

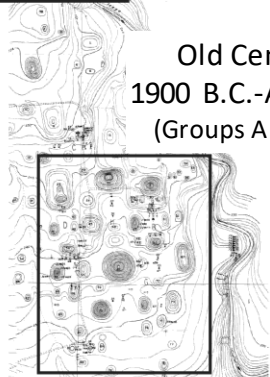
# Collapse and Survival

The story of Izapa was one of survival. The site was occupied for nearly 3,000 years, from approximately 1,900 B.C. to A.D. 1,000. But the city changed significantly through time. After A.D. 100, monument production at the site declined and the Izapeños started building smaller mounds. This dramatic change may have coincided with a major eruption of the Tacaná volcano.

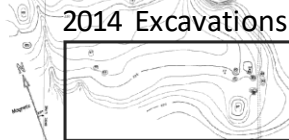
After A.D. 100, a new ceremonial center was constructed to the North (Group F). But the old center was never forgotten. Ritual activities continued to be carried out in the original site center for years to come.



New Center  
A.D. 100-1000  
(Group F)



Old Center  
1900 B.C.-A.D. 100  
(Groups A and B)



2014 Excavations



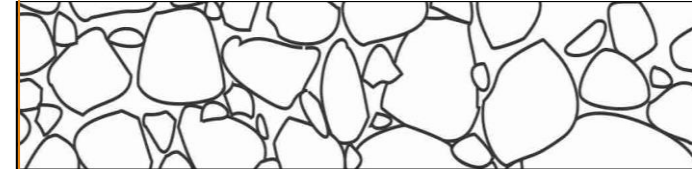
Group F: The new ceremonial center at Izapa

The people of Izapa were early leaders in the art, trade, and religion of Mesoamerica. The population was also resilient. After the collapse of many early Mesoamerican cities, the Izapeños made changes to their government and economy that allowed their civilization to survive for another 1,000 years.



## Acknowledgements

Permission to conduct excavations was provided by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH). We are thankful to the landowners of the Segunda Sección de Izapa for allowing us to excavate on their properties. We also thank the large crew of workmen who helped with the excavations and the entire Izapa community for their support.



## The 2014 Excavations: New Findings from the Izapa Household Archaeology Project

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## Monuments at Izapa

Izapa is most famous for its many monuments carved in a unique “Izapan” art style. The art style and the culture of Izapa are sometimes claimed to be transitional between the fall of the Olmec culture and the rise of the Maya.

Today, we understand that Izapa was one of many early cities across Mesoamerica associated with a network of trade and complex political relationships.



## Who lived at Izapa?

The ethnicity of the people who lived at Izapa has been debated by scholars. Many art historians believe that residents of Izapa were Maya because of the close connections between Izapan art and Maya art. Archaeological evidence suggests that Izapeños (residents of Izapa) may have had closer ties to Mixe and Zoque ethnic groups, associated with the Olmec. In reality, Izapa was probably inhabited by peoples from several Mesoamerican cultures, speaking different languages and developing their own local cultural tradition. Izapa was an important center for trade and a religious pilgrimage center, attracting peoples of many different cultural backgrounds.



## Why Study the Houses?

As archaeologists, we can learn a lot about kings and public ritual by excavating the large mounds and monuments in site centers. But this only gives us information about the elite segment of society. Excavations outside of the site core give us insight into how common people lived.

One of the goals of the 2014 project was to better understand daily life at Izapa. What were people eating? What kinds of crafts were they producing? Who were the Izapeños trading with? In archaeology, one of the best ways to answer these questions is by looking at the artifacts found in ancient trash.



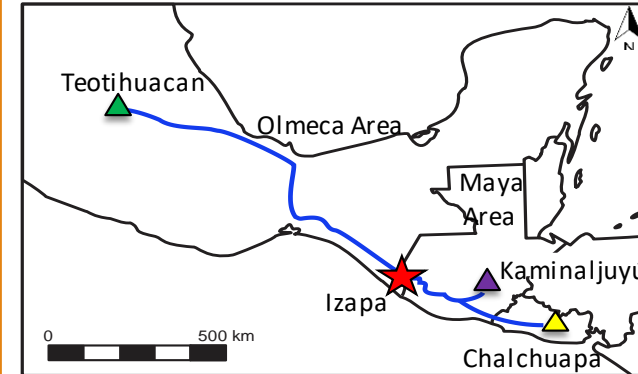
*Excavation of a trash pit*



*Reconstructed cooking pots from the trash pit*

## The Izapa Economy

Izapa is located along an important trade corridor. Like the modern highway system, much ancient trade was conducted along the Pacific coast. This coastal route connected different Mesoamerican cultural zones through time, including the Olmec, the Maya, the city of Teotihuacan in central Mexico (close to Mexico City) and, later, the Aztec. The people of Izapa most likely exported cacao, which was a valuable Mesoamerican commodity. In turn, they imported other materials like obsidian (volcanic glass), jade, and foreign pottery into the site.



By studying the artifacts at the site archaeologists can determine how trade and foreign relationships changed through time. After the 2014 project we now understand that when the earliest Maya cities in Guatemala and El Salvador collapsed around A.D. 100, the residents of Izapa adapted their economy to trade with different people. As their southeastern trade partners suffered, the residents of Izapa decided to strengthen ties with people to the west, including the emerging city of Teotihuacan.