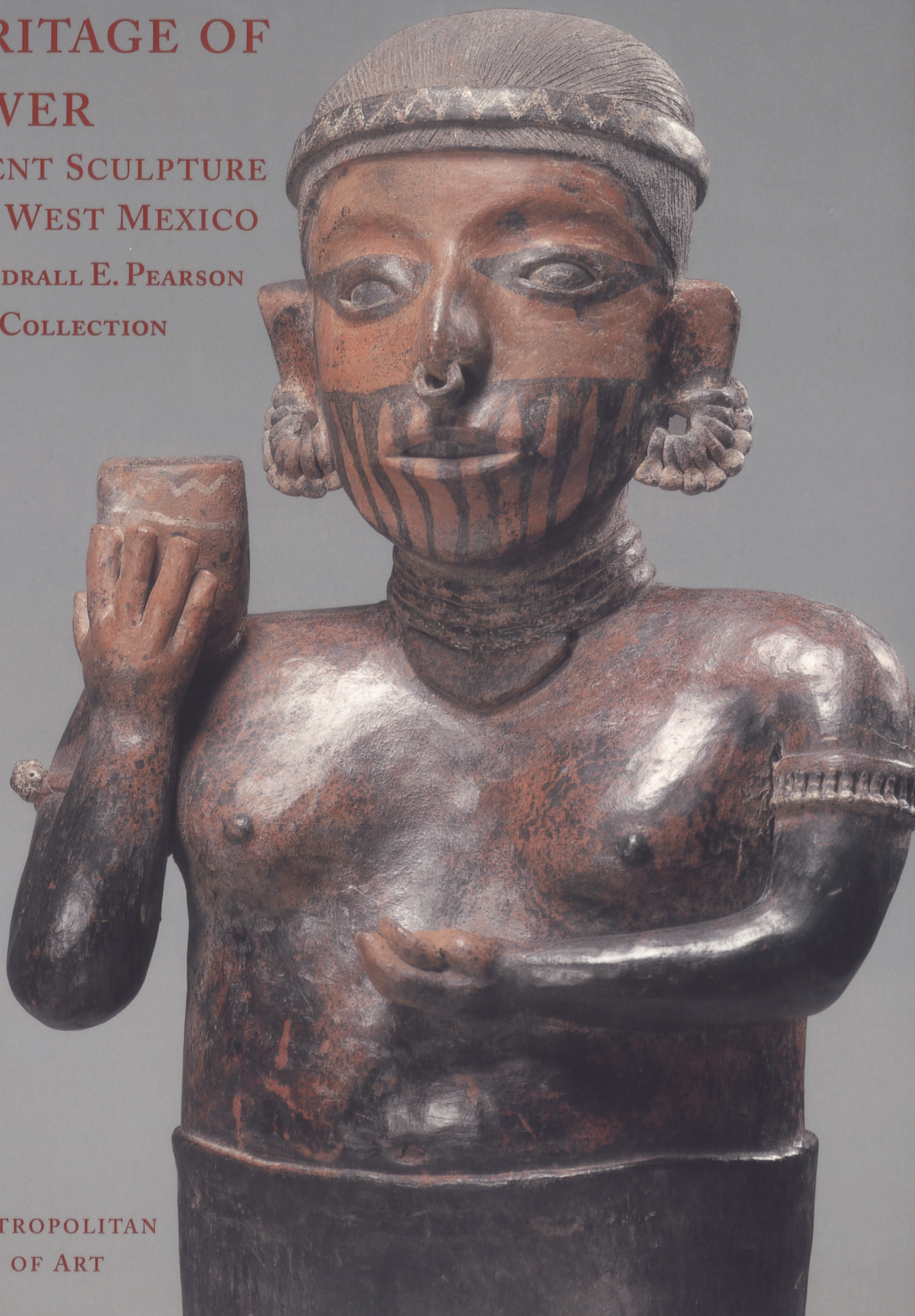


HERITAGE OF POWER

ANCIENT SCULPTURE
FROM WEST MEXICO

THE ANDRALL E. PEARSON
FAMILY COLLECTION



THE METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM OF ART

HERITAGE OF POWER

EDITORIAL



Map of West Mexico

HERITAGE OF POWER ANCIENT SCULPTURE FROM WEST MEXICO

THE ANDRALL E. PEARSON FAMILY COLLECTION

KRISTI BUTTERWICK

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK
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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

With the presentation of "Heritage of Power: Ancient Sculpture from West Mexico. The Andrall E. Pearson Family Collection," the Metropolitan Museum has the good fortune to display an ancient American art that is little known to the Museum's public. A personal pleasure for the family of Joanne and Andrall Pearson, who have long admired these two-thousand-year-old sculptures from the western part of Mexico, the exhibition affords visitors an opportunity to view these works of character and individuality by an early people of the Americas. Made during the centuries around the turn of the first millennium, they are primarily hollow, three-dimensional sculptures of fired clay (called ceramic by American archaeologists), overwhelmingly representational in theme. The sculptures speak to human concerns, such as the acknowledgment and celebration of powerful families. Warriors and ballplayers, musicians and dancers, and especially ancestors were honored. The founders of family dynasties are thought to be among the representations of male and female couples that are so prominent among the ceramic sculptures from Colima, Jalisco, and Nayarit. These three regions, in the highland basins of the impressive Sierra Madre Occidental in the west of the country, are named for the modern Mexican states in which the archaeological zones are located. At the time that the ceramic sculptures were made, and then deposited as valued objects with the revered deceased, the area enjoyed a particular era of prosperity, enabling the wealthy and powerful inhabitants to com-

memorate their activities. While the archaeological regions of Colima, Jalisco, and Nayarit share an underlying ideology, there are artistic differences and numerous styles among them, clearly visible in their ceramic sculpture. As Andrall Pearson notes in these pages, the realistic qualities of works from Colima first drew his attention and that of his wife, Joanne, but once engaged in looking, they grew to appreciate the creative invention of the sculptures from the other two West Mexican regions as well. An insistent stylization characterizes them all, as will be immediately apparent to the readers of this catalogue. The differing styles reflect the complexity of the art of West Mexico and enhance its substantial and intriguing appeal.

The Pearsons' loans to "Heritage of Power" come from Joanne and Andrall Pearson (Joey and Andy to their friends) and from their daughter and son-in-law, Jill Pearson and Alan Rappaport. We are grateful to the family for enabling the Museum to exhibit the objects for a considerable period of time; I thank both Mr. and Mrs. Pearson and Mr. and Mrs. Rappaport for their generosity. They have worked together with Julie Jones, Curator in Charge of the Metropolitan's Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, in putting the show together, and have extended their hospitality to the author of the catalogue, Kristi Butterwick. Long a student of the ancient peoples of West Mexico, Dr. Butterwick is Curator at the Foothills Art Center in Golden, Colorado.

Philippe de Montebello
Director
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

COLLECTOR'S NOTE

When we began our collection of Precolumbian art roughly twenty years ago, we certainly never expected it to approach the range and depth of our current holdings. Like most collectors, we began by purchasing two or three outstanding objects, selected at random. However, as we became increasingly interested in, and infatuated with, the art and cultures of Mesoamerica, it was quickly apparent that we needed an organizing framework to guide us in our choices. Based on the advice of Edward Merrin, our priority was to focus on acquiring select, top-quality works, not on sheer quantity. Also, following the wise council of John Menser and Claudia Giangola, we concentrated mainly on West Mexico for two reasons: the ceramic sculpture of the Precolumbian era seemed to us to be most fascinating, and the notion of owning works of art that were crafted two thousand (or more) years ago was very appealing. The results of those two decisions are reflected in this catalogue.

Among the three dominant cultures that make up ancient West Mexico, Colima initially captured our interest because we found the figures that originated there the most attractive and realistic. Yet, as time went on, we discovered that both the Nayarit and Jalisco cultures offered some equally wonderful and unique examples of creativity and artistic ingenuity.

Our collection includes an unusual number of pairs of sculptures, with several from all three cultures. The subject of pairs holds a natural fascination for my wife and me perhaps because we are both twins. However, when I attempted to purchase one half of a figural couple, the comment of one dealer, in particular, also played

a role in influencing our acquisitions. He said, "I'll, of course, sell you just one, but since they've been together for 2,500 years it does bother me to separate the pair." Needless to say, I decided not to break up that marriage.

When Philippe de Montebello asked us if we would be willing to lend this very central part of our collection to The Metropolitan Museum of Art for a future exhibition, we had two conflicting reactions. Understandably, the thought that sharing our collection might inspire others to appreciate West Mexican ceramics was an appealing one, but we also knew that we would miss these "old friends" while they were away. In the end, of course, the fact that our treasured objects would add to the public's knowledge and enjoyment of West Mexican art made our decision easy.

In organizing the exhibition and planning this catalogue, Julie Jones, Curator in Charge of the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, and her associates at the Metropolitan Museum succeeded admirably. We are also especially grateful to Kristi Butterwick, author of the text, and to Justin Kerr, an accomplished and renowned art photographer, whose pictures capture the charm and vibrancy of these examples of ancient Mexican art.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the contribution of our daughter, Jill Pearson, and her husband, Alan Rappaport, in strengthening our exhibition: Nearly a quarter of the objects belong to them—hence the name Pearson Family Collection. The fact that they share our fascination with Precolumbian art has only added to the joy of collecting.

Andrall E. Pearson

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This catalogue of ancient West Mexican sculptures represents the efforts, vision, and support of many kind and encouraging people. I am grateful to Julie Jones, Curator in Charge of the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, for her constancy in bringing this volume to fruition; to Andy and Joey Pearson, for their generous hospitality in making available their exceptional West Mexican sculpture collection for study; and to Ellen Shultz, the gracious editor at the Metropolitan Museum, who skillfully smoothed out my bumpy sentences and thoughts. I am grateful, too, to Christina Elson at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, who guided me through that museum's important Carl Lumholtz collection, and to Margaret Young-Sanchez, who eased the publication of photographs from the Denver Art Museum's outstanding Precolumbian collections.

Over the years, many talented colleagues have fur-

thered my work in West Mexico, and I would like to acknowledge them here: Christopher Beekman, Mannetta Braunstein, John Clarke, Linda Cordell, Horace Day, Jane Day, Peter Furst, Lorenza López Mestas Camberos, Alejandro Martínez, Joseph Mountjoy, Robert Pickering, Jorge Ramos de la Vega, Otto Schöndube, Richard Townsend, Christina Turner, Barbara Voorhies, Phil Weigand, and Hasso von Winning.

I deeply appreciate the opportunity given to me by Carol Dickinson and Jennifer Cook of the Foothills Art Center in Golden, Colorado, which allowed me enough flexibility to write this catalogue while curating exhibitions of contemporary art at that institution.

The text was invigorated by frontline editing from my nineteen-year partner, Stephen Martens, whose witty commentary on my rough drafts elicited howls of laughter from this writer; this catalogue is dedicated to our sons, Nick and Ben Martens.

Kristi Butterwick

HERITAGE OF POWER



Warrior (detail of cat. no. 7)

HERITAGE OF POWER IN ANCIENT WEST MEXICO

BY KRISTI BUTTERWICK

In the ancient societies of West Mexico, power emerged in kinship groups or lineages, whose ancestors held valuable lands. Inheritance of land, claimed by the burials of family members of high status, was a seminal step in defining power. From 200 B.C. to A.D. 400, diverse groups of sophisticated peoples thrived in the resource-rich highlands of Jalisco, Colima, and Nayarit in western Mexico. Vast lakes supplied water, food, and reeds; the great rivers facilitated trade; the fertile lands were suitable for agriculture; the volcanoes yielded obsidian and rare minerals; and the forested mountains harbored wildlife and edible plants and fruits (see fig. 1). Kin groups lived together in thatch-roofed houses built of stone and mud and braced with branches. The small communities had flat, stone-lined courts where leaders met to play ceremonial ball games, and plazas where family celebrations and seasonal feasts took place. These early settlers, dispersed throughout the bountiful highlands, almost certainly displayed ethnic and linguistic differences, yet they were united by a shared belief system, a remarkable ceramic tradition, and a trade network. These essential aspects of their cultures converged in the singular phenomenon of the shaft-and-chamber tomb, in which family members were buried alongside their powerful ancestors, together with unusual trade items, offerings of ceramic art, and food and drink for the journey to the netherworld.

Ancestor worship was widespread, and existed as a shared belief system practiced by individuals from all ranks of the various social groups throughout western Mexico. The honoring of ancestors guided principles of land inheritance, power, and social status. Founding families were the highest-ranked kin because their priority of arrival gave them rightful ownership of the land they occupied and its valuable resources.¹ The identification of ancestors followed rules of descent that recognized genealogy as an organizing concept in establishing kinship and social structure. Membership in kin groups ideally was determined by descendants of a common ancestor or founding pair. By tracing successive generations back to a blood ancestor or, even better, to a pair of founding ancestors, the heritage of kin members and their place in the lineage were validated. An individual's ancestry legitimized a child's birthright, identified non-kin marriage partners, and directed the transmission of property, office, and status. Status based on heredity thus was the



Figure 1. The Tequila Volcano in Jalisco reaches an altitude of 2,986 meters above sea level. In this view from the archaeological site at Huitzilapa, fields of blue maguey agave are visible in the foreground. (Photograph by Kristi Butterwick)

foundation of social inequality—and the resulting hierarchical societies—in early West Mexico.

Art, in the form of ceramic sculpture, integrated the early West Mexicans by communicating their shared world view. That certain themes in sculpture persisted over a period of six centuries in this environmentally diversified region reveals the depth of the early peoples' communal beliefs. Because they left no written records, their ceramic sculptures are keys to their past, and serve as ethnographic documents that convey information about the history and culture of a significant group of pre-Hispanic peoples. Interpreting the meaning of West Mexican art requires a combination of archaeological evidence and the examination of those themes repeatedly depicted in ceramic sculpture; among the most important subjects portrayed in the art from Jalisco, Colima, and Nayarit are kinship, status, power, and feasting. Made over two thousand years ago, the figural sculptures from the highlands of West Mexico were created as burial offerings, and once they were reverently placed in underground shaft-and-chamber tombs, their funerary context imbued them with sacred and spiritual significance. This ceramic art includes large, hollow, polished and painted figures of humans and animals, over three feet tall, as well as miniature figures and solid architectural models whose dimensions are measured in millimeters. The majority of the sculptures in the Pearson Family Collection depict men and women who arguably portray important chiefs, heads of lineages, founding ancestors, and other personages of high rank.

In chiefdoms, pathways to power followed bloodlines, and correlated with the veneration of ancestors and the inheritance of status and land. Hereditary inequality led to the emergence of the ranked and hierarchical societies of West Mexican chiefdoms. Ideally, the hereditary role of chief was passed down from a founding ancestor through a lineage.² Valuable trade items found in the shaft-and-chamber tombs of

1. Ashmore and Wilk 1988; Hayden 1995, pp. 37, 59; Hayden 1996, p. 37; McAnany 1995, pp. 116–17.
2. Service 1971, pp. 145–55.

chiefs indicate that the early leaders of West Mexico enhanced their power and wealth by fostering trade networks, which may explain the different styles of ceramic sculptures buried with them. To strengthen allegiances, chiefs hosted feasts, where they exchanged information; suitable marriage partners; labor pools; perishables, such as fine textiles, unusual foods, animal pelts, and feathers; and gifts of rare stone carvings and ceramic sculpture. In particular, the exchange of sculpture among regional leaders may have been politically motivated:³ To expand and legitimize their heritage of power, chiefs may have traded ceramic representations of their founding ancestors, heads of lineages, or important blood relatives. Furthermore, exceptional objects including carved beads of obsidian, greenstone, quartz, slate, and bone, as well as conch- and spondylus-shell personal adornments, all found in the shaft-and-chamber tombs, confirm the existence of established trade networks extending across Mexico from the Pacific to the Caribbean coasts and inland to the Valley of Mexico and beyond. Upon the death of a chief, a funerary feast was held, and on that occasion, the deceased's collection of prestigious items, including ceramic sculptures, was buried with him. The custom of burying the dead with their wealth, to commemorate their accomplishments, provided them with rewards in the afterlife while also ensuring the status and wealth of their heirs by securing their lands.⁴

CLAIMS TO VALUABLE LANDS

The inheritance of land created powerful families and lineages. Genealogy was crucial in the attempt to gain power because the division of land was defined and justified by a family's association with the founding ancestors;⁵ control of land through ancestral claims was unshakable. In early societies, the construction of shaft-and-chamber tombs served to establish the ancestors', and, subsequently, their descendants' territorial rights.⁶ For the burials of their ancestors, and to claim the best lands for their kin in West Mexico, the living dug deep cylinder-shaped conduits under the floors of their houses or in nearby cemeteries. These shafts led straight down to the tombs or sometimes penetrated at an angle through layers of earth and *tepetate*, a compacted volcanic ash (see fig. 2). Using stone and wood tools, they made the conduits about a meter in diameter—wide enough for human entry—and from one to sixteen meters deep, although the average depth was only two and one-half meters. A tunnel or a few short steps led from a single shaft to the slightly lower burial chambers (usually one to two), which branched off horizontally (see fig. 3). The cave-like rooms were three to four meters in diameter and approximately one meter high. The earthen floors were flat so that the dead could be interred in horizontal positions. To maneuver the bodies down the shaft, they were bound in mats, tied to a board, and lowered by rope, after which simple to lavish offerings were deposited with them. The quantity and quality of sculptures, precious objects, food, and drink placed in the tomb were a measure of the wealth and status of the deceased and of their kin. Tombs frequently contained multiple burials—either a single interment of several dead, together, or numerous interments, of a family or a lineage, which had occurred over time (see fig. 4). Following final interment, a capstone was placed vertically to seal the point between the chamber and the shaft, which was then filled to ground level with volcanic ash and dirt. On the surface, a ring of stone sometimes demarcated the circular entrance to the shaft.

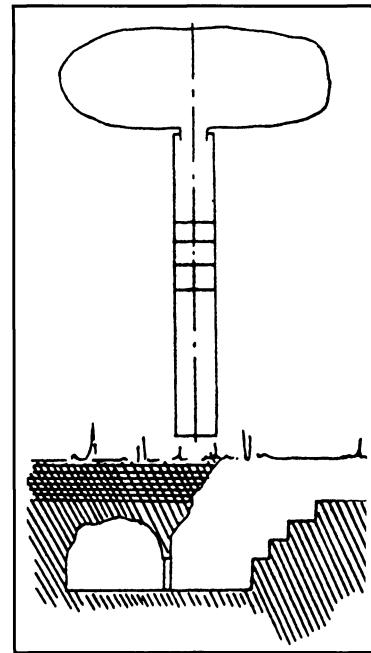


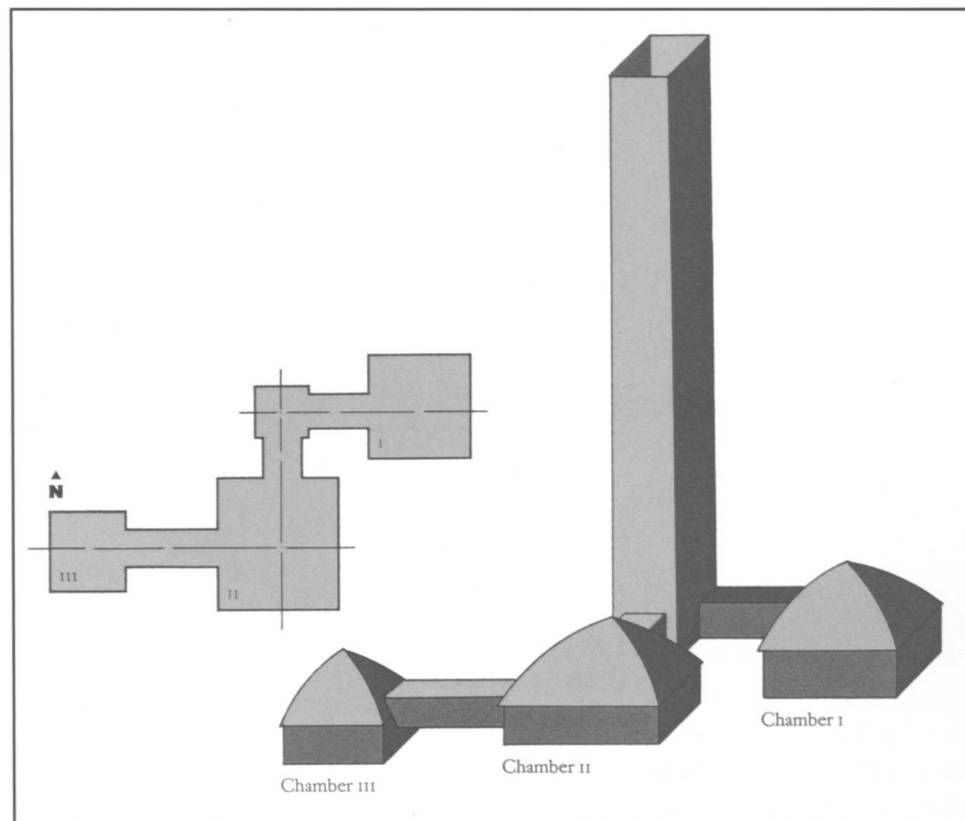
Figure 2. This diagram of a cross section and plan of an early West Mexican shaft-and-chamber tomb at El Opeño, Michoacán, dating from between 1360 and 1200 B.C., shows the steps leading to the domed chamber. (Adapted from Noguera 1939, p. 585, fig. 14, no. 1)

3. Townsend 1998 a, pp. 20–21; Weigand 1974, p. 124–27; Weigand 1989, p. 43.
4. Hayden 1995, pp. 66–73.
5. Byland and Pohl 1994, p. 220.
6. McAnany 1995, p. 162; Freedman 1967, p. 97.
7. Brand 1971.

