



Figure 7.14. Ceramic molds.



Figure 7.15. Ceramic molds for making figurines (warrior torso and head) and urn appliques, including feathers.

Several ceramic vessel forms that were rare at Ejutla nonetheless also may have been made at the site. Two forms appear to be distinct to Ejutla (or to sites in the southern part of the Valley of Oaxaca) as they were not present at any of the archaeological contexts we excavated in Tlacolula, nor were they represented in the collections reported from Monte Albán (Caso et al. 1967). These vessel forms include café bowls (sahumadors or braziers) with large medallion appliques and rope appliques on the rim, for which we also recovered several possible molds

(Figure 7.22, see also Figure 5.28). Another uncommon form was an amarillo cylinder with a depressed band below the exterior rim; on some vessels an applique band is situated above the linear depression (Figure 7.23).

We found small numbers of amarillo vessel fragments with exterior carving, mostly associated with contexts early in the occupational sequence. For the most part, these particular bowl and cylinder fragments were made in small quantities, a finding supported by the presence of amarillo vessel wasters in the domestic ceramic complex of this house. One cylindrical vessel has an incised band of small slanted ovals on a bolstered rim; another cylinder has a band of deep crosshatching below the exterior rim (Figure 7.24). A third, thin-walled cylinder with crude geometric carving is heavily fire-clouded and may have been a waster. One amarillo bowl that was broken into many fragments, but almost complete, has deep curvilinear carving (Figure 7.25).

Other rare vessels include spouted jars like those we found in the high-status residences at El Palmillo, so the Ejutla residence would not appear to be low status. All the jars at El Palmillo were made in gris paste, while both gris and amarillo spouted jars were present at Ejutla (Figure 7.26). It is not clear whether the Ejutla potters made these jars mostly for exchange and that is why they were rare on site, or whether they obtained them through exchange. Another rare form are sahumadors with an animal effigy (possibly a feline) on the rim of the bowl (Figure 7.27 top), similar to one example at Monte Albán (Caso et al. 1967, figure 334b); in another example the effigy is on the end of the handle.

Although we found few brazier supports (Figure 7.27 bottom left), we suspect these utilitarian implements were also made locally; two elongated supports appear to be from the same brazier, while one broader and shorter brazier support is the same form as a rare single object from the excavations at Miahuatlán (Markman 1981, plate 17). An unusual support in the form of an animal's head looks like a mouse (Figure 7.27 bottom center). A final rare ceramic object is shaped like a phallus (Figure 7.27 bottom right; see Joralemon 1974, 65, figure 11); the piece is not broken, so it is not clearly a handle or support, and its use is unclear.

7.2. Comparison with Excavated Classic Period Sites

Compared to the other Classic period contexts we excavated in the Valley of Oaxaca, Ejutla stands out in terms of the overall volume of ceramics and the various indicators of ceramic production detailed in section 7.1 (Table 7.5). Only on the lower terraces at El Palmillo did we find a possible firing feature (it was much smaller than those at Ejutla) (Feinman and Nicholas 2004a, 176, 2007d; Haines et al. 2004). We did not excavate any firing features during our investigations at Lambityeco (Feinman et al. 2016), but given wasters and other ceramic evidence of production that we recovered in the excavations, ceramic



Figure 7.16. Complete ceramic mold for a figurine head with braided headdress.



Figure 7.17. Complete ceramic mold for a small figurine (center), with a matching figurine from Ejutla (right) and a figurine that we made using the same mold (left).

production may have occurred nearby. During earlier excavations in other parts of the site, ceramic production was documented as an important economic activity at Lambityeco (Lind and Urcid 2010; Payne 1970; Peterson 1976).

We base our comparisons among the sites and houses on rim sherds and other diagnostic, decorated, or otherwise significant pottery fragments and do not include nondiagnostic body sherds (which comprised over 70% of the Ejutla ceramic assemblage). Given the different



Figure 7.18. Modeled spherical (top) and disk-like spindle whorls (bottom).

number of houses excavated at the four sites, we compare per-house quantities, even though, in all cases, the totals for all eight residences at El Palmillo and all three at the Mitla Fortress are lower than for one house at Ejutla.

