STONE TREES TRANSPLANTED? CENTRAL MEXICAN STELAE OF THE EPICLASSIC AND EARLY POSTCLASSIC AND THE QUESTION OF MAYA "INFLUENCE"

VOL. 1

by

KEITH JORDAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

STONE TREES TRANSPLANTED? CENTRAL MEXICAN STELAE OF THE EPICLASSIC AND EARLY POSTCLASSIC AND THE QUESTION OF MAYA "INFLUENCE"

by

Keith Jordan

Adviser: Professor Eloise Quiñones Keber

Stelae dating to the Epiclassic (650-900 CE) and Early Postclassic (950-1150 CE) from Tula and Xochicalco in Central Mexico have been posited as evidence of Classic Maya "influence" on Central Mexican art during these eras. Formal and iconographic comparisons between the Central Mexican examples and Maya monuments at Piedras Negras, Dos Pilas, Aguateca, Ceibal, and Copan were briefly presented by Cohodas (1974, 1989), Mary Miller (2006), and others in support of such connections. This dissertation attempts to reevaluate these claims via detailed comparative analysis of the Central Mexican stelae and their claimed Maya counterparts. In addition, it will, for the first time, situate the Central Mexican stelae in the context of often overlooked local artistic traditions as well as other distant connections. It begins with a comprehensive survey of Central Mexican examples, including stelae from the sites of Xico, Tlalpizáhuac, El Cerrito, Cerro El Elefante, Cholula, Teotenango, and Nevado de Toluca in addition to Tula and Xochicalco. A critical review of theories regarding mechanisms of

artistic contact between the Maya area and Epiclassic Central Mexico follows. I then survey stelae in Central Mexico predating the Epiclassic, at the sites of Cuicuilco, Chalcatzingo, Tlalancaleca, Xochitecatl and Teotihuacan, demonstrating that the practice of stela carving has a long history in this area. Continuities between these earlier local sculptures and the Epiclassic/Postclassic stelae suggest that the Maya area was not the sole source of inspiration for them. Comparison of Tula and Xochicalco stelae with earlier and contemporary stelae from Oaxaca and Guerrero demonstrates connections equally as plausible as those posited with the Maya region, and bolstered by archaeological evidence. I also demonstrate that those Classic Maya monuments used for comparison to the Tula and Xochicalco stelae are characterized by an atypical predominance of Central Mexican formal and iconographic elements, raising the problem of circularity. While it is clear that some Central Mexican stelae, especially Stela 4 from Tula, may reflect Maya contacts, I contend that this contribution has to be balanced by consideration of local and other regional developments and connections, and plausible mechanisms of contact with all outside regions.

PREFACE

All presentations of Mesoamerican art require authorial decisions regarding the choice of spellings of indigenous names from the array of alternative readings present in the past and current literature, as well as choosing among the often controversial options available for naming various deity images and other motifs. I would like here to explain my selection of a few usages.

In the rendering of Maya names in English, I have tried to adopt the most recent versions of both hieroglyphic decipherments and spelling conventions. Given the rapid progress of decipherment over the past few years alone, and the changing fashions in transcription, the results will no doubt appear dated in the not so distant future, but this is unavoidable. Some of these conventions are more contentious than others. For example, I render the Yucatec Maya term for both a hilly region of Yucatan and an associated Terminal Classic architectural style Puuk rather than the alternative Puuc. This spelling is consistent with the recent shift towards using the Latin "k" instead of "c" in spelling Maya words, and is employed by Schele and Mathews (1998), two leading Maya epigraphers. It has not, however, been accepted by the Mexican government, which in its tourist literature still uses the older and still common variant "Puuc." With the name of a Pasión Maya site in Guatemala I discuss extensively in Chapter 6, Ceibal, on the other hand, the name is currently favored by the modern government of the region, although the competing alternative "Seibal" does still appear in the archaeological and art historical literature. As I discuss in reviewing the site's history in Chapter 6, the locality was christened after nearby stands of ceiba trees by the Austrian archaeologist Teobert Maler at the close of the 19th century. However, Maler Teutonicized the spelling by

changing the “c” commonly used to render the name of the tree into an “s” for the name of the ruined city. I have opted for the “c” to bring the tree and its eponymous archaeological site into congruence, as well as to remove the European twist on this indigenous name.

The names of deities depicted in Mesoamerican art are also often disputed matters. A frequently appearing character in this dissertation is the goggle-eyed, fanged Central Mexican rain deity whose face appears on Stela 2 at Xochicalco and on the headgear of at least two of the Tula stelae, as well as in the art of Classic Teotihuacan, and via contacts with that metropolis in some of the Classic Maya works under examination here. The Mexica (or Aztecs) and other Central Mexican speakers of Nahuatl at the time of the Spanish Conquest called this figure Tlaloc. We have no evidence to determine with absolute certainty what he was called in earlier times and in areas outside the Nahuatl area. But, from the 19th century, scholars, like the Sufi holy fool looking for the keys he lost in the house not there but under the street light because the light was brighter there, have used the better documented Mexica material to name and interpret these earlier images. For the greater part of the 20th century, the images of this deity in Teotihuacan art were referred to as “Tlaloc” even though the linguistic affiliations of this city were and remain unknown. In last few decades of the last century, George Kubler (1985) and Esther Pasztory (1997) argued strongly against this label for the Teotihuacan version on the basis of both the probable linguistic differences and on art historical grounds, noting, following Erwin Panofsky and other historians of Western art, that the same image may acquire radically disjunctive meanings over the centuries. (A small winged figure on a Roman sarcophagus, for example, will have a quite different intended meaning than one

gracing a Christian painting of the Renaissance.) The arguments and influence of these writers lead to the common use in recent writings of the term "Storm God" to describe this god in Teotihuacan art.

Both writers stressed the uniqueness of Teotihuacan among Mesoamerican art traditions and deemphasized its connections both with contemporary Mesoamerican cultures and later developments in Central Mexico. Yet, recently the pendulum has begun to swing once again in the direction of using apparent continuities of Teotihuacan's art and religion with those of its Central Mexican successors (e.g., Manzanilla 2000; Taube 2000a) as the basis of hypothesis formation. Consistent with this development, some recent writers have referred to the Teotihuacan deity as Tlaloc, not to demonstrate linguistic but what they perceive as ideological continuity. Thus in the most recent book-length publication on Teotihuacan art as I write these words, Annabeth Headrick calls the goggle-eyed figure at Teotihuacan Tlaloc, explaining that

> As of late it has become more common to refer to Tlaloc as the Storm God…so as not to confuse the Teotihuacan manifestation of the god with the later Aztec version. While I find much merit in this strategy, I have retained the name Tlaloc because I see so many continuities between the Central Mexican cultures. However, this decision must acknowledge that there are differences, and it is critical to be sensitive to the Classic period manifestations of this deity. (2007, 172)

A more cautious tactic is taken up by Karl Taube (Miller and Taube 1993; Taube 2000a), who employs the more qualified epithet "the Teotihuacan Tlaloc," adopting a term used in the past by Pasztory (1974). I have adopted this usage for this god, both at home in

Teotihuacan and abroad among the Classic Maya,[1] as a compromise stressing continuities and differences simultaneously.

At Xochicalco, this supernatural is called Tlaloc by all of the pundits involved with the interpretation of the stelae at this Epiclassic site (e.g., Smith 2000), although this city's ethnic and linguistic affiliations are also uncertain. For ease of communication, I use this consensual label, but it is not to be interpreted as reflecting a belief that this is what the citizens of ancient Xochicalco called him or how he might have differed in cult and concept there from later Postclassic cultures—matters on which I remain agnostic. At Tula, the same name is used for this divinity by most of the handful of scholars concerned with the site's iconography (e.g., Diehl 1983; Jiménez García 1998; Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002). The majority of the very small community of Toltec scholars agrees, on ethnohistorical and historical linguistic grounds, that the Tula Toltecs included Nahuatl speakers, removing the linguistic disjunction objection to the use of the name. Cynthia Kristan-Graham represents an exception to this consensus (2007). She is deeply skeptical of the historical veracity (in a European sense) of Mexica traditions about Tula, and points to DNA evidence (Fournier and Bolaños 2007) suggesting a great time depth for the presence of speakers of Otomí in the Tula region. However, since both archaeology and ethnohistory (Davies 1977) point to the multiethnic makeup of the Tula polity, and Fournier and Bolaños (2007, 496) report that DNA analysis of skeletons from the Early Postclassic shows the presence of other lineages or ethnicities beside the Otomí,

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[1] As will be seen in Chapter 6, historians of Maya art like Linda Schele (Schele and Freidel 1990) and Andrea Stone (1989) call him Tlaloc when he occurs in Classic Maya art to distinguish him from the very different indigenous Maya rain deity Chaak (formerly Chac), and to emphasize his Central Mexican origins. Among the Terminal Classic and Postclassic Maya of Yucatan, these two gods seem to have syncretistically merged (Taube 1992b, 133-135), but during the Classic they occur in very different contexts, with "Tlaloc" associated mostly with warfare rather than water.

there, I accept the probability that Nahuatl speakers were present at the site, at least during the Early Postclassic Tollan Phase. In addition, Jiménez García sees much iconographic, and by implication, conceptual continuity between Toltec and later Mexica deities. For these reasons, I have retained the "T-word" to describe this god in Toltec art, but again it is not to be understood that conceptions of this deity were the same in their entirety between the Toltecs and their Aztec successors and admirers, no more than concepts of the nature of Christ among the creators of catacomb paintings, Coptic art, or Byzantine icons were identical.

In terms of geographical nomenclature, I employ the term "Central Mexico" in its narrower sense to designate the highland regions of the center of the country, encompassing the states of Mexico, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Hidalgo, and Morelos, as distinct from the Mixtec and Zapotec regions to the south in Oaxaca, and the coastal lowlands of Veracruz and Tabasco.

All translations from Spanish are mine, with the exception of works cited as their English translations in the Bibliography, where the translator is credited.

I have commonly employed abbreviations in the text for some agencies and museums. Although each name is given in full in the first usage, a few common ones bear explaining at the start as well:

INAH Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City

MMA Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

MNA Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City

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A dissertation or book is never really the work of one individual, traditions or conventions of attribution and authorship, and intellectual property laws, aside. It is a reflection of one writer's engagement and interaction, at one stage of scholarly and personal development, with the broader field and discipline as it stands at a particular juncture in its history. Both the individual and the field exist within broader social, economic, and political contexts that shape, constrain, and provoke the forms of the thoughts expressed in its pages. Beyond these macrosocial contexts, the contents of a dissertation are conditioned and shaped by the more immediate networks of support and feedback surrounding its author and the processes of research and writing. I would like here to acknowledge the crucial help received from individuals and institutions that permitted, facilitated, and stimulated the work presented here.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: STELA STORIES

Most introductory publications treating pre-Columbian Mesoamerican art, particularly those of the well- illustrated variety aimed at students and the general reading public, present Mesoamerican stelae (upright stone slabs carved in relief) as a quintessentially Maya monument form. Indeed, during the Classic period (c. 250-850 CE), hundreds were raised across Maya city-states from Copan, Honduras, the eastern frontier of the Maya world, to Tonina, Mexico, in the west (Fig. 1). The presence or absence of these works has been historically definitional of Classic Maya culture. The supposed appearance of stelae bearing hieroglyphic dates and inscriptions at Maya sites in the early centuries of the Christian era bracket the beginnings of the Classic period, as formulated by 20th-century archaeologists. At the other end of the time frame, the cessation of the practice of erecting stelae defines in part the end of the Classic period.

In fact, stelae do not make good monumental "book ends" for the questionable construct of the Classic period: they have turned up in Middle Formative (c. 900-300 BCE) contexts at sites like Kaminaljuyu and Nakbe in Guatemala, and a few late examples were produced in 14th-century CE Mayapan inYucatan. The association of the form with the Classic Maya is nevertheless as deeply cut in the literature as some of the reliefs themselves. The past fifty years of archaeological fieldwork and art historical analysis have established the existence of stelae outside of the Maya region predating the Classic at, for example, Middle Formative Olmec sites in Tabasco on the Gulf Coast, considered to represent the remains of the "mother culture" of all subsequent

Mesoamerican civilizations by some.[1] Yet peruse the plates or index of any survey text, and the correlation of the most extensive discussion and illustration of stelae with the Maya chapters is easily demonstrable.

It is no wonder that this state of affairs prevails. Classic Maya stelae are quite impressive visually, carved with figures rendered in the relatively naturalistic style that earned the Maya the admiring epithet "the Greeks of the New World" by 19th - and early 20th -century observers. The carved scenes and long glyphic texts on stelae display the power of Maya lords as they performed ceremonies to commemorate the passage of units of time or "period endings" in the Maya calendar. In the first half of the 20th century, the calendrical nature of and hieroglyphic dates on these monuments, combined with ignorance about the nature of the non-calendrical glyphs and considerable wishful thinking, led otherwise sober archaeologists to envision the Maya as pacifist priest-astronomers preoccupied with time and very little else. In this pious utopia of scholarly fantasy, the rulers depicted on Maya stelae were read as priests or gods. Advances in the decipherment of Maya writing over the last fifty years have resulted in the correct identifications of the royal subjects of stela art, even if successive corrections in the renderings of their names seem to succeed each other almost yearly in the recent literature. We now know that these stelae reliefs showed flesh and blood lords of city-states in the acts of acceding to the throne, conquering and sacrificing their rivals**,** and performing rituals of bloodletting and self-mutilation to call upon the legitimizing blessings of their ancestors. If they are ritual, calendrical monuments, Maya stelae are also analogs to modern Western political propaganda in their exaltation of rulers.

Yet, it is also their cosmological symbolism that ties stelae intrinsically to Maya

[1] See Appendix 2 for a review of the possible Olmec origins of the stela form.

culture. Although the epigrapher David Stuart (1996) now rejects his earlier reading of the glyphs for stela as “tree stone” in favor of “banner stone**,”** stelae are linked symbolically to the cosmic trees and pillars of Maya cosmology, which were believed to support the earth and link it to the celestial world above and the underworld of the dead below. Kings, having inherited the trappings at least of earlier shamanic practices, personified these cosmic axes and appear to have played a symbolically analogous role in magically mediating between the realms of gods and ancestors on behalf of their people, at least in the ideal realm of state ideology.

It is therefore an enigma that a form so closely associated with Maya politics and religion appears as a small corpus of stelae hundreds of miles away from Maya country at Epiclassic (c. 650-950) and Early Postclassic (c. 950-1150) sites in highland Central Mexico. To account for the seemingly "foreign" and anomalous presence of stelae at Tula, Hidalgo, and Xochicalco, Morelos (see Figs. 2-3), parallels in form and iconography with specific Maya counterparts have led to claims of Maya “influence” on Central Mexican polities during the crucial transition (the Epiclassic) from the Classic to Postclassic periods. During this dynamic phase of Central Mexican culture history, the collapse of the hegemony of the great Classic-period Central Mexican metropolis of Teotihuacan (c. 150-650) created an opening for ruling elites to experiment with new and eclectic artistic and architectural programs. The art of Central Mexico during this period of flux and transformation indeed borrows forms and symbols from other parts of Mesoamerica, including the Maya region. In fact, the relationship between Central Mexico and the Maya area during this transition represents a central historical, cultural, and artistic conundrum in Mesoamerican studies, and has been called the “Gordian knot”

of the field. Thus Maya painting styles, pigments, and probably painters appear at the site of Cacaxtla, in the state of Tlaxcala, hundreds of miles away from the Maya homeland, between 650 and 850. The Toltec capital of Tula has been the subject of a long intellectual brawl for the past 150 years because of its striking similarities in architecture and sculpture to the Maya site of Chichen Itza in Yucatan, 800 miles (1100 kilometers) distant.[2] That ideas and forms were shared by these sites is clear; the rancorous debate focuses on the direction(s) in which they spread and the temporal priority of one or the other of the "twin cities"—basically a question of "who's on first?"

The Central Mexican stelae of this time of transition and their putative Maya connections usually are treated in connection with the Tula/Chichen controversy and the general eclecticism of Epiclassic art, footnotes to larger discussions, installations in a scholarly side-show gallery. Perhaps their seemingly anomalous nature explains the poverty of the extant literature, a common reaction to anomalies in academic disciplines being to ignore them (see Kuhn 1962). Published treatments of Central Mexican stelae as a group are rare, and invariably incomplete. They usually occur in focused discussions of one site, with the monuments at other locales brought in briefly for comparative purposes. Most coverage of Central Mexican stelae at individual sites does not represent much of an improvement. The Tula stelae in particular, when they are discussed at all, get briefly dragged into the light, compared to Classic Maya stelae at the Guatemalan sites of Ceibal, Dos Pilas, and Piedras Negras, attributed to usually ill-defined cultural connections, and then ignored again. With the exception of two extensive descriptive works on Toltec sculpture (de la Fuente et al. 1988; Jiménez García 1998), they are mostly treated in passing, with their "Mayoid" (Lincoln 1990) qualities emphasized.

[2] See Appendix 4 for a review of the current state of the question.

Basic descriptive data, such as the number of stelae at the site, vary considerably among these brief accounts. When illustrations accompany these mentions, one of three specimens of a sample of at least six stelae at Tula is reproduced, these three being the most similar to Maya art. The authors' case for Maya links might be shakier if two of the remaining stelae were illustrated instead since their Maya credentials are less obvious to the eye.

Dissertation Project

In the following pages, I provide a critical assessment of these hypotheses for the appearance of stelae in Epiclassic Central Mexico and suggest as an alternative that overlooked local developments as well as Maya contacts played a role in the genesis of these monuments. What I have tried to do is bring this fascinating corpus of sculpture out of the footnotes and margins and put them into central focus. This dissertation constitutes the first attempt at integrated iconographic, formal, and contextual comparative analysis of central Mexican figural stelae of the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic periods as a group.

The Tula stelae were my initial starting point for this venture, originally conceived as part of a broader consideration of this center's visual traditions. Toltec art in general has been disparaged and neglected by art historians, and the Tula stelae are ignored beyond even this usual standard. I have tried to pull them away from the margins of the marginalized and give them their due. Depending on the definitions employed and the thoroughness of past commentators, even the number of stelae at Tula fluctuates in the

literature. I have followed the most broad and inclusive treatment, the work of Beatriz de la Fuente and associates (1988), in provisionally accepting six complete stelae at Tula (Figs. 4-11, 14-15), in addition to two fragments (Figs. 12-13) associated archaeologically with Stela 4, though the dissenting definitions and tallies will be addressed in the Chapter 2.

An additional Toltec example, from Xico in the Basin of Mexico (Fig. 16), was first published by Eduard Seler in 1888 and occasionally reproduced since, but has received little scholarly attention. The lengthiest description of it, in one of the descriptive catalogs, does not even mention which site it came from (de la Fuente et al. 1988). A fragmentary stela (Fig. 17) from the Early Postclassic component at the site of Tlalpizáhuac to the east of Mexico City seems to be contemporary with Tula's heyday, though its makers probably were not of the same ethnicity, and its style may have closer connections to the art of Xochicalco. A Toltec stela (Figs. 18-19) from the northern limits of Tula's political dominance, at the site of El Cerrito outside of the capital city of Queretaro in the Mexican state of the same name, completes the sample of definitively Toltec-era examples. This monument has been reproduced in three Mexican publications, first the site report (Crespo 1991), then in a regional survey in a multi-author collection on northern Mesoamerican archaeology (Braniff C. 2001), and finally, most recently, a long-overdue analysis of its atypical iconography (Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz 2005). To my knowledge, its only appearance to date in English literature is a passing mention in an article on archaeological evidence for "empires" or spheres of influence in ancient Mesoamerica (Smith and Montiel 2001). A little published and roughly carved stela (Fig. 20) from Cerro El Elefante, Hidalgo, has stylistic affinities with the Tula group

but may be slightly later in date than the capital's florescence. It has not been reproduced beyond a single site report (Martínez Magaña 1989).

