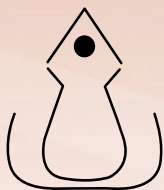


4

ancient  
**ITZOCAN**  
**THE FALL**

**Aztec expansion towards the  
Olmeca-Xicalanca region**



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# ANCIENT ITZOCAN – THE FALL

## Aztec expansion towards the Olmeca-Xicalanca region

# 4

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## Introduction

In its origins, Itzocan (or Izúcar) was an outstanding and important center of the Olmecan civilization that left exceptional pottery works as testimony. Later on, it went through a stage of Teotihuacan dominion, particularly recognizable through its Thin Orange ceramic. Its following period was represented by the Black on Orange ceramic and the Olmeca-Xicalancas, conquered and expelled from its territories around the year 1200 A.D.

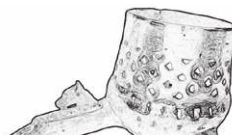
From that date on, the last three centuries of the pre-Hispanic history of Itzocan were built by the presence of several groups: Chichimecas, Mixtecas and Mexicas, as well as some local people, who developed many important and peculiar pottery traditions, due to their characteristics and geographical distribution. Some of these traditions are recognized as local, and others were shared within that region and other important sites from the High Central Plateau.

Finally, at the beginning of the 16th century and with the arrival of the Spaniards, the area embodied to the colonial system and the Mesoamerican world suffered a rupture. Obviously, this ceramic styles are interrupted and the pre-Hispanic history of Itzocan comes to an end. Still, some other aspects develop during that time and survive until now, like its irrigation system through channels or irrigation ditches.



# 1 Their Identity continues

The Aztec expansion towards the Olmec-Xicalanca region



## 1.1 Nexapa: Red on Bay

**D**uring the period between the years 900 and 1200 A.D. —known as Early Post-classic—, many important fortified sites are consolidated in the valleys of Matamoros and Epatlán, as well as the pottery made in red on bay color, with engraved ornaments, identified with the name of Nexapa.

The potters from Nexapa produced almost exclusively clay tripod bowls, which stand out due to the thickness of their walls and the peculiar shape of their sharp-ended rattle supports. The surface of these pieces are decorated with a lot of reddish paint and symbolic motives, such as the “staired” fret, which’s contour is outlined through incision.



Nexapa style red on bay tripod clay bowl.



Image of a codex representation of a fortified site.

Nexapa is interesting because, even though it is very particular, it is the ceramic most related –from the stylistic point of view- to the Toltecan productions made during the Early Post-classic.



## 1.1.1 Nexapa River



A very important part of the non-written history of ancient Itzocan can be found in the riverbed of the Nexapa River, the most important water source of ancient Coatlalpan.

Born from the thawed snow of the Popocatepetl volcano, this river represented the spinal cord of the pre-Hispanic societies that, since ancient times, took advantage of its flow through irrigation ditches, in order to water their cultivating lands.

Therefore, the Nexapa River became the fundamental axis for the agricultural development of the villages settled in that area.



Agriculture.



Nexapa River.



Feeder canals.



## 1.2 Epatlán's pottery

**T**ogether with Nexapa, another typical local pottery was the one from Epatlán. This has been stated by the fact that it was archaeologically found in Tepapayeca and in collections from Matamoros and San Juan Epatlán. It is true that it can be observed in other private collections, but the reason for this could be attributed to the area itself.

But, first of all, what does it look like? Its complete name gives us a clear idea of its characteristics: Epatlán, Dark Brown with a Stick-Polished finish.

Its manufacture shows extreme simplicity and elegance, both covered by the veil of mystery, for the origin of its raw materials is unknown, as well as to what group or part of the many villages from that region it can be attributed to.

Probably the whole pieces seen in private collections come from tombs located in unexplored archaeological sites from the valleys of Izúcar and Epatlán.



Epatlán ceramic.

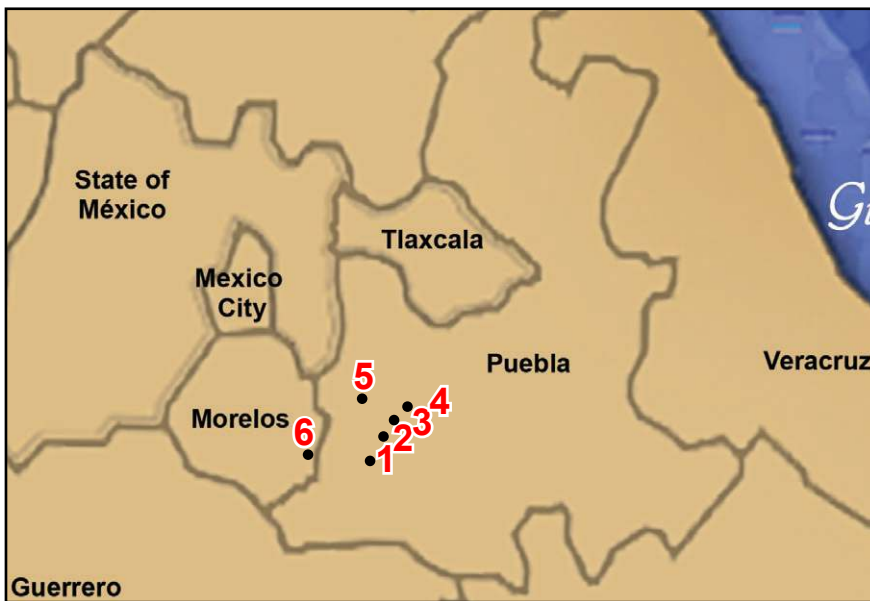


Epatlán ceramic.



## 1.2.1 Distribution

The Epatlán pottery has been found in Izúcar de Matamoros, Tepapayeca and of course, San Juan Epatlán, the town after which it was named. Besides this area, the only place where it has been reported to have found this type of pottery is Tetla, a settlement near Chalcatzingo, Morelos. This is very interesting, because it shows that, during the Formative Horizon as well as the Post-classic, the area maintained a strong relation with that part of Morelos.



Geographical location

1. San José las Bocas
2. Oxtotla
3. Necoxtla
4. Epatlán
5. Tepapayeca
6. Tetla

Geographical location.

## 1.2.2 Epatlán: shapes and sizes

The Epatlán Dark Brown pottery with a Stick-Polished finish has two recurrent shapes: plates and tripod clay bowls — with diameters ranging from 15 to 20 centimeters—, as well as medium size versions and occasionally, miniatures. Less frequently, small jars and large bottles were made, in shades that go from medium to dark brown.



Example of a tripod plate.



Example of tripod clay bowls.





Jars.



Large bottles.

### 1.2.3 Supports

The Epatlán's pottery symbolism is focused on its base supports -cast-made, firmly attached to the vessel's body-, which are represented with animal heads or a character's bust. The plates show a figure with coyote traits. This fact reminds us that, among ancient Mexicans, there was a deity called Huehucóyotl, "the old coyote".

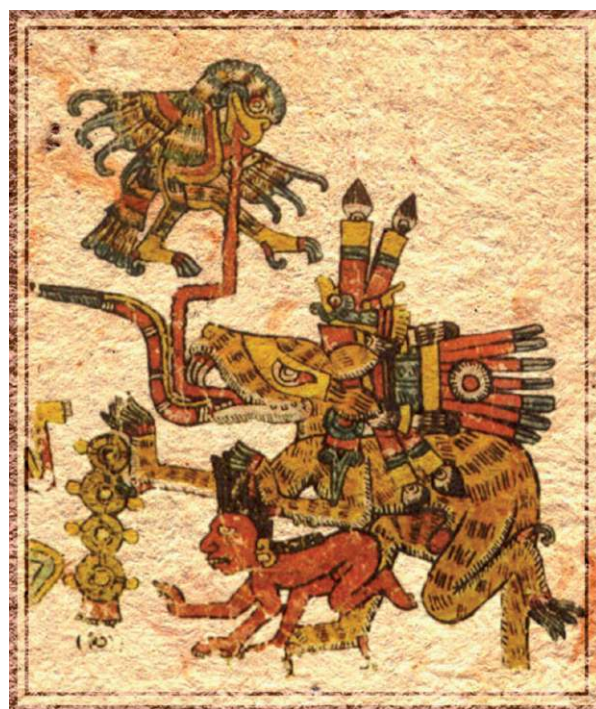
Depicted in codices as a beast with elongated head, sharp ears and long tail, he is the lord of the fourth day sign and is the representation of the dance god.