Legitimate access to productive land was fundamental in hierarchical societies in which agriculture and activities centered around feasting prevailed, as is believed to have been the case in highland West Mexico. The best lands produced food in abundance, which made the hosting of such feasts possible. Chiefs gave away surpluses to gain support and to establish alliances within their communities as well as in a wider region. The situation of central Colima, at an altitude of about five hundred meters above sea level, afforded optimum conditions for plant growth and subsistence. The diversified landscape was lush with subtropical foliage and edible flora and fauna. The valley floors of Ríos Armería, Salado, and Coahuayana were agriculturally productive, since the soil was enriched with mineral-laden volcanic ash from the dual peaks of the Colima Volcano, over four thousand meters above sea level and still active. Volcanic materials included deposits of obsidian and basalt. The pre-Hispanic peoples valued high-quality obsidian, a volcanic glass, from which they made lancets, sharp knives and points for hunting, and scrapers and blades for processing food and animal hides. Basalt was the preferred material for manos and metates (grindstones), employed for grinding such foods as corn. The prevalence of grindstone—either simple slabs or carved and footed—in the shaft-and-chamber tombs supports the premise that the early West Mexican peoples were agriculturists. Colima settlers had easy access to long-established trade networks operating along the Pacific Coast and inland as far as the Valley of Mexico.

The landscape of Lakes Etzatlán and Magdalena, with the Tequila Volcano in between, attracted early settlers to highland Jalisco. Historic accounts by the Spanish, dating from 1523 to 1565,⁷ described the highlands as plentiful, with abundant waters, great wooded areas, and fertile soil for agriculture. The inhabitants grew maize, beans,

Figure 3. A reconstruction drawing and plan of a 3-chambered tomb at El Arenal, near Etzatlán, Jalisco, dating from between 300 B.C. and A.D. 200. The tomb shaft is 16 meters deep. The chambers were looted prior to archaeological investigation. (Adapted from Meighan and Nicholson 1989, p. 36)



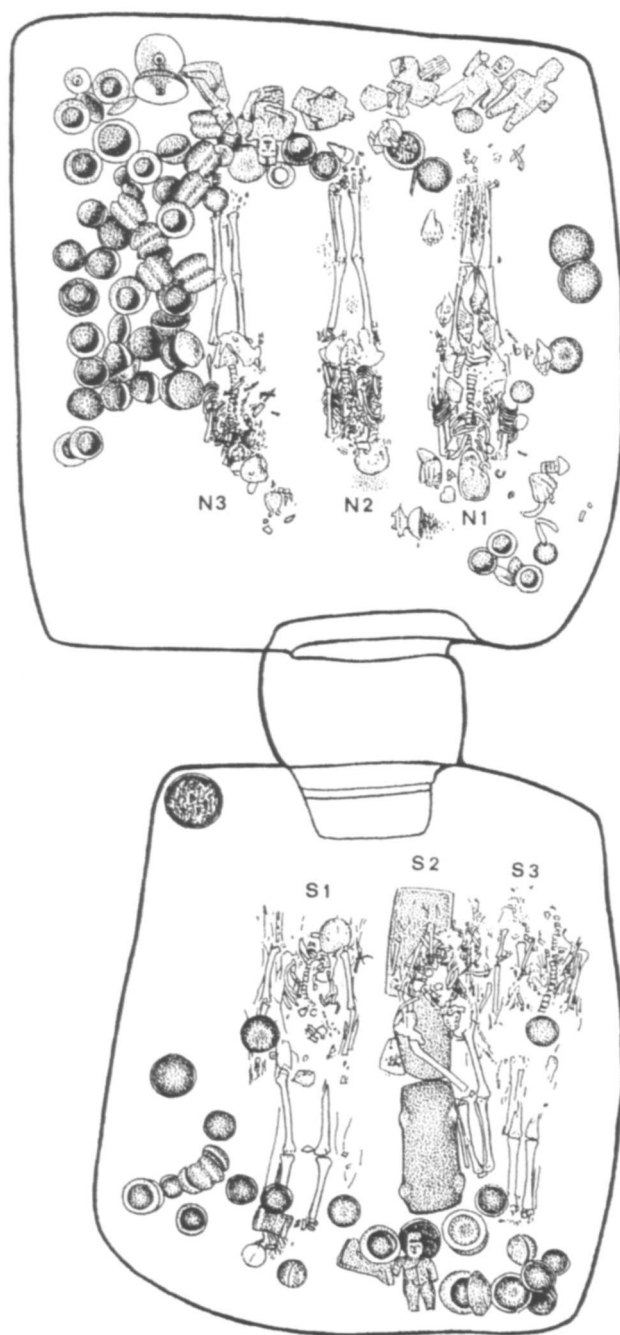


Figure 4. Plan of the north and south burial chambers of the Huitzilapa tomb located in the Magdalena basin of Jalisco, dating to about A.D. 100. The main personage interred is in the north chamber designated N1. (Adapted from López and Ramos 1998, p. 60, fig. 8)

cacao, squash, chili, and cotton. The Spanish chronicled the activities of these native peoples, who collected reeds, snails, insects, and salt, and caught fish, geese, and ducks from the expansive lakes of Sayula, Magdalena, and Chapala, situated at approximately fifteen hundred meters above sea level. Navigating these lakes in floating crafts facilitated commerce with the villages along their shores. The native peoples used canoes and platforms made of reeds that were kept afloat with ballasts of gourds. In the rolling, wooded hills, they hunted deer, hare, and other game, and harvested indigenous edible fruits, nuts, berries, and agave. In short, the abundant resources from the lakes, native agave, fertile soil, and obsidian deposits sustained population growth in highland Jalisco. Archaeological sites around the Tequila Volcano are covered with

8. Weigand and Beekman 1998, p. 46.
9. Weigand 1985a, p. 82.
10. Bruman 1940, pp. 133–34.

obsidian flakes and chips left over from the prolific manufacturing of pre-Hispanic tools.⁸ In addition to natural resources, the early settlers in Jalisco developed irrigation to increase the agricultural productivity of the land adjacent to the lakes.⁹

The Spanish noted that, for the indigenous peoples, the maguey agave plant satisfied a variety of uses. When its spiky leaves were cut and roasted over a fire they were similar in taste and texture to a sweet winter squash. Fibrous strands were pulled lengthwise from the leaf, dried and processed, and woven into fabric, baskets, mats, and rope. Dried agave leaves also were employed as roofing material. The native peoples collected juice from the agave for drinks that were served at ceremonies and feasts, scraping its pineapple-like core with a rounded obsidian tool, or *ocaxtle*; sap that settled in the core was suctioned out with a long gourd called an *acocote*. The juices were consumed fresh or were fermented to make pulque, a thick, beer-like brew. The Spanish appreciated the value of the agave, and by the seventeenth century they had implemented the European process of alcohol distillation to produce tequila, the well-known beverage derived solely from the maguey agave native to the land surrounding the Tequila Volcano.¹⁰

The Sierra Madre Occidental, which parallels the Pacific Coast and forms part of the Nayarit highlands, has plentiful edible wildlife and flora on which the native population subsisted, and precious minerals, including malachite, opals, and quartz crystals, which they traded. The 2,200-meter-high Céboruco Volcano in central Nayarit last erupted in 1879, generating obsidian, unusual red basalt, and thick volcanic ash that enriched the soil. The settlers of highland Nayarit occupied subtropical valleys with elevations of about nine hundred meters above sea level; their communities were adjacent to the major rivers that flowed from the Valley of Mexico to the Pacific Coast. The trade routes along the Río Ameca and especially the Río Santiago (or Río Grande de Santiago) were well traveled for over 2,700 years, from at least 1200 B.C. to the Spanish Conquest. Nayarit villages along the routes were well-situated stopovers that provided traders a cool respite from the tropical lowlands of the Pacific Coast. Because of their prime location along the Río Santiago trade route, such early sites as Ixtlán del Río were rebuilt over time by the much-later Aztatlán peoples, who were trading partners with the Aztec. Historically, it was the mountainous lands of Nayarit that provided safe haven and ensured the survival of the native peoples during the Spanish Conquest. Even today, the reclusive Huichol and Cora are sustained by the resources of their Nayarit homeland.

The highland environment of West Mexico had a diversity of sufficient natural resources for the three kinds of feasts traditionally celebrated: those for the dead, those that took place at seasonal festivals, and those that honored a chief's power. To mark the passage of life, kin groups gathered to honor and "feed" the dead—as evidenced by the contents of the shaft-and-chamber tombs: fine vessels filled with the remains of food and empty jars that probably once held liquids. The theme of feeding the dead frequently was depicted in ancient West Mexican ceramic sculpture and architectural models. The cups, bowls, and other types of vessels held by the ceramic figures suggest that they are participants in ceremonial feasts; other sculptures display the *acocote* tools used to make pulque. In addition, tableau-like scenes portray groups of figures feasting and drinking, oftentimes with offerings of food in a lower chamber or tomb.

For highland inhabitants, as in all agricultural societies, the seasonal cycles of cultivation determined food surplus or scarcity. Annual harvests and feasts provided opportunities to distribute any food surpluses and to express gratitude to the original

landowning ancestors who had ensured the bounty. Perhaps the figural groups shown in ceramic tableaux, gathered around a ceremonial pole and feasting, herald the Aztecs' grandest seasonal feast held in commemoration of the dead, which still takes place today, and remains one of Mexico's largest and most popular celebrations. On the Mexican Days of the Dead (*Todos Santos*), which correspond to All Souls' Day and All Saints' Day in Catholic ritual, families build altars and place candles, marigolds, cigarettes, and the favorite food and drink of the dead at their gravesites.¹¹

To establish political power and maintain trade networks, it seems probable that highland chiefs participated in feasts, most likely cultivating certain plants (such as agave) for drinks and food, and stockpiling any surpluses to serve at these events. Feasting was an essential political activity in many chiefdoms in the Americas and may have been so for chiefs in West Mexico as well. For example, leaders in pre-Hispanic Panama sponsored drinking and feasting celebrations for up to a thousand guests¹² in order to publicize their generosity and worth, to interact with their peers and trade partners, and to cement their authority in their community or lineage.

The competitive and political aspects of feasting had parallels in ball games. As in other pre-Hispanic societies, highland leaders may have staged ball-game competitions, held in special courts or public arenas, engaging rivals in a game to resolve conflicts and create new alliances, followed afterward by a feast at the site.¹³ Beginning about 1500 B.C. in West Mexico,¹⁴ these games were played on a flat earthen court enclosed within stepped, stone walls, using a hard ball made from the sap of the native rubber tree. The players were distinguished by their padded clothing and protective equipment, and used their hips to advance the ball. In the highlands, ceramic sculptures of players holding balls and equipped with protective gear; ceramic models of courts, complete with players, ball, and audience (see fig. 5); architectural remnants of courts; and actual equipment found in shaft-and-chamber tombs establish the significance of the ball game in the lives of the early inhabitants of West Mexico.

ANCESTORS

The elaborate shaft-and-chamber tombs were an unusual type of burial for the native peoples of the Americas, and, in fact, were geographically restricted, in the New World, to the highlands of West Mexico and northern South America. The earliest known examples were built at the site of El Opeño (see fig. 2),¹⁵ in the state of Michoacán, near the Colima border; the nine tombs in that cemetery date from 1360 to 1200 B.C. Conduits to these early burial chambers were slanted and stepped and about one to two meters in depth. Each El Opeño tomb contained several males and females, interred over a long period; while the bones of some individuals were articulated and properly laid out, others had been collected into piles in prehistoric times to make room for subsequent interments, in an effort to preserve the remains of the most important people. One such person must have been a ballplayer, as evidenced by the offering of two ceramic ballplayer figures and by the small stone yoke worn around a ballplayer's hips for protection. Offerings of female figures and the tools they used, such as manos and metates, honored women of high status interred in the El Opeño tombs. Other grave goods included fine ceramic vessels to hold food and drink in the afterlife, as well as rarer offerings of obsidian projectile points, greenstone ear-spools and beads, an Olmec-style figure from the Gulf Coast, and jewelry made of shells imported from the distant Caribbean Sea.¹⁶ In addition to the veneration of

11. Nutini 1988, pp. 53–76.

12. Helms 1979, p. 29.

13. Fox 1996, p. 494.

14. Day 1998, pp. 151–54.

15. Oliveros 1974.

16. Noguera 1939; Noguera 1971; Oliveros 1974.

Figure 5. This model of a ball game, in the Nayarit Ixtlán del Río style, shows a court with stepped, parallel walls; players; and observers. The players wear ball-game paraphernalia such as yokes, or padded belts; pelvic protectors; leg bands and armbands; and decorated headgear. The positions of the bodies illustrate the use of the hips to advance the ball, whose large size may be an exaggeration. Three small, white mounds placed along the central axis of the court probably depict markers for the game. The 18 male and female spectators wear turbans and ornaments with white patterning, indicative of distinctions in status. A figure holding a conch shell, in the back corner at the right, watches over an assortment of draped objects that perhaps may represent additional equipment. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The Proctor Stafford Collection, purchased with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. Allan C. Balch)



ancestors, the burials at El Opeño reveal the existence, early on, of significant social differentiation.

As early as the period from 1870 to 1720 B.C., the inhabitants of Colima honored their dead with ceramic offerings. Objects found in the burials of individuals of high status included exceptional gourd-shaped vessels similar to examples from the Valley of Mexico and stirrup-spout jars like those from coastal Ecuador. Related ceramic styles were the first of many cultural similarities that the Colima people shared with their distant trade partners.¹⁷ Shaft-and-chamber tombs were not constructed in Colima until centuries later, when, from 200 B.C. to A.D. 400, shallow examples began to appear in clusters or in cemeteries near villages. The slanted or vertical shafts, which led to one or two chambers, were only from one to two meters deep. The discovery of jumbled human remains and broken ceramics from different epochs inside and outside the shaft-and-chamber tombs indicates that the Colima peoples honored the sacred nature of these burials by reusing the tombs.¹⁸ In addition to the exceptional ceramic sculptures interred in the tombs in Colima, there were exquisite trade goods made of shell (see fig. 6), greenstone (see fig. 7), and obsidian, and other rare items; furthermore, a large proportion of the Colima tombs contained either the skeletal remains of dogs, or a ceramic dog effigy to lead the dead through the netherworld.¹⁹

Discoveries at Chupícuaro, near the border of Michoacán and Guanajuato, revealed early artistic links to the ceramic sculpture of West Mexico. From 500 to 300 B.C., the Chupícuaro peoples flourished in villages along the trade route from Río Lerma and

Río Grande de Santiago to the Valley of Mexico. The over 390 graves unearthed contained the remains of hundreds of ceramic figures and vessels for food and drink. Mortuary offerings, however, were interred in burial grounds or cemeteries rather than in the distinctive shaft-and-chamber tombs. The ceramic sculptural traditions that subsequently developed in Colima, Jalisco, and Nayarit resembled the styles and finishes characteristic of Chupícuaro ceramics. Chupícuaro thus represents a transitional culture, and the artistic themes of kinship and the feeding of the dead that are reflected in its fine ceramic figures would influence the later art of West Mexico.²⁰

The spectacular and uncommonly deep shaft-and-chamber tombs are found primarily in highland Jalisco, specifically, in the valuable lands bordering the Tequila Volcano and Lake Magdalena. Among the first documented shaft-and-chamber tombs were two at El Arenal, situated beneath the floors of houses, unearthed millennia later by looters. The primary burial had an astounding sixteen-meter-deep shaft leading to three distinct chambers (see fig. 3). Pothunters had removed jade beads and several fine ceramic sculptures: Among them were two warriors, figures seated on stools, a ballplayer, and a pregnant female.²¹

A significant five-meter-deep shaft-and-chamber tomb, dating to about A.D. 100, was discovered nearby, at the site of San Sebastián, in the 1960s. In this singular case, the entire contents of the tomb was sold to one individual, and the collection subsequently was donated to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.²² The human skeletal remains included those of nine adults (possibly two males and seven females, two of them pregnant) as well as an atypical collection of six long bones, all



Figure 6. These spondylus-shell ornaments from Colima, in the form of scorpions, date from between 200 B.C. and A.D. 300. The largest scorpion measures 8.9 centimeters in height. (Denver Art Museum. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward M. Strauss, 1989.52 a,b)

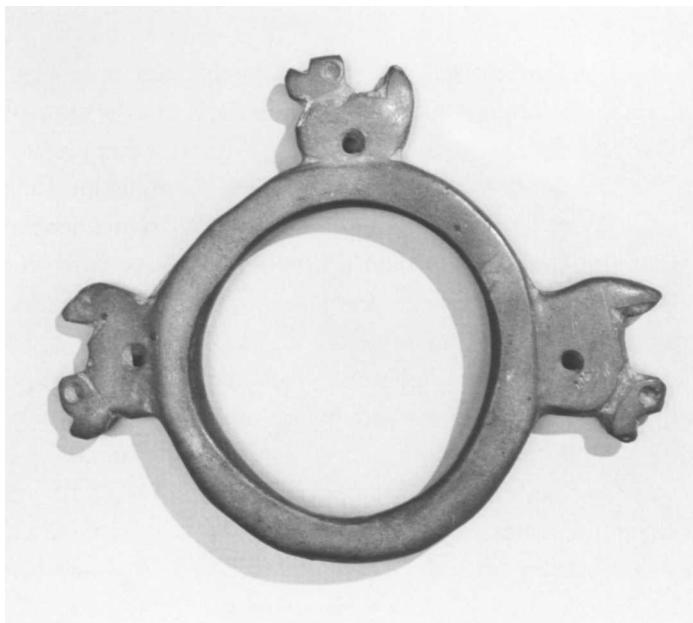


Figure 7. This Colima bracelet, or ornament, of greenstone, dates from between A.D. 100 and 300, has 3 carved animal shapes along its rim, and measures 10.8 centimeters in diameter. (Denver Art Museum. Museum Purchase, 1973.187)

17. Harbottle 1975.
18. Kelly 1978.
19. Wright 1960, pp. 33–42.
20. Townsend 1998c,
pp. 116–17.
21. Corona Núñez 1955,
pp. 8–11.
22. Nicholson and Meighan
1974, pp. 12–13.
23. Long 1966; Long and
Taylor 1966; Nicholson
and Meighan 1974,
pp. 12–15.
24. Ramos de la Vega and
López Mestas Camberos
1996; López Mestas
Camberos and Ramos de
la Vega 1998.

left tibiae. Grave goods consisted of eighteen impressive ceramic sculptures in various styles, obsidian mirrors placed on the chests of the deceased, numerous ceramic bowls, spindle whorls, metates, beads, and three mollusk shells, one from the Caribbean Sea. The thirty-three decorated vessels were placed near the skulls. The burials had occurred over time—as evidenced by the partial skeletons, stacks of bones, and other desiccated remains—suggesting that certain individuals were not interred until the death of a chief or venerated ancestor. Archaeologists believe that the San Sebastián tomb served as a family crypt that was reused for over two hundred years.²³

The Huitzilapa double-chambered tomb (see fig. 4), discovered in 1994 by archaeologists Jorge Ramos and Lorenza López,²⁴ has an eight-and-a-half-meter deep vertical shaft and was radiocarbon dated to approximately A.D. 100. A ring of stone in the center of the floor of a house marked the entrance to the tomb. The early peoples had placed a carved and footed stone metate halfway down the shaft, which had been filled with fine-grained volcanic ash and pumice; at the bottom, two stone slabs sealed the entrances to each burial chamber. Steps led from the shaft to the floor of the chambers, where, just inside, an incense burner had been placed. Each of the three individuals interred in a chamber was positioned with his or her head toward the opening. The most important person, designated as a chief by the lavish grave goods buried with him, was a male in the north chamber whose damaged hipbone perhaps indicates that he also was a ballplayer. The tens of thousands of cut-shell beads that covered his remains originally had been strung together to create a burial shroud, and intricately carved and painted shell bands covered the chief's lower arms. One of three small greenstone figures rested on his chest, and, to honor his fertility and bloodline, three decorated conch shells rested on his pelvic region. The presumed wife of the chief was adorned with shell jewelry and accompanied by six pottery spindle whorls, suggesting that she was a weaver of some repute. This chamber also included the remains of a male who had been buried with two atlatls, devices used by warriors to propel their spears.

In addition to personal adornments, the north chamber contained hundreds of exquisite objects and vessels for food and drink. These offerings included greenstone and quartz beads, a large quartz crystal, obsidian blades, numerous ceramic vessels, and six large hollow ceramic sculptures. Food and drink for the journey to the netherworld were placed in the finest of the vessels and set together along the west wall of the chamber. The ceramic figures, in the Arenal style, were deposited at the feet of the dead; strikingly alike in size and details, these sculptures consisted of three male and three female figures, all in markedly similar costumes. Two females, perhaps sisters, mother and daughter, or images of the same person, were portrayed with identical earrings, nose rings, and sets of bands on their upper arms. The three males all had identical headbands, and two had the same style of armband depicted on the female sculptures. One male figure represented a ballplayer holding a ball or other round object—possibly a reference to the ballplaying chief. It is intriguing that, like the three adorned ancestors in the north chamber, the male and female ceramic sculptures are shown also wearing armbands.

The south chamber of the Huitzilapa tomb contained the skeletons of two females and one male, and not only were the offerings found with them of a lesser quality and quantity, compared with those in the north chamber, but the bones were in a more advanced state of deterioration. The remains of one female had been placed on top of two large, rectangular, footed metates. Among the grave goods were two large ceramic sculptures, two pottery spindle whorls, shell jewelry, and many fine

vessels containing traces of food. One female ceramic figure wears the same type of headband as that depicted on the ceramic male figures in the north chamber.