At Xochicalco, the frequently reproduced trio of stelae excavated in a cache by Cesar Saenz in 1960-61 has been the focus of scholarly attention since their discovery (Figs. 21-26), with much ink shed over the identities of their relief figures as deities vs. historical rulers. There are also a number of stelae bearing only glyphs and not human figures recovered from the same site (Figs. 27-29). However, the members of the triad are not in fact the only figural stelae from Xochicalco. Two sculptures, the so-called "Statues" of Miacatlan and Xochicalco, now housed in the Museo Nacional de Antropología (MNA) in Mexico City and the Cuauhnahuac Museum in Cuernavaca, respectively, take the form of stelae and depict costumed female figures wearing headdresses in the form of serpent heads and holding large disks in front of their torsos (Figs. 30-33). Although these figures are in bold relief bordering on sculpture in the round, they emerge from and are framed by the stela shape. Maya stelae in such three-dimensional form are well known from the sites of Tonina in Chiapas, Mexico, and Copan, Honduras. If these Xochicalco "statues" had been found at these Maya sites among the numerous other stelae, their classification as stelae would never be in doubt. As far as I know, no one has yet examined them as stelae, though morphologically they certainly fit comfortably under most forms of that rubric. Since these examples, too, come from a site where other stelae are documented, I consider them to be stelae. Their addition to the corpus brings fruitful parallels to both the Tula stelae and Maya monuments at Piedras Negras. A fragmentary, badly eroded, and now missing stela photographed in a Houston Art Gallery two decades ago, and recently revisited in a

publication by Javier Urcid (2007), completes the sample of Xochicalco-related stelae. The figure carved on this unprovenienced sculpture clearly relates to the art tradition of Xochicalco, while its calendric glyphs also link it to the inscriptions of the Epiclassic center of Teotenango in the state of Mexico.

Since my focus is figural stelae, bearing relief images of rulers or deities, other Central Mexican stelae that do not feature such anthropomorphic figures are only briefly discussed, including two examples from Cholula, Puebla (Figs. 34-35) that feature in general studies of the great pyramid that overshadows them, literally and figuratively (e.g., McCafferty 1997; 2001). These Cholula monuments have carved borders resembling the ornamental scrollwork of the relief sculpture of Gulf Coast Classic Veracruz art, but no figure in the blank central space. What might not have survived the ravages of time in this space is hinted at by a possible painted image of a stela from the Battle Mural at Cacaxtla, Tlaxcala (Fig. 36), which one author compares with the Cholula stelae (Baird 1989). Some of this figure's costume attributes tie it in turn to both the Tula series and the "statues" of Xochicalco and Miacatlan. The stela-like aspects of this painted image have been highlighted both by Baird and by V. Miller (1989), and I include it--tentatively--in my catalog of Central Mexican stelae. I briefly discuss two stelae from the Matlatzinca area north of the basin of Mexico, but do not include them in my comparative analysis. One, from Teotenango, only bears glyphic dates and lacks figures for comparison to Maya sculpture (Fig. 37). The other, from a prehispanic shrine atop the volcanic mountain, Nevado de Toluca, does present an anthropomorphic image in relief, but is fragmentary and of uncertain date (Fig. 38).

To assess the suggested contribution of Maya, local, and other contemporary

Mesoamerican artistic traditions to the creation of these extraordinary sculptures, I first review in Chapter 4 little-studied earlier local stelae that have not been brought into the discussion of the Epiclassic examples. In Chapter 6, I compare specific Central Mexican stelae with their suggested Classic Maya counterparts or antecedents. These Maya comparisons comprise a more detailed and critical formal and iconographic analysis based on the suggestions in the scanty extant literature. Thus the Maya monuments selected here are Late Classic (c. 600-900 CE) stelae from Ceibal, Dos Pilas, Aguateca, and Piedras Negras in Guatemala.

In my view, the neglected Central Mexican antecedents put the lie to any claims that the Epiclassic and Postclassic stelae represent a completely new and totally anomalous phenomenon. These include a recently (1997) excavated cylindrical, obelisk-like stela (Fig. 39) discovered under the lava-buried Late Formative (c. 300 BCE-200 CE) pyramid of Cuicuilco on the southern outskirts of Mexico City. The context of the discovery and associated radiocarbon dates suggest a date of c. 1000 BCE, making it quite possibly the first stela—in spite of its atypical form—known for all of Mesoamerica The stelae at Chalcatzingo in Morelos (Figs. 40-43), related to the contemporary Olmec civilization of the Gulf Coast, date to the Middle Formative (c. 900-400 BCE). In addition, I look at Late Formative stelae from the sites of Tlalancaleca (Figs. 44-45) in Puebla and Xochitecatl in Tlaxcala (Fig. 46). While the latter is an unusual slab monolith worked into the form of a serpent, the Tlalancaleca stela, even if less than ideal in its irregular shape, bears a frontal image of a deity (?) that finds a distant echo in the much later Tula and Xochicalco examples. I also review and examine stelae and stela-like small sculptures produced by Teotihuacan artists during the Early Classic period (c. 100-550)

(Figs. 47-50). The existence of all of these works demonstrates that whatever the Maya connections of the Tula and Xochicalco stelae—which seem undeniable if somewhat exaggerated in the literature—the stela form in Central Mexico, and figural stelae in particular, had deep roots in the Central Mexican past. The Cuicuilco and Chalcatzingo examples may even antedate the appearance of the form in the Maya region. I propose that the Epiclassic monuments thus may embody continuities with the regional past as well as experiments with foreign forms and iconography.

A third group I bring to the comparison with Central Mexican stelae in Chapter 5 was not originally included in the scope of this project, but a serendipitous encounter with representative monuments while searching for other materials at the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City sparked their addition. These are the stelae of southwestern Mexico—the monuments of the Classic Zapotec (Figs. 52-56) and Ñuiñe (Figs. 57-61) traditions of Oaxaca, a range of Late Formative through Early Postclassic stelae found at sites on the Pacific coast of Oaxaca (Figs. 62-68), and the poorly studied stelae of Guerrero (Figs. 69-78). All three groups of sculptures bear some striking resemblances to the Tula and Xochicalco stelae. Some of the Guerrero specimens, in particular, bear near-identical compositions, deity images, poses, and costume elements. The existence of this relatively obscure group of works suggests that if foreign ideas were incorporated into the design of the Central Mexican stelae, the Maya region need not have been the only source. The plausibility of this suggestion is by no means weakened by the archaeological evidence for extensive trade connections between both Xochicalco and Tula and the Guerrero region that I review. However, I intend this discussion to be taken as a suggestion for future research rather than anything conclusive, since the questionable

context of many of the Guerrero stelae makes it difficult to determine whether they were antecedents, provincial copies, or later derivatives of their Central Mexican counterparts. It also appears likely that the stelae at one Guerrero site, Tetmilincan, are the result of Toltec incursions into the area rather than ancestral to Toltec stelae at Tula.

Rationale for Dissertation Project

"Few books today are forgivable. Black on the canvas, silence on the screen, an empty white sheet of paper are perhaps feasible," wrote R.D. Laing some forty years ago (1967, 11). Some more contemporary commentators might suggest the same holds true for many doctoral dissertations. Why then, have I decided to add to the voluminous and increasingly compartmentalized and esoteric literature of pre-Columbian Mesoamerican art history? First, as already noted, this project emerged from a long-standing interest in Toltec art, which even by non-Western standards seems to have been shunted to the periphery of art historical attention. I believe that a remarkable body of works has been relatively neglected, probably in large part because of the Western classicizing, pre-modernist, and "Mayacentric" aesthetic prejudices of some 20th-century scholars, leading them to devalue the relatively abstract and "stony" art of Tula in favor of the more naturalistic art of the Classic Maya. Second, I believe after a seven-year review of the literature that the whole Tula/Chichen Itza debate circus has overshadowed examination of other possible evidence of Central Mexican/Maya links, including the stelae. My study is an attempt to open up an alternative avenue of approach for assessing these connections and, more broadly, for explaining the development of art, culture, and history

in Epiclassic and Early Postclassic central Mexico. Its success or failure, of course, remains to be judged by the reader and in the light of future research and discoveries. In the tradition of the late Linda Schele, I will not mind if my specific hypotheses, linkages, and suggestions sketched here prove to be completely wrong, provided I have raised new questions that can lead to future research.

In addition, the question of Maya "influences" on Central Mexican art at the end of the Classic, whether traveling via the Tula-Chichen Itza express or otherwise, is of importance for understanding the subsequent course of Central Mexican art history. A stylistic disjunction is apparent between the geometric style of Classic Teotihuacan and its Postclassic successors, including Toltec and Aztec art. While much Postclassic art preserves the abstract, hieratic nature of Teotihuacan imagery, other works show a concern with naturalism, narrative, and individual ruler portraits. M aya "influence" is again frequently invoked to explain this shift. Unfortunately, some proposals of this kind seem to have been implicitly framed within a "civilized Maya"/ "backward Mexicans" dichotomy—the idealized "Greeks of the New World" bringing the torch of culture to Mexican Romans at best, barbarians at worst. Such a position exacerbates an unnecessary historical divide in the field between "Mayanists" and "Mexicanists" at the expense of the cultural unity of Mesoamerica. Moreover, it obscures the complexity of the web of Epiclassic regional interactions hinted at by recent work using world systems theory and discussed in Chapter 3.

In a more general sense, this inquiry critiques the mechanistic fashion in which the question of "influence" is all too often discussed in art history, pre-Columbian and otherwise. One sometimes gets the impression from the published literature that artists

assimilating traits from other traditions passively waited for direction from outside sources to instigate change. As in a B-rate horror movie or a paranoid delusion, their external models seem to have a life of their own, seizing control of the artists' wills to effect their own reproduction. The active role of the "influenced" in selecting and modifying ideas from outside, and the socio-economic factors underlying such processes, get lost in such caricatures, eliminating agency and context. Unfortunately, the literature on Maya connections to Mexican stelae posits movement in one direction only, ignoring local developments. This study will be the first treatment of Mexican stelae to examine local antecedents as well as Maya analogies. If I am successful in awakening interest in these potential local precursors, much of my goal for this project will have been accomplished.

Plan of the Dissertation

I have organized my text as follows. Those readers unfamiliar with the origins, functions, and symbolism of Maya stelae should first read the summary of the history and varieties of Classic Maya stelae and their ritual, political and cosmological aspects in Appendix 2. Because of space limits, and because the Maya are becoming increasingly familiar to a general audience via large-scale exhibitions and easily-available publications, it has been moved to the end matter. I attempt in this appendix to give a state of the art overview of the subject, though with the rapid pace of Maya hieroglyphic decipherment and subsequent insights into the culture's worldview, I expect it will stand in need of revision over the next couple of years.

Those readers already familiar with the Maya material should begin with Chapter 2, “Central Mexican Stelae of the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic,” where I integrate and critically review previous studies in my site-by-site survey of these sculptures. Comprehensive reviews of the coverage (or lack thereof) and controversies in the literature for the monuments at each site provide a historiographic perspective, and I highlight the flaws of some purely “Mayacentric” models. In addition, I provide a catalog with more detailed descriptions of the same monuments, Appendix 1, in order to assemble the most complete database for comparative analysis. Appendix 3 contains a survey of the controversy over the meaning of stelae 1, 2, and 3, at Xochicalco, an unresolved issue of relevance for comparison. If they represent historic rulers, they are close in function to Classic Maya stelae, but if they are images of deities, this would be a point of divergence from Maya traditions. Again, this has been removed to the end matter to streamline the text of Chapter 2.

In Chapter 3, "Central Mexican Artists Under the Influence? A Critical Review of the Literature on Maya-Mexican Interactions at the Classic-Postclassic Transition," I examine the broader historical, archaeological, and artistic evidence for Maya contacts with Epiclassic Mexico, to situate the formal and iconographic analysis securely in context and assess the credibility of contact claims. This section will also critically evaluate general hypotheses of the mechanisms for putative Maya “influence” on subsequent highland Mexican art, from actual migration of populations in various amazing journeys across the Middle American landscapes, to more subtle invocations of trade contacts, religious world systems, and elite strategies of legitimation. The related Appendix 4 provides a brief summary of the Tula/Chichen Itza controversy.

Chapter 4, “Forgotten Forbears?” surveys evidence of stelae in central Mexico prior to the Epiclassic, including the stelae of Chalcatzingo, Cuicuilco, Tlalancaleca, and Xochitecatl, to establish the material basis for my argument that local antecedents must be taken into account in any consideration of the origins of the study sample.

Chapter 5, “Go West and South?” introduces the Classic Zapotec stelae of Oaxaca, the Late Classic Ñuiñe stelae of the Mixteca region, the many stelae of the Oaxaca coast, and the assorted, poorly dated stelae of Guerrero as further potential analogues to the Central Mexican subjects of this dissertation. Several alternative models for the resemblances of the Guerrero group to their more northerly counterparts are suggested for heuristic purposes, based on the archaeological evidence for interregional trade and elite contacts.

Chapter 6, “Stone Trees Transplanted?” compares the Central Mexican stelae to Maya material from Dos Pilas, Aguateca, Ceibal, and Piedras Negras, weighing differences as well as similarities. The full range of monuments from both the Mexican and Maya sites are included to amend for the biased selection of earlier studies.

The concluding Chapter 7 sums up my findings and argues that any attempt at understanding Central Mexican stelae must situate them both in the trajectory of indigenous regional sculptural development and in the context far-flung interregional interactions and new legitimization strategies pursued by ruling elites during the Classic to Postclassic transition. Again, though I suggest hypotheses as solutions, I am more interested here in opening up directions for future inquiry.

A Caveat: Definitions

A note is necessary at the outset about a problem of terminology that vexes any attempt at a comparative analysis of Mesoamerican monuments labeled "stelae." The word (and concept) as used in the literature of Mesoamerican archaeology and art history is itself not indigenous to Mesoamerica. Appropriately enough for a monument form first described and persistently linked in Mesoamerica to the Maya, the so-called Greeks of the New World, the term "stela" derives from the ancient Mediterranean world. Literally, the word means a post or an upright stone in Old Greek. In the language of classical art history and archaeology, it refers to upright tabular slabs of stone, bearing inscriptions and/or carved decorations, usually employed as funerary monuments or grave markers in a Classical Greek, Hellenistic, or Roman context. As a consequence of the origins of modern art history and archaeology in the study of Greco-Roman antiquities and the privileged place assigned to these civilizations in the discourse of 18th- and 19th-century European antiquarians, the term was soon generalized to describe carved slabs produced by other traditions, as these were "discovered" via the expansion of European colonial activity in the Middle East and beyond. In the course of this extension, the word lost its original connotations of a mortuary context and came to denote art works resembling its original classical referents only in general shape. Thus, for example, in Mesopotamia, the carved and inscribed tablets recording the deeds and edicts of Babylonian rulers, like the law code of Hammurabi, were described as stelae by their 19th- and 20th-century discoverers, a usage that persists to the present in Mesopotamian studies. The name also spread into the literature of Egyptology, where it is still used to describe tabular

sculptures of both funerary and non-mortuary (historical records, temple dedications, etc.) functions. As European scholarship expanded to encompass the study of Indian, Chinese, and Cambodian art, it also annexed Hindu and Buddhist religious monuments under the increasingly elastic stela rubric.

Credit (or blame) for the initial application of the term to Maya art traditionally goes to the British explorer Alfred Maudsley, who in his multi-volume opus magnum *Biologia Centrali-Americana* (1889-1902) published extensive accounts, photos, and drawings of the Maya sites he visited. He admittedly employed it for convenience of description rather than in a dogmatic or rigid fashion (Vol. 5, 33; Herring 2005, 245). The general usage of "stelae" for Mesoamerican upright slab sculptures became entrenched in the literature by the early 20th century, although Mesoamerican stelae are not grave markers or memorials like the original stelae of the Mediterranean. As noted in the opening of this chapter, we now know the word the Classic Maya themselves used for these monuments, but what they were called in Central Mexico, and more importantly, whether they were conceptualized there in exactly the same way, is unknown. This necessarily introduces a degree of uncertainty into any conclusions about the relationship between formally quite similar monuments labeled by the same traditional Eurocentric art historical term in two areas of Mesoamerica.

Mesoamerican art historian Kent Reilly recently provided a general and concise definition of Mesoamerican stelae along both formal and functional lines:

> Stelae are generally oblong, standing stones, often incised or carved with information. They vary in size from portable examples that can be held in the crook of an arm.... to monumental ones that reach many feet in height and tons in weight. The Classic Maya preferred the stela as the public format to display royal images and texts. Besides recording royal accessions and victories, Maya stelae also were linked closely with ceremonies that marked the beginning and ending of sacred cycles of

time. (2005, 34)

While Reilly encompasses many key aspects of the shape and use of Mesoamerican stelae in these brief general remarks, not everyone accepts his inclusive approach to size. As will become especially apparent in discussing the literature generated by Central Mexican sculptures, size decisively matters in some scholars' decisions as to whether a given tabular stone object makes the grade for their definitions of a proper stela. Some writers even attempt to codify their criteria of inclusion by specifying arbitrary minimal dimensions (in European systems of measurement, of course) that function like the signs in front of roller coasters in amusement parks, disqualifying for admission anyone less than the height of the sign. Any object that does not fit the minimal size criterion gets relegated to another category, usually also idiosyncratically defined, such as "plaque" or "slab." I further discuss this issue in Chapter 7, but suffice it to state here that, being based on formal and conceptual grounds rather than tallies of centimeters, my use of the stela term tends to be along the same broad lines as Reilly's, rather than some of the narrower variants. It is much safer to speak of general trends or tendencies in size during particular phases of development of the stela tradition or at certain sites. Thus, art historian Flora Clancy expresses a tendency when she says that, "During the Early Classic period, stelae were approximately as tall as an adult human" (1999, 6). During the Late Classic period, stelae erected at the Maya city of Quirigua, Guatemala, reached truly colossal proportions, heights reckoned in meters rather centimeters, while a mere century later, Terminal Classic stelae in the lowlands of northern Guatemala tended to be much smaller. But again, it is important to state that although it does reflect formal similarities, the terminology used for most of this dissertation is one of convenience and of outside

origin, which limits our knowledge of how ancient Mesoamerican would have conceptualized the monuments discussed. The verbal map is employed here to approximate conceptual territory in order to explore the relationship between two sets of phenomena, but the map, a tool, must never be conflated with the unknown territory of lost native Mesoamerica definitions of stelae. And as will be demonstrated at many points in the following pages, the "map" represented by the traditional term "stela" stands in need of redrawing.

CHAPTER 2

CENTRAL MEXICAN STELAE OF THE EPICLASSIC AND EARLY POSTCLASSIC PERIODS

Introduction

In this chapter, I present a site-by-site summary of Central Mexican stelae, providing the general archaeological background for each center, then reviewing the earlier relevant literature (what there is of it). Following these considerations, I then devote space to specific interpretive and contextual problems that have been raised in the past, or should have been raised, for each group of stelae. For basic descriptions, histories, and context (or lack thereof) of each of the subject stelae, I refer the reader to the Catalog of Appendix 1. All have been described by previous pundits, some in much greater detail, and more or less accurately, than others. I base the length of each catalog description on the relative obscurity of the sculpture in question. In the case of the Xochicalco Triad, for example, many quite detailed accounts of their formal and iconographic features already exist in print (e.g., Smith 2000). In such an instance, I limit the scope of my descriptions in the catalog and refer the reader to the best sources in the text of this chapter. In other cases, as with the El Cerrito stela, I provide a lengthier account owing to its relative obscurity.