#### Huehucóyotl "Old coyote"

The coyote, representative of the pre-Hispanic iconography, was depicted on several materials. Below: coyote in its natural habitat. Right: Huehucóyotl, "the old coyote" depicted on a codex.



Mexican Coyote. (1)



The clay bowls are decorated with a character wearing a bird mouth mask. This feature suggests that he is probably Ehécatl, the wind god.



Ceramic representation of Ehécatl. (2)



Ehécatl "wind" depicted a codex.

**Ehécatl**  
"wind"

God of the wind

One of the most ancient deities of pre-Hispanic Mexican cultures was Ehécatl, which name means "wind". He was the second of the 20 signs from the nahuatl calendar, and during the Late Postclassic —1250 to 1521 A.D.— he was considered to be the personification of Quetzalcóatl, which because of his attributes, was invisible and impalpable.



Priest with a mask of Ehécatl.

**1.2.4 Function**

The plates and tripod clay bowls of Epatlán are individual recipients, that were probably used as food containers.

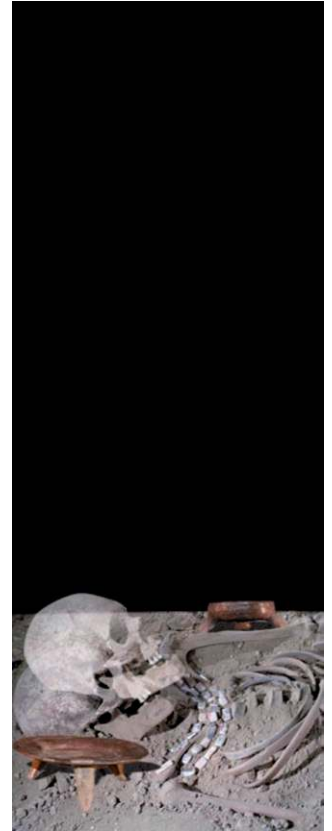
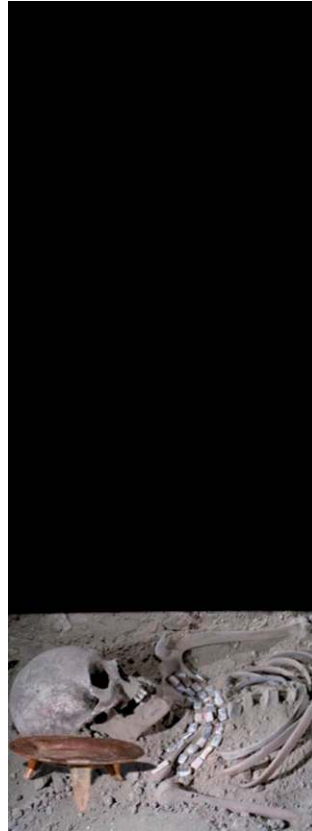
At a first glance, their surfaces don't show usage traces, which suggests that they were mainly employed in mortuary rituals. Nevertheless, its impor-



tance lays on its contribution in creating the identity of the main lords and warriors from ancient Iztocan, during the 13th and 14th centuries.



Example of how food was contained in clay bowls.

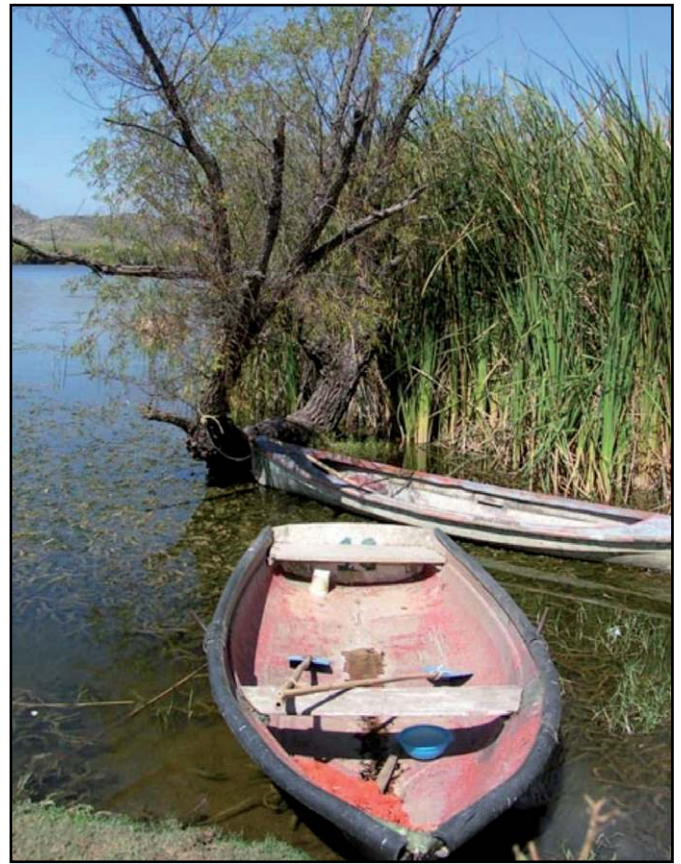


Funerary rituals.



## 1.2.5 The San Juan Epatlán Period: the village

**E**patlán, is the name of a small town ten kilometers east from Izúcar, on the slopes of the Altipetzin and Jinolaltepec hills. In the upper part of the these hills, there is an archaeological site that belongs to the Post-classic Horizon (900-1521 A.D.).



Riverbed of the Epatlán lagoon.



Inhabitant.



Fisherman.



Party.



Lagoon.



Population.



Epatlán glyph.

It is a nahuatl name, formed by two words: epatl, “skunk” and tlan, “place”, meaning “place where skunks abound” or “next to the skunks”. The toponymic glyph is, indeed, a skunk on a pair of teeth. The word “tooth”, in nahuatl is tlanti, but in this case, it is only used as a phonetic resource.



