

## SEVEN COLIMA TOMBS: AN INTERPRETATION OF CERAMIC CONTENT\*

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In the spring of 1940, I excavated seven tombs at El Manchón, immediately south of Los Ortices, Colima. Associated ceramic material provides concrete evidence of the sequential use of these tombs and helps clarify certain aspects of local ceramic phases.

### Tombs

The tombs at El Manchón are of the form typical of central Colima (figs. 1-8). The roughly cylindrical shaft is a meter or less in diameter and one to two meters deep. At lower level, to one side of its base, a chamber has been chiseled in the hard subsoil, and there is a characteristic drop from shaft floor to chamber floor. Ordinarily, a large stone slab, sometimes slightly worked, covers the opening from shaft to chamber. Six of the seven Manchón tombs had such a stone, although not always did it seal effectively.

The tombs are quite closely spaced in an irregularly shaped area, approximately nine by 15 m., on a slightly sloping mesa. Distribution suggests advance planning and contemporaneous construction of the tombs, and the sketch (fig. 1) indicates that consistent orientation was not of interest. One special feature is a small, tunnellike perforation at floor level, connecting the chambers of Tombs 4 and 7.

### Pertinent ceramic phases

Many years ago, I published a tentative ceramic chronology for central Colima (Kelly [1944]); the suggested phases, from early to late, were Ortices, Colima-Armería, and Periquillo. In general, this succession still holds but, understandably, there have been modifications.<sup>1</sup> Particularly pertinent to a discussion of

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\* This paper was presented at the XLI International Congress of Americanists, in Mexico City, September, 1974 and, through error, was programmed for publication in conjunction with a symposium on Majolica pottery. Owing to limited funds, the latter papers are not to be published, and the present study is being placed on record here.

1. In recent seasons, a pre-Ortices phase, called Capacha, has been recognized (Kelly 1972). Because its pottery is not found in the Manchón tombs, it need not be considered here. A monograph on the Capacha material is in press, at the University of Arizona. Its introduction includes a description of the phases now recognized, together with available information concerning chronology.

The three phases under consideration in the present paper fall roughly within

the Manchón tombs is the division of the Ortices phase, as it was defined 30 years ago. The earlier part, still called Ortices, includes an assortment of related wares (figs. 10-13), basically cream to gray, "wiped" or "shadow striped," sometimes with added geometric ornament in rose paint, sometimes in rose, plus purple-black, resulting in a tricolor or polychrome; also included are a rose red ware and a black on rose red (figs. 14, 15). To this newly-defined Ortices phase belong many of the small, solid figures which often depict action.

The latter part of the Ortices phase set up long ago now is designated as Comala. To it belong the best-known of all Colima ceramics: handsome red vessels, often modelled, and black on red variants (figs. 16-18). Engraved monochrome pots (figs. 19-20) also are Comala as are many -- perhaps most -- of the large, hollow, human and animal effigies (fig. 21), red or brown, found by the hundreds in museums and private collections. The small, solid figurines continue from Ortices into Comala times, but certain other kinds of solid figurines seem to be exclusively Comala products.

In addition, there are unplaced ceramics which, for want of a better term, have been designated as Manchón. The several vessels of this group are large and utilitarian (figs. 22-23). Some are open-mouthed ollas, whose rims adjoin the body directly, at a sharp angle, without intervening neck. There also are basinlike vessels and sizeable bowls, slightly incurved. Most specimens are red to mahogany in color, but in a few cases special surface treatment results in an apparent red on brown effect (fig. 23), in one instance, with slightly-raised red ribbing (fig. 22). This Manchón pottery does not fit in the general ceramic panorama of central Colima as a whole. Its undecorated red vessels are not very distinctive, and body sherds might well have been included with Red, unclassified wares. But the "ribbed" aspect is unique and should have attracted attention in any sherd lot; it is unlikely that such fragments have escaped notice.

The impression that Manchón pottery is extraneous to the local scene tends to be confirmed by the finding of one restorable vessel in the dump from a rifled tomb in the nearby Ixtlahuacan valley, of the Río Salado drainage, and that area may prove to be the center of Manchón wares. In any case, at one time, Tomb 4 was utilized by people who deposited Manchón pottery with their dead.

Finally, mention should be made of the Colima phase, which follows Comala in time. Sherds of its wares (figs. 24-27) penetrated the chambers of several tombs (pp. 25-26), but there is no evidence that these ever contained interments of this phase.

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the broad Mesoamerican scheme as follows: Ortices, late Preclassic; Comala, early Classic; Colima, middle Classic.

### Re-use of tombs

Each of the tombs at El Manchón contained sherds of the Ortices phase, and both construction and initial utilization safely can be attributed to it. The quantity of Ortices fragments in several chambers (fig. 9) rather suggests successive use during that phase (p. 17).

Later -- except for Tombs 4 and 7 -- there was a half-hearted clearing of the Ortices furniture to make way for Comala-phase burials. At the time of my excavation, all tombs except no. 7 contained offerings and presumably burials of Comala affiliation. Skeletal material was so deteriorated that little can be said of it. Only in the case of Tomb 3 was it evident that two individuals accompanied by Comala offerings were the last interments in that chamber.

The emptying of the tombs, followed by re-use, has resulted in a somewhat puzzling distribution of sherds, and restorable and near-restorable specimens have been assembled from fragments found in quite different tombs. On very minor scale, this holds for Tombs 1, 2, and 7; on larger scale, for Tombs 3, 4, and 7. The accompanying sketch (fig. 1) gives provenience chiefly in terms of shaft and of chamber proper; for Tombs 4 and 7 are distinguished sherds found in the chamber, but at the very entrance from the shaft. In several cases, a preponderance of fragments or a cluster of large sherds suggests the original location of the vessel; this is shown on the figure as a black square; otherwise, occurrence is indicated by a hollow square.

The minor overlap between tombs may be disposed of first. (1) Two fragments of a small Ortices red on cream plate (fig. 1: no. 5105) actually join one another. One is from Tomb 1, chamber; the other, from Tomb 2, shaft. With no clue to original location, it may be guessed that the entire vessel once belonged to an Ortices offering in Tomb 1; when the chamber was cleared for subsequent use, one bit was tossed out, later to become incorporated in the fill of Tomb 2, shaft.