Of the one hundred and thirteen ceramic vessels placed in the two chambers at Huitzilapa, two were incense burners, seventy-five held detectable organic offerings, and thirty-six were empty. The vessels and the food in them, protected by the dry underground environment, clearly belonged to a feast for the dead. Faunal remains, possibly of a fish or a bird, were offered in three bowls; several of the empty vessels were used as lids; and one ceramic bowl covered a greenstone figure that, itself, had been put into a ceramic vessel. Another lid was placed over an offering of shell beads, a quartz crystal, and a corn cob. Several ceramic vessels served as bottles for a beverage to be enjoyed by the dead, such as pulque or another ceremonial brew made from the native maguey agave.

Analysis of the skeletal remains identified anomalies in the neck bones shared by all, except the presumed wife, suggesting a congenital or hereditary trait, and indicating that the five individuals were genetically related blood relatives.²⁵ Based on the placement and the desiccated condition of their skeletons, archaeologists suspected that all had died before the chief, and that their remains were preserved for later interment with his. In the interim, each of the five was wrapped in a reed mat along with small treasures, their arms and legs tied with strings of shells.²⁶ The shared burial of blood relatives at Huitzilapa and the commemoration of the ancestors with food and drink are characteristics of a lineage or family crypt. The striking similarity between the adornments worn by the ancestors and those depicted on the sculptures suggests that the ceramic figures were portraits of the dead.

Surveys of mortuary data from the area around the Tequila Volcano in Jalisco determined that only twenty percent of the 171 known shaft-and-chamber tombs²⁷ measured over four meters deep and contained valuable artifacts; the rest were simple burials, less than four meters deep, with adequate but less elaborate offerings. In addition, hundreds more burials—up to ninety percent of all the human interments in highland Jalisco—were in shallow graves. Interestingly, even the common burials contained a plain ceramic vessel or figure. Thus, the findings from Jalisco indicated that the differentiation in shaft depth and value of accompanying grave goods mirrored societal and lineage hierarchies.

Just east of the Tequila Volcano, in the Atemajac Valley, the urban development of Guadalajara has exposed at least twenty-three shaft-and-chamber tombs.²⁸ Hardly any architecture or traces of villages remain that date from the period between 200 B.C. and A.D. 400. The funerary sites apparently functioned as small cemeteries in which families and their children were interred together, preserving kinship ties. The contents of the Atemajac tombs included greenstone figures and beads, shell ornaments, obsidian lancets, and large ceramic sculptures. In those multiple burials where lavish offerings identified one skeleton as the principal personage or chief, grave goods were especially opulent.

The inhabitants of the Nayarit highlands interred their ancestors in shaft-and-chamber tombs concentrated in hilltop cemeteries, each one with tens of burials. The Nayarit tombs have moderate-sized shafts from one to five meters deep. The early inhabitants of San Pedro Lagunillas constructed at least twenty-four cemeteries containing over three hundred shaft-and-chamber tombs. The nearby site of Las Cebollas featured an elaborate shaft-and-chamber tomb, whose contents are known from conversations with looters.²⁹ A five-meter vertical shaft led to the two-chambered

25. Pickering and Cabrero 1998, pp. 74–75.

26. López Mestas Camberos and Ramos de la Vega 1998, p. 64.

27. Weigand and Beekman 1998, p. 39.

28. Galván Villegas 1991, pp. 117–204, 234–36.

29. Furst 1966, pp. 76ff.



Figure 8. From the left: A ceramic rendition of a conch, in the Arenal style of Jalisco; a Nayarit figure blowing a conch-shell trumpet; and an actual conch shell. (Photograph by Horace Day. Denver Museum of Nature and Science)

tomb, which contained the remains of nine individuals. The sumptuous offerings to the dead included eighty-three ceramic vessels; an architectural model; twenty-five slate mirror backs, beads, and pendants; sixty-five shell bracelets and forty-six shell beads; ceramic flutes; and one hundred and twenty-five complete or fragmentary conch shells—all but one from the Gulf Coast, and one hundred and eleven of which were cut into trumpets. As early as 1400 B.C., conch shells were traded along a network that extended from the Gulf Coast, the Caribbean Sea, and the Pacific Ocean, to villages in highland West Mexico (see fig. 8). The conch was valued in pre-Hispanic societies as a symbol of fertility that ensured the perpetuity of a lineage. The people of West Mexico applied etched and painted designs to conch shells, cut the ends to create trumpets, and carved them into personal ornaments. The exotica of conch trumpets, flutes, and mirror backs suggest that there was a religious and ceremonial significance attached to the primary burial, which possibly was that of a shaman or wealthy trader. Clearly, the Nayarit offerings to the ancestors were equivalent to the lavish grave goods recovered from Jalisco and Colima.

Throughout pre-Hispanic West Mexico, the multitude of simple burials, as opposed to those honoring members of prominent kin groups in shaft-and-chamber tombs commensurate with their wealth and status, frequently included a small ceramic vessel and a pottery figure.³⁰ Regardless of the social standing of the deceased, the custom of feeding the dead and burying them along with a ceramic figure or vessel for use in the afterlife was widespread.

KINSHIP IN VILLAGES

The remains of ancient villages associated with shaft-and-chamber tombs are scarce in West Mexico,³¹ having fallen victim to road building, population growth, and land development, all of which destroyed archaeological sites. In their search for valuable artifacts hidden underground in shaft-and-chamber tombs, pothunters, over the years, also have disregarded the importance of architecture above ground, and have ransacked entire settlements. Archaeologists have been able to piece together settlement data from 300 B.C. to A.D. 400, most successfully with regard to sites around the Tequila Volcano, where groups of rectangular platform mounds enclosing a circular patio, called *guachimontóns*—unique to West Mexico—were built. In the center of

the patio was a round mound, and, frequently, the entire complex was erected on a man-made earthen terrace, also circular in shape. The largest such site in West Mexico is known as Teuchitlán-Guachimontón,³² because of the presence of numerous enormous *guachimontóns*, some exceeding one hundred meters in diameter. Teuchitlán-Guachimontón, on the slope of the Tequila Volcano, dates to the period following that of the shaft-and-chamber tombs. An architectural refinement found at most West Mexican sites is the addition of an impressive ball court to the circular patio group.

The site at El Arenal, dating from 300 B.C. to A.D. 200, is an example of a simple *guachimontón* constructed by the early peoples of West Mexico. El Arenal consisted of fourteen platform mounds, with stone-and-earthen foundations, grouped together in a circular pattern. Originally, the domestic architecture included thatch-roofed structures built on top of the stone-and-earthen platforms. It was directly underneath two domestic platforms that the early inhabitants of El Arenal dug the exceptionally deep shaft-and-chamber tombs. This practice, among kin groups, of burying ancestors under the floors of houses—even at a small, early West Mexican site like El Arenal—emphasized the family's claim to the land and its nearby resources, such as a patch of maguey agave or a valuable obsidian deposit.³³ Kin members at El Arenal must have enjoyed sufficient status, with enough laborers at their disposal to dig the fifty-two-foot-deep shaft-and-triple-chamber tomb to secure the inheritance of the lands in the name of their apparently powerful ancestors.

Archaeologists have been able to recover comparable data from the important but damaged site of Ahualulco,³⁴ which dates from A.D. 200 to 400, situated on the eastern flank of the Tequila Volcano, with over sixty platform mounds articulated into patio groups (four of them *guachimontóns*) as well as a ball court. The inhabitants of Ahualulco incorporated previous platform mounds into their building plans.³⁵ In creating domestic spaces, they built over and added onto earlier domestic platforms, below which were ancestral shaft-and-chamber tombs, thus acknowledging and reinforcing the claims of their kin to the land, and honoring their common ancestors buried beneath their houses. Over time, a genealogy of place was established at Ahualulco.³⁶ The settlers employed stonecutting techniques to construct their refined architecture in both domestic and public spaces. The complex public areas consisted of a ball court approximately seventy-five meters long attached to the largest *guachimontón*, in the center of which is a conical mound sixty meters in diameter and nine meters tall.

Huitzilapa is noteworthy for its pristine shaft-and-chamber tomb as well as for the well-preserved remains of a village (see fig. 9). There were over eighty platform mounds at the site, with diverse architectural features that formed discrete clusters of settlements; except for the ball court and open plaza, all were domestic spaces.³⁷ Domestic platforms served mainly as foundations for houses, with ancillary small platforms for workshops, kitchens, and storage. The majority (seventy percent) of the domestic platforms were simple, low quadrangular mounds measuring less than forty square meters in area; large, embellished quadrangular platforms, averaging ninety-one square meters in area and one meter in height, comprised twenty-two percent of the domestic structures. Examples of architectural elaboration included cut-stone facing on the large platforms with associated stone walls that demarcated property, such as a patio or a terrace; two of the large platforms had staircases (see fig. 10). The mounds were clustered into twenty distinct compounds, or patio groups—either circular, *guachimontón* arrangements, or quadripartite clusters surrounding a square, central patio. Each had from four to six domestic platforms with small ancillary mounds

30. Galván Villegas 1991, pp. 277–79.
31. Meighan and Nicholson 1989, p. 58.
32. Beekman 1996 a, p. 92; Weigand 1990 a, pp. 29–48.
33. McAnany 1995, pp. 50, 162–64.
34. Weigand 1974, pp. 124–27; Weigand 1990 a, p. 37.
35. Weigand 1974, pp. 124–27.
36. McAnany 1995, p. 100.
37. Butterwick 1998 a, pp. 278–84.

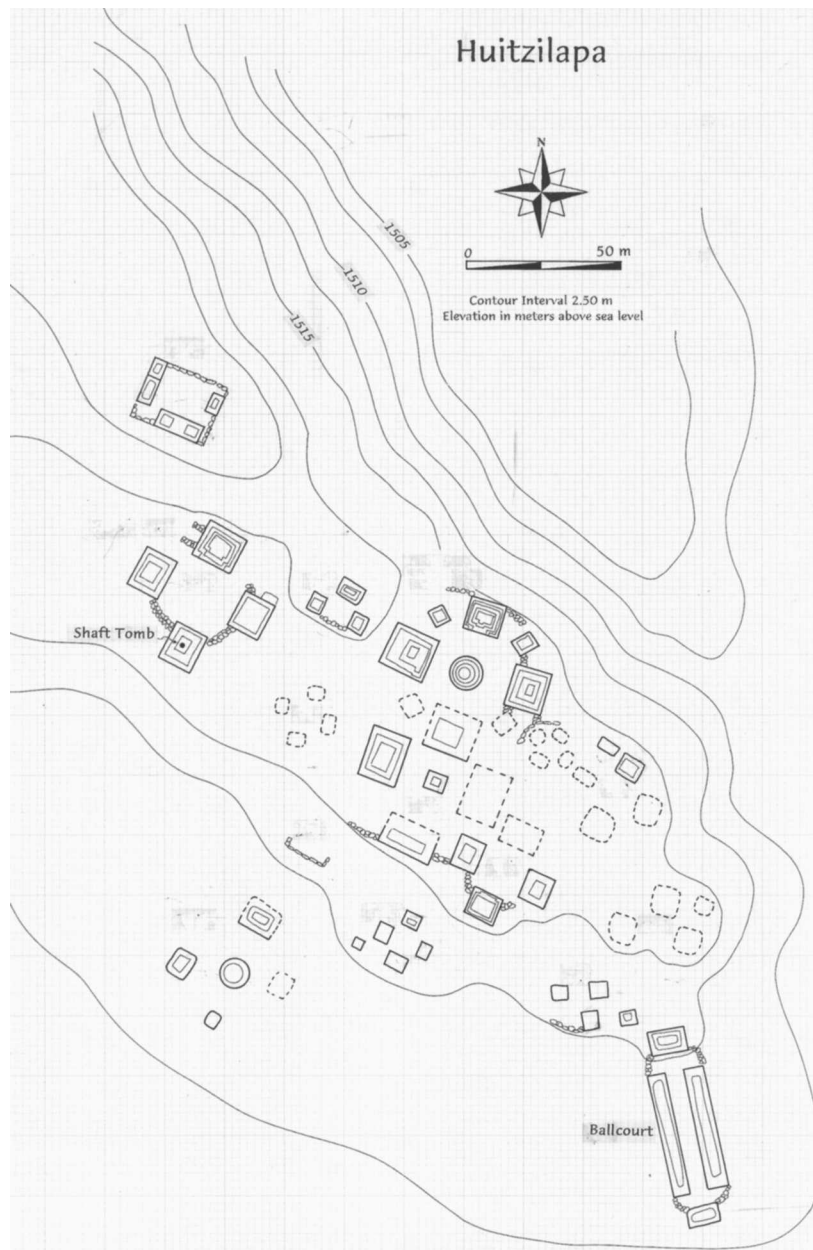


Figure 9. Map of the Huitzilapa archaeological site, Jalisco. The patio group in which the shaft-and-chamber tomb is located is at the left center. (Map by Kristi Butterwick, 1996)

grouped around a circular or quadripartite patio, the center of which usually was marked by a round altar. Exceptions were one square altar and one conical mound, composed of four stepped levels, which was nearly twelve meters in diameter and two meters tall, at the center of which was an impressive *guachimontón* circular patio.

Applying the Huitzilapa findings to analyses of comparable settlements in other pre-Hispanic societies,³⁸ the inference was made that each main platform (excluding altars and small ancillary mounds) was a foundation for an individual family's house. Extended families and kin members lived together in both circular and quadripartite patio groups. The latter form of settlement is shared by many Mesoamerican societies, whereas the circular arrangement is found only in West Mexico. In terms of platform size and elaboration, the twenty patio groups at Huitzilapa seemed to reflect rank and social status within a lineage. Large, stepped platforms occurred together around a patio suitable in size for a chief's extended family and, conversely, lesser mounds were clustered in smaller patio groups, accommodating families of lower rank. Virtually no platform mound existed in isolation from these patio groupings. For the ancestor-focused people of Huitzilapa, social standing was communicated by each patio group for the extended family and not by independent

structures. The settlement patterns at Huitzilapa underscore the significance of lineages or kin groups, rather than of individuals, as the organizational basis of their society.

The Huitzilapa shaft-and-chamber tomb was directly underneath a large cut-stone platform that originally supported a thatch-roofed house; the patio group containing the tomb is one of the largest and most architecturally complex at the site. That the tomb existed in the domestic sphere conforms to the custom—practiced by other pre-Hispanic societies as well—and supports the notion that residential patio groups served as “house sepulchers.”³⁹ The kinship ties demonstrated by the intricacy of the Huitzilapa tomb, along with the elaborate patio group situated above it, suggest that its principal occupant very likely was a Huitzilapa chief or the head of a lineage.

The nucleation of the twenty patio groups into the community of Huitzilapa may have corresponded to the organization of local lineages. Family rank within lineages may be echoed in the pattern of large patio groups surrounded by smaller ones. From the data at Huitzilapa, it appears that the head of the lineage and his immediate family



resided in the largest patio groups, with more distant kin occupying the surrounding, smaller domestic compounds. Differentiation among the residents of the patio groups may have reflected lineage members' rank, antiquity, or allocated resources.⁴⁰

Architectural models from West Mexico are vital for understanding ancient buildings as well as the villages where they were made. Due to the lack of actual architectural data beyond the domestic platforms, the models are relied on to provide the best clues regarding the methods of construction and the function of early houses: The structures seem to have been open, with walls and support posts built onto platforms. Roofs were made of thatch, and then covered with mud or plaster and painted with colorful designs, as depicted in the over one-hundred known ceramic architectural models. Carved stone steps, stepped platforms, and outdoor banquettes and patios replicate such refinements as the cut stones, stepped platforms, and stairs, and the tombs under the floors of the houses, seen at Huitzilapa. Similarly, the feasts, burials, and gatherings of kin groups shown in the ceramic models most likely were the activities of greatest importance in ancient West Mexican societies.

Figure 10. This stepped-platform mound at Huitzilapa, part of a patio group with a shaft-and-chamber tomb, had cut-stone facing and a staircase. (Photograph by Kristi Butterwick)

A CERAMIC TRADITION

During the 1890s, the first explorers arrived in the region to document the native peoples and antiquities of West Mexico. By that time, local farmers and landowners already had come across ceramic sculptures in the shaft-and-chamber tombs that were unearthed while the land was being cleared for agricultural development. Such was the situation described by Norwegian explorer-anthropologist Carl Lumholtz, who, in 1892, set off from Arizona on horseback to study the indigenous peoples of the Sierra Madre Occidental. Lumholtz's interest in native groups brought him in contact with the Tarahumara, Huichol, Cora, and other reclusive peoples living in the highlands.

38. Fash 1983, pp. 268–81; Leventhal 1983, pp. 73–76; McAnany 1995, pp. 26, 50, 116–17; Rice and Puleston 1981, pp. 139–41; Tourtellot 1988, pp. 107–17; Vogt 1983 a, pp. 18–20; Vogt 1983 b, pp. 113–14.
39. Coe 1988, pp. 234–35.
40. McAnany 1995, pp. 26, 116–17.
41. Lumholtz 1902.
42. Townsend 1998 a, pp. 15–17.
43. Breton 1903.
44. Braun 1993 a, pp. 252–53.
45. Medioni and Pinto 1941.
46. Mexico 1946.
47. Olmedo de Olvera 1965, p. 20; *Diego Rivera Museum—Anahuacalli* 1970, p. 18.
48. Kan 1989, p. 19.

Heading south, in Nayarit, near Ixtlán del Río, Lumholtz encountered his first ceramic sculptures, which had been removed from the tombs. He recorded his findings of ruins, obsidian mines, and more ceramic sculptures farther east, near Lake Magdalena. Reaching Guadalajara, Lumholtz noted that looted ceramic figures were widely available for sale. The 1902 publication of his opus *Unknown Mexico* introduced West Mexico to the rest of the world. The large, illustrated books described the antiquities and unexplored ruins of the region as well as the way of life and customs of its inhabitants.⁴¹ Lumholtz would transfer his extensive collections of thousands of ancient ceramic figures, obsidian, shell, and copper artifacts, and ethnographic objects from West Mexico to the American Museum of Natural History in New York, where they are still housed today (see figs. 12, 13, 14).

Traveling by train in Mexico, Adela Breton, a British artist and adventurer, arrived in Guadalajara in 1895, about the same time as Lumholtz. From Guadalajara, she continued on horseback west toward the Tequila Volcano in search of the buried antiquities she had heard about. At Hacienda Guadalupe, she encountered twenty ceramic figures that had been unearthed from a shaft-and-chamber tomb. She sketched the ruins and the ceramic figures, and purchased two of them, a vessel, and several carved shell bracelets that were part of the grave goods.⁴² Adela Breton explored the region around Lake Magdalena, and, on the flank of the Tequila Volcano, came upon a hoard of obsidian tools and the enormous ruins of Teuchitlán-Guachimontón, which she went on to describe. In 1903, in the journal *Man*, she published her illustrations of the ceramic sculptures from Jalisco along with an article entitled “Some Mexican Portrait Clay Figures.”⁴³ Breton’s drawings and watercolors of the ceramic sculptures and archaeological ruins are now in the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery in England.

While Lumholtz and Breton were responsible for first bringing the images of these ceramic sculptures to international attention, it was not until a few decades later that Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, the celebrated Mexican artists, would proclaim the ceramic art of Colima, Jalisco, and Nayarit indisputable masterpieces. Reflecting a nationalistic pride, the couple shared their passion for the indigenous arts of Mexico. Prior to their marriage in 1929, Rivera had begun to collect—and promote—ancient West Mexican sculpture (see fig. 11).⁴⁴ By 1941, he had amassed enough artifacts from Colima, Jalisco, Nayarit, Tlatilco, and other sites in the Valley of Mexico for a major book.⁴⁵ The acclaimed exhibition of Diego Rivera’s collection at Mexico City’s Palace of Fine Arts in 1946⁴⁶ was seminal in calling attention to the ancient ceramic art of West Mexico. Upon Rivera’s death in 1957, his entire pre-Hispanic collection officially totaled 59,400 objects,⁴⁷ and filled the personally designed building, the Anahuacalli; later, it became the Diego Rivera Museum in Mexico City, and was bequeathed to the people of Mexico.

In the century since the publications by Lumholtz and Breton, and the nearly five decades following the landmark exhibition of Rivera’s collection, appreciation of the value of West Mexican sculpture has escalated dramatically. Today, thousands of examples of West Mexican ceramic art may be found in museums and private collections worldwide. These elegant sculptures are admired for their craftsmanship as well as for their overall appeal, the artistry apparent in the simplicity of the forms, the rich finishes, and the refinement of technique. The combined use by prehistoric potters of incising, slips, and paint is original and outstanding.⁴⁸ Variations in subject, shape, size, color, and decoration reflect a diversity of artistic expression and creative vision. The sculptors of the figures used native clays and pigments without benefit of



Figure 11. Mexican artist Diego Rivera with brushes and palette, circa 1950s. On the shelves behind Rivera are Precolumbian objects, including examples of West Mexican ceramic sculpture. (Photograph by Bernice Kolko. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Funds from various donors, 2004)

a potter's wheel or molds for mass production, modeling the moist clay with their hands and adding details by attaching rolls of clay onto the basic work. These additional clay elements, here called fillets or appliqués, took the form of physical attributes, such as ears and noses, as well as of personal adornments. Tools made of wood, bone, shell, and stone were employed to carve features and create incised designs and patterns on the figures prior to firing. The early ceramists sometimes pecked or punctured the clay to differentiate textile, patterned, or other textured surfaces. The completed figure was then air dried until it was ready to be fired, either undecorated or painted.

