

II. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE AT SAN LORENZO TENOCHTITLÁN VERACRUZ, MEXICO¹

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The results of excavations conducted by Yale University in 1966, 1967, and 1968 at the complex of sites known as San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán, in southern Veracruz, have thrown an entirely new light on the early rise of Olmec civilization in Mexico (Coe, 1968). For the first time, the monumental sculptures of basalt for which the civilization is noted have been placed in an archaeological context, in this case several centuries earlier than previously suspected. However, while the San Lorenzo Phase, during which most of the monuments at San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán were carved, marks the apogee of cultural development in the area, the archaeological sequence is very long and complex, especially for the Formative Period.

This sequence is principally based upon extensive stratigraphic excavations carried out at the site of San Lorenzo itself, although a great deal of testing was done at the lesser site of Tenochtitlán, lying along the Río Chiquito only 2.5 kilometers from San Lorenzo; these produced 751 ceramic lots from 115 discrete cuts, all of which have now been analyzed. In addition, there are 17 radiocarbon dates available (to be discussed in Radiocarbon). Since some rather close resemblances can be seen from time to time with certain ceramic chronologies elsewhere in Mesoamerica, the final sequence for San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán which will be presented here is reasonably accurate.

Ojochi Phase

The Ojochi Phase is the first occupation which we have been able to detect for San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán. On the basis of its stratigraphic position underneath deposits of the Bajío Phase, and because of its obvious cultural ties with the Barra and Ocos Phases of the Pacific Coast of Guatemala and Chiapas (Green and Lowe 1967: 97-106; Coe 1961), Ojochi probably begins shortly after 1500 B.C. and lasts until about 1350 B.C. We have found Ojochi materials only at San Lorenzo itself, and even there it is highly localized, being pretty much confined to the center of the site, although an important deposit was found below Monument 20 on the edge of the Northwest Ridge. As far as can be seen, the Ojochi colonizers established a small settlement on top of the sterile yellow, orange, and red stratified sands that underlie all cultural deposits on the San Lorenzo plateau, but did not significantly alter its shape by any large-scale construction.

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Thin-walled tecomates are the dominant pottery shape, but flat-bottomed bowls with outflaring sides and narrow-necked bottles also occur. As in Ocós, the most striking ware is slipped in a deep hematite red which may be specular; red tecomates often are fluted, while on the bowls extensive gadrooming may occur. Other wares include red on burnished buff, the red being confined to zoned bands on rim and body; red-on-cream, with red bands appearing on the neck and body of bottles; plain burnished; and a burnished flesh-colored pottery. Quite frequent are coarse tecomates with red rims and red-striped exteriors.

The very important Camaño Coarse is a tecomate type which starts with Ojochi, where it is generally thin-walled and seldom brushed, and continues with various modifications until the Middle Formative Nacaste Phase. That this is a utility ware can be seen by the charred food material (perhaps overcooked corn dough) which occurs on many interiors.

The whole feeling of Ojochi pottery is so close to that of Ocós that it must be a kind of country cousin of that more spectacular culture. However, many Ocós decorative techniques --- such as iridescent painting and cord-marking --- seem to be absent. Only one worn, shell-edge rocker-stamped sherd was found, in contrast to the fully developed stamping complex shown in Ocós. The corpus of Ojochi decoration is restricted to fluting; gadrooming; fingernail gouging; stick-punching; zoning; and stick-burnishing in vertical lines or latticework patterns.

The artifact sample is small. A few pottery figurine fragments, both solid and hollow, were recovered, one showing the lower part of a person seated tailor fashion. Stone bowls and metates were manufactured from basalt, and ferrous pieces of laminar sandstone used as grinding or lapidary tools. Grey obsidian was imported from an unknown source, but only small flakes and chips were found; the absence of blades is a striking feature of Early Formative lowland sites that has been noted elsewhere. Red hematite pigment was also imported, perhaps from deposits in the Isthmian region.

There is obviously nothing very Olmec about Ojochi. Its closest affiliations seem to be with the Pacific Coast of Chiapas and Guatemala, but an Ocós-like occupation has also been discovered at San Blas in Nayarit (Joseph Mountjoy, personal communication). There may be a widespread occupation of both coasts of Mesoamerica which is of this type.