(2) The links between Tombs 2 and 7 are somewhat dubious (fig. 1: nos. 1138, 1143) because the sherds do not actually join the supposed companion pieces. No. 1138 is a Comala black on red vessel; its fragments and those of another Comala pot come from the fill of Tomb 7, chamber. They seemed not to be associated with any interment and actually may have been thrown into the open tomb as discards. Apparently Tomb 7 was not used for burials after the removal of its Ortices furniture (p. 4). Specimen no. 1143, an unclassified ware, may have belonged originally to an Ortices burial in Tomb 7 (p. 4).

The significant evidence concerning sequential use of chambers comes from Tombs 3, 4 and 7, which must be considered in conjunction. Relationships are between Tombs 3 and 7, on the one hand, and Tombs 4 and 7, on the other.

To start with Tomb 3, it contained some Ortices sherds (fig. 9), plus one

restorable Ortices vessel which apparently escaped destruction when the chamber was readied for use by Comala people. Although the latter deposited their own burial furniture in the chamber, half the sherds from the shaft were Ortices (fig. 9), with a negligible Comala ingredient. Unless Ortices and Comala are coeval -- as I concluded years ago, largely on the evidence of this tomb -- such distribution presents problems in interpretation.

It may be suggested that (1) Tomb 3 was cleared of its original Ortices grave furniture (except for one vessel, left to one side); (2) two Comala burials thereupon were installed; (3) the stone slab at the entrance, which in this case effectively sealed the chamber, was set in place; and for some unknown reason, (4) the shaft was left unfilled.

About this time, Tomb 7 was cleared. Its Ortices offerings were extracted and part of them dumped in the open shaft of Tomb 3. Owing to the well-fitting slab, nothing recognizable as discards from Tomb 7 penetrated the chamber of Tomb 3. In contrast, the overlap between the pottery of Tomb 7, chamber, and Tomb 3, shaft, is impressive (fig. 1: nos. 1136, 1139, 1141, 1142, 1145, 1146). Sherd distribution suggests that all these specimens once were grave furniture in Tomb 7. Fragments of three additional Ortices vessels, which come exclusively from the shaft of Tomb 3, also may have formed part of the Ortices offering in Tomb 7 and, when the general clearing took place, were passed to the open shaft of Tomb 3.

The same shift in location, from Tomb 7, chamber, to Tomb 3, shaft, was shared by two unclassified vessels. One (no. 1144) is not restorable; it might be a variant of Ortices rose red, or it might tie with Zapote rose, a ware tentatively recognized in eastern Colima. The other (no. 1143) is an unclassified black on red, near Ortices black on rose. Inasmuch as these stylistically unplaced vessels seem to have constituted part of the Ortices furniture in Tomb 7, contemporaneity with that phase is implied.

The steps outlined above seem to explain satisfactorily how the chamber of Tomb 3, with its Ortices sherds, its one Ortices restorable pot, and its Comala-phase furniture, came to be isolated by a shaft whose ceramic content was largely Ortices, with a negligible Comala ingredient.

To turn to Tomb 4, it also shares restorable and near-restorable pottery with Tomb 7, but in this case the wares are Manchón (p. ), not Ortices. In keeping with the now-familiar pattern, Tomb 4 evidently was used first for Ortices burials. In time, the offerings were removed, apparently by non-local people who placed their dead and a generous assortment of Manchón wares in the tomb. From the chamber of Tomb 4 came a total of ten restorable or nearly-restorable Manchón pots, including those shown on figure 1 (nos. 1153, 1155, 1157).

In time, Tomb 4 was readied for use by Comala people. Three large Manchón

pots (nos. 1153, 1155, 1157) at the opening from the shaft were in the way and were pushed to one side. Some fragments were thrown out, and all chambers, save those of Tombs 3 and 6, contained Manchón sherds. Many Manchón fragments wound up eventually in the chamber of Tomb 7; in fact, no. 1155 is so well represented there as to suggest this may have been its original location. However, my impression is that Tomb 7 was not used for burials after Ortices days; it may have been left open, thus inviting deposit of rubbish. When I cleared it, there was no entrance slab, and shaft and chamber were filled solidly with earth and sherds.

In any case, considerable Manchon pottery remained within Tomb 4, and the cleaning for Comala use was careless, perhaps hurried. No skeletal material attributable to the Comala phase was evident, but on one side of the entrance to the chamber was a cluster of entire Comala vessels; on the other side, two redware pots, presumably also Comala, although not firmly classified. In summary, the sequence in Tomb 4 seems clearly to be: Ortices - Manchón - Comala.

The Colima-phase component in several of the tombs must be a post-Comala intrusion, but quantity and distribution of the several wares are puzzling.

Tombs 1 and 2. The chambers of both tombs contained a large number of sherds and, in both instances, about half belonged to the Colima phase (fig. 9). The stone slab of Tomb 1 did not fit, and behind it extraneous material worked into the chamber. The sealing of Tomb 2 was ineffective because the subsoil "vault" had collapsed behind the stone slab.

Tombs 3 and 6. Of the seven tombs, only nos. 3 and 6 were effectively sealed. In both, sherds were few and included no Colima-phase wares.

Thus far, the presence (and absence) of Colima-phase intrusives seems adequately explained, but this is not the case with the three remaining tombs.

Tomb 4. The vault of the chamber had given way behind the entrance stone; strangely enough, no Colima-phase sherds came from the chamber proper, although a few were found at the junction of shaft and chamber. A possible explanation might be that the roof continued intact until post-Colima times, when comparatively little refuse of that phase remained on the surface. At the time of my excavation, there were few surface sherds of any kind.

Tomb 5. Surprisingly, the chamber contained 34 sherds (16.2 percent) of Colima wares. Field notes state that the entrance seemed well sealed, but presumably the observation was faulty.

Tomb 7. The dearth of Colima-phase sherds in this tomb is strange. Perhaps it remained open and became completely filled with earth and discards during Comala times, thus impeding the entry of later material.

