

Bearing the image of a hand carved in shallow relief across its lower jaw, this Aztec standard bearer represents one of the pre-Hispanic deities known as the Macuiltonaleque, or "lords of the five souls" (*macuil*, "five" + *tonalli*, "soul"). By reading the glyph sculpted on the reverse of the statue's head, which depicts a coiled serpent surrounded by five dots, we are able to identify this figure as Macuilcoatl, or "5 Serpent." Associated with feasting, gambling, and games of chance, the youthful Macuiltonaleque embodied notions of pleasure, excess, and disease in pre-Hispanic Central Mexico. As denizens of the night, they were also thought to represent exalted warriors who, upon dying in battle, rose to the heavens to carry the sun disc on their backs from dawn till its midday zenith.





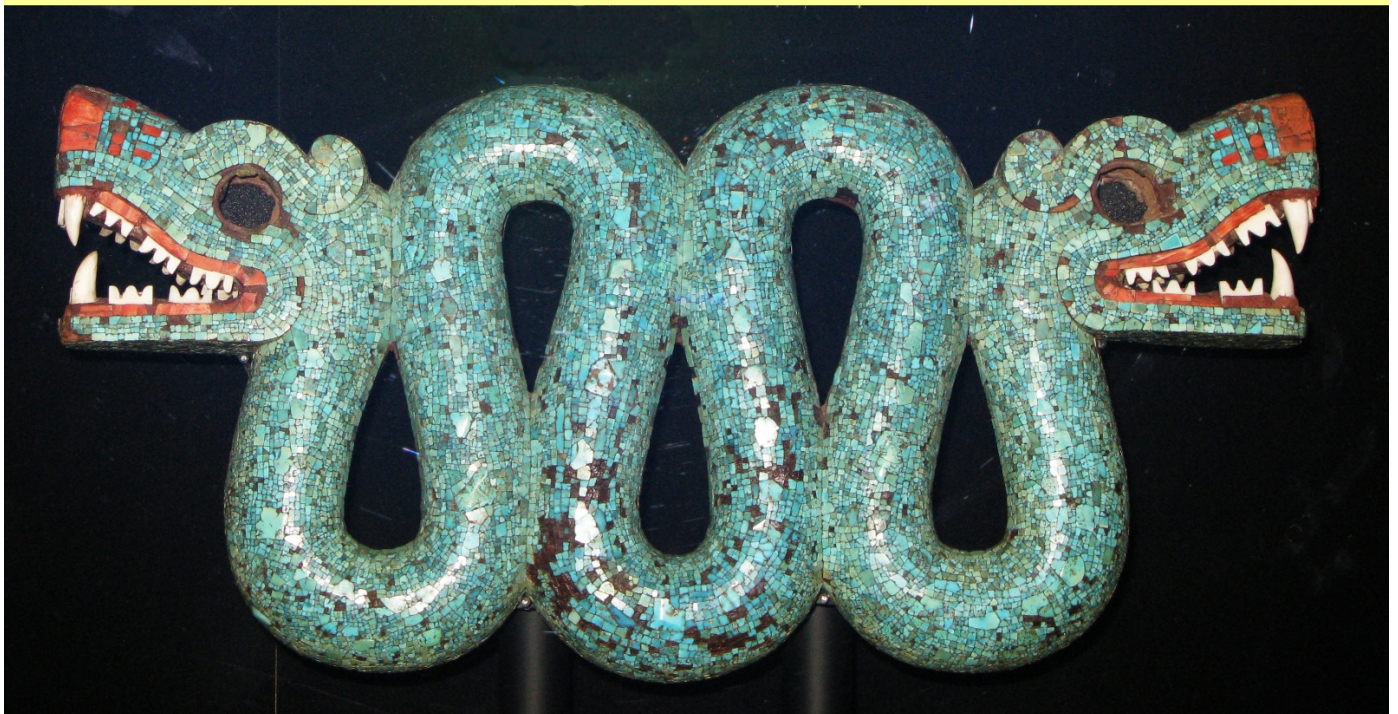
An anthropomorphic face, adorned with a stepped nose ornament bordered by emerges from a zoomorphic mouth. The gums of both upper and lower jaws a delineated in fragments of red shell. Sculptures depicting anthropomorphic fig from a serpent's mouth are common in Mexica art. These often represent Que feathered serpent, and symbolize the god's life-giving associations and repres the breath of life. Here, however, the mouth lacks any fangs and the head is r depicted, making its attribution more problematic.

The most striking elements in the mask are two intertwined serpents on its fo. Spondylus red shell decorations delineating their profiles, flanking the temples decorated tails. The heads of both serpents, with inlaid eyes, face towards the mask, framing it as though part of a headdress decoration...





Although numerous types of instruments survive from pre-conquest South and Central America, little is known of how they were used. Whistles, trumpets, and rattles in animal or human form probably had ceremonial functions or served as playthings. Some whistles in animal shapes, perhaps worn suspended from the neck, frequently have fingerholes that allow for a variation of pitch.



The **Double-headed serpent** is an Aztec sculpture kept at the [British Museum](#). It is a [snake](#) with [two heads](#) composed of mostly [turquoise](#) pieces applied to a wood base, it is one of nine mosaics of similar material in the British Museum; there are thought to be about 25 such pieces from that period in the whole of Europe.^[1] It came from [Aztec](#) Mexico and might have been worn or displayed in [religious](#) ceremonies.^[2] It is possible that this [sculpture](#) may be one of the gifts given by the Aztec emperor, [Moctezuma II](#), to Spanish conquistador [Hernán Cortés](#) when he invaded in 1519.^[2] The mosaic is made of pieces of turquoise, [spiny oyster shell](#) and conch shell.^[3]