Most ceramic figures are brilliantly colored with either slip or paint. Slip, made of fine clay and water, was applied by the ancient potter as a first coat, using a piece of animal pelt or fur, and became the figure's primary coloring and texture. Accents of color in slip, or in pigments made of ground minerals blended with a medium such as plant sap or juice, were painted on the body of the sculpture with a brush. Colors

49. Archaeological nomenclature for this period in West Mexico includes the Arenal phase (300 B.C.–A.D. 200, the Late Preclassic or Formative Period) and the Ahualulco phase (A.D. 200–400, the Early Classic Period) of the Teuchitlán traditions.

available to the highland ceramists included basic black, brown, cream, and white, and multi-hued iron oxide-based pigments in tones of red, rose, orange, yellow, and gold. Within an hour or two of applying the slip and paint, and prior to firing, the figures were polished to a lustrous, burnished finish, achieved by rubbing the slipped surfaces with a polishing stone (a smooth river pebble, one to two inches in diameter).

The ceramic figures were either hollow or solid; when hollow, vents were added to allow the hot air to escape during firing and to ensure that the work would not burst. Often, the vents also served as spouts to dispense liquid from the vessel. Solid figures are generally smaller than hollow ones and, because they are fired at a lower temperature, are more fragile. During firing, slip and paint chemically bond with the basic clay to form a lasting color; in cases when the paint did not adhere properly, designs were repainted. Sometimes the sculptures display faint traces of paint, but often modern restorers have painted over the remains of ancient designs in order to bring a broken or deteriorated figure back to its original appearance.

The early ceramists probably baked the clay figures to the desired hardness over a wood-fire pit. Unsuccessful firings might result in broken or collapsed sculptures, or discoloration when the flames actually touched the clay and created a smoky-black smudge or firecloud, although some ceramists regarded the latter as an aesthetic or decorative element. Many ceramic sculptures exhibit distinct splotchy, organic-looking black manganese dioxide accretions that are the result of biological/chemical processes that take place during burial. After hundreds of years in underground chambers, the manganese deposits are well established.

Shaft-and-chamber tombs containing ceramic sculptures date from about 300 B.C. to A.D. 400,⁴⁹ on the basis of scientific tests conducted on organic materials recovered from the tombs. However, because archaeologists skilled in collecting and testing these organic materials have discovered few unlooted shaft-and-chamber tombs, only a limited number of tombs and sculptures are scientifically datable. As shown in Table 1 (see page 35), scientific dating of shaft-and-chamber tombs with ceramic sculpture provides a general parameter of five hundred years for the production of the sculptures, from 300 B.C. to A.D. 200, with a flourish of shaft-and-chamber-tomb activity about A.D. 100.

IMAGERY OF KINSHIP AND STATUS

Most West Mexican art, including the ceramic sculptures in the Pearson Family Collection, portrays the human figure. These works express two fundamental aspects of social organization and kinship: gender and age. Gender is specified through the modeling of physical features and by dress, while age—specifically, old age—is conveyed through wrinkles, bent backs, thin arms, emaciated countenances, and, at times, with such attributes as a walking stick. Male and female figures with these characteristics portray ancestors or those near death; conversely, females holding smaller figures may be presenting their legitimate heirs. In any case, family, heritage, and kinship are among the most significant themes in West Mexican art.

A majority of the human figures are costumed. Females wear skirts, shown as lengths of woven material wrapped around the waist and in a variety of styles: short (to the knee) or long (to the ankle), plain or fringed along the border or decorated with colorful checkered patterns and designs. Upper-body nudity is common on female figures. Males frequently wear shorts, fastened by a belt with a tie or flap. Actual trousers may have been made from woven fabric or animal pelts, and the trophy

animal heads decorating some belts reinforce the pelt association. Few male figures are depicted in a traditional Mexican loincloth—a length of fabric that wrapped through the legs and around the waist. Often, male garments include a scoop-shaped codpiece, resembling a shell or a gourd, for extra padding. In addition, male figures sometimes sport a tunic, or a cloak or mantle, draped over one shoulder. Female figures also may wear mantles with their skirts. Textiles for these garments probably were woven on small looms using cotton and agave fibers spun on spindle whorls (see fig. 12).

A variety of techniques was employed to render the costumes of ceramic figures. Skirts, short trousers, and tunics were indicated by painting directly on the surface, and, within the painted outlines, textures and patterns were added by pecking and by incised hatch marks that, together with differences in color, distinguished a garment from the rest of a figure's body. The outline of a garment sometimes was achieved by incising or etching; when these lines appear at the waist and on the leg, they demarcate the borders of a skirt or trousers. A garment also might be sculpted by applying more clay, as is seen, for example, in the barrel-like armor worn by warrior figures. Specialized accoutrements were included to portray specific figure types, such as ceremonial dancers, chieftains, ballplayers, or shamans.

Frequently, personal adornments were painted or appliquéd on noses, ears, necks, shoulders, chests, arms, and legs. Many ceramic figures have an appliquéd nose ring with from one to several hoops, or a crescent-shaped clip, fastened under their nose. Appliquéd and painted earrings in many styles are worn by both male and female figures and may include round disks and earspools, with from one to several hoops, or a fan-shaped multiple disk-and-hoop combination. The earlobes of some figures have holes that originally may have held stones or perishable earrings made of feathers or flora. Appliquéd or painted neck ornaments represent necklaces composed of round beads or shells strung together, and plain bands perhaps indicate twine or leather, some with a central pendant. Rarely, a figure might wear a necklace with from six to eleven separate strands. Usually, necklaces are bound tightly around the neck but a few drape, even to the waist. Anywhere from one to ten armbands are worn, most often on the upper arm, by both male and female figures, and may be plain or embellished with small disks or shells. Less common are leg adornments and footwear. Rings or bands sometimes encircle the leg, just under the knee, and can be plain, decorated, or textured (to depict feathers?); decoration on the lower leg indicates either a sock or body paint.

Personal adornments and jewelry worn by the ceramic figures reflected reality (see fig. 13), as actual shell armbands, greenstone pendants, obsidian earspools, and beads of greenstone, quartz, bone, shell, and various other minerals have been found along with skeletal remains in shaft-and-chamber tombs.

The polychrome designs on figural sculptures replicated the ancient practice of applying body paint. Whether in the form of tattoos or stamped or painted designs,



Figure 12. These small, ceramic spindle whorls, collected by Carl Lumholtz at Atoyac, Jalisco, in 1897, were used to hold shafts for spinning cotton or agave fibers. The largest whorl is 4.3 centimeters in diameter. (American Museum of Natural History Library, New York)



Figure 13. Carved shell ornaments, collected in 1897 by Carl Lumholtz, from shaft-and-chamber tombs near Atoyac, Jalisco. The fragmentary armband measures 6.8 x 5.1 centimeters (American Museum of Natural History Library, New York)

for the ancient peoples the markings were symbolic of social position and served as a means of identification. The diamonds, chevrons, zigzag lines, dots, checkered squares, steps, and swirls on the bodies of the ceramic figures, as well as those painted on their garments and on architectural models, must have been intended to reflect the social order and to provide clues to a person's village, ethnic identity, and lineage. The designs appear on the faces, shoulders, backs, and chests of the ceramic figures, and probably replicate those that actual persons applied to their bodies with paint and a tattoo stamp. Another style of body art takes the form of patches of small, round and puffy raised pellets, clustered in square or circular patterns, on the shoulders and upper arms of many of the male and female ceramic figures; they may repre-

sent scarification, or a cluster of shells sewn together and worn like a mantle.⁵⁰

Based on the presence of vertical parallel lines etched into the cheeks of the ceramic figures, facial scarification, piercing, and bloodletting were variant types of body art. The ceramic sculptures document the practice of placing long rods in a person's mouth until they protruded through each cheek, creating the scars. The preponderance of earrings and nose rings worn by the West Mexican ceramic figures underscores the prevalence of body piercing. As noted, tattoos, scarring, and piercing were not simply for beauty and to establish identity but also for letting blood, which, in pre-Hispanic cultures, announced an individual's heritage. Bloodletting was especially critical following the death of an honored ancestor, when the inheritance of power, land, and status was at stake, and thus became part of the mourning process.⁵¹ Spines from the agave plant and obsidian lancets (see fig. 14), both readily available in the highlands, commonly were used to let blood. Because no actual evidence of tattoos, scars, or body paint from antiquity survives, the designs on the ceramic figures are the primary record of these prehistoric practices of decorating the body.

There is great variation and sophistication in the head shapes and hairstyles of the ceramic figures. Among pre-Hispanic people, there was a shared belief that cranial deformation beautified the human head. The skulls of infants were shaped by applying pressure to boards strapped on opposite sides of the head, resulting in elongations that are illustrated by the West Mexican figural sculptures. Hair is indicated with paint and by tight, parallel incised lines, reinforcing the notion that West Mexican females and males creatively styled their hair with parts and braids, and took pride in, and care with, their appearance. Using similar incising techniques, the hair of male figures sometimes is shown in a crested treatment reminiscent of Mohican-style coiffures, or in an upright style found only on male Zacatecas sculptures, where it is wrapped around a spool or other supportive device.

Headgear probably carried codified information about its wearer's social rank, political office, or kin-group affiliation. Male figures are depicted with one of several types of headgear, while females may wear only a headband, which encircles the head at the forehead level. At times, the headbands of both male and female figures are appliquéd, painted, and elaborately decorated with such elements as disks, pendants, sashes, or tassels, and have an added long braid or rope that hangs down the figure's back. On a few sculptures, long hair is shown wound around the headband, or turban;

the incised hair alternates with the band of fabric. Actual headbands and turbans were made of material woven from cotton or agave threads, or from animal pelts. The male ceramic figures sometimes wear sculptural conical hats that have a headband base and appear to fold together in back for flexibility; this feature, along with their hatched patterns, probably indicates that actual hats were made of fabric or basketry, with a brim of feathers, tassels, or other ornamentation.

Undoubtedly, specific forms of headgear signaled the wearers' key societal roles. For example, only shamans wore the one-horned headdress—perhaps symbolic of the antler of a deer, which, studies of ancient shamans' costumes in Siberia suggest, was the personification of the sun deity⁵²—that was usually integrated into a headband. Some shaman figures wear imposing helmets decorated with an animal effigy that would have represented their totem or animal spirit. Large appliquéd plant or floral motifs are a noticeably unusual adornment on headgear. Similarly, depictions of fantastical feather headdresses imply that the wearer is a chief or spiritual leader; on these, elongated parallel elements, signifying feathers, protrude from a headband, sometimes upright and in vertical rows. Bell-shaped helmets are seen exclusively on warrior figures, their shape perhaps serving a protective function; actual helmets of this type likely were made of a tough material such as reinforced animal hide. In short, these sculptures of chieftains, warriors, and shamans afford us an artist's perspective on the heritage of power in ancient West Mexican societies.

Members of kin groups probably dressed in emblematic costumes that were also replicated on the ceramic figures. In the Huitzilapa tomb discussed above, the male and female skeletal remains and the accompanying sculptures of human figures were similarly—and highly—adorned. All the skeletons were found with ceramic figures shown wearing shell bracelets, nose rings, and earrings, thus underscoring the fact that both men and women wore the emblems of their lineage and derived their status from genealogy. The shared elements of costume observed in the Huitzilapa tomb, both real and depicted, may reflect a kinship affiliation so powerful that it was perpetuated not only in the ceramic art but even in the afterlife.

Paired male and female sculptural figures echo a basic social phenomenon and may portray married couples, the founders of ancestral lineages, or the ancestral brother and sister of ancient lore, who have parallels in the brother-and-sister pairs in the Aztec pantheon. In Jalisco and Nayarit as well, pairs of large sculptures of physically similar males and females are identically adorned, reinforcing not only their shared social identity but the common genealogy of siblings or lineage members rather than of marriage pairs. West Mexican artists, like those from other pre-Hispanic societies, chose to depict founding ancestors and the primordial marriage couple or ancestral sibling pair in their funerary art. Since most West Mexican ancestral pairs are never seen in their original context, the discovery *in situ* of a Zacatecas pair, together, at El Cerro Encantado is quite significant. Many ancestral pairs are joined into a single sculpture, articulated at the legs, or with one figure's arms around the other. Male and



Figure 14. Obsidian tools, collected by Carl Lumholtz in 1897, from archaeological sites in Jalisco and Nayarit. From the left: A lancet, or knife; an *ocaxtle*, or tool used to scrape out the core of the maguey agave; and a projectile point for an arrow, or spear. The lancet measures 11.5 centimeters in height. (American Museum of Natural History Library, New York)

50. Meighan and Nicholson 1989, p. 109.
51. Townsend 1998 c, p. 133.
52. Pavinskaya 1994, p. 259.
53. Weigand 1974, p. 123.

female ancestral pairs may both display such status symbols as extensive body paint, textiles, and jewelry, including armbands, necklaces, earrings, and nose rings. From the fact that these groups of ancestral pairs are so remarkably alike, it would seem as though the figures represented well-known ancestors with specific traits and costumes. If certain sets of figural pairs do, indeed, depict founding ancestors of important lineages, that may explain their repeated and nearly identical appearance, for the sculptures are embodiments of the tales of the ancestors handed down by generations of their kin.⁵³

REGIONAL STYLES

The ceramic art of West Mexico is classified into three main styles: Jalisco, Nayarit, and Colima. Within these primary groups there are variant sub-styles named for the archaeological sites or modern towns where a particular type of sculpture has been found. Because potters as well as master craftspeople borrowed and then incorporated elements of other types in the region, many characteristics of West Mexican sculpture overlap, although each main style remains distinct.

From 300 B.C. to A.D. 400, artists in Jalisco, Nayarit, and Colima created their ceramic figures in local workshops, most probably at the village level. The techniques they employed may have derived from those refined by the Chupícuaro people of Guanajuato. Chupícuaro ceramic sculptures and vessels, which date from 400 to 300 B.C.—just prior to the great ceramic tradition of West Mexico—although distinctive, are considered transitional in style. The flat, solid clay figures are mostly female, and are painted in a thickly applied red slip with white geometric designs.

The gifted ceramic artists of Colima created sculptures of human subjects as well as creatures from the natural world. Dating from 300 B.C. to A.D. 400, these works in the Comala style originated near the Colima Volcano. Large and hollow, the sculptures are both distinctive and homogeneous, with lustrous finishes in light orange, red, tan, and black, which emphasized their plastic qualities and surface treatments. While occasionally abstract, Comala ceramics nevertheless display a refinement in the simplicity of their forms. Figural sculpture in the Comala style, which portrays individuals who played important roles in ancient societies, displays a simple realism in such details as carved eyes and noses and smoothly modeled bodies. The figures frequently wear a headband or a turban but not the lavish jewelry that adorns their Nayarit counterparts, although some are shown with a necklace of shells, beads, or other materials. Comala-style figural sculptures may represent shamans, who are identifiable by the one-horned headdress, mask, or other transformational costume element they wear; acrobats; hunchbacked dwarfs; ceremonial figures; or musicians holding panpipes, drums, rattles, and conch trumpets. Comala-style female figures often are dressed in long skirts, and may have the aging features of an honored ancestor.

In addition to human figures, ceramics in the Comala style—more than in any other West Mexican sculptural style—include diverse and even magical-looking animals. In fact, the most famous West Mexican sculptures depict dogs, whose fat bodies shine with a rich and lustrous orange or red slip. Aztec legends recount that the dog has associations with the journey of the dead to the netherworld, while figures of other animals were buried with the deceased to provide companionship or food in the afterlife. Intriguing large, hollow sculptures of parrots, turtles, crayfish, snakes, and ducks, as well as masked, mythical, and creatures in a state of transformation are

among those in the second category. In the Pearson Family Collection there are examples of some of these creatures, which may represent the bounty of the natural world, offering sustenance in this life as well as in the next. The ancestors interred in the shaft-and-chamber tombs may have relied on the “edible” creatures to sustain them on their travels to the netherworld. Another hypothesis is that the animal sculptures are embodiments of the characters in ancient myths—mnemonic devices for passing on stories over generations. Perhaps they served as emblems for kin groups, villages, or warriors—as, for example, the turtle warriors in protective armor that recall the mighty eagle warriors of the Aztec.

Comala pottery comprises exceptional effigy vessels and pumpkin-shaped containers with the same attractive colors and finishes. The decorations on these large, round ceramic vessels incorporate food and plant imagery,⁵⁴ including cacao, squash, maize, agave leaves and hearts, and native fruits, as well as such fauna as ducks, shrimp, crayfish, and dogs, in addition to human heads, and the vessels have interesting tripod supports composed of figures of birds and of other creatures. Many effigy figures have spouts, indicating that they were used to pour liquids.

The small yet solid buff-colored Colima figures represent variations of the primary Comala sculptural style. Other variants are the solid and flat “gingerbread”-type human figures, often depicted holding a small child or a dog in their arms, or the small, solid sculptures of ballplayers, dancers, and musicians, many of which also served as whistles. Coahuayana, a sub-style that prevailed near the southwest coast of Colima, is associated with archaeological sites along the Coahuayana River that separates Colima and Michoacán. The large, hollow Coahuayana sculptures are painted in various shades of red and brown slip, and portray both male and female figures frequently clasping bowls and seated on four-legged stools representative of rulership; they are sparsely clothed and often their shoulders are decorated with round, appliquéd pellets. Additional variations in the Coahuayana style include figures with full, round bodies or elongated torsos. After A.D. 300, a complex art style developed on the north side of the Colima Volcano, near the Jalisco border. These later Colima ceramic vessels and large sculptures comprised offerings, such as intertwined serpents and incense burners, with ceremonial and ritual associations.

Jalisco-style ceramic sculptures are large, hollow, and well made, and are finished in a variety of colors, with natural reds, brown, and buff predominating. Depictions of males and females are common, with obvious efforts at portraiture or realism. Faces are elongated, with wide-open eyes revealing round eyeballs; carved eyelids; long, straight noses; and parted lips that may disclose a row of carved teeth. Many figures have short, thick arms, and carved nails on their toes and fingers. Their feet are wide and flat or large and arched. Males and females frequently were sculpted as pairs and were decorated with similar, ornate jewelry. The male figures include images of ballplayers; musicians with flutes, drums, and rattles; and warriors with padded armor, helmets, and weapons. The figures often hold cups, bowls, and the *acocote* tool for extracting agave juice. Sculptures of dogs and deer occur rarely.

The ancient ceramic artists created many sub-styles, which were named for the villages throughout Jalisco where discoveries were made. For example, San Juanito, near the site of pre-Hispanic cemeteries, was the name given to one sub-style. San Juanito figures are hollow and buff colored and have elongated heads and eyes like slits, but it is the tasseled and multi-looped earrings depicted on male and female ceramic sculptures that distinguish the style. Ceramic figures in the Arenal sub-style,

named after the small but important site at El Arenal and also found *in situ* at Huitzilapa, exhibit tones of red to brown slip, with decorative details added in black and white. The style is naturalistic although the figures' large feet are arched to support them. Eyes are small but modeled, and teeth may be incised.

Figures in the Ameca-Etztatlán style unearthed at the site at Ahualulco are painted in cream, red, or gray to light brown slip, and have elongated heads; large, carved eyes; straight, naturalistic noses; and open mouths displaying incised teeth. The sculptures of females have large breasts, some decorated with black painted-scroll designs indicating tattoos or body paint.

The San Sebastián sub-style, which dates from 100 B.C. to A.D. 400, is known for expressive figures whose deep red slip surfaces are painted with designs in black and cream. Examples found along the Jalisco and Nayarit border have modeled eyes and mouths, carefully incised hair, and elephantine legs and arched feet.

Ceramics in the Tala-Tonalá style, associated with the eastern Atemajac Valley, are known for their distinctive rich red slip with details painted in a thick white slip. Tala-Tonalá figural sculptures have pointy faces, with prominent noses that inspired the outdated term “sheep faced,” and besides elegant females, include miniature architectural models, their roofs topped with animal totems.

Zacatecas sculptures are well fired, their burnished surfaces decorated with polychrome slip and sophisticated resist painting—a technique in which the designs are applied in an undercoat medium that “resists” a second coat of red slip painted over the first. Diamond and geometric patterns in dark brown or gray are typically found on Zacatecas male and female ancestral pairs. Each sculpture has an oval air vent on the top of the head and round eyes and mouths. The males are seated, with their thin arms folded across their knees, and their hair is worn wound around two spools in what appears to be a unique style.

The Nayarit ceramic style is characterized by two distinct types of figures: The first are small, solid constructions, usually unslipped, buff in color, and fired at low heat, and may be single figures or tableaux of up to fifty figures populating architectural structures with anywhere from one to many rooms, and patios, ceremonial plazas, ball courts and underground tombs. Architectural elements such as roofs, and adornments worn by attached, diminutive figures, are decorated with painted designs in tones of black, red, and white. The figures may take part in seasonal and ceremonial events: Dances around tree poles, marriages, bloodletting, scenes of family life, rites of passage, feasting, drinking ceremonies, and funerals are depicted. The ceramic models and tableaux belong to the Ixtlán del Río sub-style of Nayarit, which also includes a variety of large, hollow, expressionistic figural sculptures whose buff or black slip surfaces are overpainted with designs in red and white. Their thin yet solid arms distinguish the Ixtlán del Río figures, as do their facial features—pinched, protuberant noses; open mouths with etched teeth; and cheek scarification. Both male and female figures are sumptuously adorned with modeled and painted costume details, and they frequently wear multi-looped earrings and nose rings. Nayarit figures can portray musicians, joined ancestral pairs, family members, ballplayers, or participants in a feast holding cups and bowls.