Per residence, the volume of ceramics at Ejutla was three to six times greater than at El Palmillo and the Mitla Fortress (see Table 7.5). Differences in the quantity of ceramic figurines were even greater, with 10–20 times as many figurines at Ejutla than in domestic contexts at either El Palmillo or the Mitla Fortress. The higher quantities of ceramics and figurines at Lambityeco reflect their use in public rituals hosted by priests who resided in the domestic

structure on Mound 165 (Feinman and Nicholas 2019b) (differences in the figurine assemblages at the four sites are discussed in section 7.7 and more fully in Appendix 4). Pottery wasters, defective figurines, molds for a range of vessels including figurines, and moldes also are much more abundant at Ejutla, both in raw numbers and as proportions of the ceramic assemblages. The one context that stands out from the others beyond Ejutla is the lower group of houses at El Palmillo. As a proportion of the ceramic assemblage at each site, pottery wasters comprise approximately 1.8% at Ejutla and 0.8% on the lower terraces at El Palmillo. For all other contexts the proportions are between 0.3% and 0.4%. The presence of at least one small firing feature

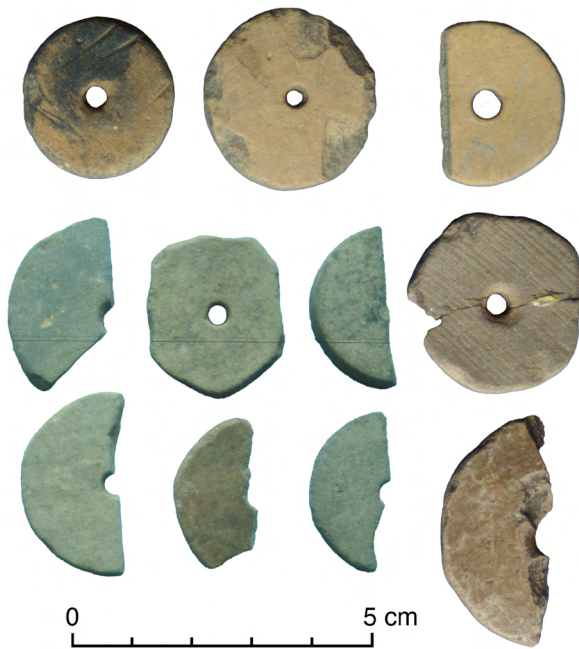


Figure 7.19. Abraded spindle whorls.

on a lower terrace at El Palmillo accords with the higher proportion of ceramic production indicators in that context relative to the other non-Ejutla contexts. The low numbers of material indicators of pottery manufacture that were recovered from the other excavated houses compared to Ejutla would indicate that those households either

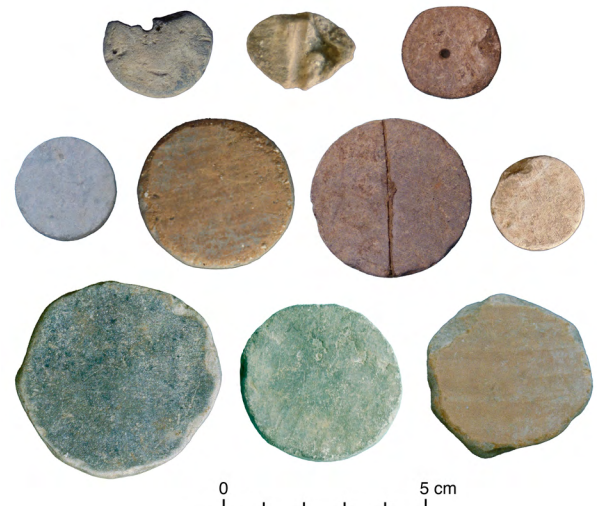


Figure 7.20. Spindle whorl wasters (top) and unperforated, unfinished sherd disks.

did not make pottery or only engaged in low-intensity production for immediate use. In contrast, the much higher quantities of all indicators associated with one residence at Ejutla support the argument that high-intensity ceramic production for exchange occurred in that context (Feinman 1999; Feinman and Nicholas 2000, 2004a).

