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INTRODUCTION



REIMAGINING THE CLASSIC HERITAGE IN MESOAMERICA

CONTINUITIES AND FRACTURES IN TIME,
SPACE, AND SCHOLARSHIP

DAVID CARRASCO, LINDSAY JONES, AND SCOTT SESSIONS

Debate concerning the unity and diversity of pre-Hispanic Middle America has been a central feature of European and American imaginings about the region since Columbus's initial arrival in the New World. Even now the dense interpretive challenges posed by the oneness and manyness of the region's indigenous peoples, and by the continuities and changes of the region's history, remain among the field's most formidable problems. Among past generations of scholars, and presently, the spectrum of explanatory responses clusters around two sorts of poles.¹

On the one hand, numerous conceptions of this region have managed the matter of sameness and difference by accentuating the discontinuities between its various sub-regions and historical eras. Perhaps most notoriously, one early and enduring strain of Americanist studies bipartitioned the Native peoples of the Central Mexican plateau over against those of the Maya lowland zone as two fully discrete cultural entities. According to one nineteenth-century view, indigenous Mexicans and Maya were wholly separate "races" that were "distinct in origin, different in character, only similar by reason of that general similarity which of necessity arose from the two nations being subject to like surroundings, and nearly in the same stage of progress" (Daniel G. Brinton, quoted in Carmack 1981: 31). In those polarizing views, the civilizations of highland Mexico and the Maya lowlands developed as essentially isolated and independent cultural spheres with only intermittent and largely inconsequential interactions. And consequently, from that frame, it seemed entirely plausible that Mexicanist and Mayanist scholars could likewise undertake their interpretive initiatives with similar independence and noninvolvement. Mexicanist studies constituted one field, and Mayanist studies quite another.

Moreover, imagining a similar measure of discontinuity along the temporal axis, for decades scholars concentrating in both areas accentuated the (supposedly) radical disjunctions between the various historical epochs of ancient Mesoamerica, particularly between the so-designated Classic and Postclassic eras. In those still prevalent perspectives, the profound differences between the characteristic approaches to religion, art, urbanism, and authority embraced respectively by the Classic versus Postclassic Maya, or by the respective “empires” of Classic Teotihuacan and Postclassic Tenochtitlan, are far more noteworthy than the continuities. Though the adequacy of the labels was always contested, the intimation that “the Classic,” whether in the Maya or Mexican area, was an age of excellence, refinement, and peaceful prosperity in contrast to the disintegration and mounting chaos of “the Postclassic” proved an irresistible heuristic scheme for imposing order on the tangled development of pre-Columbian peoples and cultural productions. In these highly serviceable, if always suspiciously disjunctive arrangements, then, the cultural geography of ancient Mesoamerica is most suitably conceptualized and examined in terms of local and largely independent processes, and the history of the region is most suitably configured in terms of a stuttering succession of fractures and ruptures, rises, collapses, and fresh starts. Here the parts, in both space and time, are more significant than the whole.

Alternatively however, an even stronger collection of academic voices has argued the contrastive case in favor of the essential unity and historical continuity of ancient Middle America. Though currently the more widespread and more respectable view, the manifold arguments for the general sameness of this portion of the pre-Columbian world have not always been made on reputable grounds. Both well before and after Paul Kirchhoff’s seminal articulation of “Mesoamerica” as a unified yet distinct culture area (1943: 92–107), arguments for the essential unity of “the whole Indian family,” including the Aztecs, were sometimes made, for instance, on the dubious basis of a shared participation in some relatively early, still “barbarian,” evolutionary stage (Lewis H. Morgan, quoted in Keen 1971: 383). Similarly implausible, sometimes insidious arguments for the essential unity of Middle America were grounded in fanciful stories of the wide adventurings and shared ancestry of some primogenial “super race” or “mother culture,” variously identified as “Toltec,” Maya, or Olmec, which had in some antique epoch fanned out and asserted its influence across the entire region.² More recent and more reasonable arguments for unity have usually been built either on the postulate of some largely homogeneous, pan-Mesoamerican “Archaic,” “Formative,” or “Preclassic” cultural horizon, which formed the common substratum of subsequent cultural diversification (Jones 1995: 39), or, in other cases, on the basis of the discernment of dynamic, reciprocal, and ongoing processes of cross-regional interaction. Permutations on that theme variously foreground conquests and invasions, migrations, pilgrimages, or, most often, networks of long-distance trade and economic exchange as the principal mechanisms of integration and unification.³

Teotihuacan, as the seemingly most complex and impressive social and architectural assemblage in the entire region, has occupied a privileged position in

some, but hardly most, of these conceptions of the unity of Mesoamerica. Particularly those depictions of a widely unified Mesoamerica that accentuate mercantile and economic exchange processes between Central Mexico and other regions, most notably the southern Maya zone, afford the extension of Teotihuacan influence a crucial role in the unification of the wider region (see Santley 1983; Ball 1983; Sharer 1983). Likewise, even those historical (re)constructions that accentuate the brash innovation and uniqueness of the Aztecs' cultural accomplishment and empire building, have tended to acknowledge an important measure of continuity between Teotihuacan and Tenochtitlan. Nonetheless, as the essays in this volume well demonstrate, the full import of Classic Teotihuacan's influence—both on contemporaneous developments in the rest of Mesoamerica and subsequently for the rest of pre-Columbian history—remains to be fully appreciated.