Tula, the Toltec Capital

Located about 60 miles north of Mexico City in the state of Hidalgo (see maps,

Figures 2 and 3), Tula was the capital of the Toltecs during their rise to—and fall from—cultural and political domination of the Basin of Mexico during the Early Postclassic. During this peak of its power (c. 950-1150), the city's residential areas were home to some 30,000 inhabitants. The civic/ceremonial center of the site, Tula Grande, was begun around 700 but reached its final form during the Early Postclassic, and features a number of monumental constructions arranged around an open plaza (Fig. 81). Although the largest of these buildings is a temple platform, prosaically labeled by archaeologists "Pyramid C," an adjacent, smaller stepped "pyramid" is the best known structure at the site. Dubbed unimaginatively, but at least predictably, "Pyramid B," it rises to a height of some 35 feet. At its summit stood a temple, of which nothing remains but some of the columns that held up the flat roof (Fig. 173). These include the colossal "atlantids" in the form of warriors, assembled from separate stone sections tenoned together by dowels, which have achieved truly iconic status in their modern afterlife. These figures grace countless postcards and travel brochures, and souvenir vendors hawk miniature reproductions executed in everything from onyx to obsidian at the site and across Mexico.

To the north of this structure runs a free-standing wall, the so-called *coatepantli* ("serpent wall" in Nahuatl)[3] (Fig. 80), with its unusual frieze in relief of skeletons and serpents which has attracted much debate over the meaning of its puzzling iconography (Jordan 2005). Several large trapezoidal roofed structures, often labeled "palaces" though their original functions may have included elite meeting halls and storage for sacred

[3] Recent excavations suggest that at an earlier stage of the ceremonial center's history, in the 8th century, the *coatepantli* was part of a wall surrounding the area around Pyramid B, later demolished (Sterpone 2007, 38).

paraphernalia, and three I-shaped ball courts, complete this ritual core.[4]

Time, nature, and humans have been unkind to Tula, even more so than most other Mesoamerican ruins. It was sacked and burned in the mid-12th century according to both archaeology[5] and Nahuatl ethnohistorical sources preserved by 16th-century Colonial chroniclers, apparently the victim of belligerent migrants from the north. Though the destroyers may well have included the ancestors of the Aztecs, the later "imperial" Mexica looked to the Toltecs as a model to emulate in politics, religion, and art (León-Portilla 1980, Ch. 1). The town was still inhabited under their rule, and they may have added some constructions, including a skull rack (V. Miller 1999, 354-355), to the main ceremonial center. But in their desire to appropriate the trappings of Toltec grandeur, the Mexica systematically looted Tula, carrying away atlantid figures and carved friezes, stripping buildings of their stone facings, to be taken to the Mexica capital of Tenochtitlan to be reused and emulated by Mexica artists (Nicholson 1971, 111, fig. 31, 119; Diehl 1983, 27; Kristan-Graham 1989, 59; 2007: 35; Cobean and Mastache 1995, 177, 219). The result of this admiring destruction, combined with the use of what was left of the ancient architecture as a source of building stone for the modern town of Tula (Acosta 1956-57, 76), is the present appearance of the site, a ruin of ruins even after extensive modern restoration. Pyramid C lost most of its facing, only a few of the reliefs of Pyramid B were left behind, and almost all of the remaining sculpture was removed

[4] For description and background material on Tula see Diehl (1983), Healan, ed. (1989), Kristan-Graham (1989), Cobean and Mastache (1995), Mastache, Cobean and Healan (2002), and Cobean and Mastache (2007).

[5] But see Sterpone (2007, 53) for a dissenting view. He interprets the evidence as indicative of a successive series of terminations and reconstruction finally culminating in abandonment, rather than a single apocalyptic destruction.

from its original setting. Even the canonical atlantids now towering atop Pyramid B are 20th-century reconstructions from fragments tossed into a prehispanic looting trench gouged through the body of the platform.

In the past century and a half, two further problems constitute impediments to the understanding of the site. The first is the issue of the equation of Tula, Hidalgo, with the Tollan of Mexica legend and historical sources after the Conquest. One difficulty rests on the multivalent meaning of "Tollan," like Tula signifying the "place of reeds," for the Mexica and other Late Postclassic Mesoamericans. The current consensus maintains that the name Tollan or its variants applied both to the historic capital of the Mexica's Toltec predecessors, and more generally to any city seen as a prestigious font of civilization in the past (Schele and Mathews 1998; Smith 2005; Kristan-Graham 2007, all building on more conservative work by Carrasco 1982). Thus, Classic Teotihuacan was a "Tollan" (the Classic Maya seem to have called it "Pu," also a reference to reeds), as were other centers like Cholula in Puebla and Chichen Itza. Both uses of the term were heavily imbued with mythological overtones by the Mexica (and presumably their neighbors and precursors as well). Conquest-era sources, like the Nahua informants whose testimony was compiled by the Spanish friar Bernardino de Sahagún, describe Tollan as an earthly paradise, literally larger than life (the corn and squash grew to incredible sizes).[6] Coe (1968, 13) compares these idealizing stories to the utopian IWW union ballad "The Big Rock Candy Mountain."

Furthermore, Tula and "Tollans" form the backdrop to Mexica myths about the god

[6] This version is from Book 3, Chapter 3, of *The General History of the Things of New Spain*, compiled by Sahagún and his indigenous informants between 1575 and 1580, as cited and summarized in Nicholson (2001, 25).

Quetzalcoatl, the famous "Feathered Serpent." That deity was equated, at least in part, with an earthly ruler, Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, who presided over Tula/Tollan's rise or decline. The god-king's supposed benign reign as a culture bearer and saintly priest ended with his temptation, defeat and exile by his rival, the shamanic trickster deity Tezcatlipoca.[7] When the French explorer Désiré Charnay brought the site of Tula to the attention of archaeologists in the 1880s, he identified it both as the Toltec capital and as the mythic Tollan, font and origin of all other Mesoamerican civilizations. The next century of scholarship saw much energy expended over whether or not Tula was the "real" Tollan, a debate based in part on a too literal understanding of the term as referring to only one site. In the early 20th century, majority opinion in the field gave this honor to Teotihuacan at Tula's expense. In the 1940s and 50s, the extensive excavation and restoration efforts at Tula by Mexican archaeologist Jorge Acosta, combined with the critical historical scholarship of Wigberto Jiménez Moreno, appeared to settle the identification of Tula as both Toltec capital and Tollan. At the same time, an excessive reliance on the Quetzalcoatl sagas, interpreted rather literally, as a hermeneutic key led to often-questionable interpretations of Tula's iconography based on the myth (Jordan 2005). The most recent scholarship (Gillespie 2007; Kristan-Graham 2007; Smith 2007) emphasizes Tollan as a semimythic concept applicable to a number of Mesoamerican cities across time and space, and not always—in extreme versions, perhaps not even ever--a reference to Tula in Hidalgo. At the same time, the recognition of considerable post-Conquest redaction of the Quetzalcoatl myth and its propaganda functions has weakened

[7] For an extremely thorough review of all extant sources related to Tollan, see Nicholson (2001).

some claims for its historical veracity (e.g., Lafaye 1976; Gillespie 1989; 2007).

The second obstacle to historical and contemporary studies of Tula's art is the bad reputation its aesthetic has acquired by repetitive negative judgments in the literature. By contrast with the sinuous naturalism of Classic Maya art that led to its valorization by European scholars who saw in it a visual language resembling the European classical tradition, Toltec art is more abstract, geometric, and reductive. Although a few European modernists like Henry Moore admired Toltec sculpture for its bold and simplified forms and respect for the natural material (Braun 1993, 94), many European and American archaeologists and art historians continue to disparage it as "crude," "shoddy," and "unimpressive." Maya art is the standard of comparison for these comments, whether explicitly stated or not. Compounding the problem, Toltec art has acquired a reputation for being preoccupied with militaristic themes and human sacrifice. This reductionist view persists in some of the current literature in spite of the pioneering work of art historian Cynthia Kristan-Graham (1987; 1989; 1993; 2001), who from the late 1980s has exploded the myth that Toltec art is solely concerned with state violence. Analyzing first reliefs from the columns of Pyramid B (1987; 1989) and later, bench friezes (1993), she has identified portrayals of a range of social types, particularly rulers. She proposes that the ideology of kingship, rather than a narrow focus on war, was the overarching theme for much of Tula's art. Human sacrifice was certainly practiced at Tula, as evidenced by archaeology (e.g., Healan 1989, 107, 126), but such rites have been documented for most Mesoamerican civilizations, including, as we have seen, for the Classic Maya. While featured in the art of these other traditions—often quite graphically for the Maya—it is far from the only theme. No less holds true for Toltec art. In fact, as Kristan-Graham

points out (1989, 11), there are no extant direct portrayals of warfare or the sacrifice of captives at Tula. Jiménez García likewise notes the absence of combat scenes in her catalog of extant Toltec sculpture (1998, 428).

The Tula Stelae

A General Literature Review and Critique

In connection with Classic Maya artistic traits at Tula, the group of stelae at the site has assumed critical relevance in what amounts to a scanty literature. They have long been noted as foreign and anomalous in form, but, though given passing mention in some surveys, remain poorly known. The late Mexican art historian Beatriz de la Fuente and associates (1988) and Elizabeth Jiménez García (1998) provide the most extensive discussions. As de la Fuente's approach to art history was always strongly formalist, and as her coverage of the stelae appears in her catalog of extant Toltec stone sculpture, her treatment is limited to detailed descriptions. Though this focus sadly bypasses issues of meaning, de la Fuente's thorough catalog remains essential reading for its wealth of basic data.

Elizabeth Jiménez García, an archaeologist and student of Robert Cobean, a major excavator of Tula, adopts the approach of art history to analyze the iconography of Toltec sculpture, specifically borrowing the theoretical perspective of Erwin Panofsky (1962).[8]

[8] Panofsky is not uncommonly the art historian of choice for Americanist archaeologists venturing into the realm of iconography. The absence of written sources and good archaeological context for much pre-European Native American art discourages the employment of more recent (or fashionable), but heavily text-dependent, art historical methods of inquiry (e.g., Phillips and Brown 1978; 1984). Panofsky's work is

As she admits at the outset, the fragmentary nature of the evidence, plus the lack of texts, forces her to confine her work mostly to Panofsky's first two levels (pre-iconographical description and iconographical) of analysis (Jiménez García 1998, 19). A cautious scholar, Jiménez García does not speculate far beyond Panofsky's pre-iconographic level of meaning until her last chapters, when she attempts to isolate specific deity images and representations of social types and ritual acts from her sample. This means that her text, like de la Fuente's, consists predominantly of extensive description of individual monuments. Unlike de la Fuente, however, she compares motifs and complexes within the total corpus of Toltec sculpture, noting their frequencies across the total sample. Extremely helpful for comparative purposes, her descriptions, analysis, and line drawings of individual sculptures are broken down by costume elements, accessories, weapons, etc. (Figs. 121-122). She also excludes from consideration some of the more doubtful pieces discussed by de la Fuente. In addition to de la Fuente, she uses an unpublished microfiche catalog of Tula sculpture compiled by Castillo and Dumaine (see also Castillo and Dumaine 1988), but she supplies the drawings and some measurements herself. One limitation of her text is that she draws heavily on later Mexica iconography for comparison at the expense of other traditions antecedent to or contemporary with the art of Tula, though, given the 500-plus page length of her book, limitations are understandable. As of 2007, she is working on a new, comprehensive catalog of all extant Toltec sculpture that promises to become the definitive reference.

Despite these efforts, there is much confusion in the literature over basic descriptive data, including even the very number of stelae at Tula. De la Fuente and Kristan-Graham

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drawn upon to isolate, describe, and classify motifs, since surviving evidence frequently precludes certainty in interpretations of meaning.

(1989, 265) agree that there are six stelae firmly associated with the site, the former author also describing and illustrating several other specimens of more questionable provenience. But archaeologist Muriel Porter Weaver in a much used textbook (1993, 393) remarks “Stelae have no precedent in central Mexico, so the two [sic] are of particular interest.” Art historian Mary Miller, in her general survey of Mesoamerican art (2006, 186), makes mention of stelae 1 and 2 but does not allude to the others. R.E.W. Adams (1991, 282) states that there are four stelae at Tula in his introductory textbook of Mesoamerican archaeology. In an earlier account, the U.S. archaeologist Bertha Dutton (1955, 245) claims to know of the existence of four stelae, but was only able to see two of them (de la Fuente's Stela 1 and Stela 2).

Some of this variation seems to be the consequence of using differing criteria for declaring a sculpture a proper stela. For example, Jiménez García lists three stelae at Tula (de la Fuente’s 1-3), but refers to stelae 4 and 6 as “lapidas” or “losas” (slabs), based on her definition of the stela form as a "monument of great height" (1998, 28), seemingly arbitrarily specified to include only those taller than 150 cm. (1998, 135). Tula stelae 1-3 make the grade by this criterion, but de la Fuente’s Tula Stela 4, at 95 cm., and 5, at a mere 48 cm., do not qualify and are demoted to the status of slabs. Dutton (1955, 230) likewise treats Stela 4 under a different rubric, though perhaps more determined by its archaeological context, and Cohodas (1974, 117) refers to it as a “panel.” At several points in the ensuing pages we will return to the question of whether size matters (vs. shape and context, when we are lucky enough to have it) in defining a monument as a bona fide stela, and whether this is even a valid taxon beyond the interests of scholarly convenience. It is important to note here that even among the paradigmatic producers of

stelae, the Classic Maya, there is great variation in the height of these sculptures. Terminal Classic Maya stelae, those temporally closest to the florescence of Tula, tend to be smaller than their Classic antecedents (Rice 2004, 205). To confound the ambiguities, Acosta, Tula's main excavator, identified Stela 1 as a panel from a carved pillar, though almost all subsequent commentators agree in calling it a stela. Clearly there is confusion over basic descriptive data regarding these monuments, which makes de la Fuente's and Jiménez García's patient work of description all the more valuable.

The interpretative and comparative treatments of these stelae frequently take up less than a page of text, and are sometimes even relegated to footnotes (e.g., Cohodas 1989). In these literally marginal spaces, parallels in both form and iconography are often proposed with specific Maya counterparts. Thus Mary Miller (2006, 186) refers to stelae 1 and 2's display of strong Maya influences, finding the closest visual analogues at Piedras Negras, Guatemala: "[The] full figure, frontal portraits roughly worked on Stelae 1 and 2 at Tula strongly suggest a Maya influence. Like earlier warrior stelae at Piedras Negras, the Tula stelae show the face worked in deep relief and the costume in shallow carving. The headdress comprises three 'bowties' [true of Stela 1, but Stela 2 has only one such ribbon] surmounted by Tlaloc year-sign insignia and feathers…the model is the Maya warrior." (Again, only Stela 1 actually has the trapeze and ray symbols she calls year signs.) Weaver agrees that "The frontal figures so closely parallel representations of rulers at Piedras Negras that these Tula stelae may be examples of dynastic art" (Weaver 1981, 379).

Esther Pasztory (1997, 235) remarks that "Tula has several stelae atypical of central Mexico that seem to be provincial *imitations* [emphasis mine] of Maya dynastic

carvings." M ore specifically, Marvin Cohodas (1989, 223) includes the stelae among other "*Imitations* of Pasion Maya art at Tula" (emphasis again mine) that rank as "the least recognized" aspect of Toltec art, stating that they "specifically imitate the Aguateca/Dos Pilas pair erected in AD 736." If imitation is used here in the sense of a direct copy, the point is easily refuted at first glance: as discussed in Chapter 6, Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2 (Figs. 127-128) both show figures in profile, in contrast to the frontal depictions at Tula. Cohodas compares (1974, 113) Tula Stela 4 to pairs of stelae depicting ballplayers from the Classic Maya sites of La Amelia, Guatemala (810) (Figs. 138-139) and Ceibal (780) (see Chapter 6 and Figs. 132-135), following Tozzer (1957). Art historian Clemency Coggins (2002, 74) identifies the nose ornament of Stela 1 as quintessentially Maya. Dutton (1955, 245) draws the most geographically distant parallel when she compares Stela 1 to Copan's Stela 6 in distant Honduras.

Kristan-Graham makes only brief references to the stelae in her dissertation and elsewhere, but views them as Maya in inspiration, like much of the Toltec royal regalia displayed in Tula's art. She suggests that the lords of Tula consciously borrowed the imagery of rulership from the Maya because of a lack of a tradition of ruler portraiture at Teotihuacan or any other Classic central Mexican site (1989, 174). She does not argue that the Maya was the only art tradition drawn upon in the eclectic synthesis of Toltec art. On the contrary, she also argues for strong architectural connections with Teotihuacan and the northern Mexican Chalchihuites culture (1999; 2000; 2007). But she sees the stelae as strongly Maya.

Mayanists Linda Schele and Peter Mathews (1998, 358) agree "that Tula's use of the stela form may be because of Maya influence," while another Mayanist, Charles Lincoln,

is most disparaging of both the Toltec monuments and the impact of Maya art:

> Mayoid [sic] stelae do occur at Tula, Tajin [sic], and elsewhere in the Highlands … and these may reflect local emulation and imitation of the Classic Maya royal cult. However, these few stelae do not constitute a major body of art, or even a notable percentage of all important sculptures, outside the Maya Lowlands, and their presence at Tula probably cannot be ascribed to significant cultural developments. (1990, 192)

His dismissive tone seems to reflect the traditional devaluation of Toltec art.[9] Along the same lines, Noguez (1998, 20-21) states that while "by the type of relief, spatial composition, and form of the human representation"[10] the Tula stelae resemble Classic Maya examples, they show warriors and are inferior to their putative models, and "do not come close to reproducing the details with the mastery of Maya sculptors."[11]

In fact, only four of the Tula stelae, 1-4 in de la Fuente's inventory, have been reproduced by other writers for purposes of comparison to Maya art. Perhaps this is with good reason, as a glance at the illustrations will demonstrate quickly that the two remaining stelae (de la Fuente's 5 and 6) feature figures that are more abstract and roughly rendered than their more celebrated fellows, and might take a bit more of a stretch to posit as "Maya" in character. In particular, Stela 5 shows an armed figure whose squat proportions and short arms and legs resemble nothing Maya, but rather evoke the art of Teotihuacan. There seems to be a bias in the literature toward discussing and illustrating those monuments of the series that most support the Maya connection. What is presented as a simple case of "diffusion" turns out to be a much more convoluted

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[9] It is also puzzling why he chooses to call Tajin, on the Gulf Coast in Veracruz, in the cultural zone Parsons (1978) defined as the Peripheral Coastal Lowlands, a "Highland" site!

[10] "por el tipo de relieve, composición espacial y forma de representación humána."

[11] "no llega a reproducir los detalles con la maestría de los escultores mayas."

phenomenon.

Description of Tula Stelae: General Considerations

The six Tula stelae illustrated by de la Fuente all feature relief images of standing, elaborately costumed figures on one face of the slab only. Stela 3 has serpents carved in relief on both edges; otherwise, the remainder of each stela is devoid of carved ornament. Stelae 1-3 are carved of basalt, while stelae 4 and 6 are made from an unspecified sedimentary stone. The material of Stela 5 is unknown. Stelae 1 and 3 show vestiges of paint, but all are in a considerably weathered state. Some of the degradation of the carvings, de la Fuente notes, occurred in the 20th century. Tula is close to a Pemex oil refinery, whose belching fumes can be seen from the site like a biblical pillar of smoke and fire. What the elements and human depredations spared for a millennium at Tula, these industrial emissions have been destroying for the last few decades. In fact, the decay is progressing, at least in the case of Stela 6. Relocated in 2007 by Jiménez García in the site storeroom, it is visibly in worse shape at present than in previous photos.

While Jiménez García (1998, 134) states, referring to stelae 1-3 that "In Tula, stelae present masculine human figures on one of their faces,"[12] one of the images in de la Fuente's catalog, that on Stela 6 (Fig. 15), wears a long skirt and could be read as a female, though in view of our relative ignorance of prehispanic sartorial concepts, this is unclear.[13] Acosta (1956-57, 93, fig. 21; 97) interpreted it as an image of the Nahua

[12] "En Tula, las estelas presentan figuras antromorfos masculinos sobre una de sus caras."