## 2 An alliance is formed

The Aztec expansion towards the Olmec-Xicalanca region



### 2.1 The Mexica conquest

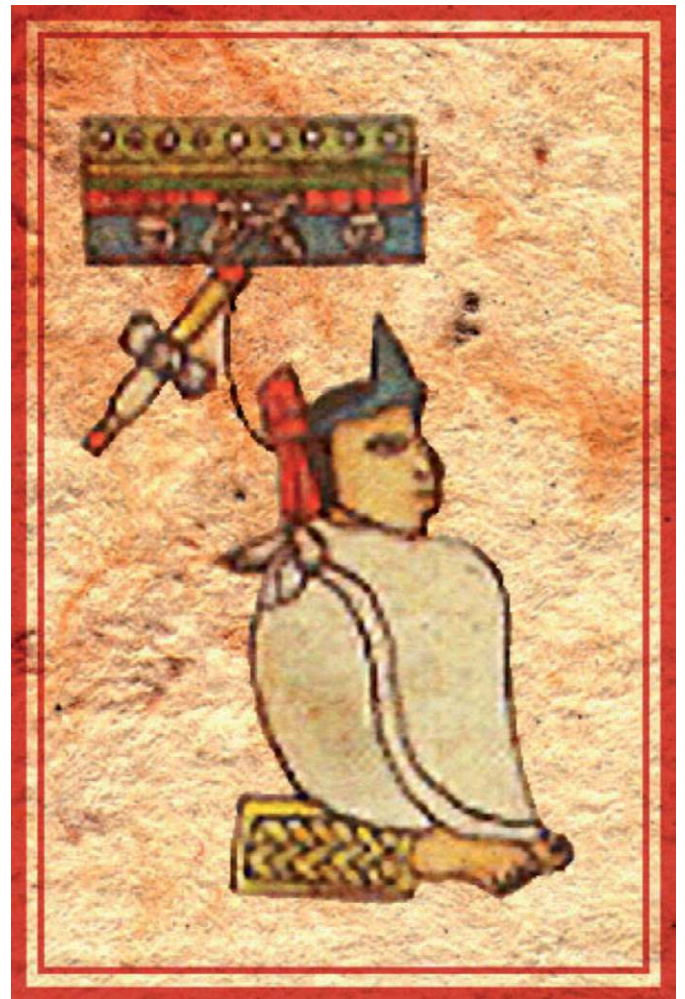
The province of Itzocan was conquered by Moctezuma Ilhuicamina; the date established for this event is 1440. Nevertheless, some historians point out that the Mexica conquest was consolidated between the years 1458 and 1446, period during which the military campaigns of the Triple Alliance reached their highest peak. The Mexicas aimed, basically, to control the exchange routes and natural passages to the coasts of Oaxaca and the Gulf of Mexico.



Pictographic representation of the Triple Alliance in the Osuna Codex.

From this stage on, the sources call this province as Coatlalpan. The Coatlalpanecas participated in several military campaigns, allied to the Mexicas; this probably allowed them to keep a certain independence facing the empire. The use of some luxurious pottery can also be interpreted as an expression of their autonomy.

**MOCTEZUMAILHUICAMINA**, Tlatoani or main Lord of the Mexicas who ruled during the period of 1440 to 1468.



Moctezuma Ilhuicamina



## 2.1.1 Coatlalpan

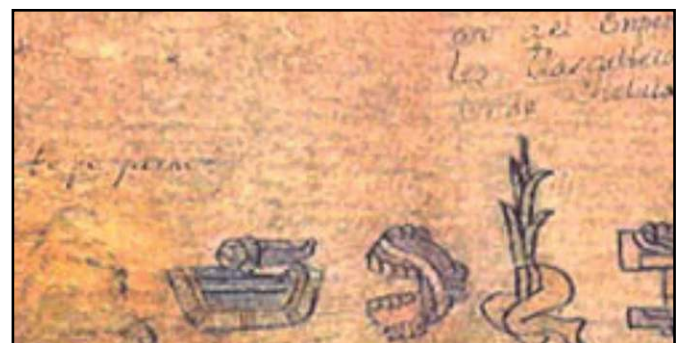
Many written testimonies from the late 16th century, record the name of Coatlalpan (or Coatlalpanecan region) referring to the ancient town of Itzocan. Among them, we find the extraordinary 1579 cartography documents prepared by the Belgian geographer Abraham Ortelius.



Cartography of the Belgian geographer Abraham Ortelius.

## 2.2 The tribute

The Mexica conquest integrated Itzocan, Epatlán, Necoxtla, and the rest of the Coatlalpanecan villages to the tributary province of Tepeaca. The “*Matrícula de Tributos*” (*Tribute List*) states that the goods given as tribute were deer skins, arrow tips and bundles of otates (strong cane sticks), cacaxtles (a wooden frame, sort of back-pack), tobacco pipes and lime package bulks, as well as corn, beans, and sage seeds.





**cenxiqipilli acáyetl**  
800 tabacco canes  
a thousand canutos of aromatic canes



**Oxtotla Glyph**



**Epatlán Glyph**

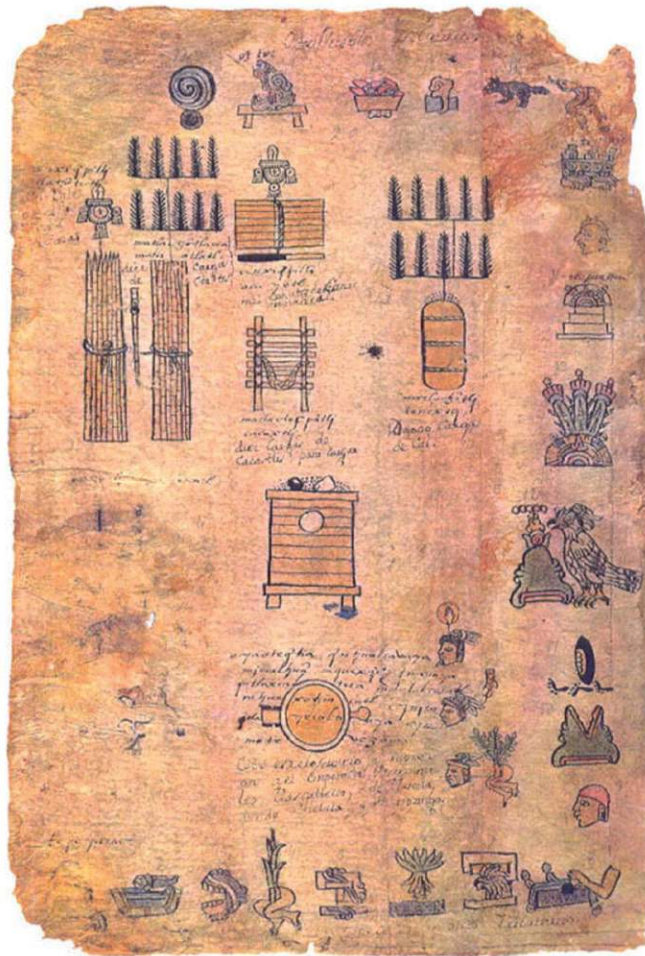


**matlactzontli tenextli**  
4000 fardos de cal  
cargas de cal



**cenxiqipilli tlatzontectli**  
800 puntas de oate

**madaczonda-mamalli óta**  
400 bundles of sticks



**Tribute list**



**Corn, beans and chia**



**matlactecpantli cacaxtli**  
200 aparejos para cargar  
diez cargas de cacaxtis para cargar



**Iztocan Glyph**



**ontozntli ehuamázatl**  
800 deer skins



## 2.3 The amazing Black Graphite tableware

Since the dominion of the Mexicas over Itzocan, an easily recognizable pottery arose: it is decorated with intense red paint, as well as the Black Graphite. Without doubt, the most outstanding aspect is the use of plumbago or graphite for its decoration, which produced a special metallic glitter. One can only point out that there is no other Mesoamerican Post-classic ceramic in which this material is used so abundantly, for ornamental purposes.

On the other hand, the vessels with graphite generated such a special link between Izúcar and Tenochtitlán, that they have been mistakenly considered as Mexicas, when they belong in fact to the Coatlanpaneca region.

Although it is still unknown what the ceremonies consisted in and what they were like, it has been undoubtedly stated that the graphite tableware was used for ritual and funerary purposes.



### 2.3.1 Geographical distribution

Besides the Post-classic sites located in Izúcar de Matamoros and San Juan Epatlán, Black Graphite was also found in Teotenango, an archaeological site in the valley of Toluca. During the 1970 explorations, several pieces of this type of pottery were discovered; by that time, the specialists considered

that these pieces had been taken there by the conquerors. But there is still a possibility to be considered: that the product may have established an actual alliance between Itzocan and the Mexicas.



## 2.3.2 Shapes and attributes

**B**lack Graphite ceramic clearly shows the modern concept of luxurious tableware, formed by the broad variety of clay bowls: with rounded bodies, with supports that represented a bird's head, tripod plates, fretwork decorated incense holders and jars.