CENTERS, CENTROIDS, AND INTERDISCIPLINARY CONVERSATIONS, FROM THE
TEMPLO MAYOR TO TEOTIHUACAN

This collection of essays, which engage the question of the unity and diversity of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica by focusing on the "Classic heritage" of Teotihuacan, is the fruit of the latest stage of the collaboration between the Raphael and Fletcher Lee Moses Mesoamerican Archive and Research Project and the Proyecto Templo Mayor archaeological team assembled and directed by Eduardo Matos Moctezuma. This collaboration began in 1979 when David Carrasco, with the help of colleagues from Mexico and the United States, organized the first scholarly conference on the then newly emerging discoveries at the Templo Mayor, entitled "Center and Periphery: The Great Temple of the Aztec Empire," at the University of Colorado in Boulder. The success of that conference, which focused on the exemplary symbolic and economic role of the Templo Mayor in the organization and expansion of Aztec urbanism, led Carrasco and Matos to organize the Mesoamerican Archive as a research and teaching center dedicated to developing new models of interpretation on the dynamics of center and periphery in Aztec society. A succession of productive interdisciplinary conferences in Boulder and Mexico City, trained principally on the Aztecs, both sustained the collaboration and issued in several important publications (Broda, Carrasco, and Matos 1987; Carrasco, ed., 1989 and 1991; Carrasco and Matos 1992; López Luján 1994; Matos Moctezuma 1995; Jones 1995; and López Austin 1997).

Now, largely in response to the wealth of provocative new information that continues to emerge from Proyecto Teotihuacan, a major and ongoing set of archaeological investigations under the general directorship of Matos, he and Carrasco have decided to re-focus their "center and periphery model" on Teotihuacan and its rippling influence across Mesoamerica. In order to initiate and advance this new stage in the collaboration, Matos hosted a 1995 conference on "The Classic Heritage: From Teotihuacan to the Templo Mayor" on-site at Teotihuacan, which was followed by a second conference, entitled "The Classic Heritage of Mesoamerica: From Teotihuacan to the Aztecs," convened by Carrasco at Princeton University in 1996. In conceptualizing that second symposium, at

which initial drafts of these essays were presented, David Carrasco utilized the urban ecologist Paul Wheatley's description of urban "centroids" in *Nagara and Commandery: Origins of the Southeast Asian Urban Traditions*, where he writes:

Most important of all, the nodes in the communications networks are situated in cities, so that the messages they transmit originate predominantly with, and in any case inevitably carry the point of view of, those who, controlling the city, reside at the hub of the network. The messages which flow outwards to the rest of society are, therefore, impregnated with urban norms. In fact, what makes the city (in early and recent times) important from this point of view is less its role as a large, dense, heterogeneous collection of non-agricultural persons (when they are non-agricultural, that is) than its control of a communications hub in that society. This is essentially what we mean when we join John Friedmann in categorizing the city as a creator of effective space, when we allegorize it as the summation of society, or when we designate it as a living repository of culture. The city, by virtue of being the site of the organizational foci of society, contrives, prescribes, modulates, and disseminates order throughout the subsystems of that society. Its most crucial export, as Scott Greer has reminded us, is control. (Wheatley 1983: 9)

Accordingly, though that international, interdisciplinary conference concentrated on the currents of continuity and change that linked the florescence of Teotihuacan and the apogee of Tenochtitlan, broader issues were also raised. That conference explored in many ways the "nodes of communication networks" located within, and transmitted beyond, the built forms of Teotihuacan as it achieved in many parts of Mesoamerica the prestige of being the site of creation of the *most effective social and symbolic space*, but also the summation of society and the great exporter of imperial authority. Participants were challenged to interrogate the proposition that Teotihuacan's heritage was a "Classic heritage" insofar as it had served as an urban "centroid" and a "canon" for the rest of Mesoamerica. Carrasco asked the discussants to consider whether Teotihuacan was, in fact, both the great classic and the great anomaly. Other questions followed from this: How did its cultural patterning interact with and get altered by its exchanges with the other influential, authoritative canons of the Toltecs, Maya, Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and so forth? Did the Teotihuacanos read and ritualize the canons of other cultures into their own worldview? How did various competing urban sites and traditions borrow, challenge, and make organizational use of Teotihuacan's power and authority? Did the Aztecs and other pre-Hispanic peoples read and reread the art, symbols, and traditions of Teotihuacan into a status of "classic"? Do we? Do we make it classical because we have such a limited understanding of what went on? A classic ignorance?

The present volume, then, which consists of revised versions of the papers delivered at that symposium, emerges from the collective effort and creative friction between archaeologists, historians of religions, ethnohistorians, art historians, archaeoastronomers, epigraphers, and, not incidentally, between Mexicanists and Mayanists, as they reflected upon these questions. Though the contributors adhere to a wide range of disciplinary perspectives and individual opinions, all are dedicated to coming to terms both with new interpretive models and with an abundance of new information. Different academic orientations notwithstanding,

they are united in their willingness to entertain seriously the prospect that, despite a generalized appreciation of Teotihuacan's importance, scholars have not yet come to terms with the full force of this site's foundational and decisive influence on contemporaneous and subsequent developments throughout Mesoamerica.

Full consensus remains elusive. In the assessment of some of us, though, those conversations and these articles add force to the claim that Teotihuacan, more than any other pre-Columbian center, was a paradigmatic source that informed the art and architecture, cosmology, religious demeanor, and conceptions of urbanism and political authority for, if not all, certainly a very large portion of the ancient Mesoamerican world. The exceptionally wide influence of Teotihuacan was, so it seems, both a principal cause for and among the most seminal consequences of the essential unity of Mesoamerica. In myriad different ways that we are still just beginning to understand, Teotihuacan's "Classic heritage" both fed and fed on the dynamic interactivity of the entire area.

The intellectual advances of this collaboration, which one participant likened to a "paradigm shift" in Mesoamerican studies, have encouraged the planners to consider two future conferences, and in all likelihood two future publications: one on Teotihuacan and Oaxaca and another on Teotihuacan and the Maya.