Despite some unexplained inconsistencies in the distribution of Colima-phase sherds, it seems certain that none of the tombs at El Manchón ever contained interments of that phase. Except for a sizeable fragment of a Colima incised bowl (fig. 26) found on the chamber floor, immediately behind and below the sealing slab of Tomb 1, Colima-phase sherds are small, and none approximates a restorable vessel.

#### Chronological implications

Distribution of ceramic material from the seven tombs at El Manchón indicates: (1) sequential use of the chambers, with (2) construction and initial use during the Ortices phase, (3) followed by clearing and subsequent installation of Comala-phase interments. (4) The intrusive and unplaced Manchón wares from one tomb should be coeval with Ortices, or later; or contemporary with Comala, or earlier. As a guess, they may correspond to a time level early in the Comala phase.

In addition, (5) apparent association with an Ortices offering makes it likely that two unplaced specimens are contemporaneous with the phase of that name. Furthermore, (6) there is strong suggestion of a time difference within the Ortices phase. The material removed from Tomb 7, chamber, and dumped in Tomb 3, shaft (p. ), includes one Ortices polychrome (figs. 12, 13) and five specimens of Ortices black on rose red (figs. 14, 15). In contrast, the bulk of the sherd material from Tomb 7 is Ortices red on cream (figs. 10, 11). The latter, then, may refer to Ortices occupancy in times prior to the vogue for polychrome and black on rose pottery.

(7) The Colima phase sherds found in Tombs 1 and 2 represent two rather different assemblages and should permit definition of internal time differences within that phase.

Works Cited

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Figures

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- Figs. 2-8 Tombs at El Manchón: profiles. All to scale given for figure 2.
- Fig. 9 Tombs at El Manchón: partial sherd count.
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- Figs. 16-21 Comala-phase products.
- Figs. 22-23 Manchón wares.
- Figs. 24-27 Colima-phase products.



