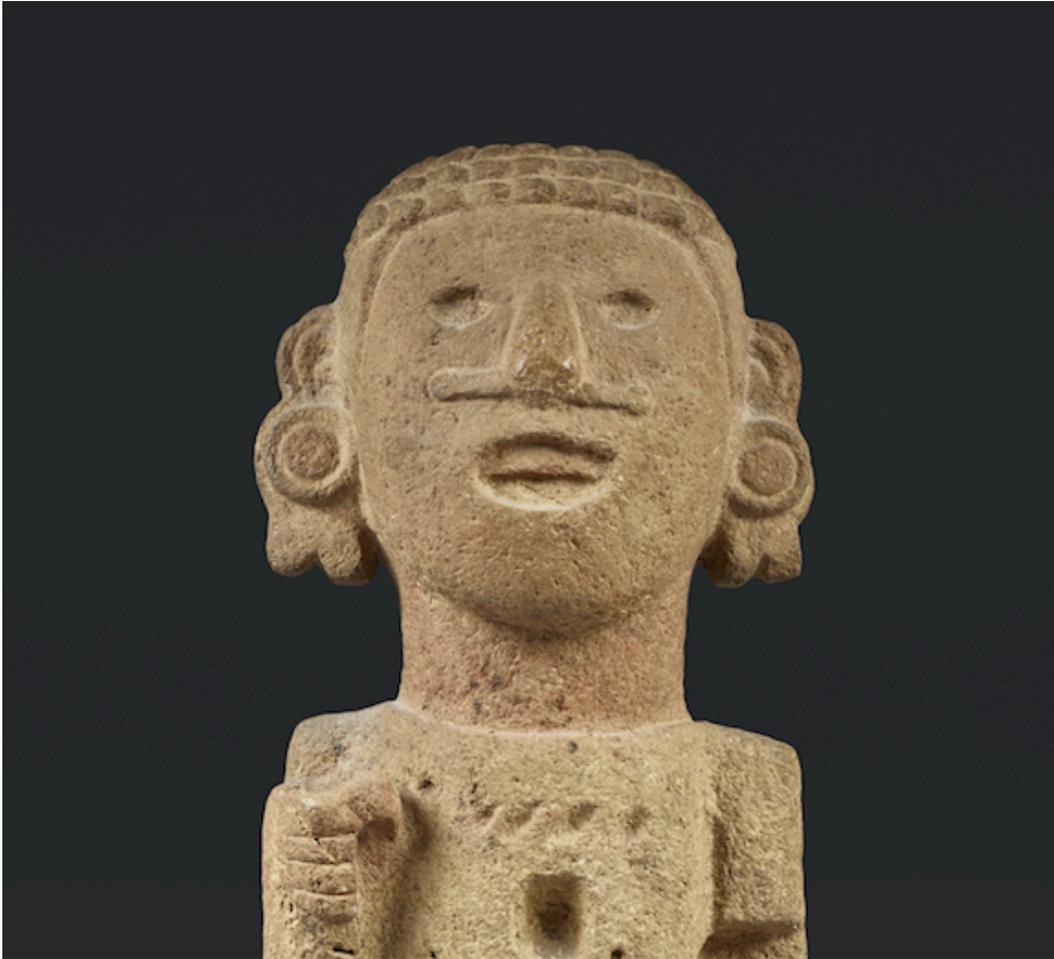


XIPE TOTEC, God of Fertility



The Rebirth, at the heart of Pre-Columbian thought

Gray volcanic stone with brown patina.
Traces of red pigment Aztec culture, Mexico

1200 - 1521 AD J.-C.

H. 72 - l. 25 - D. 18 cm

Provenance:

- KAMER Gallery, 1971.

In Nahuatl language, Xipe Totec means "Our Lord the Flayed".

He was one of the Primordial Gods of the Mesoamerican Civilizations (West, Center and Gulf of Mexico). The first representations of Xipe Totec appeared in Xolalpan, near Teotihuacán, as well as in Texcoco, in connection with the culture of Mazapán - that is to say during the post classic Toltec phase (9th-12th century).

The Aztecs adopted him during the reign of the King Axayacatl (1469-1481), until the final phase of this civilization, at the time of the Spanish Conquistadors Conquest.

In the Aztec Creation Myth, he was one of the 4 Main Gods, associated with one of the cardinal points, and ruled the East.

The sovereign of the Mexica people ritually wore the God adornment to go to war.

God of Spring and organizer of nature, Xipe Totec was associated with fertility, the regeneration of agricultural cycles and war. He was also the patron of the Goldsmiths.