Lagunillas is a Nayarit sub-style previously known as Chinesco (or Chinese) on account of the narrow, horizontally etched eyes of the figure types. The style dates to approximately A.D. 100. Lagunillas sculptures are primarily medium-sized depictions

Site of Tomb	Material Dated	Date Sculpture	Style
Tuxpan, Jalisco ⁵⁵	Shell	400 B.C.	Comala
Loma del Volantin, Colima ⁵⁶	Shell	280 B.C.–A.D. 260	Comala, various
Huitzilapa, Jalisco ⁵⁷	Burned matter	A.D. 65	Arenal
Las Cebollas, Nayarit ⁵⁸	Shell	A.D. 100	Ixtlán del Río model, Lagunillas
San Sebastián, Jalisco ⁵⁹	Shell Bone collagen	140–120 B.C. A.D. 300–335	San Sebastián, Arenal
El Cerro Encantado, Jalisco ⁶⁰	Burned antler	A.D. 100–250	Zacatecas
Tecomán, Colima ⁶¹	Shell	A.D. 100	various
Colima tomb ⁶²	Shell	A.D. 105	various

Table 1. Scientific dating from shaft-and-chamber tomb material

of human figures, with broad, flat faces; narrow eyes; and characteristic finely painted details. Ceramic dogs were made in the Lagunillas style and these, too, express an aesthetic of simplicity. Slipped in cream, reds, and browns, the elegant Lagunillas figures are highly polished and delicately decorated in red and black, and are among the most highly treasured artifacts from highland Mexico.

Other local variations and sub-styles that developed in the highlands suggest that potters did not adhere to strict guidelines. Master artisans strove for creativity and artistic expression as well as the technical refinements made possible by advancements in production methods. The overlapping of stylistic features suggests social as well as regional interaction, and perhaps political cohesiveness throughout the area. The enduring legacy of ceramic sculpture is not merely its artistic qualities but its role as a primary source of information about the ancient peoples of West Mexico. The sculptures constitute historic and ethnographic documents that serve as a window into the heritage of power that characterized these early societies. The figures portrayed by West Mexican sculptors were members of kin groups and ancestral lineages, and through their sculptures, artists were able to convey the social and political milieu of their early societies. Their two-thousand-year-old ceramic tradition provides the most immediate archaeological evidence with which to shape our knowledge of the early inhabitants of West Mexico.

55. Meighan and Nicholson 1989, p. 69.

56. Ibid.

57. López Mestas Camberos and Ramos de la Vega 1998, p. 64.

58. Furst 1966, p. 140.

59. Long 1966 a; Meighan and Nicholson 1989, p. 69.

60. Bell 1974, p. 158.

61. Meighan and Nicholson 1989, p. 69.

62. Ibid.

CATALOGUE

JALISCO



1. Seated Ballplayer

Ameca-Etztatlán style, 100 B.C.–A.D. 300

Overall: 19 7/8 x 13 in. (49.8 x 33 cm); Ball: diameter 3 3/8 in. (8.5 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

The male figure sits erect, with his legs crossed in front of him.¹ He prominently displays a large ball, held at chest height, which establishes his identity as a ballplayer. The figure's elongated head is consistent with cranial deformation—the flattening of an infant's soft cranium for future prestige. His elegantly styled hair is gathered on top into a smooth crest; the remaining hair is modeled in the back, where it hangs down to his shoulders. A headband with seventeen appliquéd elements marks the ballplayer's high status. A narrow, straight nose with flared nostrils dominates the finely sculpted face; the deeply carved eyes are expressive; and the open mouth exposes incised teeth. Air vents are situated in the centers of the hollow figure's ears, which display simple, round earpools. The anatomically correct hands feature strong thumbs and protruding wristbones—seemingly desirable attributes for a ballplayer—and his care-

fully carved fingernails are a characteristic of the Ameca-Etztatlán style. The red-slip shorts, which have a white rear flap with a pecked edge, are secured around the figure's waist by a thin, pecked, appliquéd belt. The bent, crossed legs each sport a leg band, similar to the headband, with ten decorative elements. These garments and accoutrements suggest that the ballplayer was also a chieftain or a wealthy man. The figure's toes are carved as adeptly as are the fingers.

The ballplayer is covered primarily in cream slip with red-slip accents. The smudged, blackened areas, caused by flames engulfing the pottery during firing, are called fire clouds by ceramists, and may have been intended as a surface embellishment.

Note

1. For a ballplayer in a similar position see Chicago 1998, no. 122, ill. p. 155, fig. 5.



1: back view



2. Standing Ballplayer

Ameca-Etztatlán style, 100 B.C.–A.D. 300

Overall: 11½ x 5⅞ in. (29.2 x 13.7 cm);

Ball: diameter 1⅞ in. (4 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

A male ballplayer stands with his feet apart and holds a spherical ball up to his chin. His oversized head and elongated face display the cranial shaping characteristic of Ameca-Etztatlán sculpture. The figure is depicted with an unusual combination of hair and head covering: His black hair is combed into a notched crest that is highlighted by his appliquéd white headgear, which is wound around his head, its etched marks indicating braiding or rope. The oval opening at the top of his head in the back is an air vent. The broad forehead, elongated nose, and enormous carved eyes with black centers dominate the face. Black paint encircles the eyes, extending back to the ears with their round disk-like earrings, and also outlines the figure's mouth. Each of the teeth is individually incised. Both shoulders are decorated with eleven appliquéd pellets, and similar discoid elements are found on the narrow armbands. Interestingly, the toes and fingers lack the detailing typical of the Ameca-Etztatlán style.

The large black ball, as well as the black, appliquéd pelvic protector worn by the figure—with extra padding for the coccyx or tailbone—identifies him as a ballplayer. The surfaces of the hollow sculpture are covered in buff and brown slips, with traces of red visible particularly around the neck. The extensive black spotting is postdepositional discoloration caused by manganese dioxide accretions that occur after burial in the host shaft-and-chamber tomb.

3. Dancer

Ameca-Etztatlán style, 100 B.C.–A.D. 300

12 7/8 x 6 in. (32.7 x 15.2 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

Life-like details, skilled modeling, and a rich surface finish contribute to the artistic quality of this sculpture. The male figure's posture, hairstyle, accoutrements, and garments make him unique. His unusual twisting pose suggests that

he may represent a dancer or a participant in a ceremony. His upper body and arms are turned one way, while his lower body and legs pivot in the opposite direction. The legs are crossed, with the right leg placed in front of the left one.





3: back view



3: side view

The positioning of the flat feet wide apart grants stability to the figure despite the twisted stance. The figure's rounded back is like that of a hunchback, and his prominent belly—with an air vent centered in the navel—is suggestive of overindulgence. He raises his left hand to his mouth and rests his right hand on his right buttock. Traces of black suggest that originally there were simple bands around the upper arms. The right elbow has two small holes that perhaps served as air vents or as sockets to hold an impermanent attribute like a feather or flag. Adding to the sense of movement, the figure's head is cocked to one side. His exceptional hairstyle is shaped into four curved and appliquéd ridges into which short vertical lines are incised to represent strands of hair. The face is refined and naturalistic in shape, as is the angular nose, and the appliquéd oval eyes are encircled in black paint. The spiral sun design on the left cheek and the crosshatched pattern on the right one indicate either tattoos or body paint. Incisions in the earlobes are

meant to show that the large earpools have pulled or stretched both ears.

Six pelts, or bags, with thick straps are draped from the figure's neck and shoulders, and hang down at the front, back, and sides. Each is the same rounded shape, with an upper, cutout section, its surface pecked to resemble netting, feathers, or animal skin. If these are bags, perhaps the figure portrayed is a trader of cacao, tobacco, peyote, or another sacred substance that has inspired his dance. If ceremonial, the pecked, textured costume may designate an animal spirit. The texture is repeated in the beautiful girdle, or loincloth. A codpiece in the form of a bird appears in front, and, on the back, flaps incised with an intricate geometric pattern suggest a textile. The codpiece and girdle resemble the hip protectors of a ballplayer's uniform. Another feature that makes the figure exceptional is the richness of its marmalade-colored slip, achieved by highly burnishing the surfaces of the sculpture.



4

4. Musician

Ameca-Etztatlán style, 100 B.C. – A.D. 300

18 1/8 x 11 5/8 in. (46 x 29.5 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

Based on the instruments in his hands, it is safe to surmise that this elegant male figure represents a participant in an

ancient West Mexican ceremony or musical event. His hair is smoothly shaped into a crest and colored black, and his

handsome face is distinguished by large carved eyes ringed in black, an elongated nose, and an expressive mouth. The punctured holes in the oversized ears probably once held fragile earrings made of feathers, flora, or fiber. An air vent marks the center of each ear. The only garment worn by the figure is short trousers painted in black slip. He raises a three-tubed panpipe to his mouth with his left hand and holds up a perforated rattle with his right hand (actual panpipes likely were made from native reeds, and rattles, from gourds containing dried seeds). As if moving

to the music, he leans forward, bent at the waist. The large, flat, rectangular feet, over six inches in length, give the figure stability. Consistent with the Ameca–Etzatlán style, the fingers and toes are sculpted and each nail precisely incised. The highly burnished surfaces of the sculpture feature a striking marmalade-colored slip ranging from orange to tan.

Reference

Chicago 1998, no. 133, ill. p. 27, fig. 19.

5. Pulque Maker

Ameca–Etzatlán style, 100 B.C.–A.D. 300

21¾ x 14⅝ in. (55.2 x 37.1 cm)

Jill Pearson and Alan Rappaport

The bulky male figure sits cross-legged and holds an object in each hand. Accentuating his body size is his disproportionately small head. The three-tiered knot on his crown represents an unusual hairstyle or headdress; behind the knot is an air vent. The classic coffee-bean eyes, set close together on either side of a regal nose, were made from oval fillets of clay scored horizontally and put in place prior to firing. The open mouth reveals individually incised teeth, each of which has a punched indentation in the middle. There are still traces of the black slip on the face that was meant to designate vertical stripes of body paint or tattoos. The curved ears feature fancy three-looped earrings stippled in red and black; puncture marks in the middle ring may have held feathers or other delicate materials. The jowls of the carefully modeled elongated face reinforce the heftiness of the person portrayed. A scoop-shaped pendant around his neck, suspended from a cord tied in back with a tassel, may depict a cut piece of shell. The torso is broad and fleshy; a wide sash, or loincloth, constricts the mid-section,

exposing a roll of fat. Black, crosshatched marks on the figure's garment suggest that it is a woven textile. The burnished figure is slipped in a red color, over which traces of painted crosshatched diamonds are detectable. The back of the torso is decorated with four dotted paisley-like swirls that represent body paint or tattooing. The hands and feet are incised with rough grooves to indicate fingers and toes.

In his left hand, the figure holds a fancy bowl decorated inside with stripes, and in his right hand is an *acocote*—a tool used to make pulque, the fermented beverage favored by ancient Mexican peoples. Fashioned from elongated gourds, *acocotes* were used to suction juice from the heart of the agave plant; they are still employed by farmers in the region of the Tequila Volcano in Jalisco, to prepare pulque.

This figure, which was placed in a shaft-and-chamber tomb hundreds of years ago, may represent a chief whose wealth derived from the cultivation of agave and the serving of pulque.





6

6. Warrior

Ameca-Etztatlán style, 100 B.C. – A.D. 300
16¾ x 10⅞ in. (42.5 x 25.7 cm)
Joanne and Andrall Pearson

7. Warrior

Ameca-Etztatlán style, 100 B.C. – A.D. 300
17⅞ x 9 in. (44.8 x 22.9 cm)
Joanne and Andrall Pearson

The sturdy pose and the substantial physical features of catalogue number 6 reinforce the identification of this figure



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as a warrior. His large, expressive eyes are carved in the Ameca–Etzatlán style, their rims and oval centers painted in black slip. His lips are closed, concealing the teeth, but they project like a duck's bill, perhaps puckered in a whistle. The straight, triangular nose is complete with indented nostrils. Like a pie cut into six sections, wedges representing face paint radiate from the nose. Three sections near the eyes and

the mouth are painted in black slip, alternating with three sections in the tan, base slip; two of the latter are decorated with several pea-size black circles. The figure wears a bell-shaped hat, narrow at the top and broadening at the brim, which covers the brow; it is encircled with a decorative pattern of three rows of black zigzags. Air vents are located at the centers of the curved ears. The hands are realistic, with

each nail distinctly carved. The top component of the two-part protective armor consists of a buff, unslipped top “shell,” or barrel-like garment, which protects the torso and extends up over the neck. At the bottom edge, the carapace is connected with appliquéd notches to the lower, padded hip covering—perhaps shorts, or a girdle-like garment—which seems to prop up or buttress the armor. The hip garment is decorated with black chevron designs, and a coccyx protector, or “tail,” attached to the carapace.

The warrior figure stands in an animated pose, facing to his left, his broad, flat feet, with their detailed toes and nails, firmly planted on the ground. With both hands, he grips a thick spear with a pointed tip and a rounded shaft that has twelve knobs on the butt end.

The figure in catalogue number 7 also is a striking example of the Ameca–Etzatlán warrior type, whose refined features include prominent oval eyes with black pupils and an elongated nose with flared nostrils. The lips protrude as if he were whistling. Carved teeth are revealed by the partially open mouth, and air vents are visible inside his large ears. Four wedge-shaped areas of face paint are applied symmetrically, radiating from the center of the face; dividing it vertically is a white strip with black dots extending from the forehead to the chin. Small black circles decorate the reddish cheeks and black zigzags extend around the brim of the bell-shaped helmet, which has a knob on the top. The figure’s arms are gracefully curved, and the hands show the artist’s touch in rendering anatomically correct and deliberately incised fingers and nails. The carapace, or barrel-like costume, of the warrior has two parts: A “shell” encircles the shoulders and torso and a padded hip garment holds the armor in place. The girdle retains traces of the original black-slip chevron designs. Standing in a warrior pose, the figure faces to his left, his feet planted wide apart, and with both hands he brandishes a spear that has a triangular or diamond-shaped tip and twelve knobs on the distal end.

Clues as to how ancient West Mexicans dressed for battle are revealed by these two sculptures. The bell-shaped helmets must have served as protection, and the patterns on the brims suggest that perhaps the actual helmets were made of basketry, or were woven from maguey fibers. Similarly, the padded hip garments are decorated with black chevrons reminiscent of pre-Hispanic weavings. It may be informative that the upper armor has no patterns that would indicate weaving or basketry and its plain surfaces instead may represent a smooth animal hide. The hip garments or shorts worn on top of the armor join the upper to the lower garment. The appliquéd notches clearly depict points of connection—perhaps strips of rawhide or a rope tying the



6 and 7: rear view

two parts together. Curiously, only the garment of the warrior in catalogue number 6 has a coccyx protector or “tail” attached to the shorts; the warrior in catalogue number 7 lacks this element. Differentiation in the poses is evident from the back views: The feet of the warrior in catalogue number 6 are planted firmly on the ground and face straight ahead, whereas those of the figure in catalogue number 7 are angled inward and appear pigeon-toed, but it is not known if there is any significance to these differences.

Reference

Chicago 1998, no. 136, ill. p. 43, fig. 12.

8. Warrior

Ameca–Etzatlán style, 100 B.C.–A.D. 400

17¾ x 8¼ in. (45.1 x 21 cm)

Jill Pearson and Alan Rappaport

The warrior stands erect and faces forward. He has deeply carved eyes, a straight nose, an open mouth, and a set of incised teeth. His bell-shaped helmet, which has a particularly broad brim, is topped with a large but thin triangular element. Each of the warrior’s ears is adorned with a simple, roughly made earclip, and has an air vent visible at the center. The figure’s arms and legs are colored with red slip and burnished, contrasting with the mat, buff finish of his protective carapace. This barrel-like armor—the interior of the



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top section is sealed, painted in red slip, and highly burnished—is a clear indication that he is a warrior. As in the similar costumes of the figures in catalogue numbers 6 and 7, a belt joins the lower, hip garment to the carapace. The coccyx protector has a pecked texture. With both hands,

which have anatomically correct fingers and nails, the figure clasps a thick club, now missing its distal end.

These figures from West Mexico may represent competitors on the battlefield, legendary ancestral warriors, or shamans protecting the dead on the journey to the netherworld.



9. Standing Female Figure

Tala-Tonalá style, 100 B.C.–A.D. 250

20 1/8 x 9 3/8 in. (51.1 x 23.8 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

10. Standing Female Figure

Tala-Tonalá style, 100 B.C.–A.D. 250

15 1/2 x 7 1/2 in. (39.4 x 19.1 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

The female figure in catalogue number 9 is smoothly modeled with rounded contours, the striking deep-red slip burnished to a lustrous finish. Accents are overpainted with a thick white slip. The cranium is elongated and flattened, suggesting a purposeful cranial deformation—a sign of beauty and status in many Mesoamerican societies. Encircling the crown of the head is a thick band decorated with a pattern of white stripes and squiggles on a red background, and with a knot and a long white tassel in the back. The cheeks and lower face are full; shapely eyebrows frame the oval eyes, which are painted white; the nose is pointed and displays a white three-hooped ornament at the septum; and a dab of white slip representing teeth highlights the modeled mouth. The figure's ears not only protrude and are exaggerated in size but are carefully sculpted with realistic details, including circular red earrings ringed with twelve white dots. Around her neck are four strands consisting of alternating patterns of three small "beads" (dots of white slip) interspersed with elongated beads or other materials (dashes of white slip).

The curved forms of the figure and especially the nude torso and small breasts—each of which is underscored with a line of white slip—identify it as female. The figure's left hand touches the left



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shoulder, while the right hand is held at waist level. The hands and the square, carved fingers are covered in white slip perhaps meant to depict a woven glove or body paint, indicative of social status or of a particular ethnic or kin group. Three round white circles on each shoulder may sig-

nify actual body paint or scarification. The ankle-length skirt is sectioned into broad triangular divisions, each patterned in either white dots on red or white crosses on red alternating with areas of solid white fill; the actual garment represented was undoubtedly a beautiful textile. Below the hem, the figure's feet are visible, finished in burnished red slip, the ankle bones protruding and the toes incised.

The delicately modeled and burnished sculpture seen in catalogue number 10 has a rich red slip overpainted with a thickly applied white slip. The bare chest and the skirt indicate that the figure is female. Her elongated head demonstrates that cranial deformation was a mark of status bestowed upon women in ancient West Mexico. A thick red band around her head has a repeat pattern of three white vertical stripes; hanging from the knot in the back is a single long tassel painted in white slip. Below the flattened forehead, the sculpted brow frames the carved eyes highlighted with white slip. Suspended from the symmetrical nose is a set of three white nose rings. The mouth is simply modeled and colored white to suggest teeth, and the carefully rendered large ears stand out on either side of the head and sport circular red earrings ringed with twelve white dots. The figure's necklace is composed of three strands of "beads" (dots of white slip), the longest strand further embellished in front with three tassels, or feather-like designs. Her right hand rests on her right shoulder, while her left hand is held at her waist. Round white circles decorate her shoulders. Her hands are covered in white slip perhaps to identify lineage, status, or a specific village. The white stripe under each breast may depict either a belt or actual body paint. On the ankle-length skirt, alternating patterns of white dots or crosses are set off on a red-slip background. The lower legs are finished in burnished red slip, and four incisions in the feet demarcate the toes.

The back views of these two exceptional figures offer a glimpse into the meticulous artistry involved in the creation of such ancient West Mexican masterpieces. In each case, modeling, decorative designs, slip application, and burnishing extend to the whole figure. For the sculptor, the details on the rear were as important as those on the front. From all views, the two female figures are quite alike, although catalogue number 9 is noticeably larger: Each is covered with a striking red slip, with details painted in a thick white slip, and has a highly burnished surface. Their poses are similar, as are their skirts, jewelry, and headgear. The areas of white body paint on their hands, the circles on their shoulders, and the lines under their breasts, however, are identical; in fact, if placed face-to-face, in pose and positioning of the hands and arms, the two figures are mirror images of each other—



9 and 10: rear view

which, together with such shared details as the applications of slip, skirt patterns, and headband tassels, suggests the possibility that one artist made them, despite the absence of a signature.

The two figures together represent an uncommon female-only ancestral pair, perhaps a matrilineal kin group in which status is passed through female descendants only. As noted, their cranial deformations and sumptuous costumes are indicators of high status. The selection of the best artisan to sculpt these portrait figures is another indicator of their status. The variation in size may symbolize differences in generations (mother and daughter) or in age (between two sisters). It is also possible that this pair of elegant female figures may depict the same person during different stages of life, in youth and maturity.

Reference

Chicago 1998, no. 147, ill. p. 29, fig. 21.

II. Four Female Figures

San Sebastián style, A.D. 100

A: $5\frac{7}{8} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ in. (14.9 x 8.9 cm); B: $5\frac{1}{2} \times 4$ in. (14 x 10.2 cm);
C: $5\frac{3}{8} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$ in. (13.7 x 9.5 cm); D: $5\frac{5}{8} \times 3\frac{3}{8}$ in. (14.3 x 8.6 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

These four female figures share similarities in form, size, color, and style. As they portray pregnant females kneeling in a birthing position, they have one body shape, with a protruding belly. The four have appliquéd hair that is painted in black slip. Three of the figures have a headdress in common: a crisscrossed turban with a circular ornament in the center, although one center ornament is now missing; one figure has black hair in a crested style. A red slip covers the figures' faces. Diagonal black stripes highlight their coffee-bean eyes, and one figure has black eyebrows. Their elongated, pointed, and pinched noses have tiny depressions for nostrils. The mouths are modeled and painted black, and the curved ears are adorned with circular earpools. The figure with the crested hairstyle wears a necklace with dangling beads, indicated in black paint. All four nude cream-colored torsos have vertical dashes of black body paint, and the breasts are decorated with black spirals. The figures' shoulders are adorned with from seven to ten pellets each, and their foreshortened arms extend away from their bodies.



II A: side view



11A–D

Notches delineate the fingers. Details show that two figures have inverted and two protruding belly buttons, but all have air vents in their navels. The skirts of two of the females have a repeat diamond pattern in red slip.

