

Description for the general public

Texcotzingo is one of the most important and best preserved Aztec archaeological sites. It is located in the Valley of Mexico, in the municipality of Texcoco, to the east of the centre of Mexico City and covers two hills – Texcotzingo and Metecatl and areas surrounding them. Most of the architectural remains on the site were dated back to the fifteenth century and the flourishing of the Aztec Empire. Texcotzingo is mainly known for a monumental garden complex subordinated to the ruler of the city of Texcoco - Nezahualcoyotl. This enormous complex, built in response to the construction of similar gardens in different areas of the Empire, served entertainment and recreation of the royal family. It was one of the largest botanical collections of contemporary world. Like other great Aztec garden complexes, Texcotzingo also served for symbolic functions, expressed the Aztec worldview and acted as place of celebrating great and public rituals. Texcotzingo gardens stand out from the other garden complexes of the ancient Mexico because most of them were seriously devastated by Spaniards in early colonial era. Described garden is today undoubtedly the best preserved archaeological site of this type. From a research point of view the extremely interesting feature of Texcotzingo is the presence of the richest collection of stone artworks on its territory, which in the past served to decorate the garden. Among them are sculptures, reliefs, petroglyphs and unique group of rock mockups of architectural structures, currently named as *Los Modelos*.

In spite of the importance of the royal garden complexes for the functioning of the Aztec Empire, this subject is rarely undertaken in the scientific literature. Until now no one had been interested in the research of the works of Aztec art preserved in Texcotzingo which presumably were an important element of ideology and propaganda. It was also played a huge role in religious and state ceremonies.

Presented project aims to register and analyze the significance of the stone monument of these types which have preserved until today in the area of *Zona Arqueológica de Texcotzingo*. The first phase of work will include the prospection of the still unexplored sectors of the site where the largest accumulation of Aztec rock art were observed. Then there will be comprehensive documentation of all monuments localized in the field by using both traditional and modern methods of documentation (including drawings, photographs, photogrammetry and 3D models). Within this non-invasive project it is also planned to draw up a precise plan of the site on the basis of aerial photographs and tacheometric measurement techniques.

The next stages of work will include analysis of the obtained data. There will be created the catalogue of the motives presented in Texcotzingo, supplemented with information from the other pre-Hispanic gardens of Mexico. Then we will carry out the exact stylistic and technological analyses of the registered objects. It should bring answers to questions about the significance and development of these works of art. The project is intended to study of using stone objects in the cult of water and rain deity – Tlaloc. There are also plans to analyze the spatial arrangements, in which artworks were localized and try to bind them with architecture. It is also planned to determine their relevance to the vision of paradise gardens – Tlalocan. Based on modern and pioneering laboratory techniques there will also be specified the chronology of the execution of these artworks which – as we think – might appear in Texcotzingo before foundation of the royal garden. Then it is planned to create a digital database of three-dimensional models of the most spectacular objects which are – unique across the whole Mesoamerica – stone replicas of the buildings. Registration of artworks, made during the project in Texcotzingo, can also contribute to take actions of restoration and protection those particularly vulnerable objects.

The presented project will be pioneering for the entire area of Central Mexico, both for the sake of the research subject, as well as interdisciplinary research methodology. The investigation of artworks from Texcotzingo site will contribute to development of this – still neglected by Mesoamericanists – discipline which is history of Aztec garden complexes. This project will also constitute a significant step in the field of the Aztec rock art studies. The project could also lead to deepen the archaeological cooperation between Polish and Mexican research centers and constitute a contribution to the further study of monumental garden complexes of the Aztec rulers.