[13] Archaeologist David Grove chided his colleague Michael Coe for suggesting that a Middle Preclassic rock carving at Chalcatzingo was a queen because of its skirt. By the same criteria, he quipped, it could

goddess of flowers and beauty, Xochiquetzal, on the basis of its headdress, but admitted that given the dilapidated state of the carving any identification is provisional at best. On the other hand, de la Fuente and associates (1988, 152) catalog the monument as "a masculine figure," unintentionally underlining Acosta's cautionary point. Most descriptions of the poses of the Tula stelae emphasize their frontality. Thus Jiménez García (1998, 135): says of the figures on stelae 1-3: “They are on foot, with the body and the face viewed from the front by the viewer; they display large plumes with special characteristics: they carry weapons in their hands; they have their legs separated."[14] Kristan-Graham (1989, 265), pairing them with the famous pillars of Pyramid B, notes that “Apart from the atlantids, these are the only images of standing frontal figures at Tula." Stela 4, however, shows a figure with its head in profile (Fig. 11).

The absence of iconographic attributes definitive of specific deity representations, as well as costume analogies with the Maya material, suggests that the Tula stelae depict elite humans, rulers (e.g., Jiménez García 1998, 477). Kristan-Graham states,

> The stelae portray males wearing an ensemble of familiar costume traits, including drum-major headdresses with inverted birds (?), winged pectorals, kilts, loincloths, leggings and weapons. An innovative item is a row of bloodletting knots,[15] like those that comprise the leg laces, but here placed on the arms. No glyphs were carved on the stela, but, as with images of Maya and Oaxacan individuals, the elaborate costumes nearly dwarf the bodies, particularly the faces. (1989, 265)

She identifies all of the figures, by analogy with Maya art, as rulers. “On stelae, pillars, and banquettes the ruler is depicted as an individual by attire…The institution of

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portray a Scotsman!

[14] "Estan de pie, con el cuerpo y el rostro mirada de frente al espectador; lucen grandes penachos con características especiales: sostienen armas en las manos; tienen las piernas separadas.”

[15] Ribbon-like ties associated in Classic Maya art with bloodletting rituals and warfare, identified at Tula by Kristan-Graham (1989, 61-62).

kingship is also illustrated by a core of recurring signs of rank. The armor, spearthrower, spears and fending stick are obvious martial accoutrements, but when consistently worn with the regalia of rulers, they become emblems of power" (1989, 332). The Toltecs artists have cast their royal images in Maya form. "In addition, the stelae take over wholesale a Maya art form reserved for rulers, and their dense and complex costumes likewise are cast in the Maya mode of *ahau*" (1989, 333).

Dutton (1955, 245), Mastache Alba, Cobean and Healan (2002, 106) and, much more cautiously, Nicholson (2001, 236-237) hypothesize that the ruler portrayed on Stela 1 is the legendary Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl himself. Stela 1 was allegedly found in a looters' trench cut through Pyramid B at Tula, and so perhaps was originally placed near this structure, which reinforces the notion that it was intended as a royal portrait. As Mastache and Cobean (2000, 128) point out, "Probably Pyramid B was above all else a monument related to royalty, government and power, exalting the royal dynasties and the institution of war, which was closely tied to the leadership and government of Tula. It should not be forgotten that the pillars in the temple on Pyramid B's summit apparently represent Toltec kings and other nobility." If Stela 1 were associated with this structure, it would be consistent with this hypothesized ideological theme of rulership.

Predictably, however, some still elect to read the images as warriors, perpetuating the stereotypical view of Toltec art. Thus in the official guide to the Toltec Hall at the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City, the curator, Federica Sodi Miranda (2004, 8) refers to Stela 2 as "Stela of a Warrior."[16] Similar depictions of kings dressed for war from the Maya region would never be identified so cursorily.

[16] "Estela de Guerrero." See Noguez (1998, 20-21) and Bernal and Simoni-Abbat (1986, fig. 199) for similar comments.

Problems of Context and Dating: Stelae or Architectural Sculpture?

As can be seen from the data in the individual catalog entries, precise archaeological context is known for only one of the Tula stelae, Stela 4, found in Ballcourt 1, which poses difficulties in the assessing models of long-distance artistic interaction. Data for comparing position, and thus function, with the better documented Maya examples is largely unavailable for Tula. Kristan-Graham, drawing on both local and Maya analogies, offers some speculation about the original placement of stelae at Tula:

> The stelae were not found in situ. They may have originally been placed in the Tula Grande plaza, erected in the ground like the Maya stelae that commemorate accession and other pivotal events in the life of a noble. Another likely locale would have been one of the ballcourts [in fact, Stela 4 was excavated in Ballcourt I], where they may have been set up like the ballcourt markers at Xochicalco. (1989, 268)

And

> It is unlikely that the stelae were originally set up at the foot of pyramid steps, because at Tula stairs descend into colonnaded halls rather than into the open plazas of Maya cities. Indeed, they may have been erected in the plaza or at doorways as the focal points of figural processions. (1989, 333)

While these are plausible arguments coming from the single art historian most familiar with the architectural "language" of the site, they remain unproven in the absence of sterling archaeological data.

Without good context, dating of the Tula stelae relies on stylistic considerations, particularly the suggested Maya parallels. If these resemblances are truly valid indicators of a direct connection, then the Tula stelae would have to be coeval with or only slightly later than their Classic Maya counterparts from the seventh through ninth centuries (Weaver 1981, 379; Cohodas 1989, 237; Miller 2006, 186). Miller, for example, posits

that they "may date to the early ninth century, when the [stela] tradition was still alive in the southern Maya lowlands." Elsewhere, she assigns them a temporal position before 900 (Miller and Taube 1993, 158). This would place them before the time of the main and final phase of construction in the Tula ceremonial precinct, the Tollan Phase (c. 950-1150). Adoption by Tollan Phase artists of forms from Maya centers already politically in eclipse and abandoned presents more difficulties but remains a possibility. Putative mechanisms are unclear, however, as Kristan-Graham recognizes,

> point to point contact between Tula and the Southern Maya Lowlands is more difficult to establish. Any period of overlap between Tula and such centers as Palenque would have occurred before Tula became a formidable political or economic force. Yet, Mesoamericans certainly have a sense of linear history, as oral traditions and the conscious archaizing of monuments attest…It is difficult, therefore, to conceive of Tula as an insular polity that was not aware of some earlier art styles and motifs to incorporate into its own. The costume items with antecedents at Teotihuacan and Classic Maya centers clearly evoke at Tula the power and prestige of the Classic period. (1989, 298)

Little is known about the pre-Tollan art of Tula, but Mastache and Cobean have excavated fragments of relief sculpture which are dated via context and associations at around 650 from a sub-site known as La Mesa (Mastache and Cobean 1989, 58; fig. 8; Cobean and Mastache 1995, 157) and more recently (Cobean and Mastache 1995, 170, fig. 126; Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002, 66; Suárez Cortés, Healan and Cobean 2007) from a locale called Tula Chico, dated 650-850 (Fig. 81). This area of the site was apparently the original political/religious core of Tula, but before the Tollan Phase it was destroyed and abandoned. In addition, recent excavations have also pushed back the date of the first constructions--and associated carvings--at Pyramid B to possibly as early as c. 700-750 (Sterpone 2007, 18, 26-27, 38-39).[17] Based on this evidence, it appears that most

[17] In fact, Sterpone (2007, 26-27) argues that the currently visible tiers of Pyramid B are in fact pre-Tollan Phase, the core exposed by the destruction of the Tollan Phase construction. His evidence indicates that the

of the formal and iconographic features of Toltec art were already established before the Tollan Phase (Mastache, Cobean and Healan 2002, 65) and are coeval with the florescence of lowland Maya sculpture in the Late Classic. But if the style remained the same or similar through the end of the Tollan Phase, then local formal considerations cannot help us in fixing the chronological placement of the Tula stelae. For the purposes of a critical evaluation of putative Maya "influences," assigning a date for the Tula stelae based on the dates of the Maya monuments used for comparison would be a dangerously circular procedure. And, even if the more "Mayoid" stelae at Tula could be firmly dated by comparison to presumed models, what do we make of the less convincingly Maya-related examples? Accepting the Maya link, it could be argued that they represent a later stylization of the more naturalistic original Maya design. If one wishes to engage in heresy, it could also be argued that stelae 5 and 6 (Figs. 14-15), closer in blocky spirit to the art of Teotihuacan, are the "originals" at Tula, and 1, 2, and 3 (Figs. 4-10) the end of the series. In this model, the idea of the stela form may or may not have been "borrowed" directly or indirectly (via Teotihuacan, Xochicalco, Cacaxtla or Cholula, for example) from the Maya, but the iconography and form of the figures would be a purely Toltec development, based on Teotihuacan models (costumes, frontal posture, recessed faces, etc.). The resemblance to Maya stelae would therefore be the result of independent development in both areas, based on the shared cultural heritage of Teotihuacan. I am skeptical of such a scenario, since I find the Maya parallels convincing if overstated. But without firm dating of the stelae, all possibilities must be considered.

Pyramid B area was rebuilt, remodeled, abandoned and then reoccupied more than once before the Tollan Phase. Cobean, however, rejects Sterpone's revised chronology (Smith 2005, 5). For a detailed summary and defense of Acosta's original chronology, see Bey and Ringle (2007, 396-407), which was written before the publication of the Tula Chico reliefs.

Absence of context leads to an equally heretical question: are these really "stelae" in the traditional art historical sense of freestanding monuments? Dutton (1955, 230) suggested that the Ballcourt I ball player reliefs were part of a frieze of panels, consistent with Acosta's excavation report (1941, 240). But interestingly, the Maya monuments at Ceibal and La Amelia to which Cohodas compares Stela 4 are also panels in an architectural setting, yet follow the format of other, freestanding Maya stelae, with primary and secondary figures accompanied by glyphic texts. They are called stelae in the literature, though not without objections (see Chapter 6). The Late Classic Lowland Maya may have agreed with this conceptual equation of what are to some more fastidious art historians separate categories. The victorious inhabitants of Dos Pilas celebrated their victory over the site of Arroyo de Piedra by resetting a stela looted from the vanquished center as an architectural panel at their own city (Demarest 2006, 139). In any event, Acosta (1956-57, 79, fig. 6) thought Tula Stela 1 was a panel from a pillar on the summit of Pyramid B, though in its figure's frontal pose it certainly does not match the remaining pillar reliefs. Everyone else from Caso (1941) forward accepts at least Tula stelae 1, 2, and 3 as just that—stelae, though Nicholson may have indicated some doubt about the function of these monuments by offsetting the word "stelae" in quotes in his study of Central Mexican sculpture (1971, 108-109). The sole contemporary skeptic in this regard seems to be Jiménez García, who points out that they have been called stelae on the basis of form but because their original placement is not known, they could have had an architectonic function (1998, 135), though nothing can be proven either way.

Further complicating the picture, Kristan-Graham (1989, 108) suggests that the Pyramid B pillar reliefs (Fig. 82) are themselves modeled on Maya stelae. The Pyramid B

pillars "have already been likened to Maya stelae, with each of the four pillar faces representing a standing figure. The pillar form at Tula seems to be a central Mexican answer to a Maya royal and dynastic monument, one which was continued in the same form by the Aztecs" (1989, 255). In particular, she suggests a parallel to Ceibal, where stelae set up in the space around Structure A-3 repeat the imagery of figures on the structure's relief frieze. Lincoln (1990, 192), on the other hand, rejects any such comparison: "The Tula columns have very little in common with Maya stelae, and it would probably never occur to anyone to compare them, were it not for Chichen Itza [sic]". While he feels comparing the Pyramid B reliefs to the carved pillars of Chichen Itza is still a fruitful avenue of inquiry, Lincoln frames this in Mayacentric terms, denigrating the Tula pillar reliefs as inferior. He maintains that their

> failure to focus on the single individual is puzzling and could suggest either lack of understanding of an imitated foreign mode to which significant prestige is attached. More likely, the 'warriors' at Tula are not individuals but types, perhaps more truly pure, iconographic symbols of actual war than their Chichen counterparts who are above all participants in communal ritual… (1990, 194)

Contrary to Lincoln's reading, Kristan-Graham, Mastache and Cobean, and most recent students of the Pyramid B relief column reliefs identify them as depictions of specific rulers, not generic "warriors" grist for the caricatured militarism of the Toltecs. The wording of Lincoln's betrays the traditional biases against Toltec art.

Teotihuacan Elements in the Tula Stelae

Although Maya iconography constitutes the interpretive framework of choice for the few extant studies of the Tula stelae, many of the symbols and costume elements these share with the Maya derive ultimately from Teotihuacan. Mary Miller (2006, 186) states,

in connection with the Tula stelae, that "Among the Classic Maya…Central Mexican motifs are worn both by warriors and by those engaged in sacrifice." True enough—but the Central Mexicans from whom they ultimately derive, the Teotihuacanos, also wore them. Among the Maya, this imagery appears first in the Early Classic, particularly at Tikal and Copan. Suggested mechanisms for the adoption of Teotihuacan apparel and motifs include diplomatic relationships between Maya lords and the Central Mexican metropolis, attempts by Maya rulers to appropriate the cultural and military prestige of their far western neighbor, or actual Teotihuacan invasions of Maya territory and/or meddling in Maya dynastic succession. Though hieroglyphic records at Tikal (Stuart 2000) strongly support the second model, probably all of these processes contributed in a complex and interwoven fashion.[18]

Tula's art clearly betrays the influence of Teotihuacan in many other ways—not surprising considering the geographical proximity of the two centers and the fact that the Tula region was once within Teotihuacan's sphere of influence (e.g., Mastache and Cobean 1989). The very architectural layout of the Toltec capital evokes the older metropolis in many aspects. Both cities were aligned along an axis deviating (by 17 and 15 degrees) to the east of astronomical north. Pyramids B and C parallel the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon at Teotihuacan. In both cases, a larger pyramid, facing west, is placed to the south and east of a smaller platform facing south (Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002, 92). It is therefore worth considering those features of the Tula stelae that possibly indicate direct continuities with Teotihuacan (less geographically implausible than if derived by way of the Maya). Toltec architecture emulates Teotihuacan, as later Mexica

[18] See the essays in Braswell, ed. (2003) for a range of viewpoints.

architecture evokes Tula.

The Teotihuacan heritage reflected in the Tula stelae was remarked upon at least as early as the work of Dutton (1955, 245). Martínez del Río and Acosta (1957, 35)[19] identify the monster mask in the headdress of the figure on Stela 1 (Fig. 5) as a Teotihuacan war Tlaloc (see Preface), a variant of the Storm God with a martial emphasis (see Langley 1991, contra Pasztory 1974) on the basis of its circular eyes, fangs, and what looks like a moustache. The masks on stelae 2 (Fig. 7) and 3 (Fig. 8) have likewise been identified as Tlalocs (e.g., de la Fuente et al.1988, 146) but differ from the corresponding image on Stela 1. The rounded eyes on the Stela 2 headdress suggest Tlaloc, as does the volute-shaped nose.

On the other hand, the configuration of the headdress on Stela 3 resembles an image of another mythic Teotihuacan beast, the War Serpent. The identification of this saurian monster with an arched snout as a putative Teotihuacan precursor of the Aztec *xiuhcoatl* or "fire serpent" is the work of archaeologist and iconographer Karl Taube (2000a). The shape of this mask varies considerably among both Teotihuacan and Classic Maya representations, even among monuments from the same site (e.g., Stone 1989, 158), and the Stela 3 headdress could be at home within this broad morphological range. Distinguishing the War Serpent from Tlaloc is sometimes a task fraught with ambiguity. Some Teotihuacan images held for most of the 20th century to be Tlaloc are now interpreted, following Taube, as the War Serpent. Most notable among such images are the famed saurian masks alternating with plumed serpent heads on the façade of the

[19] Jiménez García (1998, 135) and Mastache, Cobean, and Healan (2002, 142, 304) agree with this identification..

Temple of the Feathered Serpent at Teotihuacan.[20] In the case of Stela 3, the arched, rather than goggle, eyes, the dentition, and the use as a helmet with the wearer's face seeming to emerge from the monster's jaws, are all consistent with the War Serpent.[21] The triangular nose is less so.[22]

Thus the appearance of these deity ornaments at Tula could be derived a) from the Maya b) directly from Teotihuacan, via continuity of local traditions or Toltec observations of Teotihuacan art or c) some combination of mechanisms, but it is not unequivocally diagnostic of a Maya connection. In fact, Mastache, Cobean, and Healan (2002, 304) interpret the Tlaloc images at Tula as "a link to Teotihuacan." They also speculate, based on the frequency of Tlaloc images as costume attributes in depictions of rulers at Tula, that Tlaloc was a patron of royalty at that site, and that the Toltec kings may even have been seen as incarnations of this deity (2002, 104, 125, 142). Taube has identified a cache of shell ornaments and an iron pyrite mirror excavated in the Palacio Quemado, adjoining Pyramid B, as dedicated to the Teotihuacan Tlaloc war cult (Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002, 104).

The trapeze and ray symbol on the headdresses of the figures on stelae 1 (Fig. 5), 3 (Fig. 8), and 5 (Fig. 14) also features strongly in the visual language of Teotihuacan.[23] Although it has been persistently labeled a "year sign" in the 20th-century literature, based on its use in signifying year-bearer days in Late Postclassic (particularly Mixtec)

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[20] See, however, Sugiyama (2005, 70) for a critique of Taube in this case.

[21] Compare Taube (2000a, figs. 10.10, 10.11).

[22] But see Taube (2000a, fig. 10.20, b and e, and 10-27 c) for possibly closer analogies.

[23] Although its origins may lie among the Zapotec in Late Formative times, by the Early Classic at Teotihuacan, "the triangle had evolved to three forms: sharp, rounded and flat. According to Caso…the sharp point existed only at Teotihuacan and later in the Mixteca-Puebla style" (Smith and Hirth 2000, 55).

manuscripts, the term seems to be a misnomer when applied to its Classic appearances. As art historian Virginia Smith and archaeologist Kenneth Hirth (2000, 55) observe for Xochicalco, "The trapeze-triangle does not occur in context with numbered day signs, and thus was not used to represent year signs. Instead it signifies tribute associated with sacrifice." The meaning of the device is linked closely to the Tlaloc masks: "Elsewhere in Mesoamerica the trapeze-triangle has been interpreted as a symbol of a Tlaloc-like war deity and a Tlaloc-related complex of war-associated images."

We will encounter this sign and its associations with both war and the storm god again when we examine the stelae of Xochicalco and Teotenango. It also survives in the Central Mexican Epiclassic in the Cacaxtla murals.[24] The Late Postclassic association of the trapeze and ray with the Mexica *xiuhcoatl* (Miller and Taube 1993, 112; Jiménez García 1998, 472) seems echoed by its juxtaposition with a probable War Serpent on Tula Stela 3. Such a fiery link is supported by Jiménez García, who interprets the year sign at Tula as an attribute of the Mexica fire god, Xiuhtecuhtli (1998, 477-481).