Bajío Phase

Radiocarbon dates suggest a placement for the subsequent Bajío Phase at 1350-1250 B.C. However, in attempting to correlate Bajío with other ceramic complexes in Mesoamerica we are faced with some real quandries which will be mentioned later. It was a particularly important occupation for the site of San Lorenzo, for we know that at this time vast quantities of fill were added to level off the top of the plateau, and more particularly

THE SAN LORENZO TENOCHTITLÁN SEQUENCE AND MESOAMERICA

	San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán	La Venta	Central Chiapas	Guatemala-Chiapas Coast	Oaxaca	Valley of Mexico	
Early Post-Classic	1200-						
	1100-	Villa Alta		Ruiz (XI)		Monte Albán IV(?)	
	A.D.						
	900-	XX(Hiatus)XX					
Late Formative	300-	Remplás		Guana-caste (V)	Crucero	Ticomán	
	B.C.				↑		
	400-	XXXXXX?XXXXXX					
Middle Formative	500-	Palangana	Phase IV	Francesca (IV)		Monte Albán I	
	600-	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX			Conchas 2	Atoto-Cuatepec (ZACATENCO)	
		(Hiatus)	Phase III	Escalera (III)		Totolica-La Pastora	
	700-	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX	Phase II				
	800-	Nacaste		Dili (II)	Conchas I	Guadalupe	
	900-					Iglesia-El Arbolillo	
Early Formative	1000-	San Lorenzo B	Phase I		Jocotal		
		San Lorenzo A		Cotorra (I)	Cuadros	San José	
	1200-	Chicharras					
	1300-	Bajío				Tierras Largas	
	1400-	Ojochi			Ocós	Matadamas	
				Barra			
	1500-			↓			
				?			

to begin construction of the long ridges which jut out from it on the west side; perhaps all the ridges were initiated in Bajío times. If so, this is indeed strange, for since we have been able to show bilateral mirror symmetry in the ridges, it follows that San Lorenzo as a center was planned as far back as the 14th century B.C.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that this ceremonial building activity resulted in the construction of temple mounds; none have been found, perhaps because of their destruction for fill by later occupants. But we discovered, deep in an excavation on the Group D Ridge, traces of a red sand platform that rose in a series of undulating steps to a height of at least two meters.

The ceramic complex is strikingly different from that of Ojochi, although certain types of decorative modes continue. Most unusual are the large numbers of bottles which appear in Bajío, with bodies which are either fluted or deeply gadrooned to resemble gourds or squashes; necks are straight or slightly constricted towards the mouth. In addition, a very strange shape appears, one which is hardly Mesoamerican: flat-bottomed pots with constricted upper walls and enormous, outflaring rims. In wares, there is an overall drop in fine, burnished red pottery. Pottery which has been differentially fired to produce black and white areas makes its appearance. In the repertory of ceramic decoration, fluting and gadrooning continue, the gadrooning on bowl exteriors now greatly exaggerated, producing a series of swellings along rims. There is a great variety of punctuation, mostly on the outside of flat-bottomed bowls with outflaring rims: semicircular (using the edge of a reed), stick, short linear, and finger-nail-gouging. Some punctuation is zoned in curvilinear bands and triangles. Plain bold rocker-stamping is present on the exteriors of deep, thick-walled bowls with specular red interiors. More rare is shell-back and shell-edge rocker-stamping. The culinary tecomate type, Camañón Coarse, is common but walls are gradually becoming heavier, with increasing use of brushing to roughen the pot, perhaps for ease in holding.

All of the artifact types of Ojochi continue into Bajío, including stone bowls, footless metates, and grey obsidian confined to small flakes and chips. Lumps of untempered fired clay are quite frequent, possibly as a kind of "Poverty Point" object used in boiling. One rounded lump of asphalt was found, showing that the use of this material, so important to the Olmec, begins in Bajío.