This tableware is immediately recognized because these pieces have large areas painted in bright red combined with other smaller areas painted in black. The simple clay bowls have “scratched” motifs (made with the sgraffito technique) on the outside, and a projecting button on the inside. Tripod clay bowls have several shapes, with simple or zo-

omorphous supports. The most extraordinary pieces display, on its outside, up to two tiny heads; these are quite interesting because, despite its small size, their traits are perfectly clear: they are human, bird or monkey heads. Some tripod plates are outstanding pieces that combine two zoomorphic supports with a different one. The fretwork decorated incense holders are specially interesting, because of its handle—that can be cylindrical or feline shaped—and because they remind us of the Post-classic Mixtec style incense holders. The complete pieces found from the Black Graphite tableware come from mortuary contexts, for they were part of the offerings made to warriors and main lords.



### 2.3.3 Jar with no handle nor spout

The jar is a typical piece of the Black Graphite tableware. Unfortunately, the one we show here does not have its elegant spout nor handle. Other equivalent pieces will help us to virtually rebuild it.



## 3 Shared traditions

The Aztec expansion towards the Olmec-Xicalanca region

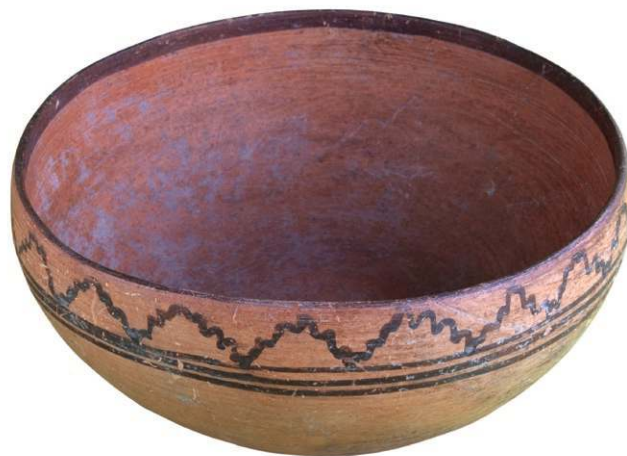
### 3.1 The Coxcatlán pottery case

During the Late Post-classic, Itzocan's main lords, besides maintaining the local styles, added to their ceremonies other pottery traditions that went beyond the geographic boundaries of the area. Such is the case of the Coxcatlán ceramic, considered as one of the most important Post-classic manufactures in ancient Itzocan. But before interpreting and appraising its historical content, it is essential to first have a closer look and know its most peculiar qualities allowing us to identify it more accurately.



Coxcatlán's craftsmen appealed to the most common shape of the Mesoamerican pottery: the clay bowl. With scarce variations as of diameter and wall height, these simple containers —maybe for liquid substances— were decorated with peculiar, dark brown geometric motives.

Of course, the formal and ornamental sobriety of Coxcatlán, contrasts with the shape complexity and added fixtures of other Itzocan ceramics. From both points of view, Coxcatlán has a measured and controlled style.



Coxcatlán ceramic.



### 3.1.1 Paste

Coxcatlán's vessels were made with fine grain paste. Its fragments have sharp edges and, when a piece hits a compact surface, it makes an almost metallic sound. This indicates a high density structure.



### 3.1.2 Coxcatlán: geographical distribution

During its apogee, Coxcatlán was a part of several important Post-classic sites of central and southern Puebla. Unlike local ceramics, like the ones from Nexapa and Epatlán, the Coxcatlán ceramic covered a wider territory. The great amount of material found in Acatzinco and Tepeaca (valley of Puebla),

points out that it was probably manufactured in that region, and then sent to Coxcatlán, Izúcar, Tetla, Tepexi el Viejo, and Tehuacán. In other words, in the valley of Izúcar, Coxcatlán ceramic is a foreign product; nevertheless, its importance as a luxurious and mortuary pottery is indisputable.





### Geographical distribution

1. Tela
2. Izúcar
3. Tepexi
4. Tepeaca
5. Acatzingo
6. Tehuacán
7. Coxcatlán

### 3.1.3 Coxcatlán pottery: its historical context

Coxcatlán pottery is also a moderately wide chronological indicator: it arose at the end of the Early Post-classic, subtly related to the Black on Orange pottery, and subsisted during the Mexica apogee. In fact, its distribution marks the limits of an enormous geographical zone located between the Mixteca and the Basin of Mexico.

The presence of Coxcatlán pottery in Itzocan indicates, in some way the coalescence of this valley to a larger entity, conformed by the lordships of Acatzingo, Tepeaca, Tepexi, Tehuacan and Izúcar itself. In this kind of pottery, the history of ancient Itzocan faces another interesting problem: which group does Coxcatlán represent or identifies with? Here we find divided opinions: according to some experts, it portrays the Mixtecas; to others, the Chichimecas.



Coxcatlán style ceramic.



Black on orange.

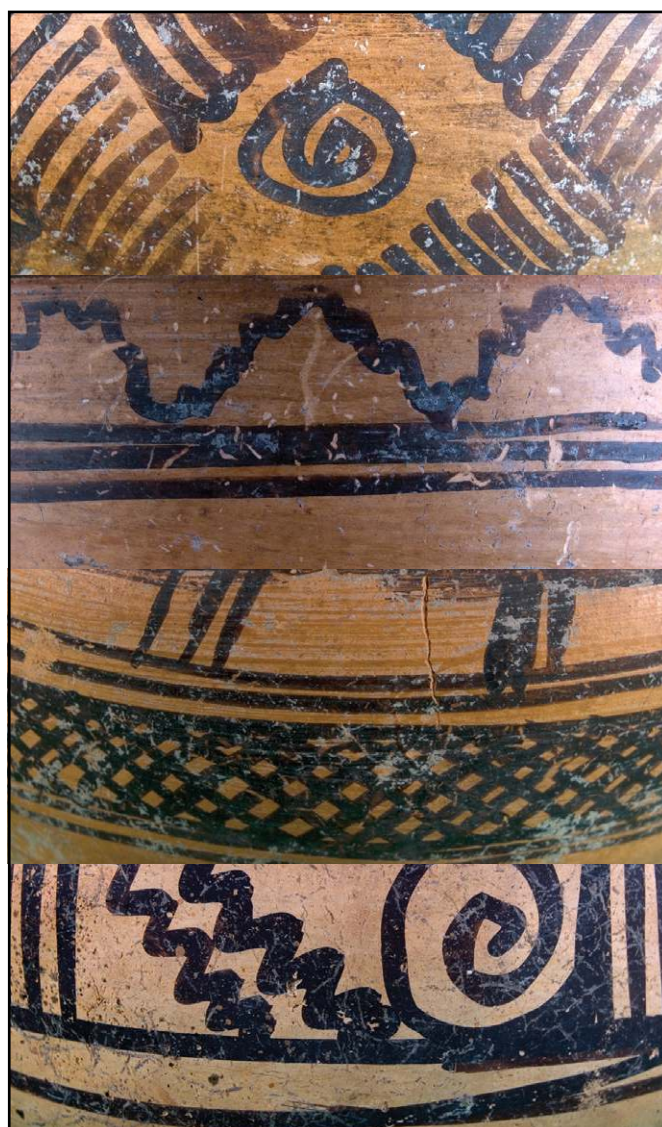
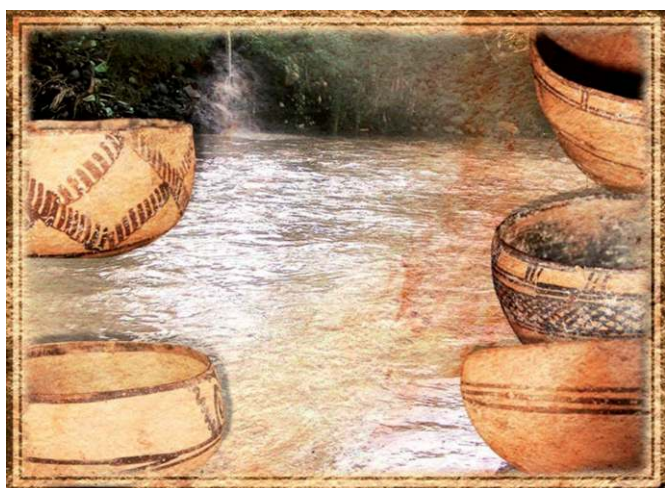


### 3.1.4 Decoration

The Coxcatlán variety is focused on the way its decorated: the distinctive trait of using brown colored geometric traces.