PART I: THE PARADIGM SHIFTS IN MESOAMERICAN STUDIES

This volume is divided into four sections, the first of which is devoted solely to Alfredo López Austin and Leonardo López Luján's essay, "The Myth and Reality of Zuyuá: The Feathered Serpent and Mesoamerican Transformations from the Classic to the Postclassic." This opening piece interweaves archaeological and documentary sources to propose a daringly "global vision" of the whole of ancient Mesoamerica—a vision that is, intriguingly, maybe even ironically, more unified but also more diversified than nearly all previous depictions of the area. Though in fundamental agreement with Paul Kirchhoff concerning the essential unity of the area, these authors strongly resist any intimation that this was a monolithic and homogeneous cultural area. By contrast, they stress, on the one hand, the region's dynamically multi-ethnic, multilinguistic, multicultural, multireligious diversity, yet, on the other hand, the vigorous interactivity and "international" networks of commercial and ideological exchange that integrated the entire "super area." In their view, multi-ethnicity, which was experienced with the greatest intensity in Teotihuacan and the other urban capitals, constituted both this world's most difficult challenge and its most fortuitous potentiality. Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, stretching from the northern frontier to the southern Maya area, was, in their view, from the earliest eras, *many and one*.

Moreover, if ancient Mesoamerica, particularly its urban centers, was always simultaneously vexed and enriched by the tensions between religio-cultural sameness and difference, López Austin and López Luján contend that those tensions were uniquely intensified during the so-termed Epiclassic, that is, during the transitional period that connected the Classic and Postclassic eras. In formulating their new solution to the old problem of continuity and change between these two eras, they capitalize especially on ethnohistoric references to

“Zuyuá,” a mythical place of origin connected to but distinct from the more famously esteemed homeland of Tollan. The “Zuyuans” (a term that corresponds to no single indigenous group, language, or region) serves as their designation for those Epiclassic innovators who were unprecedentedly successful in promulgating a style of religio-socio-political organization that was both respectful of the old and the new. The great accomplishment of the Zuyuans was the creation of a “hegemonic pattern of political control, over a broad territorial range and an ethnically heterogeneous population.” This hegemonic model—which answered the double-edged challenge of, on one side, preserving and respecting the particularities of existing local religio-political systems while, on the other side, superimposing new “supra-ethnic” control—built the foundations for the eventual political and religious realities of Tenochtitlan and other Postclassic centers. Instead of working to eradicate fidelity to local patron deities, the characteristic Zuyuan strategy entailed the symbolic replication of the archetypal Tollan coupled with the superimposition of a more overarching divine authority—namely, the widely revered Feathered Serpent, manifested in one or another of his myriad localized guises—which would embrace rather than supplant the more particularistic religious, and thus political, loyalties.

Teotihuacan and the other roughly contemporaneous Central Mexican centers, according to López Austin and López Luján, provide the clearest and most thoroughly documented instances of this Epiclassic imposition of the “forced harmony” of the Zuyuan system, which facilitated the transition from the Classic to the Postclassic. Nevertheless, consistent with their ambitiously holistic vision of Mesoamerica, they argue that parallel Epiclassic processes of strategically balancing the old and the new, the local and the universalistic, the generically human and the ethnically distinct, were at work also in Oaxaca and Michoacán as well as in the Maya lowlands and highland Guatemala—that is to say, essentially across the full breadth of Mesoamerica. The Zuyuan system is, in other words, though not without importantly different regional permutations, proposed as nothing less than a pan-Mesoamerica Epiclassic phenomenon that explains, in large measure, both the profound differences and the substantial continuities between the so-called Classic and Postclassic periods.

The ambitious sweep and substance of this argument is certain to stimulate lots of debate. Though still in the tradition of Kirchhoff, this essay presents a distinctively nuanced way of conceiving of the play of Mesoamerican unity and diversity insofar as it addresses not simply continuities and discontinuities across the cultural geography of the region, but along the chronological-historical axis as well. In this essay we are afforded a signal contribution to the interminable debate over pre-Hispanic unity and diversity, and thus a new point of departure for future inquiry.⁴

The remainder of the essays in this volume, while in only a few cases directly engaging the matter of the Zuyuan system, are all significantly informed by the necessity of situating or “contextualizing” more tightly focused studies of Classic Teotihuacan and related cities within the broader frame of a very dynamically interactive pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica. This initiative to *contextualize* Teotihuacan, that is, to locate (or sometimes relocate) investigations of that specific site in

relation to wider Mesoamerican realities and developments, takes at least three distinct, though overlapping, forms: the first concerns time and history; the second, space and geography; and the third, theory and method.

PART II: TEOTIHUACAN IN THE CONTEXT OF MESOAMERICAN TIME AND HISTORY

This set of essays works to resituate recent discoveries and interpretations of Classic Teotihuacan with respect to the chronological frame of Mesoamerican time and history. In these cases, it is the historical transitions from the Classic to Postclassic, largely within the confines of Central Mexico, preeminently between Teotihuacan and Tenochtitlan, that are of the greatest concern.

Archaeologist Linda Manzanilla's contribution sets the tone by reexamining and extending her earlier interpretations of the numerous "caves" of Teotihuacan in relation to the wider Mesoamerican tradition of beliefs and practices concerning the underworld, a tradition that she aptly conceives as "a long-duration process of basic core ideas and peripheral formal changing aspects." Informed by her own extensive excavations of the caverns at Teotihuacan, virtually all of which now appear to have been humanly constructed quarries and tunnels rather than natural caves, Manzanilla traces the indigenous uses and representations of subterranean spaces from Formative times, through Teotihuacan and Tenochtitlan, to the cave rituals of contemporary Central Mexican communities. More specifically, she documents the impressive (and apparently ongoing) continuity of three symbolic couplings: one that juxtaposes caves and jaguars, a second connected to amphibious toads and water deposits, and third that bears on the imagery of sacred mountains and world trees. By charting the spatial and temporal distribution of those motifs, Manzanilla reveals how Teotihuacan's famous subterranean cavities, if owing their initial formation to the largely utilitarian quarrying of building materials, a kind of construction by subtraction as it were, eventually came to serve a very wide range of ritual and domestic usages—nearly all of which nonetheless find notable counterparts in other Central Mexican contexts. Thus while it is plausible to argue that Teotihuacan constitutes a fresh departure in Mesoamerican culture history and a unique accomplishment, Manzanilla's work demonstrates the advantages, necessity in fact, of also situating the capital, and specifically its utilization of the symbolism of underground spaces, in relation to both its historical precedents and subsequent heirs.