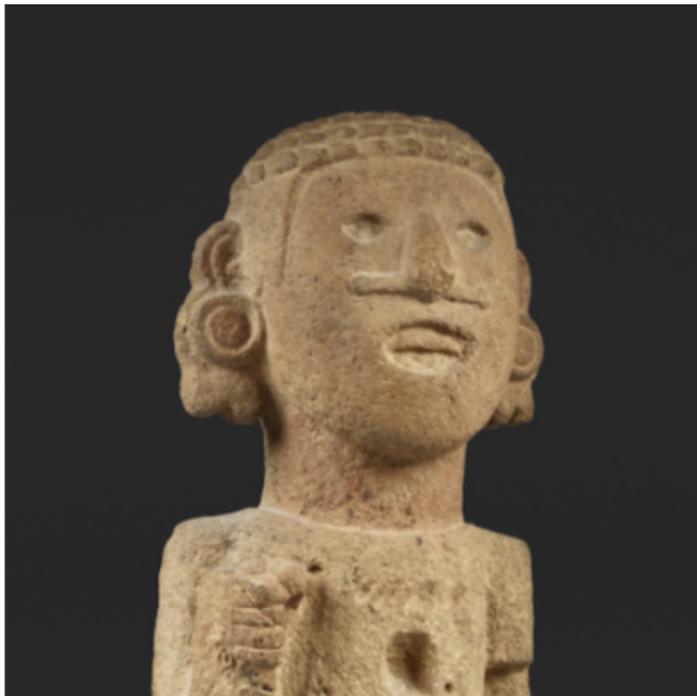
Associated with the cycle of nature and rebirth with the return of germination, it was clothed in the skin of a sacrificed human victim, a symbol of the new vegetation that covered the Earth in spring.

The statues erected in his honour still depict him wearing the skin of a freshly sacrificed victim.



As spring approached, during the month of Tlacaxipehualiztli ("flaying men"), the second in the Aztec ritual calendar, priests would kill human victims by tearing their hearts out. They then skinned the bodies and put on these skins, which they dyed yellow and called *teocuitlaquemitl* ("golden garments") one of the most important festivals at the time was "Tlacaxipehualiztli", the corn sowing festival.

It was commonly celebrated on two circular altars: one to sacrifice captives through gladiatorial or arrow fights, and the other for butchering to the glory of Xipe Totec. The priests were dressed in the skin of the sacrificed, which was then placed in small cavities.



Made in basalt, a volcanic stone, it incorporates all the **characteristics and Aztec canons of the representation of God.**

Xipe Totec is represented in the guise of a male figure standing on a small plinth, legs apart, and in a hieratic and austere position.

The head is covered with the skin of the sacrificed, and the openings of the mouth and of the eyes reveal the face of the officiating priest or the God himself. **The back of the head is engraved with a retaining link forming with the sacrificial skin a sacred mask.** The top of the skull is

hollowed out in the shape of a cup to receive the offerings. The nose is pierced with a labret, referring us to the Toltec and Tula's origins of Xipe Totec.

The ears feature large earrings, signs of nobility and power.

The bust is also covered with the skin of the sacrificed.

A seam on the chest shows us how this bloody costume was paired, but the back is even more explicit, revealing to us two large knots made of finely represented ties.

The right arm is raised, pierced on its upper part; it was to bear the emblem of God.



The lowered left arm is broken.

The hand represented in a flat fashion is in fact that of the sacrificed, which remained attached to the skin during the whole ritual of 20 to days, corresponding to the whole Aztec month.

The contours of the costume are well defined, both at the neck and at the legs of the statue. A belt surrounds the lower abdomen and retains a pattern in the form of a scaled band.

It is also a **characterization of Aztec Art to depict rotting skin and rebirth like the molting of a snake.**

The hole in the belly is, according to some INAH research, an orifice allowing the Statue and the God to come to life, through the intercession and the introduction of a green stone, during certain ceremonies.

The discovery of the first temple, dedicated to Xipe Totec, was announced on January 3, 2019. This archaeological site located **in the state of Puebla, in Ndachjian-Tehuacán, dates from the beginning of the 11th century** and would have lasted until the 13th century. An important sculpture of the God has been found, allowing underlining the importance of the worship of Xipe Totec in that time.

If the representation of the god is well known through the terracotta statues, or even his iconography in the Codices, **more rare are the stone statues** that have survived to this day. Our sculpture can be compared to two well-known works: a beautiful copy kept at the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, and one at the Museum für Volkerkunde, Basel, where the god is depicted is seated cross-legged.