More significant than any of these, however, are the pottery figurines. Both solid and hollow types were made. One fragment of a face, decorated with red pigment, comes from a hollow figure. Another is really astonishing, for it is the left leg with attached hand of a hollow spraddle-legged baby identical in form to those usually considered typical of Olmec culture. It is unfortunate that the head of this baby is missing for it would be interesting to see if the Olmec artistic convention in faces had been developed this early.

It is difficult to relate Bajío with other more-or-less contemporary cultures in Mesoamerica, probably because we are unsure just what might be

on the same time level. Tlatilco, as is well known, has a similar bottle complex, but in the opinion of Paul Tolstoy (personal communication) the graves with this material are going to be post-Olmec.

Chicharras Phase

Although there are a few continuities from Bajío into the Chicharras Phase, especially in utility wares, a host of new types and modes suggests a significant influx of ideas and/or people to join the previous population at San Lorenzo at about 1250 B.C., when, according to radiocarbon dates, Chicharras begins. The most important aspects of Chicharras, however, is that it definitely foreshadows the thoroughly Olmec San Lorenzo Phase, which follows on its heels at around 1150 B.C.

There is a tremendous increase in white-black pottery, especially white-rimmed black ware. Most of this is quite thin and extremely fine-paste, with strikingly black cores, although a coarser sand-tempered type is also frequent. Four white types also appear, all of which, along with the white-black pottery, continue into San Lorenzo. One of these, Ixtepec White, is fine-paste with black cores, while another, Xochiltepec White, is the so-called "white-clear-through" or "kaolin" ware often associated with the Olmec in the central highlands (Coe 1965a, Figs. 47, 50-54). Tatagapa Red also makes its appearance, confined to large, pure hematite-slipped tecomates; the decoration of the exteriors of these is pure incision in parallel lines, zoned crosshatching, or the very odd "false rocker-stamping" which is really incised, instead of stamped. New shapes include the necked jar, "paint dishes" (which often do contain hematite pigment), thickened-rim bowls, and heavy bowls with greatly bolstered rims.

Although "false rocker-stamping" is dominant, there is some bold plain rocker-stamping; zoned plain rocker and shell-back rocker are very rare.

In Camaño Coarse, there is a further increase in tecomate thickness and in the frequency and degree of coarseness in brushing; interior-finger-punching in these is new. Composite incensarios, the form of which is not perfectly known, appear for this type. However, a large fragment of three-pronged incensario in a plain ware is known for Chicharras.

Hollow, white-slipped figurines, often with white-black firing, are known from fragments. But Chicharras sees the first solid figurines which seem to be Olmec; these are fine-paste and "white clear through". A few heads have vaguely Olmec features. The finest depicts a seated pregnant female, unfortunately headless. Other types were being made as well, including one which always shows a hunch-backed dwarf.

The artifact complex differs in no great way from that of Ojochi or Bajío, although two-footed metates are new. We also have the first celt, of a fine-grained greenish rock, and a green stone pendant. A lucky chance of preservation of bone material in the otherwise acid soils of San Lorenzo has produced an awl and a piece of cut-turtle carapace.

The real question for Chicharras is that, granted its status as a foreshadower of the San Lorenzo Phase, were these people carving stone monuments? The answer to this is an unequivocal "yes". Basalt chips and lumps occur throughout Chicharras levels, but this is not conclusive. However, in a buried Chicharras deposit in the Group D Ridge, we hit upon a basalt fragment which must have been broken from a monument, depicting a portion of a rope-like ornament exactly like those which appear on the helmets of San Lorenzo Monuments 3 and 4, both Colossal Heads. The outer surface of the original sculpture has been covered with red hematite. Whatever the form of the original monument, my own feeling is that the origins of the Olmec sculptural style will be found to be at least as early as Chicharras.

San Lorenzo Phase

A preliminary description of the San Lorenzo Phase and its dating has already appeared (Coe, Diehl, and Stuiver 1967; Coe 1968); since this marks the height of Olmec civilization in the area, the subject is of some importance. Additional radiocarbon dates from San Lorenzo itself suggest that the phase begins about 1150 B.C., rather than 1200, and lasts until 900 B.C. During this span, most of the monuments were carved; the San Lorenzo site took on something of its present appearance (although most San Lorenzo Phase mounds seem to have been demolished at a later date and used as fill); and population reached an all-time high that was not to be attained again until the Early Post-Classic. Unusual engineering projects were carried out, such as a 200-meter long system of stone drains on the west side of San Lorenzo, and the complex of artificial ponds which seem to have been controlled by such drains.