The back views reveal that all four figures have short, groomed black hair. Long, white appliquéd tassels are suspended from two of their turbans, and stand out against the black hair; one turban is now missing its tassel. The one, black necklace depicted completely encircles the wearer's neck. The feet are folded beneath the figures but are visible under the skirts, toes pointing inward. It may be inferred that artisans crafted the four figures as a group to be placed as a single offering in the same tomb. The similarity of their features signifies a shared identity, whether of kinship or ethnicity, rather than emphasizing individual expressions. While the ceramist possessed the skill to make the figures identical, there are, nevertheless, small purposeful differences among them in body paint, turbans, and skirts. The artist may have intended to portray a variety of females of high rank. The more elaborate figure—with the black necklace and distinct hairstyle—may represent the most powerful of the group, perhaps the elder in the lineage. Alternately, all four may depict the same person, over time—an important

woman who was pregnant four times—each birthing figure legitimizing a future heir to the bloodline.

12. Standing Female Figure

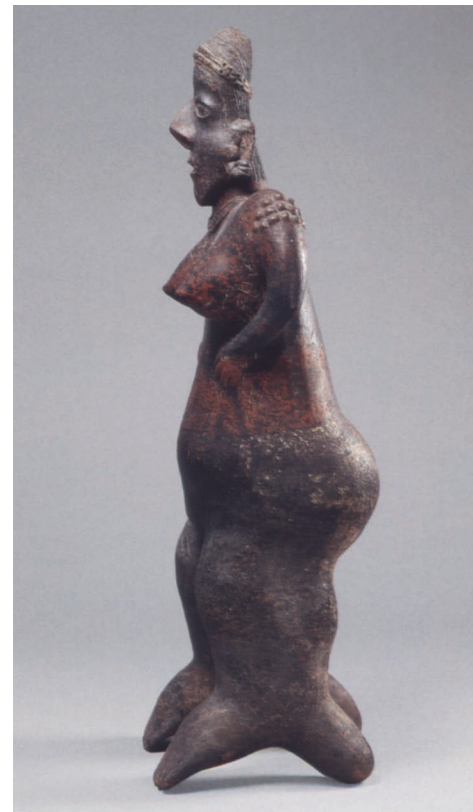
San Sebastián style, A.D. 100
 25 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (63.8 x 28.3 cm)
 Joanne and Andrall Pearson

Imposing by virtue of her size, nudity, and enormous elephantine legs, this female figure is a quintessential San Sebastián form whose body shape terminates in large, arched feet over seven-and-a-half inches long.¹ The hollow figure is highly decorated, beginning with the hairstyle. Every carefully incised hair is combed back to the nape of the figure's neck; in front, the hair has a double part in the middle. She wears an appliquéd headband composed of two ropes, each of which has four symmetrical sets of four punctures; the band encircles an oval-shaped air vent on the crown of her head. Carved, open eyes painted white make the figure's expression appear alert. Her pronounced, triangular nose has indentations for nostrils, and her open, sculpted mouth reveals incised teeth. Appliquéd earrings with five to six



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loops are suspended from each earlobe, and she wears an elaborate three-strand necklace modeled in clay from which a five-piece appliquéd ornament is suspended in front. Fifteen appliquéd pellets, set in a symmetrical pattern, adorn each shoulder. The figure's posture is graceful: She rests her small hands with incised fingers on her waist. Although black with manganese dioxide deposits, the sculpture retains its burnished, red-slipped surfaces. Traces of checkered patterns, possibly in the resist technique, suggest body paint or



12: side view

tattooing. The primary pattern is black on red, whereas the waist and lower areas show traces of gold and pink slip as well. A swirl motif decorates the buttocks, a carved groove signifies her pubes. Barely detectable squiggly lines indicate that plant roots once grew on or near the figure while it was buried in a tomb. Such powerful figures as the present one constitute artistic evidence of the high status accorded females in ancient West Mexican societies.

Note

1. For a similar figure see Chicago 1998, no. 140, ill. p. 118, fig. 12.

13. Pair of Ancestral Figures Seated on Stools

San Sebastián style, A.D. 100

Female: 19 1/4 x 9 5/8 in. (49 x 24.4 cm); Male: 21 7/8 x 11 1/4 in. (55.6 x 28.6 cm)

Jill Pearson and Alan Rappaport

The shared simplicity of their form and tonality lends this female and male pair an unquestionable elegance. The



hollow sculptures are colored with shades of buff and orange slip. Oval air vents open out at the top of each figure's crown. The female is skillfully modeled. A carved line visible on the back and the side of her head outlines her hair, which traces of dark slip indicate at one time was black. The figure's face is smooth; the eyes, with their long horizontal slits, and the nose and nostrils each are carved; and the mouth is slightly open in a faint smile. The prominent eyebrows and ears are sculpted, and each ear sports a four-looped earring. The female is nude, with small modeled breasts and a rounded pubes and carved groove. Her arms are bent at the elbows and her hands appear to blend into her torso. She wears tight leg bands with tassels, and etched lines demarcate her toes. Propped on a two-legged stool, the figure was designed to lean forward for balance with just her heels touching the ground.

The male's fancy coiffure, or headgear, consists of buff-colored hair bisected in front by an incised crest and held together in back by a horizontal, punctured band. The hair encircling his head is depicted as roughly incised vertical lines. His face is modeled with the same care as the female's. He has a prominent brow, nose, and ears with four-looped

earrings in each one, elongated eyes carved with horizontal slits, and a round mouth that appears open. The male is nude and his genitalia are depicted. He leans forward on the stool with his weight balanced on his heels and his hands resting on his knees; his feet and etched toes are otherwise plain. As with the female figure, the hands blend into the body at the point of contact. Traces of black slip suggest that at one time the male was decorated with designs representing tattoos or body paint.

The comparable sculptural style and finish of the two sculptures argue for the same artist as their creator. The two-legged stools on which the figures are enthroned symbolize power in pre-Hispanic art and signify that, as an actual male and female pair, they once held leadership positions.¹ The figures may portray an original or founding ancestral pair, although the fact that, physically, they are so alike might indicate that they represent a brother and sister with a shared lineage, rather than a marriage pair.²

Notes

1. Graham 1998.
2. For a similar pair see Chicago 1998, no. 142, ill. p. 273, fig. 9.

14. Pair of Ancestral Figures

Zacatecas style, A.D. 200

Female: 15⁵/₈ x 9 in. (39.7 x 22.9 cm); Male: 16³/₈ x 9¹/₂ in.

(41.6 x 24.1 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

The Zacatecas ancestral pair represents one of the most celebrated styles of West Mexican sculpture. The two figures are similarly made and finished with a highly burnished red slip. Their bodies are covered with subtle patterns applied in a finely executed resist technique. Both figures have oval openings on the tops of their heads. The male has additional air holes in his navel, on his torso under his left arm, and under each knee. The hairstyle of male Zacatecas figures is unique: Their hair is worn wound around supports to create two erect spools, or horns, that issue from the top of the head. Here, the tops of the spools are solid and painted in red slip, and each spool has a black stripe to indicate the hair; at the back, the hair is all black. The male figure's face is colored with a tan slip, marked by two diagonal lines of brown face paint, and the sculpted eyebrows,

carved eyes, and the mouth are ringed with the same shade of brown. The pinched and pronounced nose has air holes for nostrils. The figure wears earrings with a thick red outer ring and a white center pierced with a hole; the four white stripes below a black stripe encircling the neck denote a necklace. His small nipples are asymmetrically placed. He sits with his thin arms folded and resting on his knees, the upper arms adorned with bands in the form of four white stripes or painted rings. The male's torso is covered with bold vertical patterns in alternating black and cream against a red background; the design is particularly clear on the rear torso, where the lower cream border suggests a woven tunic. The bent legs are bulbous and decorated with parallel zigzag lines probably indicating body paint, and the oddly formed feet with their separated toes are tiny in relation to the size



of the legs. The figure's nudity is conveyed by the depiction of small genitalia.

The female member of the ancestral pair is distinctive, yet bears a striking similarity to her male partner. From the front, her hair appears as a strip of black encircling the top of her head; in back, it is indicated simply by black slip. Her face is colored in a tan slip highlighted with dark brown, which, together with her sculpted, prominent eyebrows, and her carved round eyes also accented with brown, creates a decidedly dramatic effect. Her prominent nose is modeled with indentations at the nostrils and her round mouth is ringed in appliqué with a hole at the center. Two horizontal brown stripes extend from one side of her face to the other, directly above and below her mouth. She wears earpools like the male figure, also with round red outer rings and white centers with indentations, as well as a necklace in the form of four white stripes, above which is a

lovely pattern of black diamonds that decorates her neck just below the chin. Her thin upper arms are painted with four white stripes each, to represent armbands. The front and back of her torso are richly yet subtly patterned with alternating black, cream, and red wiggly lines. Her belly button serves as an air hole. The figure's highly decorative breasts are lavishly dotted and ringed with overpainting in a thick white slip. She is seated with her hands resting on her waist and her legs extending forward. Three white leg bands adorn each leg, and her small fan-like feet each have the requisite five toes. Pairs of ancestral figures such as this Zacatecas example have been found together, as sets, in shaft-and-chamber tombs, along with other offerings to the dead.¹

Note

1. For a similar pair see Chicago 1998, no. 149, ill. p. 130, fig. 34.

15. Standing Figure

Chupícuaro style, 400–300 B.C.

15⁷/₈ x 7³/₄ in. (40.3 x 19.7 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

The spectacular finish of this solid figure is a classic feature of the Chupícuaro style. The red slip is brilliant and multi-tonal, with white or cream slip providing contrast and detail. Overall, the surfaces of the sculpture are smooth and highly burnished. In cross section, the figure appears quite flat. The top of the elongated head curves backward, its shape and cranial deformation suggesting the subject's high social status. Instead of hair covering the head, the figure seems to be wearing a white cap with a thick strap under the chin; on the front of the cap, at the top, is a thin white stripe dividing a block of red. The facial features are modeled: The enormous eyes, outlined in white, have carved rounded pupils; the stubby nose is punctuated by nostrils punched into the clay; and the

mouth is carved in a pleasant smile. Ears are indicated by simple, rounded indentations on the sides of the head. The figure wears an elaborately decorated costume. A pattern of diamond shapes and cross-hatching in white on red covers most of the front of the torso. The architectural stepped-pyramid motif outlined in white on the figure's back may have communicated the name of a town or affiliation, such as "Village or House of Chupícuaro." The bold designs on both front and back must represent a woven garment or body paint, and the white slip on the figure's upper legs, shorts. Most of the lustrous bichrome ceramics and figures from Chupícuaro were buried with the dead in cemeteries that contained the shallow graves of nearly four hundred individuals.



COLIMA



16. Seated Female Figure

Comala style, 200 B.C.–A.D. 300

14 1/4 x 7 7/8 in. (36.2 x 20 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

This female figure incorporates the minimalism, color, and burnished surfaces for which Comala sculptures are renowned. Her hairstyle emphasizes simplicity. A single incision extending from ear to ear around the top of her face indicates her hairline. A short lock of five strands of hair is situated at the center of her head, in front, and the diamond-shaped cutout on the top served as the air vent. She strikes a thoughtful pose, her head tilted down and to the right. Her face has a classic beauty. The oval eyes are



concentrically carved to achieve a lively effect, the prominent nose is thin and straight (nostrils are not indicated), and the sculpted mouth is partly open. Her strikingly modeled ears have etched curves to designate the interiors. On the earlobes, incised circles portray earrings with round indentations at their centers. The figure's nude torso is a burnished dark red-brown slip, and the small breasts have nipples with puncture marks. She wears a conspicuous necklace with rounded appliquéd beads in the front; in the back, the necklace is indicated by double, incised V-shaped lines. The female sits with her legs outstretched and her feet, with their carved toes, close together. Her left arm is extended across her torso at waist level to prop up her bent right arm, so that her face can rest on her right hand.¹ The figure wears a long, mat brown wrap-around skirt edged along the top, bottom, and side with an incised border filled in with a cream slip.

Note

1. For a female figure in a similar pose see Couch 1988, p. 21, fig. 16.

17. Seated Female Figure

Comala style, 200 B.C.–A.D. 300

11 x 5 7/8 in. (27.9 x 14.9 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

This well-crafted sculpture of a female sits with her left arm hugging her body and her legs arranged in comfortable, folded positions.¹ The figure's smooth surfaces are covered in a red slip with some manganese deposits. The figure's serene face has a naturalistically sculpted brow and a straight nose with two indentations for nostrils. The puffy eyes have etched horizontal lines that suggest she is either resting or in a trance-like state. A simple carved line indicates a soft grin. The figure's neat coiffure is modeled with added clay to give it thickness, and the incised parallel lines that represent the hair are set close together and sweep back from the forehead all the way down to the shoulders in the back. The finely executed headband is decorated with incised cross-hatching. The female has prominent

ears with large air holes; puncture marks in the lobes suggest that they once were adorned with earrings or some other ornaments. Her head rests on her curved left arm, the elbow poised on her left knee, and with her left hand she holds her right shoulder. Visible below the arm are the figure's small breasts. On her upper back, two curved etched lines indicate scapulae or shoulder musculature. With her right arm, she grasps the front edge of her carved, high-waisted skirt, which appears thick at the top, as if folded over. Two

incised lines on each upper arm represent simple bands, and four etched lines on each hand designate fingers. Her left leg is bent forward and the right one is tucked behind it. The toes on her abbreviated feet are incised. The elegance and sophistication of this female figure testify to the high status of women in early Colima societies.

Note

1. For a female figure in the same position see Barcelona 1991, p. 225.

18. Seated Male Figure

Comala style, 200 B.C.–A.D. 300

14¾ x 8⅞ in. (37.4 x 21.3 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

This striking male figure is skillfully carved and modeled, its simple forms displaying a smooth, red-slip finish with areas of black manganese deposits. The handsome face is dominated by a sculpted brow and a prominent nose, although the nostrils are not designated. The figure's eyes are etched around their perimeters and cut out at the centers to create air vents. His carved mouth is set in a slight yet pleasant smile. The incised hairline indicates the minimal presence of hair on the crown of the head, while the hair's thickness in back is revealed by the slight elevation above the neck. On the lobes of the figure's protruding ears are incised circles, in the centers of which are small holes that may have held a bead made of shell or stone, an earring, or another adornment. The male is seated, with his raised right arm bent at the elbow, which rests on his right knee; the hand is anatomically correct and carved in a clasping position that might have accommodated a staff, spear, or vertical rod two centimeters in diameter. The left arm rests gracefully on the figure's left thigh; four straight, incised lines demarcate the fingers. The figure's torso is smooth and polished. He wears a wrap-around loincloth that falls below the waist and is outlined with incised double lines; the front flap features elaborate fringe-like elements. His right leg is thrust forward and the left one is tucked under it; his flat feet are rounded at the toes, which are marked with three incisions. The overall effect of the sculpture is of a noble male figure—one who originally held a staff of authority in his raised right hand.



18

Reference

New York 1969, no. 225, ill.



19

19. Seated Figure with a Vessel

Comala style, 200 B.C.—A.D. 300

Overall: 19 1/8 x 13 in. (48.6 x 33 cm); Vessel: H. 9 1/2 in.

(24.1 cm), Diam. at top 9 1/2 in. (24.1 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

A proportionately large vessel in relation to the size of the seated male figure shown holding it makes this an imposing sculpture.¹ The figure has no gender markings but the fact that it is completely nude probably indicates that it is a male. One incision across the front of the figure's smooth forehead marks the hairline. The face is modeled with interesting features, including pronounced sculpted eyebrows and

double-carved eyes that seem to come alive. The prominent nose is broad at the base and lacks nostrils. Modeling extends to the crooked mouth, which has an etched opening, and the ears, with their small holes in the lobes to suggest that earrings were an option. The figure's nude torso is unembellished, and the arms are bent at a ninety-degree angle to enable him to grasp the large vessel, which he rests

on his bent legs. Two small air vents are located on the inside and outside of each elbow. The square fingers of the roughly shaped hands are separated by grooves. The figure is colored with a burnished brown slip.

The red slip of the vessel is brighter than that of the figure, and fire clouds, or smudges from firing, are visible on its surface. The vessel is decorated with a pattern of large diamonds, indicated by crudely incised bands of three parallel lines. Around its rim and base are horizontal incised bands with hatch marks; inside, the vessel is covered with a red slip and is caked with debris. The points of articulation between figure and vessel are patched with clay, especially noticeable in the areas of the hands, which indicates that the two components were made separately and then attached with clay prior to firing.



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20. Transformation Figure

Comala style, 200 B.C.–A.D. 300

17½ x 11¾ in. (44.1 x 28.9 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

This exceptional sculpture portrays a shaman in the process of transformation, between his human and animal spirit. Among the many unusual elements that symbolize an ani-

The large size of the vessel, relative to that of the figure, suggests that it symbolizes ceremonial feasting and drinking. It may be an actual object for use by an ancestor, and, when placed in the tomb, most likely contained food or drink for the dead; the residue in the bottom supports such a function. Another possibility is that it was meant to convey the enormity of the vats used by pre-Hispanic people to brew pulque.

Note

1. For a figure holding a similar large vessel see Gallagher 1983, p. 50, fig. 39; Chicago 1998, no. 40, ill. p. 99, fig. 17.

References

Munich 1958, pl. 75; von Winning 1968, p. 91, fig. 77; Antwerp 1998, no. 17.

mal spirit is the figure's helmet, on top of which is a small, four-legged animal. The creature, with oversized paws, has fangs, or a curled tongue incised at the center line; rounded ears; droopy, coffee-bean eyes; an etched sagittal crest; a thick, long tail; and a pecked coat signifying fur. The shaman's helmet also embodies the animal spirit, and is pecked to mimic an animal pelt. The folded shape of the brimmed helmet is atypical, and may indicate a soft fur hat, and its spout, or air vent, is angled in such a way as to suggest a shaman's horn. The male figure's face is incredibly smooth, with carefully carved details. His coffee-bean eyes are open and set slightly askew; interestingly, the placement of the thin, angular nose is somewhat asymmetrical as well. The mouth is modeled with full lips. For a sculpture of this caliber to have skewed facial elements must have been intentional, perhaps to express spirit shifting.

The shaman wears a curious, hood-like garment, painted in smooth brown slip, which blends into his hat, covers his chin and neck, and dips down the front of his chest. His face appears to emerge from this garment, which is edged with a thick incised rope with spaced markings. A fascinating ornament occupies the center of the garment, its shape a frequent yet beguiling motif in West Mexican art. The top, rounded part of the ornament has two indentations, seemingly for eyes, and is separated by a ridge from the extended lower part; directly above and below this separation, at both sides, are a few incised lines. In the ancient West Mexican spirit world the ornament may have symbolized a mythic creature, but to the present-day viewer it resembles an overhead view of a bird or duck with the beak pointing downward. A broad triangular fan, or stylized bird's tail, completes the brown garment at the back.

Pecking, to imitate the texture of animal fur, covers the remaining parts of the figure's upper body. His arms are raised to shoulder level, with two appliquéd arm rings attached to the outer part of each arm. The cupped hands are part human, part animal, with five digits on the left and six on the right paw, and a lower dewclaw on each as well. The figure wears buffed brown-slip shorts, which have a penis-protector flap on the front and, at the rear, a stylized tie or sash. His legs and mid-section are burnished to a lustrous red-brown finish. The legs are encircled by two appliquéd rings each, and the feet are small, with short incisions for toes. This ceramic masterpiece portrays great power through its subject—a figure in an upright, trance-like pose—undergoing a spirit transformation. Based on the creature standing on his helmet and the shaman's paw-like hands, the animal spirit in question belongs within the feline or canine family.¹

Note

1. For a similar figure see von Winning 1968, p. 88, fig. 70.

Reference

Chicago 1998, no. 46, ill. p. 290.

21. Dog

Comala style, 200 B.C.–A.D. 300

15½ x 16¼ in. (39.3 x 41.1 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

The archetypal Colima dog sculpture is fat and hairless and has a highly burnished reddish orange finish, like that of the present example.¹ The carved contours of its face emanate like rings from around the dog's wide-open eyes, which have incised outlines, encircling the entire head and overlapping the snout, which has two nostrils that serve as air vents. The dog's perky ears have a small extra flap of skin on their outer rims, and its snarling mouth has etched notches that indicate teeth, with two long, modeled canines on each side. The animal sits on its haunches, its stubby upright forelegs supporting its weight. On the tips of each rounded paw, three etched marks indicate the dog's claws. The five bumps, or bones, combined with the contoured striations on its chest may depict the ribs and flesh of the dog after its pelt was removed; similarly, five vertebrae and rib-like incisions are visible on the dog's back. Its rear haunches and its belly are smooth and thicker skinned, and its curved tail is tucked under the right leg. Underneath the tail are an air vent and the male animal's genitalia.

Scholars refer to the carved contours of the Colima dog sculptures as incised decorations, or as wrinkles,² and those



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21: back view

interpretations may be correct. The contrast between the thick pelt on the haunches and the exposed vertebrae and ribs on the present Colima dog's torso, along with the extensive facial carving, may represent flayed or skinned areas. However, it is incongruous for the ribs and vertebrae of such a fat animal to be so prominent. Its girth suggests that the breed portrayed is a fat and hairless Colima dog called an *xoloitacuintli* or *techich*. In pre-Hispanic times, the *techich* was bred to be hairless, making it suitable for consumption. Thus, any dog raised for this purpose would rightly have the snarling appearance of this ceramic specimen. Its countenance suggests that the animal represents the mythical fierce barking dog that demands food from the dead. In their funerary practices, the modern Huichol of Northwest Mexico still believe that a little dog impedes the dead soul from finding its way to its ancestors. Accordingly, one reason that the Huichol people give food to the dead is to provide the soul with something to pacify the hungry dog blocking its passage to the netherworld. As recounted in one description of the journey to the land of the Huichol ancestors, "First one comes to where there is a dog. . . . It stands there, that dog, as if it is tied up. It is barking there. It is as if it wants to bite that soul as it tries to pass. . . . That is why,

when one of us dies, we make little tortillas for him to take along, little thick tortillas. They are put in a bag . . . so that he can feed that dog. . . . The dog says to that soul, 'Give me something to eat now so that I may let you pass.' . . . [That little dog] is from ancient times. It died and then it remained there, to stand watch on that road. . . . [The soul] takes the tortillas out of the bag [and when] the dog is busy eating . . . that soul can pass and it keeps on walking."³

Notes

1. For a similar dog see Gallagher 1983, p. 62, fig. 62; Meighan and Nicholson 1989, no. 148, ills. pp. 64, 150.
2. von Winning 1974, p. 111, fig. 65.
3. Ramón Medina Silva 1996, pp. 392–94.