The next two chapters explore questions concerning the Classic heritage and Postclassic endurance of Quetzalcoatl, the irrepressible Plumed Serpent. Saburo Sugiyama's article, which like Manzanilla's piece draws on sustained involvements in recent archaeological work at Teotihuacan, concentrates on the sociopolitical dimensions of feathered-serpent symbolism. Sugiyama locates the earliest known representation of Quetzalcoatl in the sculptural program of the Feathered Serpent Pyramid (or the Ciudadela), and thus argues that Teotihuacan was, in a historical as well as mythical sense, the "place of origin" for the eventually ubiquitous symbolism of Quetzalcoatl. Moreover, in addition to Quetzalcoatl's irrefutable associations at Teotihuacan with water, fertility, and celestial bodies (specifically Venus), and despite the scarcity of specifically war-related associations in the

Classic city itself, Sugiyama argues that even from its earliest conception, the Feathered Serpent was very tightly and purposefully associated with militarism, human sacrifice, and a specific concept of coercive rulership. In his view, the inheritance of feathered-serpent imagery by a whole series of Late Classic and Postclassic centers in the Mexican highlands included as well the inheritance of “a state symbolic complex,” that is, a specific mode of religio-political legitimization.

In his contribution, H. B. Nicholson concurs with Sugiyama that, despite significant Preclassic prototypes for Quetzalcoatl, it was most likely in Teotihuacan’s famous Ciudadela façade that fully developed representations of rattlesnakes covered with feathers made their initial appearance. Then he turns the bulk of his attention to the survey, description, and organization of the myriad and highly diversified Late Postclassic Central Mexican (particularly “Aztec” style) two- and three-dimensional representations of the Feathered Serpent. Rescuing from obscurity a whole series of little-known sculptures, reliefs, and images, Nicholson thus provides a detailed catalogue—a veritable treasure map for Quetzalcoatl aficionados, in fact—which describes the provenance, current location, and present states of disrepair for innumerable Postclassic permutations on the flying snake theme.

The next two chapters concentrate on the direct, and apparently deliberately cultivated, genealogical connections between Classic Teotihuacan and Tenochtitlan. Doris Heyden, relying especially on documentary sources, argues that, while the Aztec pursuit of a legitimating pedigree entailed the expropriation of material and ideological elements from numerous cultures, Tenochtitlan owes its greatest debt to Teotihuacan. No other site enjoyed nearly the same prestige in Aztec eyes. Her analysis urges us to appreciate, moreover, that mythology and oral traditions played a uniquely important role in holding intact and disseminating the Classic-era symbolism of colors and directions, and the elaborate veneration of such natural features as celestial bodies, caves, mountains, springs, streams, trees, and birds, all of which she sees as similarly prominent in the Teotihuacan and Aztec worlds.

Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, whose intimate acquaintance with the archaeology of Teotihuacan and Tenochtitlan stems from directing excavation projects at both sites, examines cultural linkages between the two cities in terms of their “Great Temples.” He begins with a brief sketch of earlier archaeological efforts at Teotihuacan, including those of the Aztecs, that provides a context for current excavations and illustrates the various ways that the Classic center was imagined and reimagined in the centuries following its decline. Guided by insights concerning the foundation and sacralization of ancient cities drawn from the history of religions, Matos presents a comparative study of six elements that, he contends, identified the principal temple in each of the sites as respective centers of the universe. These include the landmark or sign leading to the temple’s foundation, its symbolism as a sacred mountain, its astronomical orientation, its association with water and the indigenous notion of the *alteptl*, the presence of sacrificial offerings there, and the surrounding platform or wall that distinguished its heightened level of sacrality from the rest of the city. Interestingly, Matos demonstrates

how recent excavations reveal that the crossing of the east-west axis and thus the symbolic center of Teotihuacan at one point was moved from the Pyramid of the Sun to the Feathered Serpent Temple, and that both of these buildings, in turn, were the focus of deliberate “desacralizing” activities before the Classic city’s terminal decline. His study shows how Teotihuacan was explicitly invoked as the principal prototype for the Templo Mayor as well as the Aztec ceremonial center.

Rubén Cabrera Castro, who is the curator of the Teotihuacan Archeological Zone and has worked at the site for nearly two decades, is also concerned with cultural connections between the Classic city and Postclassic Central Mexico. Based on recent archaeological findings, he traces the appearance and development of several religious ideas related to the calendar and the cosmos, antecedents of various Postclassic iconographic motifs and glyphs, and methods of astronomical observation, many of which find their earliest known expressions in Teotihuacan and will be transmitted to subsequent cultures. In terms of astronomy, Teotihuacanos employed two types of celestial observation—a horizontal form thought to come from Uaxactún, which later spread to Tikal, Dzibilchaltún, and other sites; and a vertical method conducted in specially modified subterranean chambers thought to have been invented in Teotihuacan and exported to Monte Albán, Xochicalco, Chichén Itzá, and elsewhere. Moreover, recent excavations reveal that these astronomical caves had various ceremonial and ritual uses as well. Cabrera also identifies early representations of the Postclassic cruciform quincunx motif, related to indigenous conceptions of cosmic time and space, in such diverse examples as a group of newly unearthed pecked circles and crosses, a three-dimensional depiction embodied in the layout of Structure A in front of the Pyramid of the Moon, certain designs covering Building 1B', and the arrangement of human burials at the Feathered Serpent Temple. In the last two sections of the essay, Cabrera focuses on several painted glyphic figures and a personage identified as Xolotl recently found in La Ventilla, one of Teotihuacan’s urban neighborhoods, and concludes that these represent some of the earliest known stylistic and thematic antecedents of several iconographic motifs common in Postclassic codices, as well as others that would figure prominently in Mexica iconography. Moreover, the ordered arrangement and style of these figures bear witness to a glyphic writing system in Teotihuacan that was departing from the stylistic conventions of its mural-painting tradition.