The ceramic markers for the phase are two pottery types which can only be called Olmec. Calzadas Carved largely consists of flat-bottomed bowls with outslanting or nearly vertical sides; the rims may be plain, bolstered on the exterior, or slightly everted. Exteriors were carved when leather-hard in broad gouges with sharp edges, the ends of the gouges either squared, or curved and tapered to resemble claws. The motifs on Calzadas Carved vessels show familiar Olmec elements like crossed-bands, jaguar-paw-wing, flame brows, and fire-serpent jaws. Red hematite filled the gouges and roughened areas associated with them. Calzadas Carved varies from tan to grey to black in color, with some white-rimming through differential firing.

The other pottery marker is Limón Carved-incised. In shapes, color, and firing it is identical with Calzadas Carved, but the grooved or incised designs are pretty much restricted to the opposed rotated scrolls known as the ilhuitl motif.

I suspect that these decorative modes and probably even the types themselves have a very wide distribution among Olmec-influenced sites in the latter part of the Early Formative. In particular, pottery decorated like Calzadas Carved is known for Cuadros on the Pacific Coast (Coe and Flannery 1967, Fig. 39 a, b), in the San José Phase of Oaxaca (Flannery, personal communication), and at Tlatilco and Las Bocas in the central highlands (Coe 1965a, Figs. 22-34); closer to home, it is well represented

at El Trapiche in central Veracruz (García Payón 1966, Pl. 23, 4-5; Pl. 24, 25). It should also be pointed out that decoration similar to that on Calzadas Carved is found on Monuments 6 and 7 at San Lorenzo, Monument 2 at Potrero Nuevo, Altar I at La Venta, and on a monument from Laguna de los Cerros (Coe 1965a, Fig. 8), indicating a close identification with Olmec ceremonial life.

Most of the other pottery types of the San Lorenzo Phase are a continuation of those known for Chicharras, but there are minor changes of mode and popularity among them. In Camaño Coarse, for instance, there is some stick-gouging in patterns like those known for Guamauchal Brushed of the Cuadros Phase (Coe and Flannery 1967; 28-20); the fine-paste, white-black types show a great decrease in frequency, with the coarser-paste types rising.

Not only Olmec pottery, but unequivocally Olmec figurines are common in San Lorenzo Phase refuse. The best of these are fine-white paste, either solid or hollow, often retouched with red pigment, and depict men and women as well as the typical baby-faces. Other Olmec figurines are fashioned from a coarse, orange-brown paste, or a medium buff paste; many are seated in tailor fashion and in stance and costume recall the monuments. Certain solid figurines are definitely ballplayers, with heavy belts and wear concave objects on the chest; they are usually daubed with asphalt and stand up by means of a support at the back. Closely related to them are grotesque figurine heads, often with asphalt decoration, sometimes depicting the so-called "one-eyed god", and it is entirely possible that these are actually the heads for the ballplayers.

The artifact complex is rich and varied. In bone, we have a needle, an antler-tine husker, and bone tubes. Two-footed metates, plano-convex manos, and stone bowls of basalt are characteristic, as well as a kind of bowl with shallow, pecked depression of unknown use. Small sandstone slabs were used for lapidary work and for grinding hematite pigment, which was brought in quantity. Other mineral imports were asphalt, mica, and some serpentine (no jade is known for San Lorenzo). Ilmenite, magnetite, and hematite artifacts are particularly important, in the form of multidrilled beads and mirrors, at least one of which was concave. A magnetite sliver with a groove running down one surface could easily have acted as a compass if floated on water by means of balsa wood in a gourd bowl; I carried out this experiment, and it worked.

In the obsidian and chipped stone industry, prismatic blades appear for the first time, as well as scrapers. Other innovations are projectile points, both flint and obsidian, of Shumla and Tlatilco types.