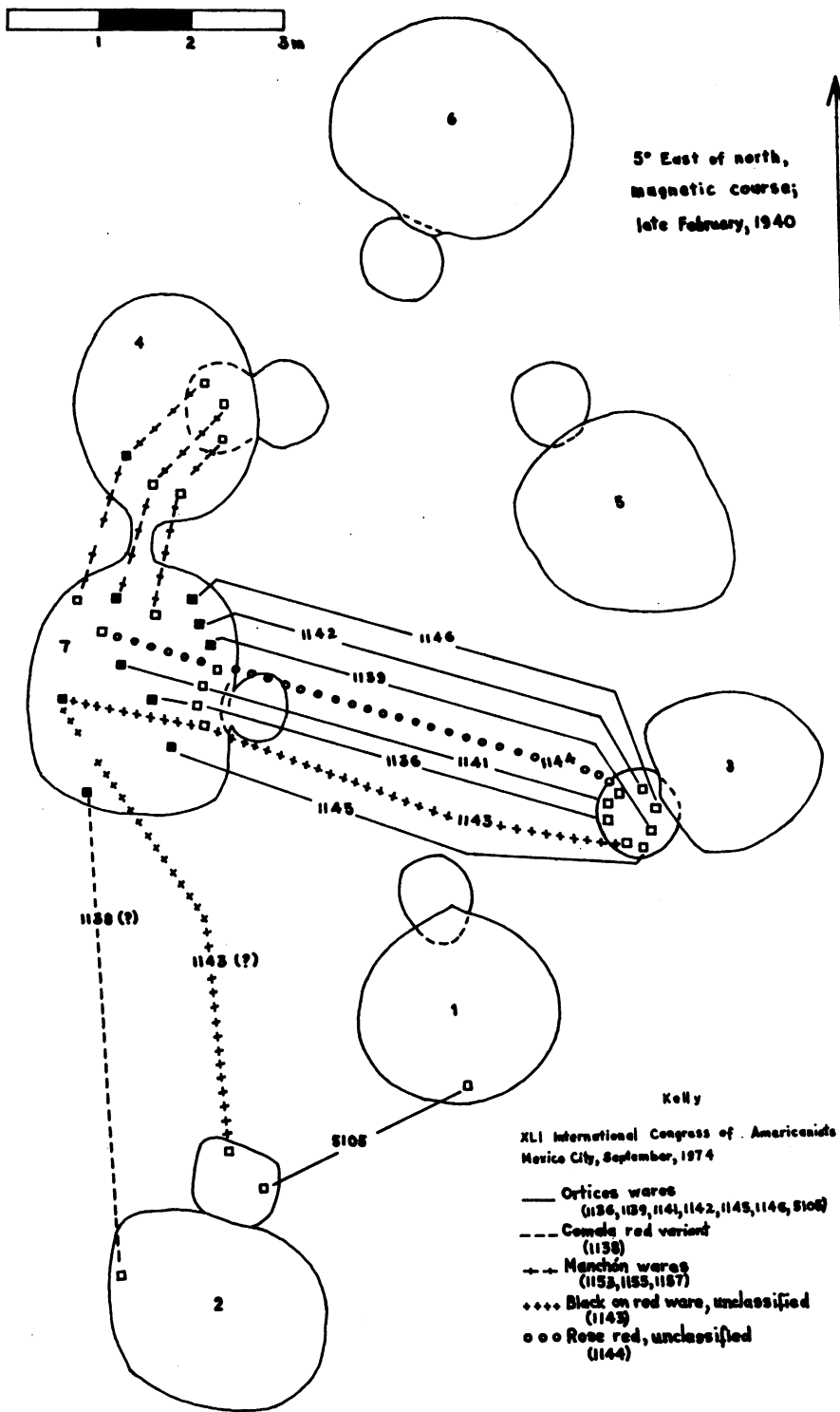


Fig. 1

Fig. 2

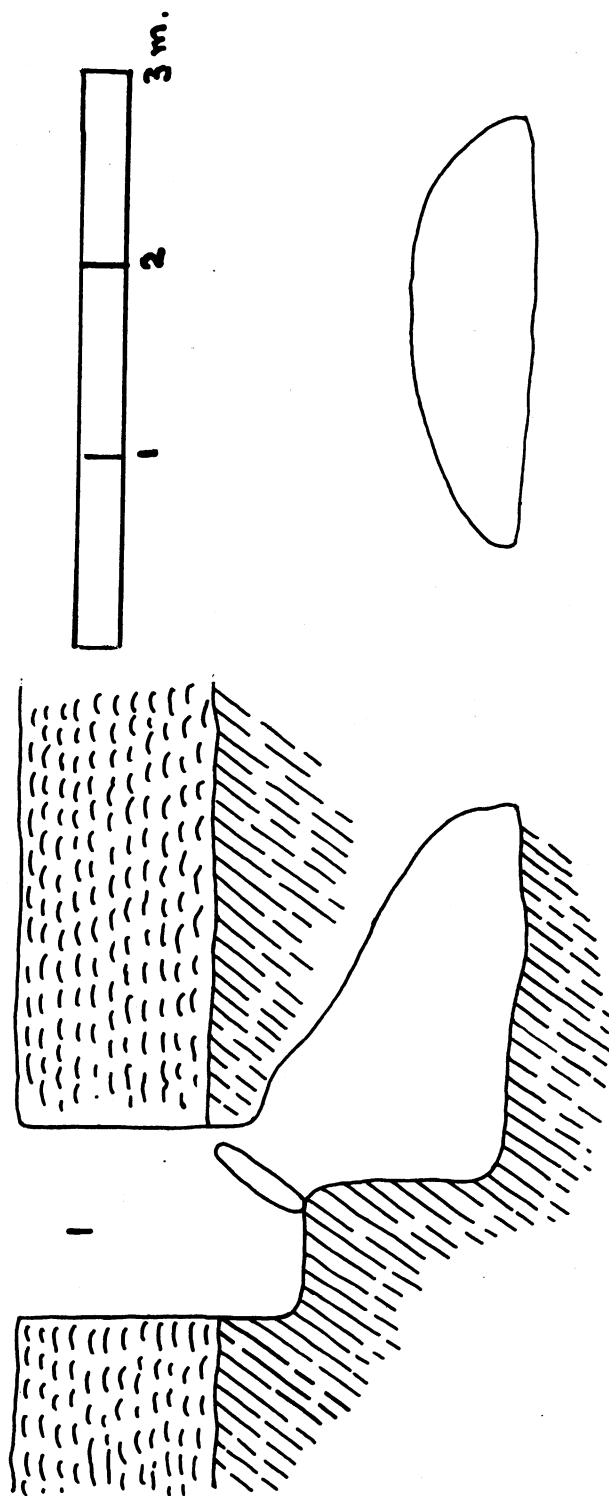


Fig. 3