The last essay in this section comes from archaeologists Leonardo López Luján and Saburo Sugiyama, along with anthropologist and materials analyst Hector Neff, who examine the composition, context, and significance of a Classic Teotihuacan-style Thin Orange ceramic vessel recently found in an offering adjacent to the Aztec Templo Mayor. Designated as the “9-Xi Vase,” due to the rare appearance of a Teotihuacan calendrical glyph on its appliquéd panels, the piece provides an excellent vehicle for exploring relationships of this Classic city with other Mesoamerican sites on several levels. Contextual data concerning its burial and the processing of its contents demonstrate this vessel’s reutilization, nearly a millennium after its production, as a cinerary urn for a high-ranking Mexica official and allow the partial reconstruction of his fifteenth-century funeral ceremony in front of Tenochtitlan’s Casa de las Águilas. Moreover, iconographic

data from the vessel itself launch the authors into analyses of several important Teotihuacan motifs and glyphs, as well as the use of certain numerical and calendrical conventions, some thought to derive from the Zapotec area and shared (either concurrently or subsequently) with Epiclassic centers such as Cacaxtla, Xochicalco, and Teotenango. Like the glyphs at La Ventilla in the previous chapter, the 9-Xi Vase suggests the emergence, at Teotihuacan, of a distinctive system of notational signs brought to fruition in Late Postclassic Central Mexico.

PART III: CLASSIC TEOTIHUACAN IN THE CONTEXT OF MESOAMERICAN SACRED LANDSCAPES AND PLACES

The three essays that constitute this section likewise respond to more fully integrated, dynamically interactive models of Mesoamerica by working to contextualize the influence and accomplishment of Teotihuacan's florescence in a more spatial or geographical sense, that is to say, with respect to contemporaneous developments in other regions of Classic Mesoamerica, including the Maya area.

Archaeoastronomer Anthony Aveni explores the possibility that Classic Teotihuacan, traditionally designated as the site of the mythical birth of the Fifth Sun, was, moreover, "the place where time began" insofar as it served as the point of origin for a "great ideological migration." This movement included the dissemination of distinctive methods of conceptualizing space and keeping time—a "Teotihuacan space-time canon" as it were—from the Central Mexican highlands all the way to the Petén Maya region. To make his case, Aveni refines and extends his earlier hypotheses concerning the uses and meanings of Teotihuacan's numerous pecked-cross petroglyphs, that is, those circular configurations of holes, usually centered on a pair of rectangular axes, that, though widespread throughout Mesoamerica, are uniquely prevalent in the rocks and floors around this Central Mexican site. In his view, these petroglyphs, notwithstanding other plausible usages, served principally as calendrical devices and "symbols of completion." Furthermore, in his view, the exceptionally wide distribution of similar quadripartite patterns—evidenced, for instance, in contexts and media as different as the carved petroglyphs at Uaxactún, the architectural decoration of Tikal, and the Maltese cross-like diagrams common in both Maya and Mexican codices—is the consequence of a flow of information that had its initial source in Classic Teotihuacan. Thus, according to Aveni's surmise, quite specific modes of arranging space and counting time, though derived originally from observations of the unique features of Teotihuacan's local landscape and skyline, were eventually embraced and replicated as virtually pan-Mesoamerican conventions.

Karl Taube's article, which addresses both the Aztecs' "archaic" evocations of Teotihuacan's symbolism of fire and war as well as generally contemporaneous celebrations of and allusions to Teotihuacan's imagery of war in Classic Maya art, features a startlingly iconoclastic interpretation of those famous goggle-eyed masks that alternate with the sculpted heads of feathered serpents on the façade of Teotihuacan's Temple of Quetzalcoatl. In the wake of recent discoveries of over two hundred sacrificial victims, most in militaristic costume, buried inside this structure, other contributors to this volume have challenged the long-stand-

ing presumption that these notoriously distinctive muzzle-snouted faces, which have served Mesoamericanists for decades as a virtual signature of Teotihuacan, represent Tlaloc, the rain god. The counterproposal holds that the reiterative element is a headdress that represents Cipactli, a primordial crocodile or caiman (López Austin, López Luján, and Sugiyama 1991; and Sugiyama, chapter 3 of this volume). Alternatively, Taube responds to the new discoveries with a different interpretive tack by identifying this zoomorphic element as the “War Serpent,” a prominent component of a complex of warfare symbolism for which he finds many counterparts not only in other sculptural and iconographic media around Teotihuacan and later in Tenochtitlan, but throughout Mesoamerica, including innumerable roughly contemporary instances in the Maya area. Despite significant local variations in its highland and lowland manifestations, in Taube’s view, both the Classic War Serpent and its Postclassic descendant, the Xiuhcoatl Fire Serpent, in addition to strong associations with shooting stars and meteorites, portray supernatural caterpillars, that is, pupate butterflies before their metamorphosis into splendid winged beings. This image provides, as Taube notes, an ideal metaphor for the processes of transformation and metamorphosis that occurred when, according to the “cosmovision” of ancient Mesoamericans, slain warriors were transformed into stars and “flying butterfly spirits of the sun.” If Taube is correct about the identity and significance of Teotihuacan’s goggled-eyed masks, several generations of scholars have been mistaken.

The third article in this group, by Geoffrey McCafferty, focuses on the dynamically fluctuating relations between the generally contemporaneous centers of Teotihuacan and Cholula. The latter, he thinks, has too often been dismissed either as a “a secondary center” within the larger Teotihuacan empire or as “an impoverished imitation” of its larger and more famous neighbor. Instead of being simply derivative, Cholula developed, according to McCafferty, a unique mode of religiously based authority, which enabled that center not only to weather the tumultuous transition from the Classic to the Postclassic era, but actually to thrive in the transitional Epiclassic context. By contrast to those innumerable circumstances in which Mesoamerican rulers worked to legitimate and enhance their own imperial ambitions by deliberately cultivating an appearance of direct connectedness to Teotihuacan, McCafferty presents the intriguing possibility that, in some cases, the most astute strategy of statecrafting was to adopt “an ideology of distinction” or “a discourse of difference to Teotihuacan,” which would deliberately distance one’s religious and governmental agenda from the heritage of that great capital.