The disk-shaped chest ornaments worn by the figures portrayed on stelae 4 and 5, and possibly 6, recall circular stone-backed pyrite mirrors found at Teotihuacan both as archaeological specimens and in artistic representation. While some were worn at the small of the back, a trait continued by the Toltecs as shown by the Pyramid B atlantids (Taube 1992a, 172), some are depicted as pectorals, especially in Teotihuacan ceramic figures (Taube 1992a, 178, fig. 8). In his extensive comparison of Teotihuacan mirrors with analogous objects across Mesoamerica and beyond, Taube interprets them as

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[24] "Another important example of the war-conquest meaning of the trapeze triangle comes from the Battle Mural at Cacaxtla. There, the trapeze-triangle is part of the headdress of the conquering warriors; for example person 3 on the east talud and person 29 on the west talud…" (Smith and Hirth 2000, 55).

symbolically analogous to human eyes and faces, flowers, fire and water, spider webs, shields, the sun, and caves, and possibly linked to a female supreme divinity.[25] Both the fiery and the aquatic symbolism relate to the very ancient Mesoamerican practice of divination by scrying, as does the cave—a symbolic portal of communication between humans and underworld supernaturals. The association with a female divinity may explain the disk worn by the woman (?) on Stela 6. We will encounter these disks again on other Central Mexican stelae, including the "statues" of Xochicalco and Miacatlan.[26]

Visual inspection of the Tula stelae and one set of proposed Maya prototypes, the "warrior stelae" at Piedras Negras (see Chapter 6, Figs. 115-120), confirms the striking similarities in pose (feet turned to the side in an otherwise frontal figure) and in the iconography of royal regalia. There is, however, a curious circularity in the hypothesized spread of ideas from Piedras Negras to Tula to explain the iconography of stelae 1, 2, and 3. The Maya images in question, in their frontal pose, stiffness, weapons, and costume elements, represent the lingering legacy of Central Mexican "influence" on Late Classic Maya art following the brief period of Teotihuacan's apparent contact with parts of the Peten in the Early Classic. As Stone (1989) argues, the Teotihuacan war regalia and postures in which the seventh- and eighth-century lords of Piedras Negras chose to have themselves depicted are conscious foreign archaisms, using the remembered glories of the by then fallen Mexican site to stress their own martial prowess and legitimacy.[27] (See

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[25] See Paulinyi (2006) for a critique of hypotheses that a "Great Goddess" was the principal divinity worshipped at Teotihuacan.

[26] Regarding goddess iconography, note that the *quechquemitl* that appears as a male garment on the Tula stelae is associated with goddess figures at Teotihuacan (Anawalt 1982, 46).

[27] "The rigid, more iconographically spare warrior stelae…have obvious artistic connections to the art of central Mexico…It is now generally reconized that these central Mexican motifs were disseminated or

Chapter 6 for further discussion.)

Parallels to Other Toltec Sculpture

Many of the elements of regalia displayed by the Tula stelae, including some of the most puzzling ones, occur as well in both other reliefs and sculptures in the round from the site. The *quechquemitl*, a triangular upper-body garment worn by women at the time of the Spanish Conquest, for example, appears as a male attribute on a carved masculine figure (Fig. 83) with Tlaloc goggled eyes and a lance (de la Fuente et al.1988, 18-20, ill. 2). On the other hand, it is also worn by another sculpture in the round that de la Fuente identifies as female (1988, 23-24, ill. 5) (Fig. 84) as well as by a now headless figure of ambiguous gender (1988, 28, ill. 9). On de la Fuente's Catalog 8, the *quechquemitl* appears as part of the costume of a sculpture, alongside the trapeze and ray sign in its headdress (Fig. 85). Berlo (1992) identifies this statue as a female, a goddess in fact. Patricia Anawalt (1982, 45), an expert on prehispanic Mesoamerican costume, notes that representations of this garment as female apparel also occur on Toltec ceramic Mazapan figurines (Fig. 86) and in Toltec rock paintings at Ixtapantango (Anawalt 1982, 47). She interprets its appearance on the male Tlaloc figure illustrated by de la Fuente as a symbol of that divinity's association with fertility. She nevertheless remarks on her surprise at finding it as male apparel on Stela 2 and other Toltec sculptures (1979, 10).

The disks worn as pectorals by the figures on Stela 5 and possibly Stela 6 find parallels in the disk (mirror?) held at abdomen level by a figure de la Fuente and associates (1988, 20-22, ill. 3) assign to Tula (Fig. 87). Taube (1992b, 104, fig. 52),

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borrowed from Teotihuacan" (1989, 156).

however, provides the provenience of the same sculpture as "possibly from Tlaxcala," and identifies it as definitely female, wearing a War Serpent helmet. The disk also appears as an adornment of small atlantid figures (Jiménez García 1998, 452, fig. 172), and is worn by Tlaloc on a pillar relief from Pyramid B (Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002, 101). Mastache and Cobean excavated actual examples of Teotihuacan-style stone disks with pyrite mosaic mirrors from a cache apparently dedicated to this deity in the adjacent Palacio Quemado (Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002, 103).

Another Tula sculpture (de la Fuente et al.1988, 22-23, ill. 4) has a deeply recessed face like those of stelae 1-3, as well as a trapeze and ray sign in its headdress. The apparent War Serpent helmet of the ruler on Stela 3 finds an analog in de la Fuente's Catalog 7 (1988, 25-27, ill. 7), a male figure whose visage emerges from between the jaws of a snake helmet closer in morphology to the classic War Serpent (Fig. 88). The bloodletting knots or ribbons in the headdresses of the dignitaries portrayed on Stela 1 and Stela 2 are echoed on the surviving head of a sculpture in the round (Fig. 89) (de la Fuente et al. 1988, 32-33, ill. 15). These ribbons also appear at the knees of royal figures carved in relief on the pillars of Pyramid B and as part of the costume of reclining figures depicted in relief panels from the adjacent Palacio Quemado. The apparent fending sticks shown on the stelae are carried as well by the Pyramid B relief figures. The butterfly pectorals are a common Toltec ornament, depicted as well in both the pillar reliefs and the Pyramid B atlantids. The bird headdress of the Stela 4 figure, though not common, resembles one worn by a Pyramid B pillar relief (Pilaster 3, see Jiménez García 1998, 113, fig. 49).

The Xico Stone: A Toltec Monument From the Basin of Mexico

Another Toltec stela (Fig. 16), presently in the MNA, reportedly comes from the site of Xico in the present-day Federal District in the Basin of Mexico, to the south of present-day Mexico City. It was first published as such by the pioneering German Mesoamericanist Eduard Seler in 1888 (1991, 88, fig. 69) for purposes of comparison to the Statue of Miacatlan, though he only reproduced the "front" of the stone showing a female facing left, and not the reverse with its glyph in a square cartouche.[28] He stated simply that the relief was "excavated in the village of Xico in the lake of Chalco". Though there is no detailed provenience for this sculpture, an origin in Xico is consistent with the archaeology of the site. Located on an island in Lake Chalco, Xico was heavily occupied during the Postclassic, with what Richard Blanton (1975, 229) calls a "large Early Toltec center," succeeded by Aztec settlements. Nicholson (1971, 107) described the form of the relief carving as "in an obvious Xochicalcoid style." However, the style of the monument is also consistent with relief sculpture from Tula,[29] and de la Fuente includes it in her catalog of Toltec sculpture as number 155 under the ill-defined rubric of "Variants of Different Provenience and Doubtful Attribution to Tula." Although the catalog provides the most detailed description of the relief I have encountered, it unfortunately does not provide any information whatsoever about its alleged place of origin. I am indebted to archaeologist and epigrapher Javier Urcid for correctly

[28] See Catalog for description.

[29] Javier Urcid commented that "While the figure is rendered in profile, I sense that its style comes very close to several of the stelae from Tula that show rulers in frontal view" (personal communication, January 15, 2007).

identifying it as deriving from Xico (personal communication, January 15, 2007). However, because of some doubt about its origin and therefore its date, as well as its lack of parallels among Classic Maya stelae, I do not include it in my comparative analysis.

The *quechquemitl* and radiant disk pectoral worn by the female figure on this monument clearly parallel the occurrence of these costume elements on the Tula stelae and other sculptures discussed above, as does the trapeze and ray sign in the headdress. As to the identity of this important woman, the association of these attributes seems to point to a divine figure, and Seler identified her as a goddess or a priestess. Because of the shared *quechquemitl* and trapeze and ray headdress, it is tempting to speculate, as did Seler, that in the Xico stela we possess a relief image of the same personage portrayed in the round in de la Fuente Catalog 8 (Berlo's "goddess"), and that furthermore the radiant mirror (if that is what it is) identifies her as a Central Mexican analog of the Maya Goddess O, as Taube (1992b, 103-105) posits for similar images including the Statue of Miacatlan. One may permit oneself to succumb to the temptation without harm as long as the speculation is recognized as just that. The glyph on the reverse, a form of the Classic Reptile Eye glyph that Urcid identifies as the calendrical date 1 or 6 Crocodile (Cipactli), offers us little help in identifying the figure. 1 Cipactli was the traditional date for the coronation of Mexica rulers, and the Cipactli glyph appears on the Pyramid B pillars above and below images of Toltec kings, albeit in these instances in the form of the animal's head (Kristan-Graham 1989, 217, 236).

The Stela of Tlalpizáhuac

Tlalpizáhuac is another site located in the south-central Basin of Mexico, on the northern shore of Lake Chalco across from the island of Xico. Although Tlalpizáhuac appears to have been first settled in Teotihuacan times, most of the structures and archaeological materials date from the Epiclassic to Early Postclassic, radiocarbon dated to c. 700-950. Construction work in the modern municipality in 1987 accidentally uncovered the remains of the prehispanic settlement, leading to a salvage archaeology operation, followed by two additional seasons of excavations in 1990-1991 under the direction of Alejandro Tovalin Ahumada (1998). All of the architectural features unearthed by Tovalin consisted of residential structures, probably belonging to the Epiclassic/Early Postclassic elite. Although some of the ceramics show clear ties to Tula, other pottery types suggest links to Epiclassic Cholula in Puebla and Cacaxtla in Tlaxcala (see below). Features of the domestic architecture of Tlalpizáhuac also parallel constructions at Cacaxtla. Because the proportion of Toltec-related ceramics in the assemblage is not high, Tovalin concludes that the inhabitants of the site were not ethnically Toltecs (1998, 171).

The broken stela (Fig. 17)[30] was found in the fill of one of the residential structures (Room 21), so its original context remains unknown. It was originally displayed in an erect position, intended to be viewed from both sides, since the blank or "rear" face bears a natural cavity that the carvers covered up with plaster (Tovalin Ahumada 1998, 80).

[30] See Catalog for description.

The theme of a processing ballplayer parallels Tula Stela 4 and its associated fragments, but the human figure is much more simplified than the Toltec examples, and the costume elements not as detailed. The stela's excavator (Tovalin Ahumada 1998, 181) sees closer stylistic affinities to the sculpture of both Xochicalco and Cholula (see below). Since only the lower half of the figure remains, it is difficult to pinpoint the formal connections of the carving.

The El Cerrito Stela: A Toltec Monument in Querétaro

An additional stela in Toltec style (Figs. 18-19) occurs at a site far to the north of Tula, on the outskirts of the modern city of Querétaro, El Cerrito (Crespo 1991, 193, 195-198, figuras 17a-b; Braniff C. 2001, 106, fig. 41; Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz 2005). A number of Toltec-style stone sculptures, including atlantids, are associated with an apparent intrusive Toltec component dated to 950-1150, coeval with the flourishing of Tula (Crespo 1991). Architectural features of the site include a 30-meter high pyramid, columns, and a possible ball court. The same locale has yielded other sculptures in the style of Tula, including a chacmool[31] and sections from atlantid pillars. Crespo's excavations at El Cerrito in the late 1980s unearthed distinctively Toltec ceramics, including Mazapan ceramic figurines and plumbate ware, as well as fragments of Toltec reliefs. For Michael Smith, these observations "suggest local elite emulation of [Toltec] state/imperial styles, probably resulting from close communications between elites in the

[31] The so-called chacmool, as discussed in Appendix 4, is a sculptural form shared by the Toltecs, Chichen Itza, the Mexica and the Tarascans. It represents a figure reclining on his back, upper torso raised and head twisted to the side in an anatomically improbable, or at least profoundly uncomfortable position, and supporting a stone receptacle for offerings on its abdomen.

two areas. The regional polity extending from Tula to the El Cerrito area…could be considered a large regional state, or perhaps a miniempire" (Smith and Montiel 2001, 263).[32]

In terms of iconographic analysis, Crespo (1991, 198) restricted herself to the generic interpretation that the monument depicted "the solar disk and the deities associated with astral myths," without specifying which astral myths she had in mind. She also suggested from the presence of the solar motif that the stela was once used as a marker for movements of the sun at ritually critical points in the year, but without archaeological context this remains an unverifiable speculation. A more detailed iconographic study of this strange monument had to wait another decade and a half, when Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz (2005) published their pioneering paper. Since the odd imagery of this sculpture, though redolent of Maya connections, nevertheless strongly diverges from the iconography of Classic Maya stelae, I will not include it in the comparative analysis in Chapter 6, but I will attempt to interpret its remarkable reliefs here.

Despite my stated intentions to stay as clear as possible of the Tula/Chichen Itza debate in this work, some of the clearest analogies to the unusual iconography of the El Cerrito stela are to be found in the Terminal Classic to Early Postclassic art of Chichen Itza. The central male figure surrounded by a four-pointed nimbus closely resembles the solar haloed personage dubbed "Captain Sun Disc" by Arthur Miller (1977), depicted in the battle murals of the Upper Temple of the Jaguars at Chichen Itza (Coggins and Shane 1984, 158-159; 161, fig. 18; 162-163, fig. 19; 165, fig. 20). This individual appears as well on carved wooden lintels from the Upper Temple of the Jaguars (Coggins and Shane

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[32] See the Catalog for description and provenience data for this stela.

1984, 162-163, fig. 19; Miller and Taube 1993, 173; Taube 1992b, 141, fig. 77e) and in a stone relief of processing figures from the Lower Temple of the Jaguars (Cohodas 1974, 41, 319-320, fig. 18) (Fig. 90). In these last instances, the figure in the nimbus is seated, like the El Cerrito sun figure, and like its Central Mexican counterpart wears a bar-shaped nose ornament. He frequently carries darts or arrows, like the El Cerrito personage. In one (Fig. 91) of the painted images (Milbrath 1999, 80-81, fig. 3.5), a wing-like ornament projects from the back of the seated figure that resembles the form in the same position on the El Cerrito relief. The visual parallels are particularly striking between the El Cerrito image and a relief of "Captain Sun Disk" (Fig. 92), presently stored at the Hacienda at Chichen (Lincoln 1990, 174a, fig. 7; 278-278a), down to a shared skull ornament at the back or side.

The El Cerrito figure deviates from its Yucatec counterpart in seeming to have one foot replaced by a serpent and/or forms redolent of smoke,[33] the hallmark of the mercurial Nahua deity Tezcatlipoca. A protean and shapeshifting god, patron of royalty, thieves and sorcerers alike among the Mexica, Tezcatlipoca's standard iconography in Mexica manuscripts and relief sculpture includes a missing foot replaced by a smoking mirror or a serpentine form. However, this apparent formal divergence becomes a potential conceptual connection between El Cerrito and Chichen in light of Lincoln's contention (1990, 164-167) that the "sun disk" figure at Chichen in fact represents a

[33] The image is difficult to interpret. Below the knee is what Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz (2005, 36) interpret as a knee ornament with an upright projection. Below this in turn are two bands resembling anklets and a bracket-like form that seems to mirror the shape of the knee ornament. Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz comment that the foot is represented by a form similar to the banquette upon which the individual sits. In any case, whatever the form is, it certainly does not resemble a foot as characteristically rendered in Toltec art. Beneath this is a scrolling line that these authors interpret as a ground line. It does not extend very far, and seems rather to be a stylized serpent form--compare to the snake grasped by the deity in their figura no. 8 on page 37--or a representation of smoke or blood.

variant form of Tezcatlipoca. Lincoln posits that at Chichen Itza, Tezcatlipoca functions as the binary opposite, both opponent and complement, to the numerous feathered serpents depicted at the Yucatan site, just as he is the enemy of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl in Mexica myth. The hypothesis that the El Cerrito central figure is Tezcatlipoca fits well with the mythological association of Tezcatlipoca with Tula and the Toltecs in the Conquest-period sources. That the earliest identifiable depiction of this god in Central Mexico occurs at Tula in a pillar relief from Pyramid B (Jiménez García 1998, 127-128, fig. 51, 51a; 465; Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002, 99-103, figs. 5-17, 5-18) would seem to strengthen the association. This relief shows the deity with his missing foot replaced by a protruding leg bone, under which smoke emanates from a semicircular mirror. Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz (2005, 37) reproduce another Early Postclassic image of this divinity, from the Otomí center at Huamango in the State of Mexico, where his left leg takes the form of a serpent.

López Austin and López Luján (2000, 55-56) identify the form of the enclosing solar nimbus at Chichen Itza as distinctively Central Mexican in origin. Milbrath (1999, 82) agrees that the Chichen figures wear "a central Mexican style sun disk with pointed rays, like that in Mixteca-Puebla codices and murals". A quite similar solar figure appears in presumed Toltec pictographs at Ixtapantango, Hidalgo (Villagra Caneli 1971, 149; Taube 1992b, 141, fig. 77c), though this painted (literal) luminary is not fully enclosed by his surrounding nimbus,[34] as are his Cerrito and Chichen Itza counterparts (Fig. 93). Solís (1999, 136-137) describes the Ixtapantango figure as carrying "a sky disk on his back."

[34] The solar halo here is formed by two concentric rings. The innermost circle closely resembles the El Cerrito example in having four rays oriented in the cardinal directions. Oddly, however the rays of the El Cerrito disk resemble the letter A with outflaring bases. This type of ray does not appear in the art of Chichen but in Late Postclassic solar imagery in both the Maya and Mixtec areas (Taube 2007, 2).

This is not clearly the case, but in any event the sun disk surrounds only the upper half of the body. Was the El Cerrito stela thus a "precursor" of the Chichen images? Were the Toltecs truly the "donors" to the art of Chichen Itza, at least in this case?

Tempting as these connections seem, however, they cannot be pressed too far. Muddying the waters, to start with, is the El Cerrito figure's helmet, clearly in avian form and thus more suited for a figure cognate to Quetzalcoatl than to his rival, Tezcatlipoca, although the Huamango relief rather atypically depicts Tezcatlipoca wearing a headdress in the shape of a bird's head. At Tula, a relief figure from a Pyramid B pillar with a similar bird helmet has been identified as either Quetzalcoatl himself or a priest of that deity (Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002, 100-103, figs. 5.16, 5.19, 5.21). No rayed figures at Chichen Itza wear such headgear. The El Cerrito image also differs greatly from the Tezcatlipoca relief at Tula. The significance of the Chichen Itza "Captain Sun Disk" motif itself remains far from certain, as do its ultimate origins. Both Arthur Miller and Clemency Coggins (1984) identify him not as a deity but a historical figure, opponent in the Temple of the Jaguar battle murals of another lord associated with feathered snakes (predictably dubbed "Captain Serpent").

Lincoln hypothesizes that in addition to representing Tezcatlipoca and his rival, this pair is symbolic of a putative institution of dual kingship at Chichen. He (1990, 166, 174a, fig. 1) also ambitiously proposes that they signify the Hero Twins of Maya myth to boot. But there are problems with Lincoln's claims that "Captain Sun Disk" represents Tezcatlipoca. In one relief from the Lower Temple of the Jaguars, "Captain Sun Disk" faces what looks like an image of Tezcatlipoca, a serpent-footed figure carrying an atlatl (Cohodas 1974, 223, 225). This suggests that, contra Lincoln, these putative Chichen

divinities were separate entities, although Cohodas speculates that the serpent-foot character "may be parallel to the sun disk figure" and represent the setting sun. But other images more closely resembling the Tula relief of Tezcatlipoca occur as pillar reliefs at Chichen (Tozzer 1957, figs. 239, 240, 241), reinforcing the distinctiveness of this deity.