The traces combine straight lines with other predominantly undulating lines that represent spirals, the synthesis of a “staired” fret, as well as using wefts or hatchings; these two are millenary elements that were born during the Post-classic.

In the Coxcatlán ceramic, the line that shapes “braids”, undulations and above all, spirals, certainly represents constant movement, probably of water or wind. This ceramic retakes an element that was also performed 1,000 years before Christ, by Pre-classic Horizon potters.



Examples of ceramic geometrical decorations.



### 3.2 Black on Red Pottery during the Late Post-classic



Some pre-Hispanic manufactures clearly identify an age or a region, such is the case of the Black on Red pottery, widely distributed ceramic family used in the High Central Plateau during the Late Post-classic Horizon. It is certain that the different provinces that controlled the High Plateau made its own versions; this is the reason why it was a widely shared tradition. This pottery is excelled by its broad, intense red covered areas, over which one can observe black painted symbolic motives.

Constituted predominantly by tripod clay bowls, Black on Red was related to the Black Graphite pottery, because they share the typical tripod shape and the usage of bright red color.



Black on red.

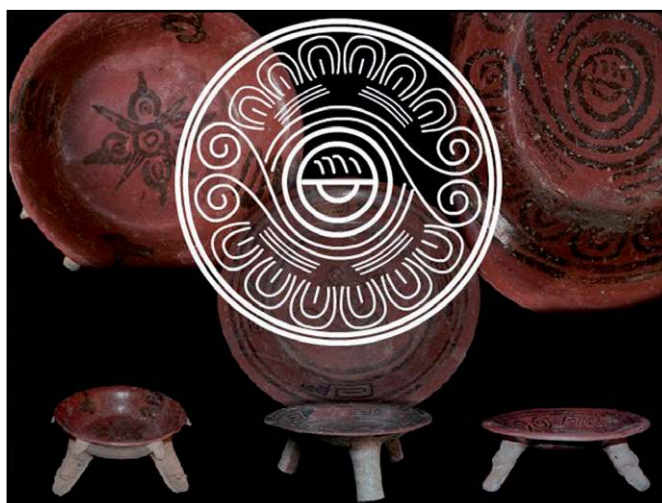
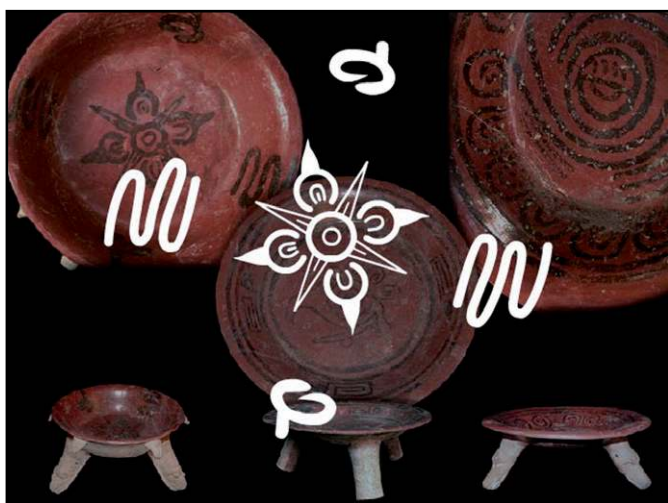


### 3.2.1 Tripod clay bowls and its motifs

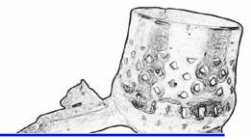
**B**lack on Red tripod clay bowls are large containers of medium depth, which supports are simple rounded cylinders, or independently cast-made; they represent eagle's, dog's, or coyote's heads, and they are also used as rattles. Occasionally, some pieces have several conic elements stuck to their bodies.

The uniqueness of these clay bowls is stressed by black painted geometric motives inside them. In these highly slender traces, one can recognize "staired" frets, spirals, perimetric bands, an element known as Venusian eye, flowers and side views of bird heads.

They are all linked to shapes that appeared during a stage of intense commercial and military activity among the most important metropolis of the High Central Plateau.



## 4 The fall of the pre-Hispanic tradition



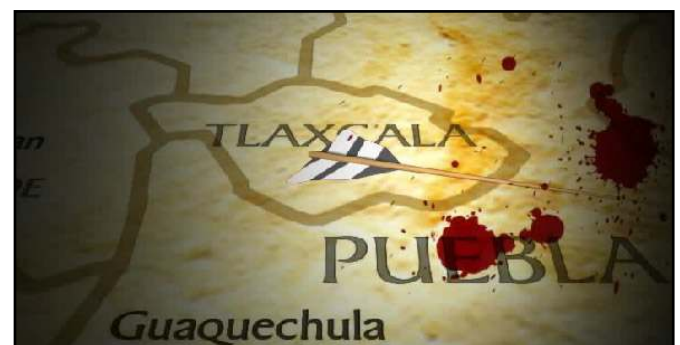
The Aztec expansion towards the Olmec-Xicalanca region

The arrival of the Spanish army to the Basin of Mexico was the event that marked the most important fracture in the Mesoamerican world.

After they were defeated by the Mexicas, the Iberian people ran away from the Basin and took refuge in Tlaxcala. Once they recovered, Hernán Cortés assigned Cristóbal de Olid as captain of a company of approximately 300 men: infantry and cavalry soldiers, crossbowmen, and Tlaxcaltecan warriors. Their main objective was to establish a definitive siege, and then attack Tenochtitlán. Their first battle was against the Mexica army in Guaquechula, Puebla; the survivors headed towards Itzocán, where there was a big fortress.

According to the testimonies, Izúcar was hardly defeated, due to the bold defense of the Mexicas. Bernal Díaz del Castillo wrote that the Mexica squadrons offered a strong resistance, killing a horse and wounding Cristóbal de Olid. Despite all their efforts, they lost the battle.

The Lienzo de Tlaxcala (Tlaxcala's Canvas) depicts with great realism a scene of that battle. It represents a temple and the symbol of Itzocán (an obsidian blade), as well as several warriors with chimallis (shields) and macanas (wooden clubs) facing the Spanish army and their allies. The Izúcar battle was the last Mexica resistance outside of Tenochtitlán. Throughout its pre-Hispanic history, ancient Itzocan was shaped by various ethnic groups, every one of them of different origins. It was repeatedly invaded and embodied to diverse foreign traditions, power spheres, and organizations. Nevertheless, the archaeological expressions, particularly the pottery traditions, contributed to develop its identity.





## Chimallis

Buckler or shield. Defensive weapon widely used in Mesoamerica, especially from the Post-Classic Horizon and later on. It was frequently decorated with symbolic motives, manufactured with colorful feathers.

## Classic

In the Mesoamerican History we find a big mosaic of cultures, which is why a chronological scheme was designed allowing, to a certain extent, the comparison of local developments. The scheme that appears the most inside this topic's literature incorporates three periods: the Pre-classic or Formative Horizon, the Classic Horizon and the Post-classic Horizon. The Classic Horizon is divided into two stages for practical purposes:

1. Early Classic from 200 to 600 A.D. it is one of the greater splendor periods of Mesoamerica. Cities like Teotihuacán, Cholula, Monte Albán, Calakmul, and others were born and reached very high specialization levels.
2. Late Classic from 600 to 900 A.D. it is characterized by the birth of a new political situation in most part of Mesoamerica associated with the fall of Teotihuacán and with the great splendor of some Mayan cities.