It was found possible to divide San Lorenzo into an A and a B subphase. San Lorenzo A has all the things described above. To these, San Lorenzo B adds many new elements. There is a great increase in soft-paste orange ware and in grey bowls with widely everted rims; scored rather than brushed tecomates appear; and there are many shreds from thick, mortar-like vessels of unknown function. Most significant, San Lorenzo B shows much greater involvement with other regions in Mesoamerica, most likely through

increased trade contacts necessitated by the sharp production rise in local industries. Several new types of projectile points are introduced, and there is an influx of exotic obsidians, such as green, mottled red, and brown, most of which probably originated in the central highlands. We discovered not only extensive workshop areas for obsidian and brown flint, but also evidence for a stepped-up lapidary industry, which produced ear spools and beads of serpentine, schist, and other exotic materials. In fact, in San Lorenzo B refuse there is much more serpentine and schist than before.

In line with this new cosmopolitanism, foreign figurine types appear, some of them with features vaguely reminiscent of Type C heads from the Valley of Mexico.

The aftermath of this state of affairs was the destruction of Olmec civilization at San Lorenzo. While one sculpture, the columnar relief designated as Monument 42, was found at the bottom of a San Lorenzo A deposit, all of the other monuments for which we have good stratigraphic associations were discovered in a destroyed or mutilated condition, purposefully buried in a fill that can be pinned down to the very end of San Lorenzo B. This is the case with the two lines of monuments in the Group D Ridge, for instance, so that it can be demonstrated that at about 900 B.C. there was a willful but ceremonial putting away of what was Olmec following a massive act of destruction (Coe 1967); it is even likely that the fill covering these stones was in part derived from ceremonial mounds leveled at this time. The question is, who did it? At one time I leaned to a hypothesis of internal revolt. However, after a thorough analysis of the materials associated with the burial process, I felt safe in saying that the iconoclasm was at least in part connected with the arrival of peoples identified with the next phase at the site, called Nacaste.

Nacaste Phase

The Nacaste Phase sees no major constructional activity at San Lorenzo that we can detect, but house mounds were built on the Northwest Ridge at San Lorenzo and there was a major domestic settlement in the southern part of Tenochtitlán. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that the building up of the ridges enclosing the monuments, sometimes with the addition of long, low mounds on top, was the work of what may be presumed to be Nacaste invaders.

With Nacaste there is a virtual disappearance of all previous pottery types excepting the coarse tecomates and soft orange ware, and a replacement of them with several kinds of very hard pottery fired at much higher temperatures. One of these types, Camalote White, has a poor white slip on one surface, while the other type (Tacamichapa Hard) is unslipped. The obvious affiliation of this pottery is with initial early Formative phases such as Chiapa II (Dixon 1959), Conchas I (Coe 1961), and Guadalupe (Flannery 1968); accordingly, a dating of 900 to around 700 B.C. is suggested. Single and double-line breaks are found incised on rims of flat-bottomed bowls with outslanting sides, and there are cuspidors with thickened and sometimes everted rims, below which are incised parallel diagonals on vertical zones. Large tecomates may be very heavy and have bold freehand incising combined with scarped-away bands; the thinner Camafio Coarse specimens

occasionally have small horizontal handles combined with interior finger-punching, as in Chiapa II (Dixon 1959, Fig. 54 a, b).

This disappearance of older Olmec patterns can be seen in Nacaste figurines, which have the large, punched eyes characteristic of the Middle Formative in southern Mesoamerica and show no Olmec features. Nevertheless, some Olmec influence is implied by a few of the stone artifacts, perhaps reflecting the augmented importance of La Venta as a bastion of Olmec culture. One of these pieces is a tiny green stone pendant incised with the face of a were-jaguar; another is a fragmentary serpentine "stiletto". Actually, some continuity of population from San Lorenzo times is suggested by the survival of not only the culinary pottery types but also by the artifact complex which is very similar to that of the San Lorenzo B subphase. For instance, the same lapidary industry with the same tools occurs within Nacaste, including the related importation of much serpentine and green schist. Green and mottled red obsidians were also being brought in, as well as brown flint and small iron-ore mirrors. A final continuity is the presence of stone projectile points, including the Tortugas, Coxcatlán, and Garyito types.