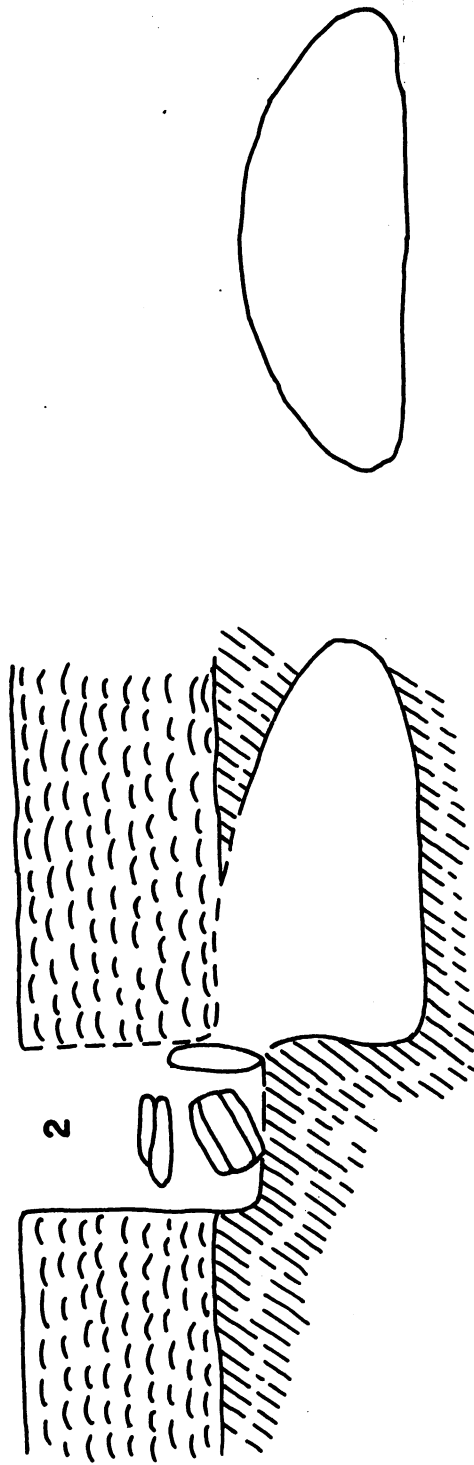


Fig. 4

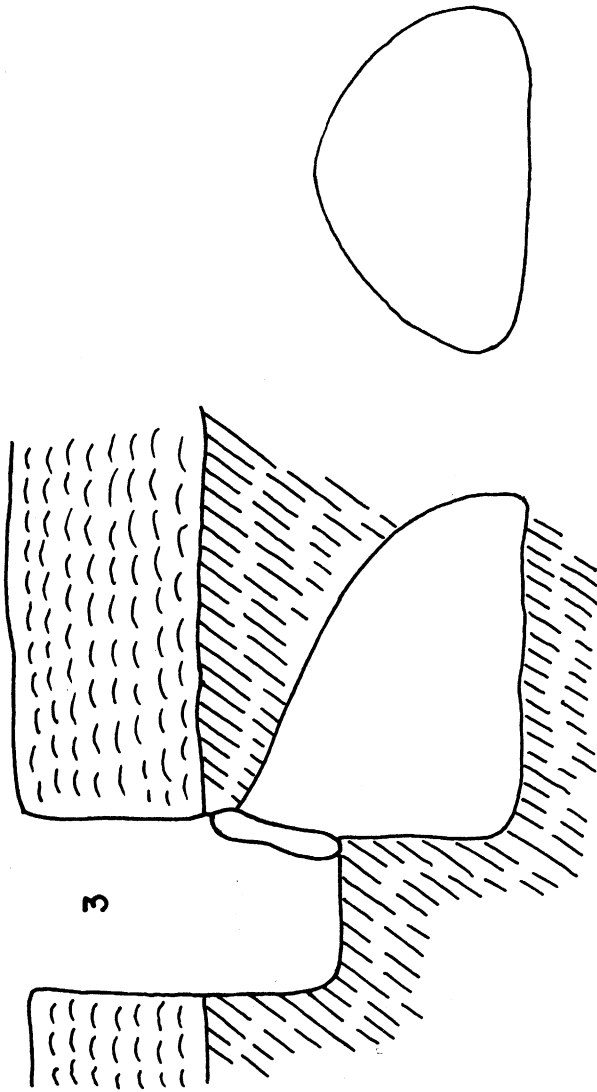


Fig. 5