## Coatlalpan

Archaeological and historical sources have confirmed the cultural and anthropological significance of the ancient lordship of Coatlalpan (current area of Izúcar de Matamoros) in Mesoamerican life. Such importance is marked by the antiquity of its settlements, its chronological continuity, and its peculiar geographic situation of intense "international" traffic of diverse and influential pre-Hispanic nations. It is also important due to its copious crops and watering practices, which were famous even in the valley of Mexico.

## Coxcatlán

This town is located on the lower part of the Tehuacán valley, south of Puebla, which was the center of a nahuatl reign with a popoloca minority. Coxcatlán is next to Oaxaca and is an abrupt area in the Tehuacán river basin. They grow sugar cane as a way of life.

## Cristóbal, Olid De

1488-1524. Spanish officer who was captain during the conquest of Mexico and Honduras. When he arrived to the new World, he participated in the taking of Cuba (1511), under the orders of Diego Velásquez. He was part of the expedition commanded by Juan de Grijalva that left towards Cozumel, Yucatán and the southern coasts of the Gulf of Mexico in 1518. When Hernán Cortés undertook an expedition a year later, Olid embarked with him. He participated in several battles during the conquest of Mexico.

## Graphite

One of the three allotropic forms of carbon; the other two are diamond and coal. It is also called plumbago or black lead. It is black, opaque and with a metallic luster. Due to its pliancy, it stains everything it has contact with and has a greasy texture. Used to decorate pottery, graphite was scarcely used in pieces of the Mixteca region, and abundantly in Black Graphite pottery in Izúcar, Puebla.

## Matlatzinca

Name of a native Mexica town also known as Pirinda, located in the Valley of Toluca. Two of its main settlements are Calixtlahuaca and Teotenango. The Matlatzincas were independent until the end of the 15th century, time in which they were conquered by the Mexicas and forced to pay tribute and act as their allies. The pottery of Matlatzinca has symbolic elements that shares with



the rest of the High Central Plateau's Post-classic pottery, such as the fret and the double spiral as well as mysterious symbols which meanings are still unknown.

### **Matrícula de Tributos (Tribute List)**

One of the most famous pictographic Mexican documents that still remains in its place of origin: kept at the National Anthropology and History Library (Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia), in Mexico. It has only 16 pages of amatl paper, of approximately 26 x 42 cm; they are all colorfully painted on both sides, although some of them are seriously damaged. This list was used for administration purposes, as well as for public finances. In this document, México-Tenochtitlán, capital city of the Mexica Empire, kept the precise record and schedule of the tributes to be paid by different provinces and people. Besides its economical contents, it is amazing all the additional information about some other meaningful aspects that offers and allows reconstructing part of their pre-Hispanic life.

### **Mesoamerica**

In 1943 Dr. Paul Kirchhoff called the region that was inhabited by numerous groups of people, Mesoamerica. The region designated as Mesoamerica includes Mexico's Central-southeast region and Central America's northern region, where the most important pre-Hispanic civilizations bloomed. From the Olmecs, today's south of Veracruz and Tabasco region; the Mayas in the peninsula of Yucatan, Chiapas, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras; the Mixtecos-Zapotecas in today's state of Oaxaca, the Totonacas north of Veracruz; the toltecas and Aztecs in the central Plateau, etc. Nowadays, through the ruins of their ancestral cities, which have little by little revealed their best kept secrets, we have testimonies of their culture and greatness.

### **Post-classic**

In the Mesoamerican History we find a big mosaic of cultures, which is why a chronological scheme was designed allowing to a certain extent, the comparison of local developments. The scheme

that appears the most inside this topic's literature includes three periods: the Pre-classic or Formative Horizon, the Classic Horizon and the Post-classic Horizon. The Post-classic Horizon is divided into two stages for practical ends:

1. Early Post-classic from 900 to 1200 A.D. and is defined by the combination of features, in which we can find the collapsing of great cities from the Classic Horizon, migratory movements and the existence of historical information.
2. Late Post-classic from 1200 to 1521 A.D. which is characterized for being a period where Mesoamerica had its greatest splendor. Cultures like the Tarascos and Mexicas developed during this period.

### **Pre-classic or formative**

In the Mesoamerican History we find a big mosaic of cultures, which is why a chronological scheme was designed allowing, to a certain extent, the comparison of local developments. The scheme that appears the most inside this topic's literature incorporates three periods: the Pre-classic or Formative Horizon, the Classic Horizon and the Post-classic Horizon. The Pre-classic or Formative Horizon is divided into three stages for practical ends:

1. Early Pre-classic from 2500 to 1200 A.D. it is when the bases for Mesoamerican cultures development were established, thanks to agriculture as a subsistence base and for sedentary life.
2. Middle Pre-classic from 1200 to 400 B.C. it is when social organization became more and more complex.
3. Late Pre-classic from 400 B.C. to 200 A.D. it is when the cultural tendencies are consolidated and the bases for the Classic Horizon are established.

### **Stick-polished finish**

A technique that consists in rubbing the surface of a vessel with a blunt tip instrument. It originated during the Formative Horizon and lasted throughout the Classic.



## **Teotenango**

This site, which name is a Nahuatl word that means “sacred wall” or “in the sacred enclosure”, is located in the State of Mexico. The city is formed by a group of constructions and patios built in different levels, due to its irregular topography; there are residential groups, wells, plazas, pyramid bases, streets, drainage systems and ball game courts. The place developed approximately since the year 650 to 1550 and its apogee occurred between years 900 and 1162 A.D.

## **Tepapayeca**

Name of a town and of an archaeological site, both located east of Izúcar. The place was explored by INAH archaeologists during the sixties; the structure found is a pyramidal base with three superpositions corresponding to the Post-classic Horizon.

Several tombs were found in Tepapayeca with offerings of Coxcatlán, Epatlán and Black Graphite pottery.

## **Toltecs**

Nahuatl-speaking people which name means “building masters”. They ruled the central and northern regions of the Valley of Mexico and succeeded in conquering territories like Chichén Itzá, thanks to their trading and bellicose influence. They reached its splendor between the years 800 and 1100 A.D. and made Tula their capital city. The term is also used to identify a representative style from that period of time in which this culture was in full climax.

## **Triple Alliance**

During the first half of the 15th century, the Basin of Mexico or Anahuac valley saw the rise of a confederation between the cities of Tenochtitlán, Tlacopan and the lordship of Acolhuacan. It was constituted in order to defeat the doughty Tepanecas from Azcapotzalco. Such confederation was absorbed by the splendor of the Mexica Empire.





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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Some of the images used in the present work are a compilation of a bibliographic investigation done with the purpose of spreading the knowledge of the Mesoamerican archaeological heritage. Other images used in this work, not owned by this Foundation, were provided by María Guadalupe Ruiz de la Rosa and Janeth Manrique Mendoza.

The photographs of the Selection of Pieces section are part of the photographic archive of the Armella-Spitalier Cultural Foundation.

1.- Image facilitated by the Archaeologist Pavel González.

2.- Ceramic representation of Ehécatl...Private collection photograph of the Archaeologist Isaac Toledo. Taken by the National Anthropology and History Museum, Mexico.



# Selection of Pieces



# 1

Three stand plate with zoomorphic supports.  
Belong to Epatlán Dark Brown with Stick-Polishing pottery.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 8 cm.  
Diameter: 21 cm.





Three stand plate. Its mold-made supports represent coyote heads.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 8 cm.  
Diameter: 22.5 cm.



# 3

Three-stand earthenware bowl. Its supports represent a character with a bird mouth mask. Epatlán Dark Brown with Stick-Polishing pottery.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 9 cm.  
Diameter: 16 cm.