According to McCafferty’s archaeology-based reinterpretation of the multistaged construction history of Cholula’s Great Pyramid, late in the Classic era the Cholula architects abandoned their earlier strategy of announcing a close affiliation with Teotihuacan via abundant imitations of its architecture and monumental art. At that point, the most prudent political ploy required an aura of separation from Teotihuacan and a symbolic rejection of kinship and indebtedness to the great capital, perhaps in favor of stronger affiliations with El Tajín and the Gulf Coast region. But then in later Epiclassic remodelings of the Great Pyramid, apparently in response both to Teotihuacan’s decline and to the arrival of the

ethnically distinct Olmeca-Xicallanca, the architects of Cholula once again began to utilize characteristically Teotihuacanoid architectural elements, this time within “a palimpsest of multi-ethnic internationalism” that may even have included considerable Maya influences. Not inconsequentially (and not unlike the exposition of the Zuyuan system delivered by López Austin and López Luján), it was in the context of this Epiclassic negotiation of unprecedented ethnic and religious diversity, as Cholula undertook to position itself as heir apparent to the fading Teotihuacan, that the feathered-serpent cult of Quetzalcoatl, which would eventually be so closely identified with this place, made its initial appearance. At any rate, this adroit tactic of intermittently jettisoning and embracing affiliations with its infamous neighbor enabled Cholula, McCafferty explains, to emerge from the Epiclassic era as the primary religious center of Central Mexico, “the Rome of Anahuac,” a pilgrimage center to which nobility from across Mesoamerica looked and traveled for legitimation. With Teotihuacan in disrepair, Cholula, at that point, came to serve as an esteemed reservoir rather than a mere recipient of religio-political legitimacy.

PART IV: CLASSIC TEOTIHUACAN IN THE CONTEXT OF MESOAMERICANIST SCHOLARSHIP

The final set of essays, though also addressing very specific historical problems concerning the legacy of Teotihuacan’s Classic heritage, are notable especially for contextualizing recent interpretations of Teotihuacan with respect to larger problems in the history of Mesoamericanist scholarship. Here we are alerted to Teotihuacan’s pivotal role not only in the pre-Hispanic past, but in the hypothetical formulations and enduring controversies of our own academic field.

In her contribution, Elizabeth Boone, for instance, situates her own fresh discussion of Aztec understandings and perceptions of Teotihuacan with respect to the timeworn debate about the extent to which the specific site of Teotihuacan can be identified with the marvelous Tollan of Nahuatl myth and legend and with the equally marvelous Toltec priest-king, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl. Boone first rehearses the history of ideas wherein scholars’ once-prevailing identification of the legendary Tollan with Teotihuacan was, in the 1940s, largely displaced by a new orthodoxy that located the legendary Toltec capital in Tula, Hidalgo. Then she joins with those scholars who have argued in various ways that “Tollan” is best conceived, not as a single historical-geographical location, but as a concept or a metaphor for urban excellence, which was assigned to a whole series of pre-Columbian capitals, Teotihuacan being presumably foremost among them.

With that nuance, Boone then assembles sixteenth-century maps and chronicles to support her contention that the Aztecs definitely did consider Teotihuacan as *a* Tollan (one of many), and perhaps as “the greatest of all the Toltec cities.” Moreover, beyond its explicitly “Toltec” affiliations, she shows that Teotihuacan enjoyed a multilayered prestige insofar as it was conceived as the place where the Fifth (and present) Sun was created by the sacrifice of the gods, where the Aztec system of government had first been constituted, and as the point of departure for many of the peoples who inhabited Central Mexico in

the Late Postclassic. Furthermore, Boone supersedes earlier discussions of the “Tollan problem” by foregrounding the usually neglected fact that, although its ancient ceremonial core may have decayed well before the rise of the Aztecs, Teotihuacan actually remained a thriving city in the Late Postclassic era. Though never formally under the sway of the Triple Alliance, Teotihuacan did serve as a judicial seat for the Acolhua lords, an active and autonomous *altepetl* that was home to a widely revered oracle.

We learn from Boone, in other words, that the Aztecs’ veneration for Teotihuacan was not confined simply to abstract reminiscences of a bygone era, nor even to the extensive copying and incorporation of various Teotihuacan elements into their own architectural and artistic creations. Additionally, the Aztecs maintained an active and ongoing relationship with “the home of the gods” to which they often traveled and from which they retrieved innumerable objects that were subsequently deposited in offerings at the Templo Mayor and other Tenochtitlan ceremonial precincts. Via such strategic scavenging and relocating of Teotihuacan objects, the Aztecs, in a sense, transferred “the place where the Fifth Sun was created” to their own capital, and thereby, according to Boone, “metaphorically took ownership of this Sun, for whose continuance their sacrifices and offerings were responsible.”

Johanna Broda’s panoramic article, which draws on the work of several of the other contributors to this volume, situates a very specific hypothesis about the calendrics and axial layout of Teotihuacan in the context of some two decades of impressive progress in the interdisciplinary field of archaeoastronomy. Broda, informed particularly by the recent interpretations of Rubén Morante López, isolates several newly emergent sets of evidence that provide a basis for fresh contributions to the long, often contentious history of debate concerning Teotihuacan’s orientation: the recent discovery of three additional caves that, in her view, very likely served as “subterranean observatories”; new and more-detailed studies of the alignments of the Pyramid of the Sun; provocative suggestions that the Temple of Quetzalcoatl and the Ciudadela may have functioned as a huge “calendrical marker”; and the recent discovery just to the south of the Pyramid of the Sun of those several pecked circles that figure so prominently in the article by Anthony Aveni.