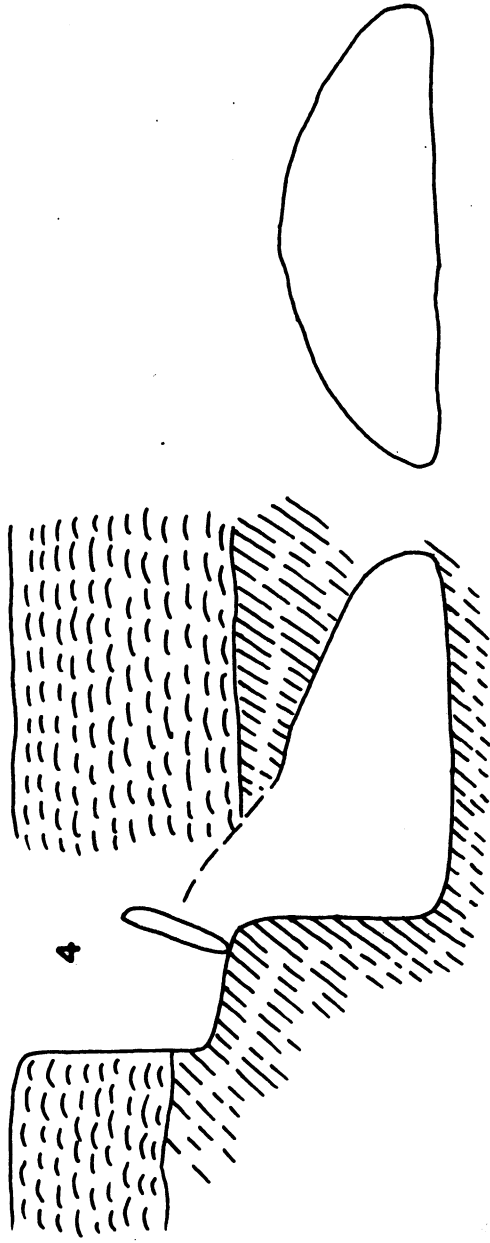


Fig. 6

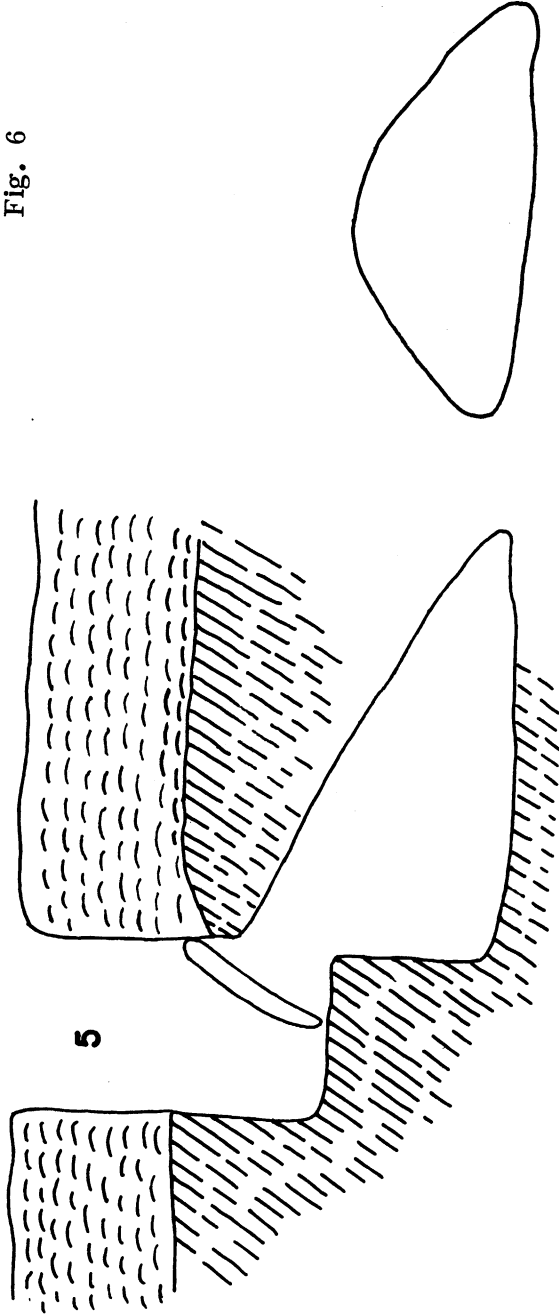
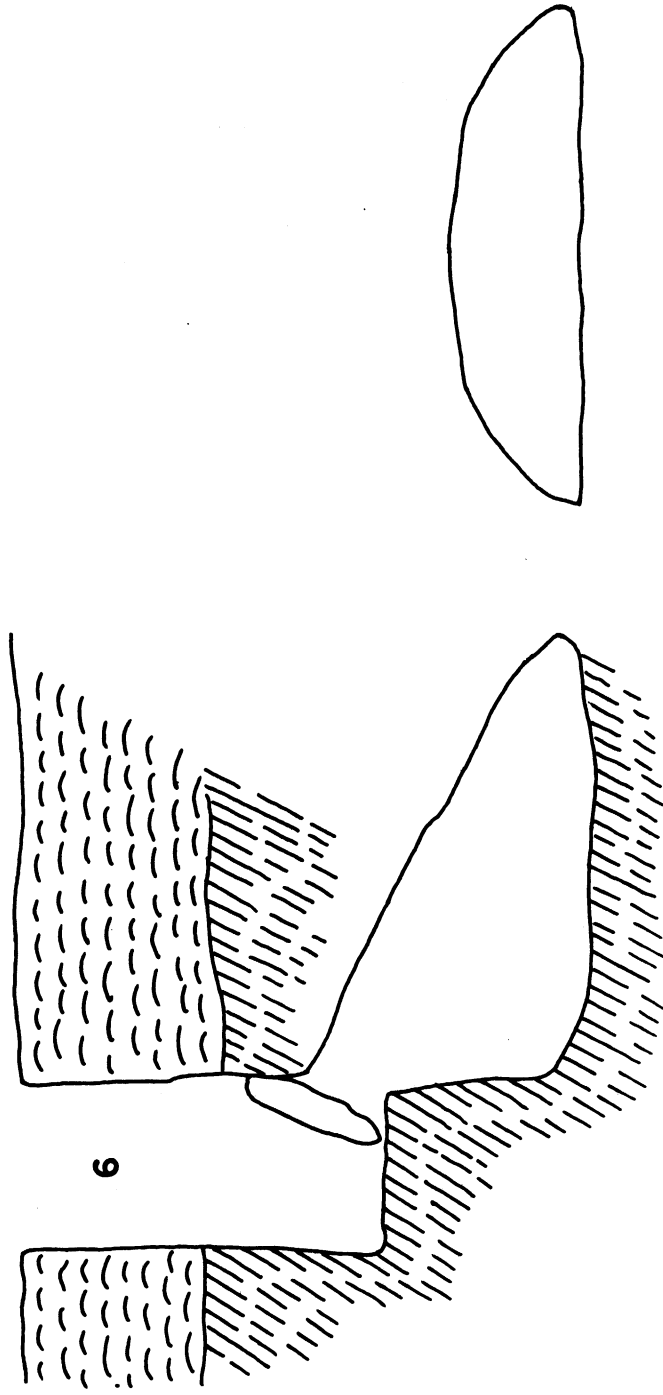