Palangana Phase

There must be a hiatus between Nacaste and the Palangana Phase which replaces it, since all of the pottery complex is completely new. Stylistic considerations lead me to equate Palangana with Chiapa IV or Francesa (Agrinier 1964: 10-33), with a time range of perhaps 600 to 400 B.C., i.e. towards the end of the Middle Formative.

The Palangana reoccupation was principally concerned with the central part of the San Lorenzo site, where all previous inhabitants must have concentrated their ceremonial activity; unfortunately, only a part of the Central Group itself is Palangana in date, but this includes especially the four-sided court flanked with mounds, lying just northwest of the principal mound, which we have called the Palangana and believe to have been a ball court, probably the earliest known for Mesoamerica.

Palangana pottery is identical with much of that from the stratigraphic tests made by Drucker at La Venta (Drucker 1952: Fig. 34, a, b; Fig. 38, f; pl. 20 a), as well as with some of the ceramics of Tres Zapotes (Drucker 1943: Figs. 20, 22, 23). Thus, the reoccupation could have come from either area. Of overwhelming frequency are open, composite silhouette bowls in tan, brown, or black; incising occurs on the angled zone of the exterior, usually zones of diagonal parallel lines enclosing areas outlined by sigmoid curves. Rim interiors sometimes have single, double, and triple lines with superior rather than inferior "breaks". Rocker-stamping, white-rimming, and other unusual forms of decoration are absent.

The interesting find of one Mars Orange trade sherd suggests a connection with the Maya lowlands during the Mamom Phase; I have found several other Mars Orange sherds in Drucker's La Venta material (now at the U.S. National Museum).

There is an impoverishment of the artifact complex, although serpentine ornaments and plaques were present. One green schist mask-like fragment recalls the central highlands or Guerrero more than it does Veracruz, while a tiny rock crystal fragment recalls the offerings of La Venta. Projectile points were still in use, one example resembling the Shumla type. The only known sculpture consists of tiny, crude turtle effigies of basalt.

Most Palangana figurines are solid, female, with peculiar triple-punched eyes. However, a few definitely Olmec heads, not like those of San Lorenzo, were recovered suggesting once again the connections with La Venta.

Remplás Phase

A recent examination of some ceramic material from San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán shows that there is an additional cultural phase present in the area, which has been named Remplás.

Remplás pottery so far is confined to the site of Tenochtitlán. An excavation (TE-Strat. 1) made by Francisco Beverido in 1966 in one of the small mound plazas of that site had produced pottery that I had recognized as Formative, but different from any of the Formative complexes known to me thus far. Because the amount of diagnostic material was so little, I set it aside for further study.

However, I have recently had the opportunity to go through all of the pottery, excavated by Drucker in the 1946 season at San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán (on temporary loan to Yale from the Smithsonian Institution). Drucker's Trenches 11 and 12, although non-stratigraphic, produced quantities of the same Formative material, along with Villa Alta and San Lorenzo sherds that could be easily factored out. These two trenches were cut into the north plaza of the principal mound group at the site. Thus, there is now sufficient material for a definition of Remplás.

Most characteristic of Remplás is a type which I am calling Ixpuchuapa Black Incised. While there is one necked jar, forms are mainly composite-silhouette bowls with S-angles. The surface is polished black. Decoration is pure incision, emphasizing inverted triangles filled with parallel diagonals, often with a line extending beyond the triangle apex; single or multiple horizontal rows of scalloping; diagonal parallel lines; and curvilinear areas filled with cross hatching. Red pigment has sometimes been rubbed into the lines.

There is also a coarse ware, confined to necked jars and tecomates. The temper is coarse, rounded sand; and firing temperatures were probably quite low. The surface is smoothed, but rather bumpy and with a peculiar "leathery" feeling to the touch. Some jar necks have a horizontal rib at the rim which is painted red.

Red-slipped ware also occurs, apparently only in the form of squat, necked jars. The slip may be over the entire exterior, but also may be restricted to the lower body. There is crude post-slip incising in

paralleled lines, occasionally alternating with dashed lines. The overall texture and appearance of this ware is like that of coarse ware.