22. Reclining Dog

Comala style, 200 B.C.–A.D. 300

10³/₄ x 14⁵/₈ in. (27.3 x 37.1 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

A skilled artist crafted this effigy of a reclining dog. Its exceptional sculptural qualities include the superbly





22: detail

smooth finish and the realistic musculature. The remarkable burnished surface combines pastel shades of orange and tan. The dog's head is held high and the sculpted ears (there is an air vent in the left one) are erect, indicating that the animal is alert. The dog's eyes are simply incised and the snout naturalistically modeled with punctured nostrils serving as air vents. Its closed mouth is carved and modeled with short, etched diagonal lines to depict either whiskers or canines. The reclining pose is realistic: The dog leans on its left side, its rear right leg raised and bent at its side, and the left one tucked underneath. The forepaws are folded in front, with the left one placed imperially on top of the right paw, the claws individually carved. The animal's rounded shoulders, body contours, and spine are sculpted, and even on the underside, the rear left foot is modeled, as are the curved tail and the small genitalia, which indicate that this is a male dog. The impression conveyed by the dog is that in life it probably was

loved and cared for as a pet; perhaps the effigy, in turn, served as a comforting companion for the soul of the deceased.

To the ancient peoples of Mesoamerica, dogs symbolized death and the journey to the afterlife. From seventy-five to ninety percent of the shaft-and-chamber tombs in Colima contain ceramic dogs.¹ The ritual interment of ceramic or actual dogs may be explained by the pre-Hispanic belief in *Xolotl*, the dog of the netherworld.

Note

1. von Winning 1974, pp. 42–44.

23. Duck

Comala style, 200 B.C.–A.D. 300

11 x 12 3/8 in. (27.9 x 31.1 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

The sculpted round shape of this realistic duck effigy makes it appear plump and healthy. The duck is hollow and has a lovely burnished orange slip. At the crown of its smooth head, which it holds erect, is a cleanly cut diamond-shaped vent. The circles of the eyes are simply etched, but strong incised lines differentiate the duck's bill, which is painted in a red slip darker than that of the rest of the sculpture. Where the curved bill is open an air vent is visible, and,



on the tip, a small blemish that may be either ancient or modern. The pose of the duck, and its smooth, full breast suggest that it is floating on water. The curved wings are folded softly against the body. No further details, such as webbed feet, were modeled on the underside. The beauty of such Comala sculptures as the present duck effigy resides in

their simplicity of style and luscious finish. Ducks were native to the lakes of highland West Mexico. At the time of the Conquest, the Spanish noted that local villagers caught duck for food. This Comala duck may have been made for the dead to enjoy in the netherworld, either as a companion or as symbolic food.



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24. Crayfish Vessel

Comala style, 200 B.C.–A.D. 300
6¾ x 12¾ in. (17.1 x 31.4 cm)
Joanne and Andrall Pearson

A freshwater lobster, or crayfish, is portrayed with a particularly chubby body. Much like the lobster of today, the smaller crayfish of pre-Hispanic Mexico were considered a

delicacy. The hollow effigy vessel is finished in a classical Comala red slip and highly burnished. That anyone could create a crayfish so appealing is a tribute to the ancient ceramists of Colima. Its intriguing face, which narrows into an upturned snout, has beady carved eyes indented in the centers and a most engaging mouth etched into a smile. From the front, the creature's stubby claws appear to reach upward. That the pincers are not extended suggests that the crayfish is about to be consumed. Among the naturalistic features depicted are the six plump appendages on

each side of its five-tiered shell and its short tail.

Emphasizing its vessel function is the round, oversized, everted rim of the spout. In a shaft-and-chamber tomb, the crayfish vessel may have contained a ceremonial beverage such as pulque or one made from cacao.¹

Note

1. For a similar vessel see von Winning 1968, p. 99, fig. 95.



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25. Turtle Vessel

Comala style, 200 B.C.–A.D. 300

7¾ x 13⅝ in. (19.7 x 34.6 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

The head, tail, and carapace of this turtle effigy vessel are depicted realistically. The turtle's correctly shaped angular head is painted in red slip. It has two small, carved eyes, and its mouth is a simple, extended etched line. The anatomically accurate shell is modeled and etched with precision, and plainly sculpted on the bottom. An etched pattern similar to that of the ornate box turtle covers the carapace, the left half of which is painted in red slip with traces of black. Rows of alternating squares with hatch-marked divisions extend lengthwise over the shell. The fleshy areas of the turtle's body are differentiated from the carapace by a darker

slip. Its four rounded legs are stylized and undecorated and its turndown pointy tail clearly depicted. On the turtle's left side is a large, unadorned rimless spout—an indication that such Comala effigies were intended as containers for liquids in the tomb. Turtles represented water and rain for the Huichol people of Northwest Mexico. Perhaps the ancient Colimans used turtle effigies in ceremonies to elicit rain from the gods as the Huichol did in the early 1900s.¹

Note

1. Schaffer and Furst 1996, p. 132.

26. Male Ancestral Figure Seated on a Stool (one of a pair)

Coahuayana style, A.D. 100–400

20 7/8 x 16 1/4 in. (53 x 41.3 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

The large sculpture is the male figure of an ancestral pair. Seated on a stool reserved for chiefs, the figure is well proportioned and naturalistic. A thick layer of smooth hair covers his head and extends down to his neck at the back. An appliquéd brown headband is wrapped around the crown, anchored in front with a circular decoration. The top of the figure's head is open, shaped like a pottery vessel with an everted rim. Such a large air vent certainly facilitated the

successful production of the enormous hollow sculpture.

The realistic face, painted in a chalky white slip, is sculpted with a delicate brow, a near-perfect rendition of a nose, and a strong angled jawline. His puffy oval eyes, through which horizontal grooves were carved, are only half open; together with the chalky face, the sleepy eyes evoke an image of the dead or of an ancestor. The soft, slightly open mouth has small full lips. In the diminutive ears are round earpools

with holes poked through the centers that originally may have held precious stones, feathers, flowers, or another perishable material. The figure's red-slipped neck is adorned with strands of rounded, appliquéd bead-like elements. His nude body is reddish brown and burnished.

He sits on a short four-legged stool with his bent knees apart, revealing his genitalia. A large, round belly button marks the center of his erect torso. The figure has broad shoulders on which square patterns of twenty-five appliquéd pellets are placed in five rows of five each; these extend over the bulky upper arms above simple, wide appliquéd arm-bands. The figure's left hand, with carved fingers, rests on his left knee; the right arm is raised to shoulder height and extends forward, the hand, with its delicate fingers, supporting an empty ceramic vessel. The large, detailed feet rest flat on the ground.

Note

1. For a similar figure see Gallagher 1983, pp. 54–55, figs. 47, 48; Meighan and Nicholson 1989, p. 139, fig. 127.

Reference

Chicago 1998, no. 112, illustrated with catalogue number 27, p. 128, fig. 31.



27. Female Ancestral Figure Seated on a Stool (one of a pair)

Coahuayana style, A.D. 100–400

20½ x 10½ in. (52.1 x 26.7 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

This imposing sculpture is the female member of a Coahuayana ancestral pair (see cat. no. 26). The two figures are alike in size, finish, craftsmanship, and appearance. The female is nude, and has a reddish brown burnished finish. Her hair is groomed in a complex style: From the front hair-line, thick, parallel vertical ridges of hair follow the shape of the cranium to the back, where they taper off; the ridges are polished and colored with alternating streaks of red and brown. The back of her head is plain except for a large, round air vent. The female's nicely sculpted face is painted with a chalky white slip. The pronounced brows emphasize her puffy eyes, which have horizontal grooves. The short, upturned nose has indentations for nostrils. The figure's small, full mouth is slightly off-center and partly open. Like that of her male partner, the female's face is angled and strong. She wears a cord necklace with two rows of punctated designs, which diminish at the back. Thirty-six round pellets, in a pattern of six rows of six pellets each, cover the shoulders and upper arms, above a plain band. The figure has small breasts, a large round indentation for a belly button, and a naturalistic pubic area. With both arms raised, she lifts an empty bowl that she supports with her ten delicate outspread fingers. The back of the figure is plain and smooth, the buttocks narrowed to fit on the small stool. Her realistically depicted square feet are set flat on the ground.

Coahuayana sculptures of ancestral pairs seated on stools with empty bowls evoke a tradition among the Huichol people of West Mexico, who commemorate their ancestors, every year, on the Feast of San Andrés. On that day, the ancestors are believed to

gather below the family's hearth, with their bowls raised waiting for food.¹

Note

1. Lumholtz 1902, vol. 2, pp. 28, 242.

Reference

Chicago 1998, no. 112, illustrated with catalogue number 26, p. 128, fig. 31.



28. Flat Female Figure

Coahuayana style, A.D. 100–400

20 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (53 x 21.6 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson



This tall female standing figure is a variant of the Colima–Coahuayana type. Although seemingly simplistic, the flat yet solid ceramic statuette is stylistically elaborate. Her long hair is appliquéd onto the sides of her head, with one long braid extending down her back; the hair in the front and on the crown is incised to suggest that it is combed back. A broad, appliquéd headband, or turban, is wrapped around the top, front, and sides of her head. The figure is painted primarily in a buff slip, with traces of red slip visible on her face. She has tiny, coffee-bean eyes, small full lips indented in the middle, and a triangular, pinched nose. Her upper torso is lavishly bejeweled. Around her neck is a low-hanging, appliquéd band from which twenty-four rectangular tabs, or beads, are suspended. Seven rounded pellets set in a decorative circular pattern adorn each shoulder. The foreshortened arms have appliquéd bracelets that clasp in front. The nude figure is gender specific, with indications of a pubes and widely set, small breasts placed high up on the torso. The angular hips are indented at the waist, and the flat, tapered legs are detailed at mid-point with modeled kneecaps. Evidently, the ancient ceramists meant for the figure to be displayed lying on her back because all the embellishments, except for the braid, are limited to the front.

29. Standing Figure with a Helmet Mask

Colima style, 100 B.C.–A.D. 400

Figure with headdress: 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (46.4 x 21.9 cm); Figure only: 14 x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (35.6 x 21.9 cm);

Stand: 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ x $\frac{5}{16}$ in. (13.3 x 8.9 x .80 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

Almost every surface of this solid, buff-colored figure is adorned with elements of



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his ceremonial costume, the details of which are carved and incised clay additions rather than painted embellishments. The figure wears a massive removable helmet mask, believed to represent a plumed caiman, or crocodile, which has a long, rectangular snout with two horns and indented nostrils, and round, beady eyes. Thirteen sharp teeth protrude from the rectangular upper jaw. The bird imagery of the helmet mask includes a triple crest of feathers (forty-nine in each row), wings at the sides, and a tail composed of rows of incised markings indicating feathers.

When the helmet mask is removed from the figure, his padded cap is revealed; incised with cross-hatching to imitate basketry, or cloth, and fastened with a wide, incised chin strap, it almost certainly was worn to support or accommodate the massive headdress. The figure's face is delicately sculpted with small, round eyes and a plain nose sporting a large crescent-shaped nose ring. The chin strap covers the

lower part of his face. He wears a pair of large, flared three-dimensional earspools and an impressive appliquéd necklace consisting of three strands of prominent, round bead-like elements; one strand hangs down below the waist. His raised arms are bent inward at the elbow, as if poised for activity, the shoulders each decorated with a set of twenty pellets clustered in a neat square pattern just below two thin, incised encircling lines. While shoulder pellets are common ornaments on Colima sculptures, the incised lines representing string are unusual and of possible heuristic significance, suggesting that the pellets are tied together and, in turn, fastened onto the arms. Here, the shoulder pellets may signify shell beads or cotton balls tied together to form elegant adornments or ceremonial rattles rather than purposeful scarification, as is often proposed.¹ The figure is holding two cone-shaped implements that are affixed to each wrist with appliquéd rope; the fact that the rope wraps around the wrists three times implies that the objects are heavy, like the stone *bachas*, or axes, used in Colima ballgames. On the other hand, because these cones are striated, or incised, like a broom, they may depict a rattle or another rhythm instrument. The figure's padded belt, set high on the waist, is similar to those worn



29: without mask



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by ballplayers. The reverse side of his loincloth has graceful folds and is edged at the bottom with incised cross-hatching to indicate woven fabric. The figure's legs are festooned with two horizontal rings each, etched at the top with short marks possibly denoting feathers; his large rounded feet are attached to a flat, ceramic stand, which ensures that the figure remains erect and, in addition, may symbolize a court or public plaza where the figure participated in a festival or ceremony.²

Notes

1. These comments are by Meighan and Nicholson 1989, in the entry for no. 69, p. 109.
2. For similar works see Chicago 1998, no. 100, ill. p. 257, fig. 6.

30. Figure with an Incense Burner

Colima style, 100 B.C.–A.D. 400

Overall: 19 1/8 x 17 1/2 in. (48.6 x 44.5 cm); Incense burner: 12 3/8 x 7 7/8 in. (31.4 x 20 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

This fine Colima sculpture comprises a male figure alongside and holding an *incensario*, or incense burner.¹ That such a large, solid, and substantial ceramic work was successfully fired testifies to the great technical skills of the early Coliman ceramist. The sculpture's mottled red-orange slip is blackened with manganese dioxide. The figure stands with his legs wide apart, and turns to grasp the handle of the oversized four-legged incense burner with his left hand. He wears an ornate crested-and-notched helmet with straps that wrap around his head and fasten in back with a three-flowered ornament. The figure's expression appears alert on account of his round, appliquéd eyes, each of which is pierced in the center. His sculpted nose is small and his carved mouth open.

Suspended from his appliquéd rope necklace is a wide, pecked crescent-shaped pectoral. His broad and solid right arm is raised, and he holds a wedge-shaped, incised fan—probably used to keep the incense burning. The figure wears bulky shorts and an animal-skin belt: The triangular flap in front is edged with ruffles to imitate fur, and at the back the decoration consists of an animal's head with perky ears and mouth agape, also edged in ruffles.

The incense burner takes the form of a double Tlaloc—the rain god that is so prominent in the religions of ancient Mexico. The back-to-back Tlalocs have separate legs and male genitalia, as well as the characteristic huge goggle eyes and pinched noses. The frontal Tlaloc has three punctures for each eyebrow and a wide, appliquéd band on each arm; he holds his left hand under his nose. The rear Tlaloc has a belly button and a small mouth. A ruffled or ropey textured border edges both huge heads. The juncture of the two Tlaloc bodies forms a bowl for the burning of the incense. A pair of intertwined serpents penetrates the headdress of the frontal Tlaloc and merges with the thick, arched handle of the incense burner, which also has a rope-like or ruffled edge. The male figure's left foot is attached to the rear right foot of the incense burner, linking the two elements of this complex sculpture.

Note

1. For a similar figure, without an incense burner, see Alsberg 1968, p. 115, fig. 54.

Reference

Chicago 1998, no. 106, ill. p. 23, fig. 13.

31. Shaman with a Back Rack

Colima style, 100 B.C. – A.D. 400

18½ x 11 in. (47 x 27.9 cm)

Jill Pearson and Alan Rappaport

This unique, solid figure is colored with a cream slip that has manganese deposits on its surface. His horned headdress identifies him as a shaman. Presumably to keep the small frontal horn in place, an appliquéd rope is wrapped around it and then under the chin. The figure has appliquéd round eyes, a prominent sculpted nose, and an incised mouth that slants downward. He wears a white ceramic necklace with a circular pendant. The shaman faces left and holds an enormous spear-like implement with both hands, raising the



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pointed end high and to the right. His hands are plain and lack detail. The layers of thick belts around his waist secure the massive protective shield on his back in place; in front, a codpiece protrudes below the belts. The shield is colored with a cream slip, like the figure, and reveals traces of black chevron designs. A bunch of feathers or flowers sprouts from the top of the back rack. The figure's plain, slab-like feet are heavy enough to provide ample support for the sculpture.

NAYARIT



32. Architectural Model

Ixtlán del Río style, 100 B.C.–A.D. 200

12 x 10¼ x 6¾ in. (30.5 x 26 x 17.1 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

In this architectural model, a feast for the dead is taking place, complete with miniature plates of food and jars for holding drinks, such as pulque; there are three chambers, or tombs, and twenty-six figures, five of whom recline in a fetal position, denoting death, while the others eat.¹ Three surprisingly detailed birds with bulging eyes and parrot-like beaks may represent the souls of the dead that have flown there for a visit. The architecturally complex, ceramic structure has a double roof, interior walls and doorways, one post, and outdoor banquette or patio areas, its two levels connected by a staircase. The compound roofs intersect at a ninety-degree angle: The taller roof projects above the lower, horizontal one and covers the central area of the structure. Both roofs are peaked at the corners, which probably is indicative of how they actually were built—with two upright support beams and a third beam laid across them. Like thatched roofs, the overhanging ones on the architectural model slope outward, providing protection from sun and rain; their smooth surfaces seem to suggest that real roofs may have been covered with plaster or mud and then painted. Remnants of a diamond pattern painted in black and white on a red slip are visible on the tops of the roofs.

Thin yet solid slabs, or walls, and a rounded support, or post, extend from floor to ceiling to demarcate two large rooms on the top level. The main room is open at the front and back and filled with activity, as is the outdoor banquette around the upper perimeter. An adjacent, dark, smaller room is enclosed on three sides. The lower level also has two rooms: a larger main room and, directly below the dark room, an enclosed empty chamber with a portal in front. Linking the two levels are four steep stairs, underneath which is a small, carved chamber. The two levels of this architectural model probably represent the world of the living (on top) and the underground world of the ancestors (below). It is likely that the lower level portrays a shaft-and-chamber tomb, which frequently was dug directly under the house by ancient West Mexicans to keep the ancestors nearby. The buff-slipped surfaces of the structure's walls contain traces of painted polychrome designs and manganese dioxide markings.

The sixteen figures on the top level of the house include at least six females, as indicated by their skirts, paired with a male; this identification is reinforced by the thin, appliquéd arms wrapped around a partner's shoulders—a gesture adopted by the four pairs of males and females seated



32: side view



32: back view



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together. Two female figures sit outside, one at the top of the stairs and the other on an upper banquette; the latter once was paired with a figure that is now missing. Most of the eight males in the main room hold one or both hands to their mouth as if they were eating, and one chief (or shaman) clasps a conch shell or rattle in his raised right hand. Two

figures recline in a fetal position, one outside on the banquette and another inside the dark room. On the lower level, inside the main chamber, five figures sit cross-legged, holding their hands on their mouth; their appliquéd hair or headgear possibly identifies them as female. Perched outside on the lower banquette are three figures wearing appliquéd turban-like headdresses, and cloaks (or robes) from which their thin clay legs protrude. The specialized costumes of the cloaked figures and their placement on the lower, underground level of the structure suggest that they are members of a lineage or honored ancestors. Nearby, one figure reclines on the threshold of the empty chamber and another reclining figure occupies the niche-like chamber underneath the stairs.

Feasting imagery abounds on both levels of the architectural model. On top, the inhabitants of the main room cluster around a large jar painted white, a miniature plate on which are four round items, and a mound of food dabbed with white. The figures inside the lower room surround a plate with four circular objects and two large jars, one with red and white stripes and one tipped on its side in the corner. The cloaked figures outside, on the lower level, partake of a feast from a plate also containing four round items and a plain red jar. Set out on the corner of the lower banquette, adjacent to a reclining figure, is another plate also with four round items to accompany the dead on their journey to the next world.

Note

1. For another two-story house with many occupants see Chicago 1968, no. 176, ill. p. 94, fig. 8.

33. Pair of Ancestral Figures

Ixtlán del Río style, 100 B.C.—A.D. 200

Female: 19½ x 8¾ in. (49.5 x 22.2 cm); Male: 21¾ x 8½ in.

(54.3 x 21.6 cm)

Jill Pearson and Alan Rappaport

These large, colorful, and ornate sculptures portray important personages in an ancient Nayarit village or society. The male and female are similarly constructed, with hollow bodies and thin, solid arms. Their legs are spread apart and their

enormous feet are arched, making it possible for them to stand; their toes, however, are crudely fashioned and separately attached. The red-slipped surfaces of both the male and female figures are finely decorated with a luscious gold



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slip with white and black accents. As is the case with all ancestral pairs, they share many adornments, including highly decorative, carved turbans, their coiled bands wrapped with a delicate white-and-gold cord. A pointy, cone-shaped hat with dazzling zigzag designs tops the male's turban, at the rear of which is an air vent. The female figure's air vent is at the top of her head. Sets of five thick nose rings clasped together at the top seem to gouge open the nostrils of each

figure. They both wear five appliquéd earrings on each ear, with thick tabs and rings at the base, and their necklaces consist of eleven white strands with black painted dots. The cloak, or mantle, that each figure wears over the right shoulder extends across the front and back of the torso and is beautifully decorated with shared designs in white, with the addition of gold slip to the female's garment. The two figures have modeled puffy cheeks whose contours and wrinkles

possibly are intended to signify that they are elderly. Their sculpted and carved eyes were once highlighted in white. Their mouths are open and their white teeth are individually carved.