Fig. 7



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Fig. 8

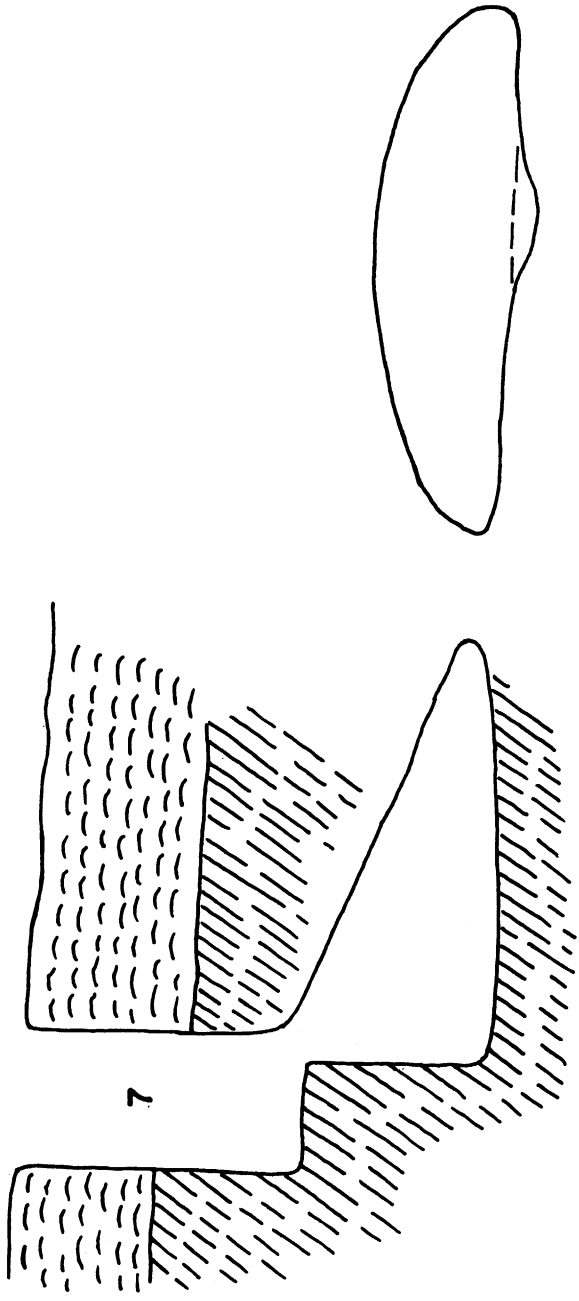




Fig. 9. Tombs at El Manchón: partial sherd count <sup>1</sup>

Tomb number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Ortices phase						
Shaft	42 (42.0)	31 (20.4)	167 (47.4)	148 (14.9)	22 (38.6)	75 (52.1)	78 (21.8)
Chamber, at entrance	-	-	-	44 (40.7)	-	9 (64.3)	34 (25.6)
Chamber proper	143 (14.8)	109 (8.8)	22 (61.1)	238 (17.8)	84 (40.0)	12 (44.4)	131 (21.2)
Chamber or shaft <sup>2</sup>	-	-	-	182 (36.3)	-	-	-
	Manchón wares						
Shaft	3 (3.0)	17 (11.2)	1(?) (x)	381 (38.4)	0 (0)	7 (4.9)	116 (32.4)
Chamber, at entrance	-	-	-	6 (5.6)	-	0 (0)	30 (22.6)
Chamber proper	16 (1.7)	38 (3.1)	0 (0)	543 (40.6)	10 (4.8)	0 (0)	115 (18.6)
Chamber or shaft <sup>2</sup>	-	-	-	122 (24.4)	-	-	-
	Comala phase						
Shaft	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (1.1)	16 (1.6)	5 (8.8)	2 (1.4)	10 (2.8)
Chamber, at entrance	-	-	-	0 (0)	-	0 (0)	2 (1.6)
Chamber proper	2 (x)	0 (0)	25 (1.9)	25 (1.9)	2 (1.0)	1 (3.7)	12 (1.9)
Chamber or shaft <sup>2</sup>	-	-	-	1 (x)	-	-	-
	Colima phase						
Shaft	15 (15.0)	42 (27.6)	2(?) (1.0)	1(?) (x)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.0)	7 (2.0)
Chamber, at entrance	-	-	-	13 (12.0)	-	0 (0)	6 (4.5)
Chamber proper	453 (47.0)	643 (52.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	34 (16.2)	0 (0)	28 (4.5)
Chamber or shaft <sup>2</sup>	-	-	-	3 (1.0)	-	-	-

<sup>1</sup> Entries refer only to the several ceramic categories under consideration, but percentages are given in terms of total sherds. Accordingly, in no case will the indicated percentages total a hundred. For Tomb 1, shaft sherds come to 60 percent of the total; chamber sherds, to 63.5 percent. Red and Plain wares, unclassified, account for most, but not all, of the balance not shown here. The first entry in a column gives the number of sherds, with an "0" indicating absence. Immediately following, in parentheses, is the percent ratio; "x" is less than half of one percent.