# 4

Three-stand earthenware bowls with zoomorphic supports representing dog or coyote heads are typical shapes of Epatlan pottery.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 10.5 cm.  
Diameter: 15 cm.



# 5

Less frequent than the earthenware bowls are the small jars, with wide necks and two small handles.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 12.3 cm.  
Width: 9 cm.



# 6

Small jar with handle and long spout, irregular modeling

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 13.2 cm.  
Width: 8.5 cm.



# 7

Miniature version of a three-stand earthenware bowl with zoomorphic supports. It belongs to Epatlán Stick-Polishing pottery.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 4.7 cm.  
Diameter: 8 cm.



# 8

Miniature versions of Epatlán Stick-Polishing pottery reproduce faithfully the features of bigger pieces.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 4.5 cm.  
Diameter: 7.5 cm.



# 9

The zoomorphic traits of Epatlán pottery supports are indisputable. On the contrary, the precise identification of the represented character has not been yet satisfactorily determined.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 5.6 cm.  
Diameter: 12.6 cm.



# 10

The technique of polishing surfaces with thick sticks comes from the Formative Horizon and continued until the Postclassic. This dark brown bottle is a good example.

Origin:  
Central Highland.

Chronology:  
Late Preclassic.  
400 B.C. - 200 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 15.6 cm.  
Diameter: 12 cm.



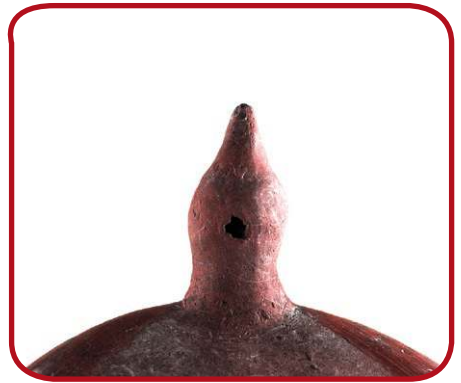


Three-stand earthenware bowl called Nexapa Red on Buff. Its hollow supports function as rattles.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Early Postclassic.  
900 - 1200 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 10.2 cm.  
Width: 18.5 cm.



# 12

Graphite Black earthenware bowl with slice-shaped post-fire incising on the outside.

Origin:  
Central Highland.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 7.6 cm.  
Diameter: 18.3 cm.





Graphite Black three-stand earthenware bowl with zoomorphic supports. On one side, a stuck head of a character, with a hair lock on the middle part.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 9.8 cm.  
Diameter: 16.5 cm.



# 14

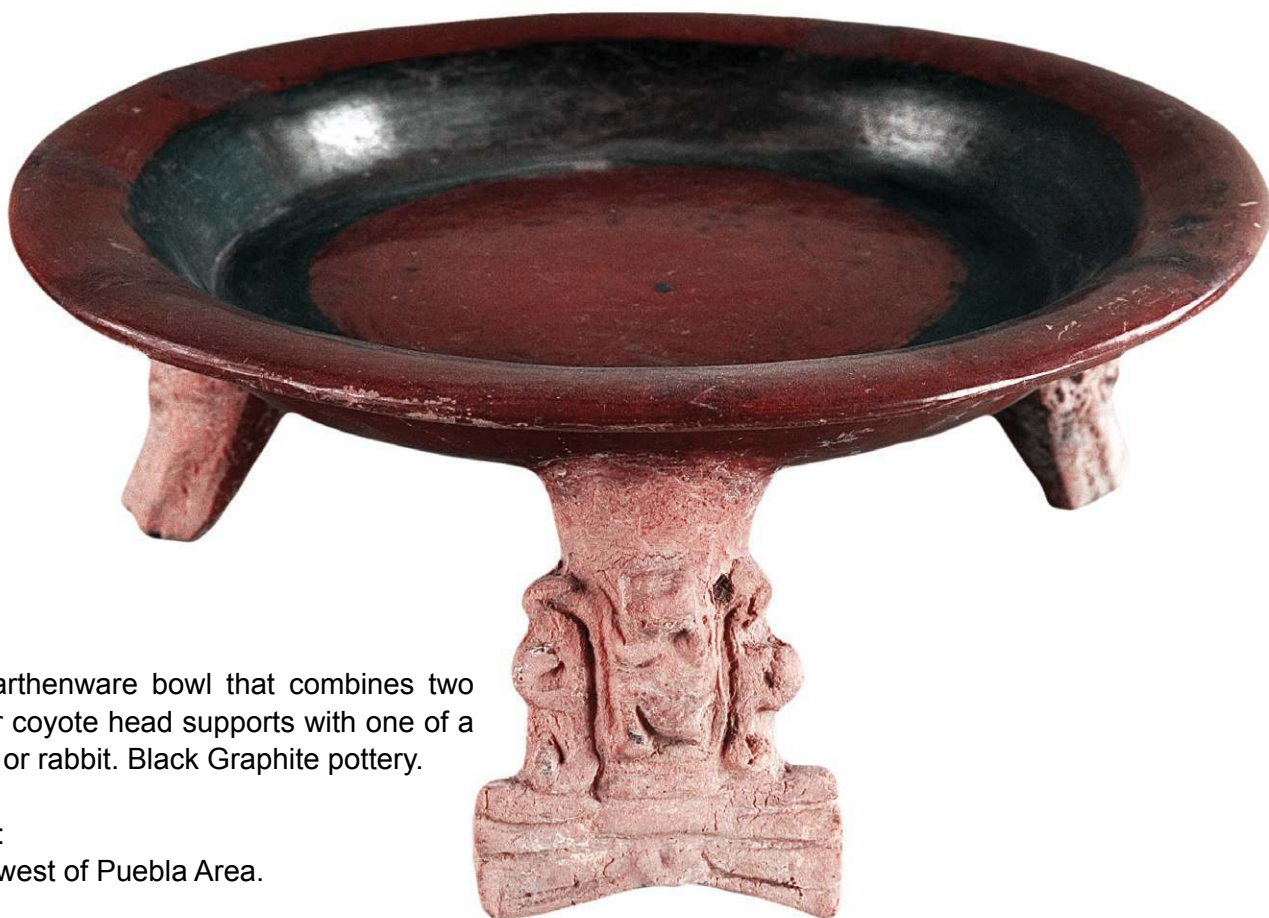
This three-stand earthenware bowl with zoomorphic supports also has the head of a monkey stuck on one of its sides. Black Graphite pottery.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 10 cm.  
Diameter: 16.5 cm.





Big earthenware bowl that combines two dog or coyote head supports with one of a tochtli or rabbit. Black Graphite pottery.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 10 cm.  
Diameter: 23 cm.



# 16

Black Graphite is a well balanced and elegant pottery. The ornament combines ample zones of red and black on the inside, as well as in the outside.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 9 cm.  
Diameter: 20 cm.



# 17

Vessels with two stuck heads are less frequent in Black Graphite pottery. In the present case, one head is a character with zoomorphic ears; the other represents a feline.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Preclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 9.2 cm.  
Diameter: 13 cm.



# 18

Three-stand earthenware bowl with cylindrical supports and zoomorphic head stuck in one side. Black Graphite pottery.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 9.5 cm.  
Diameter: 17 cm.



# 19

Thuribles are ritual objects that were not necessarily used, just like this one, without traces of being used. Black Graphite pottery.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 10 cm.  
Length: 23 cm.



Open-work bowl thurible with cylindrical supports and shaft. Black Graphite pottery.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 12.5 cm.  
Width: 21.5 cm.



# 21

Ample body and cylindrical neck jar, incomplete. On its sides, two bulges. Black Graphite pottery.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 22 cm.  
Width: 19.5 cm.





Simple earthenware bowl with geometrical ornaments on the outside is an almost exclusive shape of Coxcatlán pottery.