Integrating those new evidences with her previous findings, Broda argues that Teotihuacan was arranged according to “a fourfold structure” that was reflected not only in the much imitated axial layout of urban space but also in the quadripartitioning of the agricultural year with respect to four specific dates: February 12, April 30, August 13, and October 30. In her view, this four-part division of both built space and calendrical time, though an informing notion for the Classic planners of Teotihuacan, ought to be appreciated as a fundamental feature of a distinctively Mesoamerican “cosmovision” that probably has Preclassic roots and definitely operated in the Postclassic world of the Aztecs. Though she is careful to note significant discontinuities over time and the particularity of local permutations on the shared scheme, Broda adduces considerable ethnographic evidence that not only the same basic cosmological principles but even respectful acknowledgments of the same four specific dates continue to

be expressed in the “highly syncretistic” seasonal rites of indigenous communities in present-day Mexico and Guatemala. In her view, then, Teotihuacan may have earned its prestige less as a place of origins in the sense of brand-new innovations and unique accomplishments than as the quintessential instantiation of a set of cosmological conceptions that was embraced both well before and long after the Classic era, throughout what Broda terms “the one great cultural tradition that was ancient Mesoamerica.”

The next two entries, which signal a refreshing thaw in cold-war relations between Mayanist and Central Mexicanist scholars, explore the connections between Teotihuacan and the Classic Maya. Mapping and annotating the intellectual history of the problem, William and Barbara Fash explain that full appreciation of Teotihuacan’s influence in the Maya area has been complicated, and often forestalled, by the untoward tendency to regard the Isthmus of Tehuantepec as a “great divide” not only between geographical regions but between two disturbingly independent strains of Mesoamericanist scholarship. Consequently, opinions concerning highland-lowland interactions have tended to divide between two extremes: one that granted primacy to Teotihuacan in the creation of Mesoamerican civilization, and thus relegated even the Classic Maya to “secondary state status,” and the equally radical converse, far more prevalent among Mayanists (at least until recently), which insisted on the complete independence of the Classic Maya from Teotihuacan, except perhaps for the self-initiated borrowing of a few Central Mexican technological and artistic features.

Alternatively, these authors welcome the more detailed and evenhanded approaches that are at last revealing the complexity of the ongoing interactions between the two regions and, concomitantly, the tremendous prestige that Teotihuacan enjoyed in the eyes of the contemporary, and in many cases competitive, Classic Maya. In their view, the present archaeological evidence, which they regard as the most reliable source of information, continues to challenge the claim that there were ever armies of Teotihuacanos stationed in the Maya lowlands. Nonetheless, recent glyphic decipherments (including those by David Stuart in chapter 15 of this volume), coupled with the excavationary record, does, they think, demonstrate very convincingly that a number of Classic Maya rulers did claim the Teotihuacan-Toltec heritage as their own. They conclude, in other words, that several Maya kings appealed to a strategy of legitimation not unlike that pursued by their Mexica counterparts insofar as they tried very hard to prove that they had the blood of Central Mexicans coursing through their veins.

Commenting specifically on the abundance of Teotihuacan imagery on the portraits and architecture associated with the Copán lord K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’, William and Barbara Fash argue that if this Classic Maya ruler was not himself Teotihuacano—which he may well have been—he had at the very least been to the Mexican capital and “drunk deeply of its waters.” Moreover, having stressed the abundance of reverential allusions to Teotihuacan in Copán and other lowland centers, they suggest, albeit tentatively, that the somewhat curious absence of similarly honorific allusions to the Maya at Teotihuacan does not undermine the likelihood that the two areas were involved in very substantial and sustained interactions, but it does shed additional light both on Teotihuacan’s supremacy

over the entire region and on “Mesoamerican principles of hierarchy.” The Teotihuacanos were aware, in other words, that, with rare exceptions, “it does not bring prestige to oneself to mention lesser sites.”

Mayanist epigrapher David Stuart likewise revisits, and then contributes to, the much debated topic of the nature and scope of the interactions between Teotihuacan and the Maya lowlands. With the continuing advancements in epigraphy, it has become increasingly clear that the extensive hieroglyphic texts at Tikal, Copán, and other Maya sites provide a singularly detailed fund of evidence with respect to the relevant historical events and even the specific individual actors; yet, as Stuart reminds us, these uniquely revealing sources have, until now, played a surprisingly small role in resolving the problem. Stuart explains how his own and others’ recent glyphic decipherments not only reconfirm archaeologically derived surmises of very extensive highland-lowland interactions, but, additionally, reveal startling specific information about radical changes in the status of Teotihuacan-Maya relations over the several-century duration of the Classic period. Arguing, like others in this volume, for a fuller appreciation of Teotihuacan’s pivotal role throughout an essentially unified, dynamically interactive Mesoamerican super-area, Stuart contends that the Lowland Maya were heirs to the Classic heritage of Teotihuacan, which they termed the “Place of Cattails,” in two successive—though drastically different—respects.

First, contrary to the views of most Mayanists, Stuart argues, principally on the basis of his reading of inscriptions at Uaxactún and Tikal, that, in the Early Classic era, that is, during the Mexican capital’s florescence, Teotihuacanos actually intruded into the Petén zone with considerable frequency, and thus played a direct, probably violent and certainly disruptive role in Maya polity and religion. Reaffirming and extending Tatiana Proskouriakoff’s earlier hypotheses about “the arrival of strangers” in the Maya lowlands of the late fourth century C.E., Stuart, in fact, views this physical incursion of Teotihuacanos, which may even have eventuated in the execution of the reigning Tikal lord, as no less than “the single most important political or military episode of early Classic Maya history, when Teotihuacan established itself as a dominant force in the politics and elite culture of the central Petén.”