<sup>2</sup> In shipment, the label of a bag from Tomb 4 was damaged and, as indicated, it is uncertain if one sherd lot comes from the chamber or from the shaft.



Fig. 10

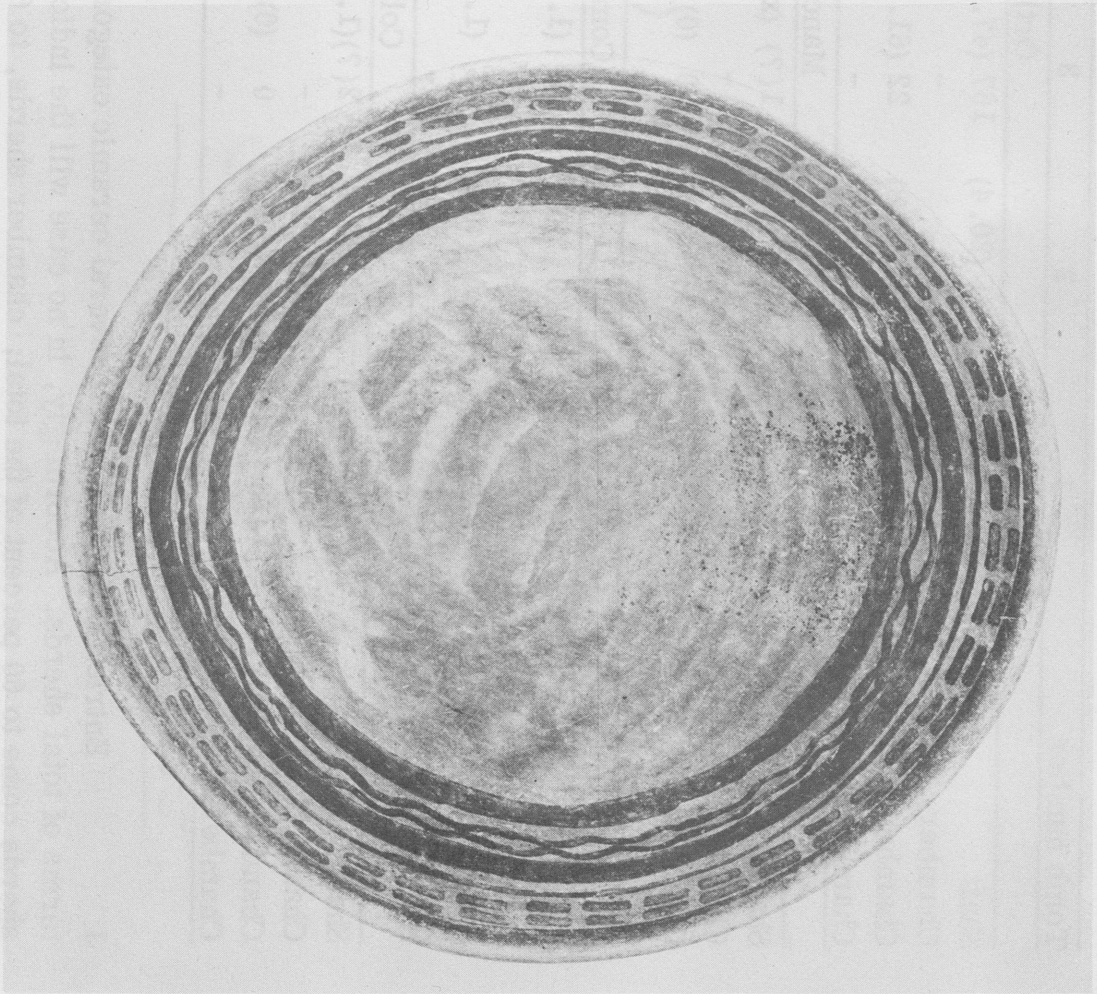


Fig. 11

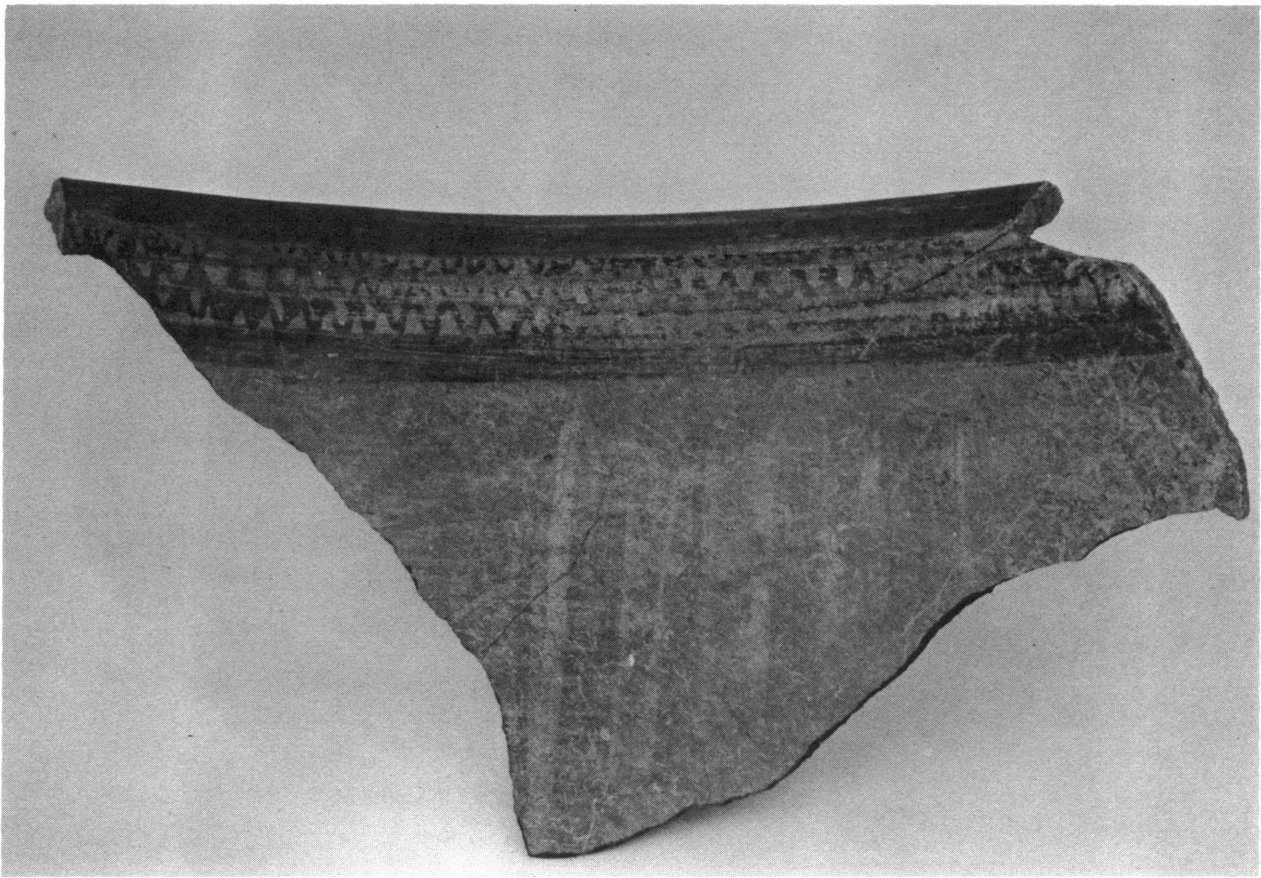


Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20

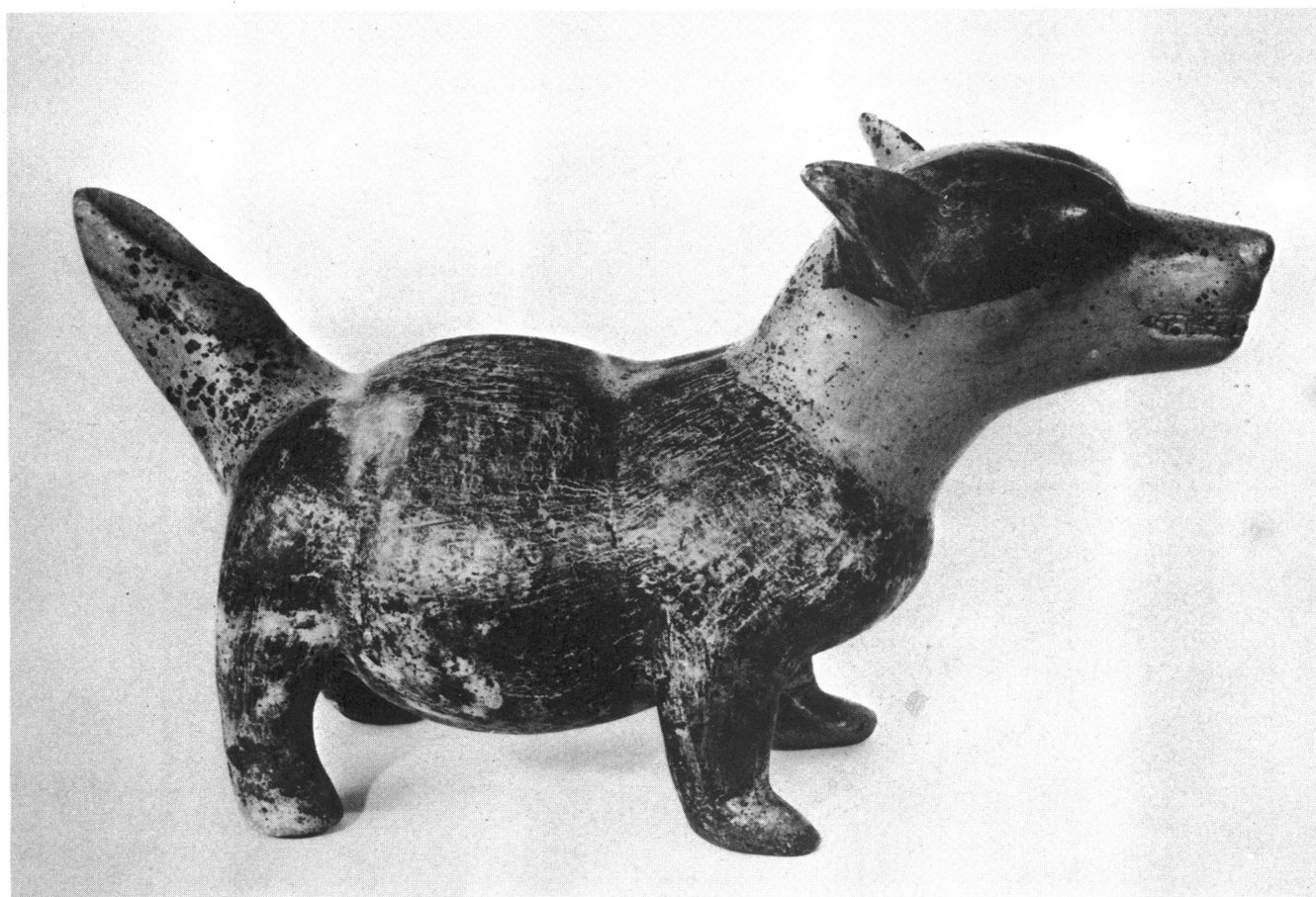


Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23





Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27