The female has small, high breasts and an elaborately decorative skirt with stepped fret patterns in gold and red within a larger checkered design outlined in white. A circular pattern of eight pellets adorns each shoulder. On her upper arms she wears an appliquéd band with discoid decorations, and on her wrist are painted bracelets whose white dots may represent shells. She holds a striped polychrome cup or jar with both hands.

The male wears short trousers trimmed in white, a white belt that supports a scoop-shaped genital protector, and a bracelet consisting of six strands of white dots. His right arm is raised to display an unusual staff painted with white and gold rings, the lower end of which rests on his torso; the five raised elements on its solid, circular top seem to mirror

the ancient West Mexican settlement pattern of houses grouped around a circular patio with an altar in the middle. The staff itself may represent an artist's attempt to portray in clay an actual linkage uniting the underground world of the dead with the earth's surface and the living. Some shaft-and-chamber tombs had tunnels, called *claraboyas*, leading from the chamber to the ground above; in addition to providing ventilation for the dead, they could serve as conduits for sacred beverages such as pulque, which probably were poured down the passageways along with food to nourish the ancestors. Here, the staff may symbolize a *claraboya*, connecting the deceased (the figure) to the world inhabited by their kin (the patio group depicted on the circular top).

References

See Meighan and Nicholson 1989, p. 80, fig. 16a–b; Furst 1996, pp. 269–72.

34. Pair of Joined Ancestral Figures

Ixtlán del Río style, 100 B.C.–A.D. 200

12 5/8 x 10 3/4 in. (32.1 x 27.3 cm)

Jill Pearson and Alan Rappaport

These hollow male and female ancestral figures, finished in cream and red slips, are joined at the shoulders and from the waist down to the knees. In addition to this connection between parts of their bodies—and, hence, their bloodlines—the pair have many physical and decorative elements in common. Their strikingly similar, circular, brimmed headgear is red. The male's turban forms a complete circle all around, while the female's ends in back with an impressive tassel. Air vents occur at the top of each figure's head, which, like the faces, is exaggeratedly elongated. Their nearly identical facial features include large modeled noses and carved open and heavy-lidded eyes and open mouths. Each has a straight red line extending from the mouth to the navel, possibly indicating the act of bloodletting from their tongues. Unusual triple-looped earrings with a clip across the front are worn by both figures. The curvatures of their necks and chests, as well as their lower bodies, are painted in red slip. Their inner arms touch and wrap around each other from behind. The male's right hand rests on his raised right knee, while his left leg is tucked under him. His genitals are visible. The breasts of the female are modeled and decorated with red concentric swirls. Her left hand rests on her round



belly, which is fleshy like that of her companion. Only the female wears an appliquéd double armband. Her small feet peek out from under a full-length skirt.

Somewhat atypically for West Mexican pairs, the female is one centimeter (about ½ inch) taller than the male, which might indicate her higher social position; this is underscored by her additional ornamentation, in the form of bracelets, and by her tasseled turban, all signs of rank. This emphasis on the higher status of the female figure, together with the portrayal of bloodletting, suggests that matrilineages existed in some ancient Nayarit societies, with important bloodlines established through females. This ancestral pair also supports the notion of bilateral kinship, whereby both males and females, or brother-and-sister pairs, inherited status, rank, and land. Such physically similar male and female figures, as here, may symbolize kinship rather than marriage. The female figure thus might represent an older sister to her younger and smaller brother, or a mother with her son, an heir to the bloodline.¹

Note

1. For a similar single female figure see Meighan and Nicholson 1989, p. 115, fig. 80.

35. Pair of Joined Ancestral Figures

Ixtlán del Río style, 100 B.C.–A.D. 200

17¼ x 15¼ in. (43.8 x 38.7 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

These joined ancestral figures have lavish costumes and elaborately decorated bodies, and, as with other ancestral pairs, the male and female share a number of physical and decorative characteristics.¹ The male wears a regal conical hat with multi-hued zigzag designs, a brim composed of eleven feather-like elements, a striped band with tassels at the rear, and a knob at the top. A round air vent is situated near the tassels on the back. The female sports a thick red-, white-, and gold-striped headband like that worn by her companion, and she has an oval-shaped air vent on the top of her head. The figures' sculpted faces are extremely ornate: In addition to their broad eyebrows, carved and decorated eyes, and pinched, narrow noses, they are embellished with swirling suns representing face paint or tattoos. The female figure has a horizontal nosepiece with vertical incisions and the male, a nose plug in the form of a double butterfly. The figures' open mouths reveal incised white teeth. Their earrings—



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exactly the same—are extravagant, with numerous thick loops on each ear (seven for the male, six for the female). Around their necks are appliquéd crescent-shaped pectorals. The male wears a cape, or mantle, with a checkered design of alternating C-shaped squiggles, over one shoulder, and a loincloth at the waist with an attached, scoop-shaped genital protector. He holds a conch shell—a symbol of power in ancient Mexico—in his raised right hand. The female's full-length skirt shows traces of its original elaborate designs. The band on her left arm is adorned with five round elements. In the palm of her left hand she holds a tiny empty bowl. The ornate costumes and decorative appearance of the figures suggest that they portray participants in a ceremony or festival (perhaps their own wedding). The male and female are one piece, joined together at the shoulder and at the hip, and embrace each other from behind. Their arms are thin yet solid and their small feet and legs, which are painted in black and red slip, are solid as well.

Note

1. For a similar joined pair see Meighan and Nicholson 1989, p. 57, fig. 14.



36. Pair of Ancestral Figures

Nayarit style, A.D. 100–400

Female: 18¾ x 11 in. (47.6 x 27.9 cm); Male: 19¾ x 12¼ in. (49.2 x 31.1 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

These large sculpted male and female ancestral figures are impressively naturalistic in appearance, and are alike in design and construction, their surfaces finished in cream, brown, and orange-red slips, with extensive manganese deposits.¹ Each hollow figure has an oval air vent on the top of the head, at the back, and holds an item of importance. With both hands, the female clasps a cup decorated with a diamond pattern close to her chest, and the male, in an identical pose, holds a ball—a solid, ceramic sphere about seven centimeters (2¾ inches) in diameter. These objects suggest that the male is a ballplayer and the female possibly a potter or pulque maker.

In keeping with the possibility that members of ancient lineages announced their bloodlines through shared emblems or social markers, this ancestral pair shares similar physical traits, headgear, jewelry, and poses. Both figures wear thick, rolled turbans, decorated with white, red, and black stripes, that wrap in the back. Their broad, sculpted faces have carved and incised eyes, open smiling mouths with incised teeth, and prominent noses—from which are

suspended multiple appliquéd nose rings: five worn by the female, and four by the male. Each figure has a set of eight to ten distinctive earrings with a series of appliquéd loops and lower disks. Their identical necklaces consist of six strands of beads, painted as a series of white dots, and their armbands have seven to eight appliquéd white disks on red bands. The female has full breasts and a protruding belly, perhaps signifying pregnancy and the birth of a future, legitimate heir. She wears a magnificently sculpted and decorated knee-length skirt that is depicted in the round, its entire surface, including the bottom, covered in a red-and-white, stepped fret pattern. The male wears an elaborate loincloth, or shorts—orange-red, with white trim along the top edges—wrapped around his waist and with a soft fold in front. Both figures sit cross-legged, their legs and feet carefully modeled.

Note

1. For a similar pair see Day 1998, p. 156, fig. 7.

37. Standing Female Figure

Nayarit style, A.D. 100–400

23 x 12 in. (58.4 x 30.5 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

This work is a stunning representation of a female figure, her shoulder blades, buttocks, feet, and breasts naturalistically sculpted by the artist. Her realistic coloring shows a successful attempt to attain a life-like portrait: Clearly, she was a beautiful woman. Her incised, black hair, styled with bangs framing the face in front, is pulled straight back behind a black appliquéd headband with an incised zigzag pattern accented with white lines, which ties in the back. Her face is realistically rendered with a smoothly finished sculpted forehead and brow and a refined nose. The eyes are thickly outlined in black slip, producing a dramatic effect. On the lower half of her face, vertical lines of black face paint taper as they extend below the chin. The lips are

parted, revealing white teeth outlined in black but not incised. She wears a necklace of three plain appliquéd bands that tie in back and from which a simple, wide crescent pendant is suspended in front. Her nose is adorned with a three-looped nose ring attached to her septum. Her undecorated short skirt is distinguished by a burnished black slip, and her legs are a rich shade of sienna. Her right arm is raised, and she holds up a cup with the same inverted-triangle design painted in black as those “tattooed” on her back. In the palm of her left hand, held up to her shoulder, is a small bowl.

The female figure is stylistically reminiscent of two other sculptures in the Pearson Family Collection, the



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female in catalogue number 38 and the male in catalogue number 39. The three seem to represent members of a strong lineage of ancient West Mexico. They share unique elements of costume and jewelry in addition to their physical resemblance. The present female and the female figure in catalogue number 38 have their jewelry and various decorative

elements in common: Their earrings have black tabs with white disks. Here, the female is wearing eight of the distinctive earrings per ear, while catalogue number 38 wears seven. On their left upper arms, the females wear identical bands featuring white bell-shaped tassels. Even more striking is the inverted-triangle tattoo on each figure's rear torso.

Although one centimeter (about one-half inch) shorter than the female in catalogue number 38, this figure is wider and bulkier in appearance. On her right upper arm, she wears the same distinctive band as the male figure in catalogue number 39—a red appliquéd cord emblazoned with a small, white conch shell. Also like catalogue numbers 38 and 39, the present female has black coloring on her lower legs, per-

haps to indicate stockings or body paint, and a thick pad, or platform, under her feet to help steady the commanding figure. The artist who made this magnificent female figure probably sculpted catalogue numbers 38 and 39 as well.

Reference

See von Winning 1968, p. 131, fig. 163.



38. Standing Female Figure

Nayarit style, A.D. 100–400

23½ x 9⅞ in. (59.7 x 25.1 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

The physical attributes of this arresting female figure are the result of artistry coupled with keen observation of the human body. The smoothly modeled face appears to be a portrait of a refined and handsome woman. Emphasis was given to the brow area, and to the carved, black oval eyes, accentuated by black face paint and with a spot of white slip to mark each pupil. The mouth is open to reveal the individually carved white teeth, each also outlined in black. The realistically modeled nose is adorned with a nose ring consisting of seven appliquéd loops. A series of parallel black zigzags representing face paint covers the lower part of the figure's face. A talented effort to depict a lavish hairstyle is evident: The hair is parted in the middle and bound around a turban, the ends wrapped with a decorative cord; for emphasis, the hair is black and incised, while the turban is white. The figure wears seven appliquéd earrings per ear, each with a black tab and white disk. Her simple but elegant necklace is indicated by a thick double black band.

The realistically colored figure includes a sienna finish for the body areas. The back of the figure is finished, with delicately sculpted shoulder blades and shapely hips, and an overall regard for proportionality. A striking design—an inverted-triangle motif portraying either tattoos or body art—is painted twice, below each shoulder blade. Most likely, this design was the emblem or symbol of a specific, powerful Nayarit lineage with enough influence to retain the best ceramic artist to sculpt portraits of their members of high status. The pattern consists of seven inverted mini-triangles forming the top row and tapers symmetrically to one at the base of the tattoo; it appears in exactly the same form, color, and physical positions on the female figure in catalogue number 37.

A bracelet composed of appliquéd white, bell-shaped tassels adorns the figure's right upper arm; the placement of her right hand on her protruding mid-section announces her pregnancy. Her left arm—adorned with a band embellished with seven disks painted white, possibly to depict shells—is placed across her chest and her left hand rests on the opposite shoulder in a gesture that probably held special meaning for the people of early West Mexico. The wrap-around skirt is knee length, colored in black slip, and edged with a white border that is incised with chevron designs. The legs, above the black stockings, are the sienna skin color of the other areas of the body. The feet have skeletal nuances and indications of musculature, and, like catalogue numbers 37 and 39, there is a thick pad, or platform, beneath them, probably for stability. Both female figures (cat. nos. 37, 38) have a round air vent at the top of the head, in the back.

39. Standing Male Figure

Nayarit style, A.D. 100–400
 30⁷/₈ x 14⁵/₈ in. (78.4 x 37.1 cm)
 Joanne and Andrall Pearson

This imposing male figure is naturalistically depicted, standing with his legs apart, his right arm at his side, and his left arm raised in order to rest an implement on his shoulder.¹ The massive figure wears a conical hat with an incised, or stamped, checkered basket-weave pattern, and with a band along the bottom edge. The checkered part of the hat is folded and wraps around to tie in the back. An appliquéd red cord with two white shells crosses the crown of the hat and another red cord dangles from the back, where incised hair is visible. The male's handsome face is sculpturally rendered with a modeled brow and cheekbones, and a realistic nose adorned with a four-looped, appliquéd nose ring. The mouth is open enough to disclose the incised white teeth separated by black lines, and the carved eyes show traces of realistic white and black coloration. The face and arms have a rich ochre slip that suggests a natural skin color.

In each ear, the figure wears eight to nine earrings, featuring appliquéd tabs and disks like those worn by the figures in catalogue numbers 37 and 38. He is clothed in a long, cream-colored tunic with a V neck and short sleeves. His upper arms each have appliquéd and decorated red cord bracelets; the mini-conch shell attached to the left one, identical to the armband worn by the figure in catalogue number 37, would seem to be emblematic of a specific lineage or kin group. The legs are plain, with sienna slip on the thighs and black coloring, representing stockings, from the thighs to



39: detail of the head, seen from the back

the ankles. The feet, which rest on small platforms, have wonderfully sculpted joints, toes, and toenails.

The three figures seen in catalogue numbers 37, 38, and 39, as well as other similar known sculptures, appear to represent members of an important ancient West Mexican social group. Shared features and craftsmanship suggest that one artist made all three figures, from fifteen hundred to two thousand years ago. They may have been deposited in the same shaft tomb in the Nayarit village where they originated. On the other hand, archaeological investigations have shown that leaders exchanged prized ceramic figures through a regional trade network. To cement such negotiations, a chief may have given these masterful sculptures or even his own ceramic portrait to distant rulers, perhaps in far-off Jalisco or Colima, where they remained buried for generations in separate shaft-and-chamber tombs.

As with most West Mexican sculptures, the provenance and archaeological context of these figures are unknown. The fortunate coincidence that they are reunited in the Pearson Family Collection permits them to be considered as a group, which seems to have been the artist's intent. If the similarities between the two females were intended to show kinship, the figures might represent mother and daughter, or sisters in the same lineage. Alternatively, the two may portray a female of high status in two stages of her life—young and pregnant and mature and matronly. The features shared



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by the male and the elder female, especially the emblematic conch bracelet, suggest that they belong to the same lineage and are perhaps an ancestral brother and sister rather than a married couple. Lastly, the unusual fact that all three wear black stockings may further indicate a common genealogy.

Note

1. For similar standing figures see Gallagher 1983, p. 116, fig. 148; Meighan and Nicholson 1989, p. 79, fig. 12.



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40. Standing Male Figure

Lagunillas style, A.D. 100–300

13¼ x 6⅜ in. (33.7 x 16.2 cm)

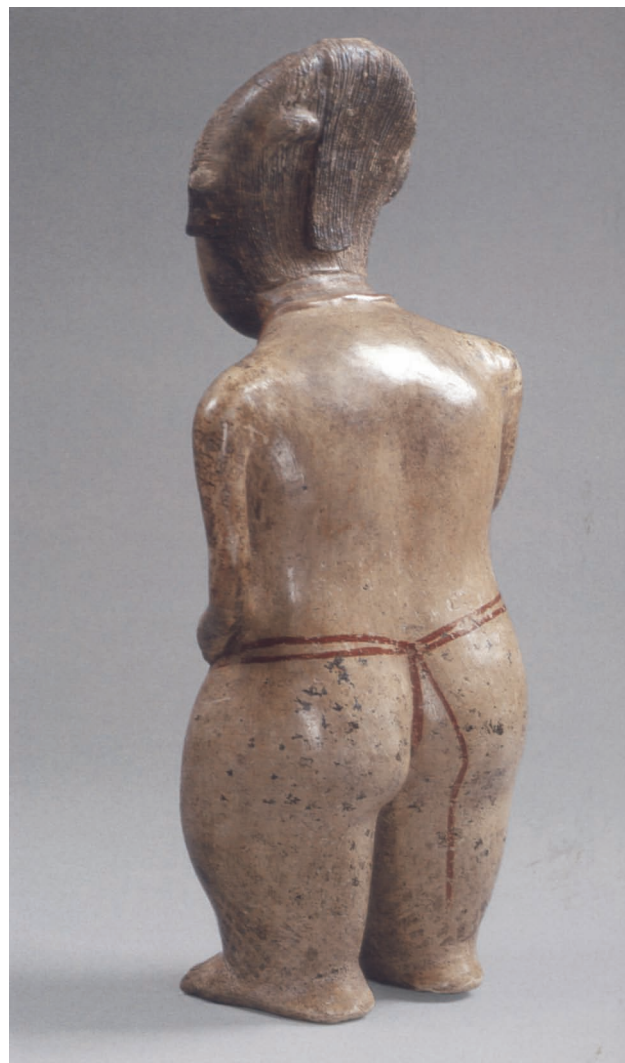
Joanne and Andrall Pearson

The outstanding quality of Lagunillas ceramic figures is palpable in the thick cream slip and buttery burnished finish of this example. A sculpted-and-painted thin red loincloth and flat nipples establish the figure's as male. Precision and care guided the craftsmanship of this sculpture. Incised lines and traces of black slip depict the hair, which is swept back into a long ponytail and knot. Set high on the sides of the head are rectangular ears with holes in the lobes for removable or perishable earrings. The face has a smooth finish with a sculpted brow, puffy eyes with narrow slit openings, and a

realistic nose complete with nostrils. The figure's mouth is slightly open. Red slip daubed on the bridge of the nose and the chin may represent blood. Two vertical incised lines on each cheek signify bloodletting and facial scarification. High around his neck is a painted black-and-red three-strand necklace, worn above a red, appliquéd rope from which a round pendant is suspended. The arms are solid. The right hand is positioned above and the left one below the waist; except for a few etched lines to indicate fingers, the hands blend into the torso, which has a pronounced navel. From the knees down, the figure is decorated with a diamond pattern in black resist that may indicate body paint or a woven garment. The scant loincloth is held in place by two red strings that tie in back, with one string hanging down to just above the figure's right ankle.

Reference

Chicago 1998, no. 218, ill. p. 128, fig. 30 a.



40: back view



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41. Seated Female Figure

Lagunillas style, A.D. 100–300

18¾ x 16 in. (47.6 x 40.6 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

This classic Lagunillas female figure's high status is easily detectable in her masterfully rendered appearance and highly burnished red-slip finish. The depiction of body art includes the decorative patterns on the figure's face, in vertical black stripes with cream dots alternating with the plain red slip. The puffy coffee-bean eyes have horizontal slits, and the narrow nose is straight in profile. The figure wears an

appliquéd double nose clip. Her protruding ears are each adorned with sculpted-and-appliquéd six-hooped earrings. As in other depictions of female figures of high status, her coiffure is carefully styled, each incised hair branching out from a central knot in the front, with a long ponytail hanging down the center of her back. She wears a three-strand appliquéd necklace that is pecked to represent beads, and is

painted in white and black. Each of her small shoulders is decorated with eight rounded pellets set in two rows. A stack of ten plain appliquéd bracelets covers nearly her entire left arm. In short, this lavish decoration was intended to communicate the female's status and power.

A low-hung appliquéd belt with etched markings en-

circles her hips, below which is a brief, black garment. With her legs spread wide apart and her hands placed in a "pushing" position on her waist, the artist's intention seems to have been to suggest a stage in the birthing process or a statement regarding the fertility of the figure's lineage. Her thick outstretched legs taper to small feet with incised toes.

42. Hunchback with a Vessel

Lagunillas style, A.D. 100–300

9 x 6 7/16 in. (22.9 x 16.4 cm)

Joanne and Andrall Pearson

This crouching figure has an exceptional, deep red-brown burnished finish. Its rounded form and vibrant color contradict the hunchback's frailty and wrinkled countenance. Based on the loose modeling of a skirt, the figure is probably female. Her full head of hair is carefully indicated with incised lines, and her wide, heart-shaped face, with closed eyes, is characteristic of the Lagunillas style of Nayarit. The figure's pinched nose has a single, wide appliquéd noseclip. Around her neck is a painted white-beaded necklace. Her hunched back is emphasized by the sculpted and high-lighted ribs and spine, and her thin arms and legs are delicately folded. Her raised right arm and hand support a large vessel decorated with six, white incised circles and a stripe, almost the size of the figure's head, that rests on her right shoulder.¹ Nine pellets embellish her left shoulder, and she wears a white, appliquéd tabbed band on her upper arm. Perfectly applied thin white stripes demarcate her waist and the top of her feet, and may represent the edges of a garment. A circular air vent is cut out on the bottom of the figure.

Feasting and drinking ceremonies are primary themes in ancient West Mexican art. The figural West Mexico sculptures, frequently depicted holding a bowl or a cup, were placed in the tombs of the deceased, and some vessels held by the figures may have carried offerings to the ancestors. With her empty bowl, this frail female figure is symbolically feeding the dead. The themes of eating and drinking confirm the existence of complex pre-Hispanic seasonal feasts observed by early West Mexican societies. The actual food bowls and jars for drink that were found in the majority of the shaft-and-chamber tombs, and that originally held nourishment for the deceased ancestors, support such artistic representations as the present work.



42: back view

Note

1. For similar hunchbacked figure with a vessel see Antwerp 1998, no. 100.



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