By the Late Classic, however, following the demise of Teotihuacan as an active political force either in the central plateau or elsewhere, the Maya’s very tangible connection to the once-great capital was radically transformed into a relationship of a more figurative and conceptual, though still exceptionally important, sort. Focusing, in this portion of his discussion, on the abundance of Teotihuacan-style elements in the iconography of Copán, and particularly on the representations of three prominent Copán sovereigns (including K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’) as “outsiders” with highland or western origins, Stuart explains that “Late Classic references to central Mexico are almost as numerous, though of a very different character.” No longer the home base of an active player in the Mesoamerican religio-political world, Teotihuacan had by this time come to serve as an idealized element of a primordial past, a distant yet profoundly prestigious place of beginnings—as Stuart says, “a paradigm through which Maya rulers could define themselves and their historical pedigree.” Thus, instead of exceptions to the

wider Mesoamerican patterns of authority and legitimating self-representation, Maya rulers at this point, not unlike the rulers of innumerable “other Tollans” (and not without a very substantial historical basis), invoked Teotihuacan as their place of origin and claimed for themselves the distinction of a “Toltec” heritage.

The final entry to the collection, initially crafted as a response paper at the 1996 conference on “The Classic Heritage: From Teotihuacan to Tenochtitlan,” is by historian of religions Philip Arnold. Though providing an innovative and quite specific interpretation of Mesoamericans’ distinctive relationship to the land, Arnold, moreover, engages the much broader methodological problems consequent of interpreting and representing a culture so remote from our own as Classic Teotihuacan. Working to reconcile an apparent contradiction between those contributors to this volume who accentuate Teotihuacan’s “earth-based cult” and those who highlight the Classic city’s “warrior cult,” Arnold contends that Teotihuacan, not unlike other Mesoamerican contexts, is profitably conceived as “a consumptive cosmos” in which both warfare and agriculture were “consumptive activities” animated by a “symbolism of eating” and a logic of reciprocity that required killing as an essential precondition for the continuance of human life. In his view, Classic Teotihuacan expressed a “locative” worldview wherein people found their orientation, not abstractly, but in relation to their dynamic (and “consumptive”) involvements with the “materiality” of this concrete place, this living landscape.

Consequently, in Arnold’s view, Teotihuacan operated as a paradigmatic city and, in his terms, a “locative canon” for the rest of the Mesoamerican world insofar as it exercised enormous influence not simply as a source of ideas that could be transferred into other contexts, but as a fixed and concrete place—“the center of the cosmos which organized, or founded, the rest of material existence.” Though dubious that contemporary interpreters can suspend our own “cultural grids” fully enough to recover the “Other” mind-set of the pre-Hispanic Teotihuacanos, Arnold nonetheless regards the serious consideration of ancient Mesoamerica’s “consumptive cosmology” as an eminently rewarding endeavor inasmuch as it pressures and challenges us to reconsider our own involvements in a consumerist worldview of a parallel, though very different sort.

It remains for our readers to determine whether the several claims by participants at the Princeton conference were correct when they stated that a “paradigm shift” in Mesoamerican studies was taking place within the expanded community that now makes up the Mesoamerican Archive. It does appear that the “center and periphery” model⁵ forged in previous conferences has undergone a rich and perhaps radical revision in the accumulated papers herein. A new contextual understanding of Teotihuacan and the diversities and unities of Mesoamerica is emerging in these pages. We witness an exciting new sense of the interrelations of Teotihuacan with Tenochtitlan, Cholula, and the Maya ceremonial centers. This in turn reflects a new openness between Aztec scholars and Maya scholars who have been laboring hard and long in their own cultural areas. Finally, this book demonstrates the distinctive virtues of interdisciplinary collaboration (which, in the Archive setting, included an emphasis on the religiosity of Mesoamerican

cultures) and may reveal by its example that in fact very few individual or collective books in Mesoamerican studies are seriously interdisciplinary or speak across disciplines. Having a series of articles by scholars from different disciplines does not make or represent interdisciplinary work. There must be moments and spaces where the differences in approach and interpretation are activated, revealed, and engaged. Such an engagement is taking place in the Archive conferences where scholars are sharing important discoveries they are making while using different sorts of resources and types of evidence. The editors are especially grateful to Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, Alfredo López Austin, Leonardo López Luján, William and Barbara Fash, Karl Taube, and David Stuart for revealing how their methods and labors help us struggle toward a more unified vision of ancient Mesoamerica. The learning process has been significantly enhanced by the Department of Religion at Princeton University and especially Lorraine Fuhrmann, Departmental Manager, and Jeffrey Stout, Departmental Chair. Also, we appreciate the generous support of Raphael and Fletcher Lee Moses, President Harold Shapiro, and Provost Jeremy Ostriker. It may be that Linda Manzanilla, emerging from the ritual caves that provided ancient and profound mysteries, said it best when she noted that the Mesoamerican tradition was “a long-duration process of basic core ideas and peripheral formal changing aspects” that had their Classic expression in Teotihuacan.

NOTES

1. Regarding the intellectual history of the problem of the unity and diversity of Mesoamerica, see, for instance, Jones 1995: 32–43.

2. For a sampling of other sources that argue for the essential unity of Mesoamerica on the basis of a common ancestry to some “mother cultures,” see Jones 1995: 37–39.

3. Notable in this respect are the essays assembled in Miller 1983.

4. Maybe inadvertently, by accentuating the “multicultural” and “multi-ethnic” constitution of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, and thus undermining monolithic views of “the Indian,” López Austin and López Luján’s exposition of the Zuyuan system could have profound ramifications not only for how scholars constitute and contextualize their more tightly focused studies of Mesoamerican phenomena, but even for the ways in which Mexican national identity and ethnicity are complicated and refined, the viability of the enduring notion of the “mestizo,” ostensibly constituted of a simple two-part Spanish-Indian mixture, is seriously challenged. The implication of their view is that Mesoamerica was, at least from the Epiclassic era forward—and thus remains even in the wake of the colonial encounter—in an important sense, a “multicultural society,” threatened but even more enriched by the condition of ethnic and religious plurality.

5. For an overview of this model, see Broda, Carrasco, and Matos 1987; and Carrasco 1991.

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