Taube (1992b, 140-141; 1994; Miller and Taube 1993, 173) identifies the figure in nimbus at Chichen Itza as a Maya adaptation of another Nahua deity, the sun god Tonatiuh.[35] Tonatiuh also forms a complementary opposition in Central Mexican cosmology and iconography with Quetzalcoatl. As the Sun, he is paired with/against Quetzalcoatl as the Morning Star, who is daily overwhelmed (sacrificed) by the sun's brightness (Miller and Taube 1993, 172). He also frequently appears in Late Postclassic Central Mexican art with a solar nimbus as ornament or enclosure, for example, in the Mixteca-Puebla manuscript *Codex Borgia*, page 71 (Fig. 94). In this same manuscript painting, note also the similar pose to the El Cerrito figure (if the El Cerrito figure is really sitting), bag/bundle with three large pendants or tassels to left/rear, large (albeit disk-shaped bracelet) on the forearm, and weapon (in this case darts) in hand. Tonatiuh carries a similar bag in a similar position on page 23 of the *Borgia* as well. The El Cerrito eagle helmet depicts a bird linked in Mexica thought with the sun (Miller and Taube 1993, 83). Tonatiuh sports an eagle feather headdress in Mexica art, though not a helmet.[36] However, eagle helmets were part of the costume of the elite Mexica "eagle warriors," who were under the patronage of the sun.

Like Lincoln, Taube also reads "Captain Sun Disk" as the image of one partner in a

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[35] He speculated that this Nahua deity was modeled on Maya rulers, associated with the east and dawn (Taube 1994, 224-225; 2006, 162).

[36] Taube (2005b, fig. 5b) notes, however, that in *Codex Fejéváry-Mayer* (page 33), Tonatiuh wears a

putative system of dual rulership at Chichen. The sun figure would correspond in this version to the traditional Classic Maya concept of the king or *ajaw* (literally sun, appropriate for the disk), while Miller's "Captain Serpent" represents a coregent war leader adopted from a Central Mexican ideology of government (López Austin and López Luján 2000, 56). He identifies the costume of both the Chichen Itza and Ixtapantango sun disk figures as Classic Maya royal regalia (1992b, 142; 1994, 225). Alternately, Schele and Freidel (1990) and Ringle (2004, 170) identify the Chichen rayed figure as a deified royal ancestor.

We seem to be dealing at both El Cerrito and Chichen Itza with multivalent symbols, as Cohodas acknowledges. Though in his dissertation he identified "Captain Sun Disk" as a deity, he has since revised his opinions:

> I would no longer suggest that this figure is to be interpreted specifically as deity. Nor would I agree with Miller that all such figures represent one historic individual. I think these images are among the most multi-layered in Maya representation, and probably involve the identification with the sun deity of both living and deceased patriarchs (rulers and others). (personal communication, February 24, 2000)

Human figures in solar disks also occur, both descending in frontal view on figures of rulers or scenes of sacrifice, and in postures resembling the Chichen and Ixtapantango images in the art of Cotzumalguapa, Guatemala (e.g., Taube 1992, 141, fig. 77a). This visual tradition, of Epiclassic to Early Postclassic date and thus coeval with many of the works discussed in this dissertation, shows many Central Mexican traits despite its location in the Maya highlands. The ethnic identity of its creators remains unresolved. Mexican and Maya artistic forms and content again interpenetrate in such a complex and ambiguous fashion that simplistic models of "direction of influence" fail to account for phenomena like the El Cerrito stela and its Maya analogs.

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helmet in the form of a quetzal head.

Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz (2005, 34, 36) note the similarity of the four-pointed sun of the El Cerrito stela to the Nahua calendrical sign *ollin*, "movement" or "earthquake", and identify the enclosed figure as a ruler based on his baton, rich ornaments, and seated position. They speculate that the skull ornament on his back links him to earth deities, and in support of their argument cite a 16th-century Colonial Mexica image of the war goddess Itzpapalotl ("obsidian butterfly") on page 15 of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*. In fact, skull ornaments are not exclusively tied to earth deities (the Chichen Itza solar figure seems to wear one in the relief cited by Lincoln), and Itzpapalotl, as one of a class of mercurial Nahua supernaturals known as *tzitzimime* (Pohl 1998; Klein 2000) may have had stellar as well as cthonic associations. They devote the greater portion of their analysis of the El Cerrito stela, however, to the strange figures that seem to hover in the top register of the El Cerrito stela that are even more enigmatic than the solar being, and to which I now turn.

The head of the floating entity at top center is somewhat difficult to read owing to light erosion of the relief. In Crespo's drawing (1991, 197, fig. 17b), in particular, the configuration of forms around the mouth seems to indicate that it wears the duckbill mask of the Mexica deity Ehecatl, or Quetzalcoatl in his role as the wind deity. The morphology of the rest of the head, however, does not correspond to most Late Postclassic manuscript and sculptural representations of this god, though it is within the range of some painted variants in the Borgia group of manuscripts (Spranz 1973, 144) from the Puebla and Tlaxcala areas. The closest resemblance I have been able to locate is to the brow and forehead of the Ehecatl figures emerging from the opened wind bundle on page 36 of *Codex Borgia*. The exposed or emaciated rib cage is not at all typical of

Ehecatl, however, and Ehecatl's distinctive cap-like headdress is absent. It is also possible that the segmented forms around the mouth represent teeth in protruding skeletal jaws.[37]

Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz (2005, 39-40) interpret this figure as the aforementioned Itzpapalotl. In their dissection of the El Cerrito image into its component parts (2005, 35, fig. 10), they interpret what could also be read as the upper part of the "duckbill" as a continuation of the cord linking the deity to the small human below, a plausible, though not clearly definitive, reading. They interpret the form of the floating divinity's right foot as a claw, an attribute of Itzpapalotl in particular (and *tzitzimime* in general) in Late Postclassic Central Mexican art, and the left foot as a plant, perhaps maize. This would be consistent with Pohl's (1998) and Klein's (2000) relation of the *tzitzimime* to fertility. The lines on the chest they read as representing the lines on a chrysalis, consistent with a butterfly deity as well as with her martial associations in Nahua myth and iconography. From Teotihuacan times, war and butterflies have been persistently linked in Central and Southern Mexican symbolism, and the lifecycle of slain

[37] If the enitity is Ehecatl, and if one were to throw caution to the winds and read the entire composition of the El Cerrito relief as a grand scheme (for both the carver and the iconographer), I might attempt to employ the Mexica myths of the creation of the present era or Sun as a hermeneutical tool. According to some preserved variants of the Aztec narrative of cosmogenesis (e.g., the *Leyenda de los Soles* in *Codex Chimalpopoca*), Quetzalcoatl created the present race of humans out of the bones of the humans of the previous era. He stole the bones from the underworld by trickery, and brought his creation to life by letting his own blood (Carrasco 1982, 98-99). Assuming, contra the principle of disjunction and pace Kubler and Panofsky, that this Mexica legend already existed in Toltec times, we could read the emaciated Ehecatl as Quetzalcoatl, represented as dead in connection with his underworld journey. The tiny human in front of him, connected by an umbilical cord and/or blood flows, could then represent his creation, obliged to repay the deity for his self-sacrifice with human blood. The skull-headed being to the left could conceivably be read as Mictlantecuhtli, lord of the Underworld (though in a very different form from his Late Postclassic depictions), or, maybe more plausibly, the dead humans of the last creation. The nimbus figure could then represent the present Sun, and the flowers in the lattice at bottom would represent the fertile earth, after Quetzalcoatl as culture hero teaches his creation about agriculture and introduces them to maize. Less ambitiously, I might speculate that the stela represents the fructifying effects of the gods of the sun (center) and wind (top) on the earth (below), with the bloody and dead humans, blood flows, and "Tonatiuh's" knife signifying the human obligation to pay for such bounty.

or sacrificed warriors equated with the lifecycle of the insect, their posthumous apotheosis compared to the emergence of the adult butterfly from the chrysalis (Taube 2000a; 2005). Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz see flaccid breasts under the lines of the "chrysalis," which they parallel to Central Mexican depictions of an aged earth goddess.[38] They read the figure's headdress, a row of dots across the back and top of the head and a group of plume-like elements behind the neck, as the segmented body and obsidian blade wings of Itzpapalotl's insect namesake.

Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz base their identification of this figure as Itzpapalotl in part on its resemblance to a relief from Tula (Fig. 95) on display in the site museum that Acosta (1956-57, 95-97) interpreted as a Toltec image of this goddess (de la Fuente et al.1988, 185-186, ill. 127). This carving indeed shares the apparent hanging breasts, head shape, long jaws and teeth, round eye, and crest of leaf-shaped elements of the El Cerrito figure, and the blades on her outstretched butterfly wings do resemble the forms at the back of the latter's neck, though the Querétaro image lacks the full, spread wings of the Tula relief. They are probably representations of the same entity. However, although the combination of blades and butterfly wings on the Tula carving identify the deity as literally an obsidian butterfly (Itzpapalotl), this must be an early version of the goddess since it does not resemble the Mexica versions Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz reproduce from the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* (folio 15) or *Codex Vaticanus A* (folio 28), as they acknowledge. Nor do the costume elements of the goddess in the Borgia group of manuscripts--her collar, blouse or *huipil* (Spranz 1973, 88) adorn the El Cerrito image. In fact, Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz find attributes of the Mexica

[38] The pairing of sagging breasts, exposed or emaciated ribs, and a small, infant figure is reminiscent of the iconography of Preclassic ceramic figures from Central Mexico showing an aged woman with a baby

Itzpapalotl not on the El Cerrito stela image of the goddess, but on the solar figure--the theriomorphic helmet, bag and skull ornament at back--leading them to interpret him as a ruler or warrior under Itzpapalotl's protection. However, as we have seen, the bag and skull have other parallels and are by no means unique to Itzpapalotl; the headdress of the solar figure (an eagle) differs from Itzpapalotl's in the Mexica manuscripts (which resembles a butterfly with antennae); he lacks the clawed hands and wings of the goddess, and the sun disk suggests other divinities, as discussed above.

The closest parallels to the odd grouping of the tiny human connected by a cord to the larger deity on the El Cerrito stela occur in Late Postclassic religious manuscripts from the Puebla/Tlaxcala region. Page 15 of the *Borgia Codex* shows a series of gods either sculpting (a metaphor for creation) or mutilating small human beings rendered as facing the deities and attached to them by umbilical cords. Perhaps, then, the linkage between the two El Cerrito figures indicates creation, with the human taking sustenance from the goddess (?) through the umbilical cord. On the other hand, other parallels in Late Postclassic manuscript painting may imply that the nourishment in the El Cerrito scene is flowing in the opposite direction—to the deity from a human sacrificial victim. Pages 75-76 of the *Borgia Codex* show another series of gods facing small human figures, the latter interpreted plausibly as priests or penitents. The humans are depicted piercing their ears in an act of autosacrifice and the blood flows in a long narrow stream connecting the human to the deity. On page 71 of the *Borgia*, Tonatiuh feeds on the rope-like stream of blood emanating from a decapitated sacrificial bird (Fig. 94). So is the El Cerrito "Itzpapalotl" nurturing a human, or is the human's sacrificial blood, via heart sacrifice, judging from the incisions on the torso, feeding the supernatural? Perhaps both meanings

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(Joralemon 1981).

are intended in order to illustrate the reciprocity of Mesoamerican human relationships to the divine. In this interpretation, the smaller skeletal figure would then balance the reciprocity of life's blood to the right through its implications of death and sacrifice. Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz identify this being as another *tzitztimime* and discuss the paradoxical nature of these beings in Mexica mythology, as both skeletal sky demons capable of destroying the world and earth deities associated with fertility and healing. This fundamental ambiguity or dual nature is consistent with a bivalent and reciprocal interpretation of the sacrificial/nurturant relationship between the human and the larger *tzitzimime* figure.

Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz (2005, 43, 46) give a more ethnic or political significance to the combination of human, cord, and Itzpapalotl, understanding it as a reference to the northern Mexican origins of the Toltec represented by the goddess. In a number of Nahua city foundation myths recorded in the 16th century, like the *Leyenda de los Soles* and the *Annals de Cuauhtitlán* in *Codex Chimalpopoca* (Bierhorst 1992, 23, 27, 152), the culture hero Mixcoatl leads the Toltecs from a migrant life in the north to a settled existence in the Basin of Mexico, vanquishing the devouring demon Itzpapalotl along the way (Davies 1977, 423-440). This is plausible, though Itzpapalotl is a destroyer rather than progenitor in these narratives. But they also note another aspect of the *tzitzimime* in Conquest-era Nahua mythology that, although they do not pursue the lead, may further elucidate the combination of birth, butterfly, and solar imagery on this enigmatic monument. That is the association, if not identity, of the *tzitzimime* with the *cihuatateo*, the souls of women who died in childbirth.[39] These women's deaths,

[39]See Quiñones Keber's (1995, 182) commentary on *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, folio 18v.

analogous to the death of warriors on the battlefield or on the sacrificial stone, led to their apotheosis as attendants of the sun god, accompanying him on his journey to the west just as the spirits of dead warriors traveled with him across the sky by day. If the upper half of the stela represents the sky and the paradise of the sun god, I suggest that the presence of Itzpapalotl, her butterfly attributes symbolic of the rebirth of *cihuatateo* and slain soldiers, with an infant connected by an umbilical cord--and a solar figure--the sun god himself, a related deity, a deified ancestor, or a reborn eagle warrior (he wears a butterfly bracelet, symbol of rebirth), makes sense.

This leaves the lower section for interpretation, with its lattice and rosettes. Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz (2005, 30-31) find a parallel for this design on a decorated vessel from Tula now in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City (Fig. 96). They interpret this motif as a symbol of water and of a center of civilized life,[40] and even identify the flowers as the hallucinogen *Turbina corymbosa*. However, the design also has Teotihuacan antecedents. In the painted decoration of the North Portico of the White Patio in the "palace" or "apartment complex" of Atetelco at Teotihuacan, the cells formed by the net design enclose small human figures (Millon 1988, 212, 214-215). At the Tetitla "apartment complex," they enclose owls carrying human hearts (Kubler 1985, pl. III-III). Most similar to the El Cerrito design is the net design depicted on a stuccoed tripod ceramic vessel (Berrin and Pasztory eds., 1993, 252, catalog 136). Here four-petalled rosettes with circles and swastika-like patterns at the center fill up the cells of the net pattern. The El Cerrito relief differs from the vessel painting in having five to six-petalled flowers with less complex centers. The catalog identifies the Teotihuacan motif as a fertility symbol. If so, its position in the lowest or "earthly" level of the El

Cerrito relief, under the sky realm implied by the presence of the solar figure, makes symbolic sense, and is consistent with Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz's interpretation as well. For these authors, the top of the stela represents the sky with its supernatural denizens, the lattice work the earth, and the solar figure a Toltec ruler mediating between the two realms.

But all such reconstructions of meaning by necessity leap across many temporal gaps by means of many assumptions. As Claude Levi-Strauss said famously of Maya art, it was not intended for a modern Western audience, and in absence of further evidence, I remain an agnostic regarding any interpretations of this stela. I hope this dissertation helps give it wider exposure so that other iconographers will be tempted to penetrate its mysteries.

The Mystery Stela of Cerro El Elefante, Hidalgo

Another possibly contemporary monument to the Tula stelae from the Toltec region is the stela (or steliform sculpture) discovered at Cerro El Elefante in Tunititlan, Hidalgo, in 1989 (Martínez Magaña 1994). It was in fact the discovery of the stela by locals that brought the attention of archaeologists to the badly looted site and led to a salvage excavation. The site consists of a small (one hectare) hilltop center with platforms, some of them supporting residential structures around a plaza, and a walled precinct that the excavators interpret as a Colonial construction. The stela was found within the latter. Though only one photo has been published (Martínez Magaña 1994, 144), the carving

[40] *Altepetl*, water mountain in Nahuatl. It is used as a place name in, e.g., *Codex Borbonicus*, folio. 32.

resembles a cruder version of the Tula stelae (Fig. 20).[41]

On the evidence of pottery recovered in the salvage excavations, the prehispanic occupation of the site spans the period between 1000 and 1300 CE. This places the sculpture in an interval overlapping with the florescence of Tula, though perhaps much later than the Tula stelae. On the other hand, Mastache, Cobean and Healan (2002, 68) suggest that the sculpture belongs to the Coyotlatelco tradition of the Late Classic, [42] though they provide no arguments for this date. The frontal posture, outward turned feet, and style recall the Tula examples, though nothing comparable to the decapitated figure has been found at the Toltec capital. The square recess on the chest resembles a similar aperture carved into the abdomen of the aforementioned relief figure of Itzapapalotl at Tula, and may have possessed the same sanguinary sacrificial symbolism. Clearly, the minimal costume and mutilation of the El Elefante image contradicts any interpretation as a royal portrait. I am unaware of any stela from any part of Mesoamerica devoted to depicting a sacrificial victim alone, apart from the very different El Aparicio Stela from Veracruz (Miller and Taube 1993, 47). On the latter, the victim squats in profile, while serpents symbolizing flows of blood gush from his truncated neck. No deity-specific body markings or costume elements appear to be present on the El Elefante monument. Because of the aberrant imagery, lack of original context (it was certainly not created to adorn the Colonial Christian structure) and possible post-Toltec date, I do not include it in my comparisons to the Maya material. It is a mystery that hopefully will be elucidated

[41] See the Catalog for descriptive data.

[42] A ceramic complex associated with the period following the collapse of Teotihuacan in Central Mexico, characterized by geometric painted designs on buff ware. Arguments continue as to whether this complex is of ultimately north Mexican origin or a local indigenous phenomenon. See Cobean (1990, 31-37) for discussion.

by further excavations at the site.

Xochicalco, Epiclassic Metropolis

Located 16 kilometers southwest of Cuernavaca in the state of Morelos, the ruins of Xochicalco ("place of the house of flowers" in Nahuatl) perch atop a hill, Cerro Xochicalco, and adjacent elevations (Figs. 2-3). This elevated location seems to have been chosen with the potential for defense firmly in mind, and indeed Xochicalco's economic, political and cultural florescence occurred in turbulent times. Although the history of human settlement at this site extends back to the Middle Formative (c. 900-400 BCE), it was during the Epiclassic Gobernador Phase (650-900) that Xochicalco rose to prominence as a cosmopolitan center of some 9000-14,000 inhabitants (Hirth 2000, 68), with an eclectic art style, broad trade connections, and apparent military hegemony over surrounding cities, if its iconography and glyphic inscriptions are to be taken at face value (Berlo 1989; Hirth 1989; 2000). It seems that Xochicalco moved to fill the cultural and political vacuum created in Central Mexico by the collapse of Teotihuacan around 600. Whether Xochicalco helped bring about that apocalyptic event by economic competition, or simply profited by it, remains an unresolved question.[43] During the Epiclassic, the area appears to have been balkanized into separate city-states jockeying for political, economic, and ideological influence, and characterized by increasing militarism and large-scale population movements. Not surprisingly in this context, the inhabitants of Gobernador Phase Xochicalco constructed fortifications at the base of the hill. In spite of these defensive preparations, Xochicalco's apogee was short-lived.

Around 900, the site was burned and subsequently largely abandoned.

The political and ritual nucleus of Epiclassic Xochicalco centered on the artificially leveled summit of Cerro Xochicalco. The most prominent architectural complexes of this core are the Eurocentrically-labeled "Acropolis," a group of three large platforms supporting now ruined royal residences and administrative centers, and the Ceremonial Plaza. The latter, seemingly more focused on ritual rather than bureaucratic activities, is bounded to the northwest by the best known Xochicalco structure, the Temple of the Plumed Serpents (Fig. 97). It takes its name from the feathered ophidians that undulate in relief across its façade, alongside seated elite figures depicted in a style similar to ruler images from Classic Maya jades. Other temple platforms adjoining the plaza include XI-4, which supported a building complex in which archaeologist César Saenz discovered the buried cache containing stelae 1-3. Further remains of the city cover the three lobes of the hill, and include I-shaped ball courts and natural caves modified by the addition of shafts to serve as astronomical observatories, as well as further plazas, palaces, and pyramids. One small platform or adoratorio, X3-5, apparently supported the Stela of the Two Glyphs. More ceremonial, political, domestic, and military constructions can be found on adjacent hills Cerro Coatzin, Loma Larga, Cerro Temascal, La Silla, and La Fosa, as well as to the north and south of Cerro Xochicalco.