Origin:  
Southern and Central Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 4 cm.  
Diameter: 11.5 cm.



# 23

Curved and high walls earthenware bowl, with geometrical ornaments on the outside. Coxcatlán Brown on Beige.

Origin:  
Southern and Central Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 5.8 cm.  
Diameter: 17.5 cm.



Ample earthenware bowl, plain bottom, and curved walls. The outer ornaments are rounded spirals with curved lines. Coxcatlán Brown on Beige.

Origin:  
Southern and Central Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 8 cm.  
Diameter: 17 cm.



# 25

Plain bottom and curvo-convergent walls earthenware bowl. Coxcatlán Brown on Beige.

Origin:  
Southern and Central Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 6.5 cm.  
Diameter: 16 cm.



# 26

Big earthenware bowl, plain bottom and straight walls. Coxcatlán Brown on Beige pottery.

Origin:  
Southern and Central Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 – 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 6.5 cm.  
Diameter: 18 cm.





The outer ornaments of Coxcatlán Brown on Beige earthenware bowls probably represent moving water.

Origin:  
Southern and Central Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 5.3 cm.  
Diameter: 16 cm.



The hatched panels are also usual elements on the ample Coxcatlán Brown on Beige earthenware bowls. In this case, another peculiarity is that the inner part is completely black.

Origin:  
Southern and Central Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 7.2 cm.  
Diameter: 17.3 cm.



Coxcatlán Brown on Beige simple earthenware bowl.

Origin:  
Southern and Central Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 7 cm.  
Diameter: 17.3 cm.



# 30

The ornamental elements used in Coxcatlán pottery may be reduced to straight bands and broken lines that create triangles.

Origin:  
Southern and Central Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 7.2 cm.  
Diameter: 19 cm.



# 31

Earthenware bowl with plain bottom and straight walls. Coxcatlán Brown on Beige.

Origin:  
Southern and Central Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 4 cm.  
Diameter: 12.1 cm.



ancient  
ITZOCAN

60



Large earthenware bowl, plain bottom and straight walls. Coxcatlán Brown on Beige.

Origin:  
Southern and Central Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 7.4 cm  
Diameter: 20 cm.





Three-stand earthenware bowl; its supports are mold-made and they represent eagle heads. The inner part depicts a flower.

Origin:  
Southern and Central Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 11.6 cm.  
Diameter: 18 cm.





The central element of this three-stand earthenware bowl with cylindrical supports is an eagle head, surrounded by a band with "staired" frets.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 8.5 cm.  
Diameter: 22 cm.



# 35

The Venusian eye is a frequent motive in Black on Red pottery. The one we observe here has feathers as a headgear.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 7.5 cm.  
Width: 19.5 cm.



Three-stand earthenware bowl with cylindrical supports and black motives; they are “staired” frets on a red bottom.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 9.4 cm.  
Width: 17.6 cm.



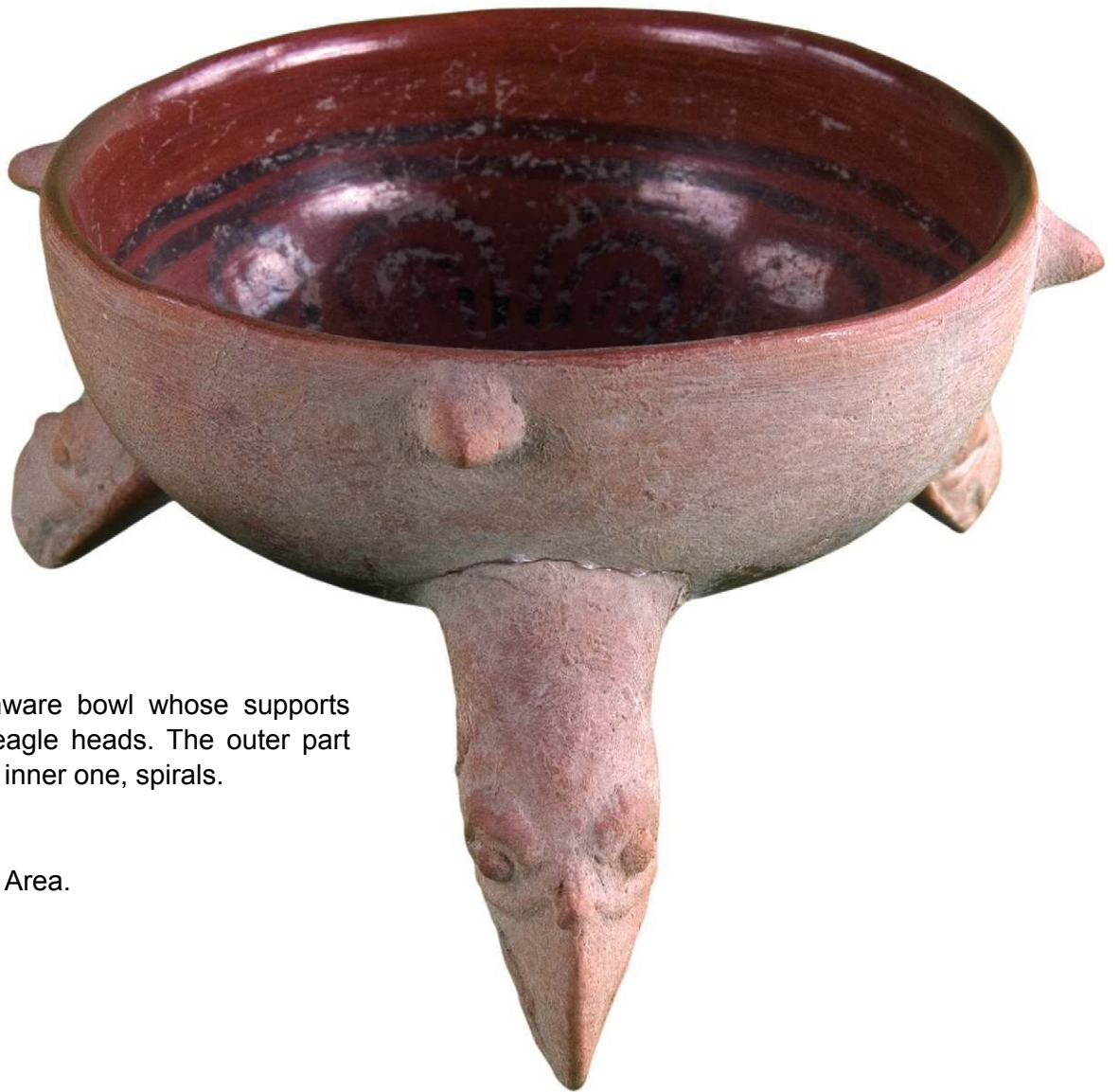
Three-stand earthenware bowl with zoomorphic mold-made supports. On the inner part, a Venu-sian eye.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 18.5 cm.  
Diameter: 22 cm.





Three-stand earthenware bowl whose supports have the shape of eagle heads. The outer part has small cones; the inner one, spirals.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 10 cm.  
Diameter: 16 cm.



Three-stand earthenware bowl, Matlatzinca pottery. The ornaments are painted in red on buff.

Origin:  
Southwest of Puebla Area.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 8.6 cm.  
Diameter: 17 cm.



Three-stand pottery mortar, which belongs to Azteca III ceramics. Plain supports, incised bottom and motives painted in brown.

Origin:  
Basin of Mexico.

Chronology:  
Late Postclassic.  
1200 - 1521 A.D.

Measures:  
Height: 9.6 cm.  
Width: 23 cm.





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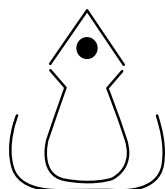
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Organization of the Photographic File





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Chichimec, Mixtec and Mexica peoples were amongst the cultural groups conforming the first three centuries of Itzocan history. They established important ceramic tradition due to its singularities and geographical distribution.

## 4

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