The only other ware identified as Remplás is white-rimmed black, quite well-made. Some of this has almost chalky-white rims, while on some other examples the rimming is quite orange in color.

As for artifacts, only a single figurine body--solid, of a pregnant female--has been identified as Remplás.

The decorated pottery bears some resemblance to that of the Palangana phase, but may be easily distinguished from it. Ixpuchuapa Black Incised is much closer to the so-called "cerámica esgrafiada" from El Trapiche (García Payón 1966: Plates 14, 15), which is undoubtedly Late Formative in date. It is also similar in its decorative motifs--but not in form--to some pottery which I have placed in a Cerro de las Mesas II phase and in a Tres Zapotes II phase--both with a possible Proto-Classic affiliation (Coe 1965b, Figs. 14a, b: Figure 17). Although it is difficult to be very exact about its placement, due to the limited material for study, I believe that Remplás is Late Formative, about equivalent in time to Guanacaste (Chiapa V), and it may follow directly on the heels of the Palangana phase.

Thus, there is no Late Formative hiatus, at least at Tenochtitlán, and it is possible that the bulk of the mound complex at that site was constructed in Remplás times. During the Villa Alta phase (Early Post-Classic), some great pits were dug down into older plazas for the placement of offerings (including pottery vessels and pyrite-incrusted mirrors), but we do not yet know the extent of Villa Alta construction at Tenochtitlán.

Villa Alta Phase

For some unknown reason, the entire San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán area was abandoned to the forest after the close of the Remplás Phase, and continued in that condition for almost 13 centuries more. About 900 A.D., following the usual correlations, a great wave of people came in to recolonize it, in the Early Post-Classic phase called Villa Alta. Since practically all villages along the Río Chiquito today are Náhuatl-speaking, it is possible that the language of Villa Alta times was also Náhuatl.

The ceramic complex is totally dominated by a fine orange pottery somewhat resembling X Fine Orange. This ware, which intergrades with a thin, fine grey pottery, usually centers upon flat-bottomed bowls with composite silhouettes and everted rims, supported by bulbous or slab-shaped hollow feet. It is much worn, but occasionally a red slip can be detected. This is accompanied by a small amount of Tohil Plumbate. Incensarios, both spiked and ladle, are very frequent.

Moldmade spindle whorls, moldmade figurines, hollow earspools, double-chambered whistles, and a number of other pottery artifacts were

fashioned from the same fine orange clay. These people picked up and reused many artifacts from earlier occupations --- especially mirror fragments --- but there are some Villa Alta specializations in stone tools, such as nutstones, the use of which can be inferred from the many finds of charred palm nuts in household debris. The obsidian industry, which utilized a good deal of green Pachuca obsidian as well as the usual grey variety, focussed on blade production from cores which often had the gound striking platform typical of the Post-Classic; from these blades they fashioned small gravers which occasionally resemble the well-known Tula points.

The massiveness of this occupation cannot be overrated. Not only was the principal mound at San Lorenzo a Villa Alta product, but major parts of Tenochtitlán were constructed by these people. At times, as in the latter site, Villa Alta planners took advantage of earlier, Olmec arrangements to construct their temples, so that a place like Tenochtitlán took on the linear appearance of bona fide Olmec centers like La Venta. Luckily for us, the major Villa Alta occupation of San Lorenzo consists of only a thin veneer of debris over earlier strata.

Conclusions

We have defined an almost unbroken succession of Formative occupations at San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán from 1450 B.C. until about 750 B.C., the three final phases representing discontinuous reoccupations of the area. Within this long span, evidence has been presented of the gradual introduction of certain Olmec traits, such as typically Olmec figurines, which perhaps begin as far back as Bajío, and monumental sculpture which is as old as Chicharras. Nonetheless, we have no real antecedents as yet for the mighty cultural upsurge which we see in the San Lorenzo Phase; the primary impetus in the establishment of Olmec civilization there may well have come from some yet-undetected outside area. Nor can we fully explain the circumstances of the destruction of Olmec civilization at San Lorenzo around 900 B.C., although the bearers of Nacaste culture, who might have come from Chiapas, could have had much to do with it.

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