The art of Xochicalco represents an eclectic mix of styles and motifs drawn from across Mesoamerica. The ball courts, with their stone rings and carved stone macaw heads, and the cross-legged figures on the Temple of the Plumed Serpents, betray connections with Classic Maya art (e.g., Molina and Kowalski 1999, 145), although as Nagao (1989, 93-94) points out, the latter are executed with a Central Mexican hieratic

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[43] Hirth (2000, 250) is skeptical of both hypotheses.

stiffness not associated with their Maya analogs. The glyphic system employed on the monuments borrows signs from both Teotihuacan and the Classic Zapotec of Oaxaca (e.g., López Luján 1995, 111). Teotihuacan elements are comparatively sparse relative to traits from other traditions. Considering Xochicalco's Central Mexican location. Nagao explains this as a conscious decision by Xochicalco's rulers to distance themselves from the discredited heritage of that fallen center. The flaring cornices of the Temple of the Plumed Serpents represent an architectural trait more typical of El Tajin in Veracruz. Trade contacts with both Oaxaca and Guerrero are reflected in finds of ceramics manufactured in these regions, Pacific Coast shells, and stone figures in the Mezcala style of Guerrero. One derives the impression from these observations of a cosmopolitan center with far-flung mercantile and probably political connections across Mesoamerica.

Though references to the site occur as early as the 16th-century writings of the Spanish missionary Bernardino de Sahagún (1977, 30) and the 17th-century mestizo chronicler Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl (1952, 38), it was not until the 18th century that Xochicalco became a focus of antiquarian interest (Hirth 2000, 29). José Antonio Alzate y Ramírez, a Mexican scholar, produced an illustrated account of the site in 1791 based on his explorations, still of use to modern scholars by virtue of reproducing monuments that subsequently were moved, attracted the attention of many contemporary pundits, including Alexander von Humboldt.[44] Many travelers and artists visited the ruins during the following century, spanning the range from cranks in search of Atlantis to early archaeologists like Leopoldo Batres, Antonio Peñafiel and Eduard Seler, and Marshall Saville. Following surface surveys by Alfonso Caso, Eduardo Noguera excavated for

[44] See de la Fuente et al. (1995, 302-303) for Humboldt's text.

eleven seasons at Xochicalco between 1934 and 1960. In 1961, he was succeeded as director of archaeology and restoration by César Saenz, who among many other achievements discovered and excavated the most famous group of stelae from Xochicalco in 1961. In 1978, archaeologist Kenneth Hirth's team carried out an intensive and extensive surface survey, the Xochicalco mapping project (Hirth 2000; Hirth, ed. 2000). Further large-scale excavations were undertaken in the mid-1980s by archaeologists Norberto González Crespo and Silvia Garza Tarazona. In 1993-1994, further digs and more extensive restoration sponsored by the Mexican government in the interests of promoting the site as a tourist attraction produced impressive results, including unearthing previously unrecorded stone sculptures now on display at the site museum (de la Fuente et al. 1995, 8, 132, 133, 139, 196).

The Stelae: General Considerations

Unlike those of Tula, the stelae of Xochicalco—or at least the most famous and figurative group of three—have been frequently published, reproduced, and discussed. Equally in contrast to the Tula stelae, this triad (Figs. 21-26) was excavated relatively recently by professional archaeologists, so the context of its final deposition, at least, is not a poorly documented enigma. All of the stelae at the site seem to date from the Gobernador Phase (Hirth 2000, 221), so again there is none of the uncertainty about chronological placement that we find for their Tula counterparts. There is, however, an unrecognized underestimation of the number of stelae at Xochicalco, which like the ambiguities around the number of stelae at Tula, appears to have occurred because of

narrow criteria for defining stelae. Hirth (2000, 221) states that "Four complete and two partially carved stelae have been recovered from Cerro Xochicalco." This omits the "Statues" of Xochicalco of Miacatlan, which as we will see, meet the requirements for stelae if the Maya are used as the standard.

For the six cited by Hirth, however, there has never been any ambiguity in the literature about classifying them clearly as stelae, this in spite of the fact that the thick, square columnar shape of stelae 1-3 diverges from Classic Maya forms, as Nagao points out (1989, 94). Thus, Smith and Hirth (2000, 17) state without reservation that these monuments "conform in usage to stelae reported elsewhere in Mesoamerica." There are however, apparently other, more equivocal instances of stelae at the site. As Hirth (2000, 221) states: "Not all of these stelae were elaborately carved…a number of plain stone lintels were also identified that may have been used as stelae and painted with important information." There seems to be a great degree of uncertainty about both the architectural setting and possible decoration of these objects, which Hirth does not reproduce or discuss in detail. If they are lintels, they cannot be stelae unless they represent the same sort of recycling of monuments as the fate of Stela 6 at Tula. While I deal below with the stelae of Cholula, which have carved borders that might have framed now vanished painted images, Hirth cites no evidence to verify that these alleged plain stelae at Xochicalco were ever painted.

While they have attracted a far greater share of published scholarly attention than their Toltec counterparts, most of the ink has been spilled in controversies over the meaning of the triad excavated by Saenz in 1960. Are they deity images or comprise as a group a sculptured rendition of a cosmogonic myth? Or are they, like the Maya stelae, records of

historical rulers?

The Saenz Triad

General Contextual and Descriptive Issues

In 1960 Saenz retrieved this remarkable group of sculptures from the east room of a building variously referred to as Estructura A (Saenz 1961), Structure X1-4 (Hirth 2000), or after the discovery, the Temple of the Stelae (Figs. 21-26). This complex of rooms, presumably religious in function, sits atop a pyramidal platform on the east side of the Plaza Ceremonial. The monuments were found intentionally broken, as if ritually "killed" to mark the termination of their public use and to release the potent spiritual forces they might have been believed to contain (Saenz 1961, 333), a practice paralleled among the Maya as well as other Native American cultures. Two large fragments of Stela 1 and a piece of Stela 2 were found resting on the floor. The remaining sections lay in a small crypt or cist set into the floor (López Luján 1995, 64, fig. 48). Along with the stelae, Saenz found in the subfloor pit stone figurines from Guerrero, obsidian blades and projectile points, fragments of onyx masks and vessels, jade, turquoise and shell beads, fragments of local and imported pottery, and the disarticulated bones of a single person, representing a secondary burial (ancestor? sacrificial victim?). Cinnabar, a mercury pigment used by the Olmec and Maya in burial rituals and cache deposits, stained the stelae. That these slabs were originally set on end as stelae is shown by vestiges of stucco adhering to the base of Stela 1, indicating the base had been at one time inserted into a

plaster floor.

The group of three stelae recovered by Saenz quite clearly represents a unified sculptural program, its components probably created at around the same time, as evidenced by close similarities of design and execution. Each one is carved on all four sides in bas-relief. In each case, what modern observers regard as the primary side or front of the stela shows, from top to bottom, a calendrical date, a head with elaborate headdress, and a series of glyphic elements. For stelae 1 and 3 the head is clearly human, while the carved visage of Tlaloc appears on Stela 2. The remaining sides of each stela are covered with glyphs, an eclectic mix of signs derived from Teotihuacan and from Classic Oaxaca. In total, each stela features 13 glyphs, according to Berlo (1989, 34). Smith (2000, 85) provides a different inventory of relief images: stelae 1 and 3 each have 16 design units (glyphs and faces, headdresses, etc.), while Stela 2, anomalous as we will see in other ways, has 17. The interpretation of the inscriptions has proved every bit as varied and controversial as the many identifications of the entities portrayed by the faces. Part of the uncertainty derives from the fact that apart from dates in the Mesoamerican ritual calendar, the precise meaning of the signs remains unknown. Even the reading order of the inscriptions is debatable. Smith (2000, 85) thinks they are to be "read from left to right beginning on Side A [the main or front, figural side]." She admits that Saenz thought otherwise, that the carved footprints guide the reader in a vertical (up or down) direction, while she thinks the footprints represent travel rather than directions to the viewer. But here we begin to enter the minefield zone of the interpretations of the meaning of these stelae, for which no consensus exists. Because of space and format limitations, I direct the reader to Appendix 3 for a summary of the major contributions

and positions in this area, and to the Catalog for a formal description of each member of the triad.

External Connections

Classic Maya formal parallels have been suggested for the Saenz trio, not surprisingly to the same "warrior" stelae at Piedras Negras proposed as models for the Tula stelae. The Xochicalco triad shares with the Tula and Piedras Negras specimens deeply carved, recessed faces surrounded by shallower relief. The theriomorphic helmets--War Serpent (Taube 2000a, 284) or Feathered Serpent (Smith 2000, 85)--of Xochicalco stelae 1 and 3 also recall the headgear of the Piedras Negras figures. If the beastie portrayed by the helmet of the Tula Stela 3 figure is the same creature, it also represents an analogy to the use of this headdress at Xochicalco. Smith notes regarding the appendages to the helmet on Xochicalco Stela 1 that "Similar bloodletting instruments are found in headdresses of the rulers shown as warriors in Piedras Negras Stelae 7 and 26…" The bloodletting symbolism repeats on the Tula stelae in the form of the bloodletting knots or ribbons worn by the Toltec rulers portrayed on stelae 1 and 2.

The "Cuaac"[45] glyph on Side C of Stela 2 and the "capture"[46] glyph on Side A of the same monument point to Maya parallels, according to Smith. Further Maya links are

[45] Virginia Smith's identification and spelling (2000, 92). In more recent versions of Maya orthography, it is transcribed Kawak (Coe and Van Stone 2001, 41). This is a Maya sign, a cluster of loops resembling grapes, for the 19th day in the ritual calendar. Though Smith does not note it, the sign was also identified by Schele and Miller (1986, 45-46) as a distinguishing mark of a "monster" representing stone and the earth in Classic Maya sculpture. Further epigraphic and iconographic work identified this entity as a personified mountain, or Witz (Schele and Feidel 1990, 68).

[46] Again this is Smith's identification of the image of a knotted band (2000, 91). The resemblance to the Maya capture glyph (Coe and Van Stone 2001, 90-91) is not wholly convincing.

suggested by the x-shaped glyphs comprising part of the alleged skyband on the front side of Stela 1. For Smith, this is the Maya Lamat or Venus sign, symbolizing the heavens in general in addition to Venus, and the Classic Maya serpent bar scepter frequently carried by rulers on Maya stelae: "This gesture [hands supporting skyband] is similar to the Maya pose of holding the serpent bar symbol of office" (2000, 86-87).

Earlier, Kubler (1984, 73) agreed in finding the "skybands" on stelae 1 and 2 "reminiscent of Piedras Negras." Despite the anatomically correct position of the hands below the face, however, it is by no means clear that they are intended to be the hands of the alleged ruler portrayed by the face. Smith believes they are part of a glyphic title of a political office (2000, 86-87). But Smith notes that the blood glyph (an image of liquid flowing from a heart-like form) framed by the sky bar on the front of Stela 3 also occurs on Stela 9 at Piedras Negras, as well as at Copan.

However, Maya traits are not the only apparent foreign ideas reflected in the stela triad. Smith also notes the presence on the Xochicalco stelae of glyphs that seem to relate to Oaxaca rather than to the Maya.[47] As we will see in Chapter 5, the Zapotecs, the Ñuiñe culture, and the peoples of the Pacific coast employed the stela form itself in Classic Oaxaca. Again, not everything steliform points to a Maya connection. In comparison with the literature on the Tula stelae, this fact is acknowledged more frequently in attempts to formulate models for the origin of the Xochicalco stela tradition. Similar to Kristan-Graham's ideas on the origins of the stelae at Tula, Hirth (2000, 266, 269) argues that the Xochicalco elite "borrowed" the form from the Maya and/or Classic Oaxaca to meet the

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[47] For an overview of Oaxacan glyphic systems and comparison with Aztec and Maya writing across domains of discourse from the calendar to royal activities and warfare, see Marcus (1992).

need for an iconography of individual rulership for the Central highlands where none had existed in the supposedly anonymous art of Teotihuacan. He cites the work of Esther Pasztory (e.g. 1997) in support of this characterization of Teotihuacan art and society as deemphasizing the role of the ruler, a position which has been challenged on the basis or recent archaeological finds at the site (Sugiyama 2005). Be that as it may, Hirth (2000, 269) may be correct when he says that at Xochicalco, "portrayal of information about rulers in public art was an Epiclassic innovation,"[48] at least concerning individualized monuments representing named rulers.

The visual comparison detailed in Chapter 6 reveals significant differences in form between the Xochicalco series on the one hand, and both the Tula stelae and their Maya counterparts on the other. In the Xochicalco examples, relatively naturalistic faces top abstract stacks of glyphs only vaguely suggestive of bodies, in contrast to the more naturalistic full-length figures seen at Tula, and one bears the face of Tlaloc rather than a clearly human visage. In their overall composition and the details of their iconography, the Xochicalco stelae are without close overall formal parallel at Tula, in the Maya area, or anywhere else. They are sui generis. As Virginia Smith (2000, 83) recognized, "they are carved in a style that is unique to Xochicalco and other carved monuments at the site. They incorporate design elements from contemporary and earlier sites including Teotihuacan, but the result is a unique expression of polity tailored to Xochicalco, its rulers, and its place in Epiclassic events." These formal differences may signify divergent meanings as well, and as reviewed in Appendix 3, meanings are much debated and up for grabs for the Xochicalco group.

[48] But see Headrick (2007, 33-42) for possible public images of rulers in Classic Teotihuacan art, contra Pasztory.

Nonfigurative Stelae at Xochicalco

Besides the group excavated by Saenz, other stelae at Xochicalco exist in fragmentary form and are undecorated save for glyphic inscriptions. Because they cannot be compared directly either to Maya royal stelae or the figurative stelae from Tula, I do not include them in the comparative study. I provide brief descriptions in the Catalog.[49]

The "Statues" of Miacatlan and Xochicalco: A Stela By Any Other Name

More convincing Xochicalco analogs for both Classic Maya and Tula stelae are two carvings called "statues," of Miacatlan (Fig. 30) and Xochicalco (Figs. 31-33), respectively. They have received this title because they are figures carved in front and sides in very high relief, almost in the round, but framed by, emerging from, and attached firmly at the back to steliform slabs. They are no more three-dimensional than some very

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[49] Taube (2000a, 311-313) and Lebeuf (1995, 284, 286) both make mention of one of the discoveries of the 1990s at the Acropolis of Xochicalco, described by Lebeuf (284) as "a large stela with an inscription crowned by a large half moon, an exceptional object in American archaeology." The last remark is certainly true, but if it were a stela, as narrowly defined by classical Greek and Classic Maya art historical canons, it would also be exceptional in shape for that class of monument however defined. Only the base, the lower half, of this sculpture conforms to the broad definition of stelae in being roughly rectangular. The upper half of the object expands into a huge crescent, an obvious lunar reference, with its pointed ends facing upward. The edges of the crescent are outlined in raised relief, while in the center of the lunar image is a glyph consisting of a Maya-looking profile head enclosed by a cartouche flanked by two upward pointing feet or footprints. At the top of the cartouche appears what looks like a reptile eye surmounted by five plumes, or, as Lebeuf reads them, flower petals, or, according to Taube, flames. Whatever its significance, the shape of this sculpture distinguishes it from any other Mesoamerican monument called a stela in the literature, and Lebeuf appears to be mistaken in applying that epithet to it. Taube (2000a, 311) calls it more accurately and neutrally a monument. I will not use it as part of the catalog, nor for comparative purposes in this thesis.

similar Maya examples at Copan and Tonina,[50]and no one has resorted to classifying these as anything other than stelae. If the two Xochicalco monuments had turned up in Honduras or Chiapas rather than in distant Morelos, they would have been called stelae without any debate, providing another example of the variations of the use of this term as applied to Mesoamerican sculpture.

Both of these Xochicalco stelae depict a standing frontal figure wearing a War Serpent (Taube 1992b, 103) or Feathered Serpent (López Luján 1995, 137) helmet, but unlike the Tula stelae, the figure wears a tunic and skirt and carries a disk-shaped object. The garments and the apparent suggestion of breasts (clearer on the Statue of Miacatlan) have led to its identification as female.

Previous Literature

I have not been able to locate any published comparisons of either of these "statues" to Maya stelae, apart from Peñafiel's (1890, 31) brief comment they "share the attributes of the persons or deities of the Maya civilization."[51] In fact, relative to the Saenz stelae, they have been not discussed very much at all. Most of the sparse coverage, beyond the descriptive level, deals with the question of the identity of the figure portrayed, usually interpreted as a female supernatural, and the function of the monuments. Seler, for example, saw the Statue of Miacatlan as resembling Postclassic depictions of the water goddess Chalchiutlicue, who "is quite commonly pictured with the feathered serpent as

[50] E.g., Copan stelae A, C, D, E, F, H, I, N, 4, 6; Tonina monuments 26, 177; also Stela 1 at Palenque and Stela 15 at Piedras Negras.

[51] "carece de los atributos de los personajes o deidades de la civilización maya."

head ornament. The round vessel in front of the abdomen is an attribute that we also see in like fashion with the so-called Chac Mool of Chichen Itza, and a corresponding stone figure of Tlaxcala, which Mr. Jesus Sanchez considers a Tezcatzoncatl, a pulque god" (Seler 1991, 87). Ringle et al. (1998, 203) also compare the Statue of Miacatlan to a chacmool because of the circular container it holds on its abdomen, in spite of the fact that (as they readily admit) the figure is clearly designed to stand up vertically, not recline horizontally. Any offerings would therefore be precipitated to the ground if placed in the disk. The pose of the figure bears no resemblance to the contortions of the chacmool, and all extant chacmools are clearly male. For these reasons, I find the conceptual equation of the statues of Miacatlan and Xochicalco with chacmools extremely unlikely. The Chalchiutlicue identification, meanwhile, still has advocates, including López Luján (1995, 137). This divinity indeed wears a similar serpent or crocodilian helmet in the *Codex Borgia* (Boone 2007, 97-99) and in *Codex Fejérváry-Mayer* (Anawalt 1981, 160) though the problem of temporal and geographic disjunction casts shadows on this perhaps too easy an identification.

Iconography: Recent Contributions

Taube (1992b, 103-104) identifies the disk carried by the Statue of Miacatlan as a mirror. He compares the figure to a frontal fanged goddess image with a disc on her abdomen from the Late Postclassic Mixtec *Selden Roll*. Although the *Selden Roll* deity does not wear a helmet like that of the Xochicalco figures, she does bear a serpent headdress composed of two intertwined feathered snakes. Taube also illustrates the Statue

of Miacatlan next to a “Tlaxcalan” sculpture of a figure holding a disk that must in fact be de la Fuente’s Catalog No. 3, claimed by her to derive from Tula. Taube links the motif of the disk to the Maya Goddess O, associated with the use of mirrors for divination. Goddess O has parallels with Toci, Cihuacoatl (literally “serpent woman” in Nahuatl), and other Central Mexican goddesses (including *tzitzimime*) documented for the Spanish Conquest era. I must note, however, that the *Selden Roll* goddess is a fierce creature with fangs, while the images of God O Taube reproduces from Maya sources are wizened hags with frequently aggressive expressions and poses. They all contrast markedly in these aspects to the relatively youthful and benign personages portrayed by the statues of Miacatlan and Xochicalco. In Taube’s view, the disks, held over the midsection by all of these female figures, may also refer to the world navel or axis mundi of traditional Mesoamerican cosmologies.