Spindle whorls of all three size categories (see section 5.3.1) are present at El Palmillo, the Mitla Fortress, and

Table 7.4. Abraded and modeled spindle whorls* at Ejutla (excavation and survey), Lambityeco, El Palmillo, and the Mitla Fortress.

Site	Context	Abraded	Modeled total	Modeled disk	Spherical	Total
Ejutla excavation	–	32	77	42	35	109
Ejutla regional survey	–	3	9	5	4	12
El Palmillo	lower 3 terraces	44	1	–	1	45
El Palmillo	middle 2 terraces	27	4	4	–	31
El Palmillo	upper 2 residences	67	19	19	–	86
El Palmillo	top (Platform 11)	18	8	8	–	26
Mitla Fortress	3 houses	28	7	6	1	35
Lambityeco	M165	25	15	15	–	40
Site	Context	Abraded	Modeled total	Modeled disk	Spherical	
Ejutla excavation	–	29.4%	70.6%	38.5%	32.1%	
Ejutla regional survey	–	25.0%	75.0%	41.7%	33.3%	
El Palmillo	lower 3 terraces	97.8%	2.2%	–	2.2%	
El Palmillo	middle 2 terraces	87.1%	12.9%	12.9%	–	
El Palmillo	upper 2 residences	77.9%	22.1%	22.1%	–	
El Palmillo	top (Platform 11)	69.2%	30.8%	30.8%	–	
Mitla Fortress	3 houses	80.0%	20.0%	17.1%	2.9%	
Lambityeco	M165	62.5%	37.5%	37.5%	–	

* Quantities are totals for all residences in a site sector (El Palmillo) or site (Mitla Fortress).

Spindle whorls were collected at 10 sites during the Ejutla regional survey.



Figure 7.21. Figurines from other sites in the Ejutla Valley that were collected during the regional survey.

Lambityeco, as well as at Ejutla (Table 7.6; Carpenter et al. 2012, 391; Feinman and Nicholas 2012, 245), albeit in different proportions that in part reflect access to specific fiber resources. Larger and medium spindle whorls are more appropriate for spinning coarse fibers, such as from the fronds of maguey, which is an abundant genus in eastern Tlacolula, whereas the smaller whorls would have been used on cotton and other fine fibers. What stands out about the Ejutla whorls is the number associated with one house and the formality of the whorls compared to the other sites. The Ejutla household had twice as many spindle whorls as any residence at the other sites. In addition, most of the whorls at those sites are the abraded variety made from repurposed vessel fragments, even on the lower terraces at El Palmillo where some ceramic production was carried out, whereas most of the spindle whorls at Ejutla are modeled (see Table 7.4). Spindle whorls are only one of a number of tools, including a range of bone tools (Feinman et al. 2018b), that were used to process fiber into thread. All of these were recovered with frequency from all three Tlacolula Valley sites (Feinman and Nicholas 2012, 2016b). Possibly due to lack of access, the Tlacolula fiber workers more often made their own more expedient whorls from ubiquitous ceramic sherds. The residences at the top of El Palmillo had greater

proportions of modeled disk whorls (~30%). Whether those whorls were made elsewhere at El Palmillo or were traded from a site like Lambityeco, where there also were higher quantities of modeled whorls, is unknown, but in a trace element analysis of Classic period pottery in the Valley of Oaxaca (Minc et al. 2015), approximately 18% of utilitarian pottery sampled from El Palmillo was produced farther to the west in the central part of the Tlacolula Valley. Although the ceramic objects produced by the Ejutla potters were exchanged beyond their barrio and to their closest neighbors in the southern end of the valley, they do not appear to have been exchanged as far as the eastern arm of the valley (Minc et al. 2015).

7.3. The Pit Kilns

As we were finding evidence of shell working in and around the house and middens, we were also finding multiple indicators of ceramic production, as outlined in section 7.1. The close proximity of the production debris to the house tied both of those activities to the residents of the prehispanic structure. Yet although more than half of the pottery wasters at Ejutla were from gris paste vessels (see Table 7.2), which require a reducing (low oxygen) atmosphere, we had no remains of obvious kilns, like the