In his analysis of the iconography of prehispanic monuments housed in the Museo Regional Cuauhnahuac, Jorge Angulo (2005, 105) briefly identifies the female portrayed by these two stelae as Cihuacoatl or Chimalma. The aforementioned "serpent woman" was a Nahua earth goddess associated with sweatbaths, midwifery, and via the connection of death in childbirth with death in battle or by sacrifice, with warfare (Duran 1971, 210-220). In Postclassic and Colonial manuscripts,[52] she appears as a skeletal being or a beautiful young woman with the attributes of Xochiquetzal (Miller and Taube 1993, 61), and carries a round shield with a weaving batten in place of spear or club (Read and González 2000, 148). The round disk held by the stela figure, and the War Serpent helmet, making her both a woman warrior and a literal "serpent woman," support such an identification, although the definitive identification of a Nahua goddess in the art of an

Epiclassic culture of unknown ethnic and linguistic affiliation is a risky endeavor. Chimalma, or Chimalman, whose Nahuatl name refers to a shield, is the mother of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl in native Nahuatl histories of Tula, and equated with earth goddesses like the Mexica Coatlicue (Davies 1977, 367). This proposed identification is even riskier because of the chronological and possible ethnic/linguistic gap between the Xochicalco monuments and the 16th-century Nahuatl sources, especially since the latter associate Chimalman with the founding of Tula, an event probably postdating the beginning of Xochicalco's art tradition.

Iconography: In Epiclassic/Early Postclassic Context

One of the enigmatic aspects, at first appearance, of the "statues" of Miacatlan and Xochicalco is the combination of the serpent helmet, associated at Teotihuacan, among the Classic Maya, and elsewhere in the art of Xochicalco with armed men, and the seemingly female skirt, blouse and full chests. If they are indeed women, where else in Classic to Epiclassic Mesoamerica do we find female images associated with a helmet form that Stone (1989) and Taube (2000a) tie so closely to warrior cults?

Actually, one need not venture that far from Xochicalco in time or space for analogies. At Epiclassic Xochitecatl, adjacent to Cacaxtla in Tlaxcala, ceramic figures show enthroned women with the attributes of warriors and rulers wearing headdresses that the site's most recent excavator, María Carmen Serra Puche (1998, 11; 2001, 267), reads as representing serpents or earth monsters. In fact, comparison with Classic Maya and Teotihuacan costume reveals these helmets to be a variant of the War Serpent—and

[52] E.g., *Codex Magliabecchiano* folio 45r; *Codex Borbonicus* folios 23, 26-28, 36.

very similar to the headgear of the figures on the contemporary statues of Miacatlan and Xochicalco. Additional parallels to the Xochicalco and Miacatlan stelae may be noted to the ambiguously gendered steliform figure (Fig. 36) in the Battle Mural of Cacaxtla discussed below, also contemporary with the Gobernador Phase at Xochicalco. We have also already seen what looks to contemporary Western-trained eyes like gender ambiguity in the monuments of Tula, in particular, the apparent female *quechquemitl* worn by the ostensibly male figure on Tula Stela 2. Likewise, the long skirt of the Xochicalco and Micatlan "statues" recalls Tula Stela 6, which de la Fuente calls a representation of a male, but Jiménez García sees as female. The association both of attributes traditionally assumed by (mostly male) Mesoamericanists to be exclusively masculine with female figures and the reverse appears to be a recurrent theme in the art of Epiclassic Central Mexico.

The disk the Xochicalco women carry has parallels in the disks worn as pendants on the chests of Tula Stela 5 and Stela 6. A badly eroded figure from Tula, de la Fuente's Catalog 4 (Fig. 98), likewise depicts a standing frontal figure with a disk on its chest. It also resembles the statues of Xochicalco and Micatlan in its recessed face, like those of the Tula, Xochicalco Triad, and Piedras Negras warrior stelae (not to mention Teotihuacan sculpture). The disk occurs in Classic Maya art as well, in instances other than those highlighted by Taube. For example, a ceramic figure from Jaina off the coast of Yucatan shows a woman holding a disk over her abdomen (Schele 1997, 20, pl. 2), while another (1997, 182, pl. 10) shows a female supporting what Schele calls a shield in the same fashion. She calls the similar object carried by a male figure in a similar pose to the statues of Miacatlan and Xochicalco a divination mirror (1997, 142-143). In Guerrero

a Classic (?) stela allegedly from Tepecuacuilco and identified, like Seler's interpretation of the Statue of Miacatlan as "Chalchiutlicue," has a similar rounded hollow on her torso (see below, Chapter 5). It is interesting to note the occurrence in caches at Xochicalco of perforated disks of greenstone, albeit smaller than those portrayed on the statues of Miacatlan and Xochicalco (López Luján 1995, 62, fig. 44).

Context of the Xochicalco Stelae—General Comparisons

As we have seen, the stela triad excavated by Saenz was not in its original setting—presumably erected at another location—but in a deposit of offerings suggesting ritual burial, for reasons not clear to us. Their archaeological context, broken and ritually interred as part of what Hirth interprets as a "termination ritual" (2000, 43), resembles the deposition history of some Maya stelae. At Tikal, for example, Stela 31, erected in the 5th century, was ceremonially interred after being broken and burnt, atop Temple 33 in the late 7th century (Harrison 1999, 127).

As to the original setting of these and the other Xochicalco stelae, Hirth generalizes from the Stela of the Two Glyphs to conclude that all of the Xochicalco stelae originally stood on platforms:

> Stelae were erected on low adoratorio platforms and the frequency of these structures suggests that they were common throughout the site. Fifteen adoratorio platforms have been identified…all of which are presumed to have supported stelae…Since the stelae they supported were intended to convey information, it is not surprising to find adoratorio platforms in public plazas and along causeways. (2000, 221)

These conclusions rest on the assumption that all stelae at Xochicalco had the same kind of setting as the Stela of the Two Glyphs. This cannot be supported by any other

observations at the site, and remains a speculative presumption. If true, this consistent placement of stelae on adoratorios represents a significant divergence from Classic Maya practice.

A Looted and Vanished Xochicalco-Related Sculpture

Loss of context, loss of data, questions of exact provenience haunt the histories of many of the Central Mexican stelae discussed in these pages, but perhaps the most extreme version of this fate befell a stela recently discussed by Javier Urcid (2007). In this case, not only are the site and context unknown courtesy of the monument's removal by looters, but its present-day whereabouts are likewise obscure, and the only images left are the traces of traces, drawings of photocopies of photographs. This vanished stela came to Urcid's attention via Karl Meyer, who received the photocopies from a gallery owner in Houston, Texas, in the late 1980s. The gallery later went out of business and with it the stela evaporated into oblivion. Not even the dimensions and material of the sculpture were recorded before it vanished. For these reasons, I have not included it in the Catalog. However, Urcid's interpretation of the style of the two calendrical glyphs and two seated human figures on the lost slab lead him to conclude that they place the monument within his "Central Mexican Scribal Tradition," an Epiclassic set of artistic and glyphic canons of representation widely shared across Mesoamerica "from Guerrero to the Northern Maya Lowlands" (2007, 117), but originating within the eponymous Highland region. The rendering of the numerical glyphs tie this stela to that from Teotenango (see below, this chapter) and to the Ixtapaluca plaque discussed in Chapter 4,

while the cartouche around one of the calendar signs resembles examples from the frieze of the Temple of the Plumed Serpents at Xochicalco. Urcid ties the form and rendering of the figures to the art of the latter site as well, especially to a sculpture[53] discovered by Seler (1991). Urcid calls it Monument 7, but Smith and Hirth (2000, 34) call it Sculpture 2; it is more traditionally referred to as La Malinche after the indigenous interpreter and mistress of Cortés, or simply La India. I concur with Urcid that the human images on the lost stela tie it strongly to the art of Xochicalco, and so I discuss it here as a monument if not of possible Xochicalco provenience, than as one produced within the city's art tradition and cultural sphere.

Adding to the indignities heaped by fate upon it, the surviving images of the Houston stela show it in a damaged and weathered condition, with the part of the top portion completely broken away and missing. On what Urcid designates as Side A, the seated figure is positioned in a top register while the calendrical glyph 7 Water appears below. Because of its position at the broken top, the upper part of the seated human image is gone. On the reverse, Urcid's Side B, the placement of the glyph and the figure are reversed, so here the figure survives while only the numerical section of the glyph, 13, remains (2007, 118, fig. 1). Both figures are depicted sitting cross-legged on reed mats, an ancient symbol of royal status and investiture in ancient Mesoamerica, and wear the *quechquemitl,* although they apparently do not wear the long skirts associated with female figures. On the Side A figure, what looks like the belt of a male loincloth is visible; no lower body covering can be seen on Side B. Urcid notes the usual female associations of the *quechquemitl*, but suggests that it can it have a martial or sacrificial significance as well, and might reflect a type of ritual tranvestism by males (see the

[53] Angulo V. (2005, 107) calls it an altar.

discussion of the Cacaxtla murals below). Whether they are male or female, their seated posture and woven mats suggest rank and power. The figure on Side A appears to rests its hands on its calves, though the erosion makes the image difficult to read, while that on Side B holds its hands in a mudra-like gesture, palms up, fingertips touching, at the level of its abdomen. The right foot of the Side B figure rests on the mat, while the left hangs over the edge of the seat. Both feet of the personage shown on the opposite face appear to rest on the mat. What Urcid calls a hand holding a staff, but which looks like a distorted foot, rests in front of the mat. Both figures wear a necklace of beads, earspools, and a headband or diadem with a central bead or plaque.

In comparing the images on Mayer's missing stela to Xochicalco Monument 7, Urcid notes (2007, 120) that most previous interpretations of the latter identify its representation of a seated (ostensible) female as a fertility goddess. Most recently, Angulo V. (2005, 109-111) argues for the later Nahua goddess of flowers and beauty, Xochiquetzal, as the candidate of choice. This view finds support in the corn cobs and other vegetal forms sculpted at the base of the Xochicalco monument. Urcid, however, suggests that the La Malinche image may be a ruler impersonating a deity. He reads two glyphic dates on the sculpture, 6 Leg and 2 Rabbit, as her birth date/name and possible coronation date, respectively, though he admits that the sculpture is capable of sustaining many layers of meaning.

A Painted Stela at Cacaxtla?

Coeval with Xochicalco, and showing many similarities to the latter city in its

eclectic art, concern with defense, and apparent militarism, the city of Cacaxtla perches atop a hill in the state of Tlaxcala (Figs. 2-3). The site first captured the attention of archaeologists and art historians in the 1970s, after illicit digging by local looters brought to light a remarkable group of murals executed in Classic Maya style, using Classic Maya pigments, and possibly carried out by actual Maya artists. Salvage excavations began in 1975, and quickly clarified the existence of two groups of these remarkable wall paintings. One set adorns the entryway and doorjambs of a palace/range structure dubbed Building A by the excavators, and depicts standing figures in rich garments, pairing humans in bird costumes with corresponding persons in jaguar-skin outfits. In another construction, Building B, two sloping taluds framing a central stairway bear a lively and disturbingly graphic mural of a violent battle between jaguar-costumed and bird-costumed protagonists (Fig. 102). The latter are clearly the losing side, and are shown unarmed and being dispatched by the jaguar folk. Since the initial excavations, continued work at the site revealed two other groups of paintings—one representing apparent male and female astral deities in a structure that has been dubbed the Venus Temple, the other an image of the Maya merchant god (God L) carrying his trademark backpack. The Nahuatl word for such an object—*cacaxtli*—interestingly enough, is the root of the name for the site.

Not surprisingly, the discovery of these murals unleashed torrents of speculation about how to explain the presence of such clear Maya visual traits in distant Central Mexico. Theories range from the appropriation of foreign ideas by cosmopolitan Epiclassic elites to tribute labor exacted by Cacaxtla's rulers from Maya vassals, to the invasion of Tlaxcala by a people of mixed Maya and Central Mexican descent, identified

with a mysterious group mentioned in Conquest era histories, the Olmeca-Xicallanca. I will briefly review such theories in the next chapter on models. More recently, debate has focused on the meaning of the murals. Are the battle scenes representations of a real historic event, or do they represent a mythical scene? Is this even a battle, given the unequal armaments of the two forces, or is it a sacrificial ritual?[54]

The exact date of the murals is also a matter of contention. Based on a radiocarbon date from a wooden lintel preserved in Building A, the initial date assigned was around 650. But Sandoval and Torres (1990) put the Cacaxtla murals later than previous archaeologists. As they point out, there is much evidence for the reuse of old wood at the site, so the lintel merely establishes the earliest possible date for the murals. Carbonized vegetable matter from an offering placed when the Battle Mural was buried gives a radiocarbon date of 792, so it is clear that the Battle Mural was painted before then. How much before remains uncertain, but it might have been a short interval, perhaps as little as a decade or less.

A possible candidate for a geographical/temporal "missing link" between Central Mexican and Maya stelae is a standing figure in Maya royal finery (Fig. 36; Personaje 2 in Foncerrada de Molina's system, 1993, lám. 2) being dispatched with a spear on the west talud of the Building B Battle Mural. Identifications of this personage range from an actual ruler, male, female, or male dressed in female garments for ritual purposes or as a sign of humiliation (McCafferty and McCafferty 1994), to an ancient ruler of Teotihuacan (McVicker 1985, 87), to a deity. Whoever he/she may be, a steliform frame decorated with Venus symbols encloses this figure. Baird (1989, 108) refers to the total

[54] For reviews both of the archaeology and the art historical questions raised by the site, see Lombardo de Ruiz et al. (1986), Foncerrada de M olina (1993), and Piña Chan (1998).

visual effect of this composition as "stela-like," while V. Miller (1989, 296) posits that the figure may actually be shown standing "before a painted stela." On the other hand, Ivan Spracj (1996, 159) identifies the frame with stars as a locative sign, representing a place of sacrifice associated with Venus.

The representation shares the frontal body portrayal, with feet pointing outward to either side, of Tula stelae 1 to 3 and 5-6, and the Piedras Negras "warrior stelae," although the head is shown in profile. The Cacaxtla personage's broad collar, bracelets, and sandals are similar both to the Piedras Negras and Tula depictions of costume, and the bloodletting knots he/she wears recall those displayed on Tula stelae 1 and 2. While damage has obscured this figure's headdress, a very similar image, probably representing the same individual (but lacking a steliform enclosure) on the east talud wears a theriomorphic helmet, albeit representing a bird rather than the War Serpent.

Even more striking is the similarity of the Cacaxtla image's *quechquemitl* to the triangular garment of Tula Stela 2, as well as those other Toltec sculptures I compared to Stela 2 in this regard. This enigmatic feature suggests some conceptual connection between the monuments, though it is an open question whether a figure in a fresco, not a portable object, could have served as inspiration for a Toltec relief. The presence of this garment is main reason for the identification of Personaje 2 as female or reflecting male ritual transvestism of some sort (Urcid 2007, 117), although according to Anawalt (1982, 58), it could be associated with males at the time of the Conquest (albeit infrequently). In Mexica belief the *quechquemitl* was linked in particular to the Huasteca of the Gulf Coast, and it is shown in Classic Veracruz ceramic figures (Anawalt 1982, 49). These observations are interesting in light of speculations about the role of Olmeca-Xicallanca

(see below, Chapter 3) and other Gulf Coast peoples as culture and power brokers at Cacaxtla.

Baird (1989, 114-115) compares the costumes and regalia of the Dos Pilas/ Aguateca stelae, cited in connection to Tula by Cohodas, with the ornaments and armaments sported by this and other figures from the Cacaxtla Battle Mural. We will return to this matter in Chapter 6. The issue of whether this Cacaxtla painting represents a valid analogy to the Tula stelae is further complicated, however, by the question of the nature of cultural connections, if any, between Tula and Cacaxtla. Cohodas (1989, 225-26) writes: "Although Tula's monuments are stylistically and iconographically related to those of Teotihuacan, the Pasion [sic] Maya, and Chichen Itza, there is actually little evidence of direct contact with the eclectic art of Cacaxtla." In contrast, Coggins (2002, 41) even refers to Cacaxtla as a Toltec site, albeit in the problematically broad meaning she has given to the word, as signifying and Classic or Postclassic Mesoamerican elite, Mexican or Maya, who claimed the cultural heritage of Classic Teotihuacan.

Painted Stelae (But in a Different Sense) at Cholula?

Baird (1989) suggests as a possible model for the Personage 2 image at Cacaxtla a painted stela, of which possible examples are known for central Mexico from Epiclassic Cholula (Figs. 2, 3) (Acosta 1970, fotos 33, 35, 38; Baird 1989, fig. 27; McCafferty 1996, fig. 2; 2001, 292-293). Three stelae stand literally in the shadow of Cholula's famous Classic pyramid on its south side, in an open space referred to as the Plaza of the Altars. They are associated with the stone altars that give the plaza its modern name. Two of

them, stelae 1 and 3 (Figs. 34, 35), are carved around the edges with a Classic Veracruz-style scroll design, though otherwise the faces are not sculpted (McCafferty 2001, 293). Both were found broken by the excavators of INAH's Proyecto Cholula and reconstructed from fragments (Acosta 1970; Contreras 1970). According to McCafferty (2001, 293), altars 1 and 2 could have served as thrones for putative dual theocratic rulers of the Olmeca-Xicallanca (based on the ecclesiastical structure of Cholula at the time of the Spanish Conquest). They may also have had astronomical significance.[55] Baird reproduces one, Stela 1, as presently displayed. The painted images on this monument, if there ever were any, have long since disappeared, but Baird uses its carved relief border as a comparison to the apparent depiction of a stela in the Battle Mural. Blank stelae are also known from the Maya area, including, perhaps significant in light of the connections we will explore in Chapter 6, Ceibal (Rice 2004, 207). Because they are blank, I do not include them in the Catalog.

Two Matlatzinca Stelae: Teotenango and Nevado de Toluca

Two additional Central Mexican stelae come from the Matlatzinca area in the Valley of Toluca in the present-day state of Mexico and adjacent border areas of Michoacan, Guerrero, and Morelos. This relatively neglected archaeological zone takes its name from the southern Otomí language spoken there at the time of the Spanish Conquest, when the area was a quasi-autonomous tribute state of the Mexica. I exclude both of these stelae from my comparison with Maya material and from the catalog, the Teotenango Stela

[55] "[Altars 1 and 2] are aligned with the solstitial sunset so that Stela 3, if placed behind Altar 2, would have cast a shadow onto the stela of Altar 1."

because it features only glyphs, and the Nevado de Toluca stela because of its uncertain date, but instead discuss them briefly here.

Teotenango (Fig. 2) in the present state of Mexico was yet another Epiclassic fortified center in Central Mexico, though occupation at the site continued into the 16th-century. The single low-relief stela (Fig. 37) from the site dates from the Period 2 Viento phase (also called the Roxu Hupi phase, using the Matlatzinca language), which corresponds to the Early Postclassic (900-1200), according to the principal excavator, Piña Chan (2000, 40-41). By this reckoning, it might be coeval with the Tula stelae rather than the Xochicalco examples. However, in an earlier work (Piña Chan 1977, fig 49), he refers to the glyphic dates on this stela as "in the style of Xochicalco," and Berlo (1989, 41, fig. 23b) includes it in her study of Epiclassic historical inscriptions. Rather confusingly, Susan Toby Evans (2004, 415) states that Teotenango's interactions during the Epiclassic "were oriented toward tropical tierra caliente further south, particularly with Xochicalco in the early part of Teotenango's occupation." But a few lines later, she states that although "Teotenango had been occupied from the Late Classic; its civic-ceremonial center was first built in the Early Postclassic," and cites Piña Chan (2000). But according to that source, the first (albeit relatively small) ceremonial center at the site dates to Period 2 Tierra (Tenowi Hana), which corresponds to the Epiclassic (Piña Chan 2000, 40), and includes other reliefs of glyphs in the style of Xochicalco. Quezada Ramírez (1972, 62, n. 166), in her general history of the Matlatzinca, attributes the stela to "perhaps the Late Classic." The only safe conclusion from all this is that the stela dates from the broad period of the Epiclassic through Early Postclassic. It bears four dates in a glyphic style related to Xochicalco's, variously read by successive scholars. Alvarez A.

(1975, 283) reads “7 Deer” and 2 Water” on the arbitrarily designated “Side A” of the slab, while Urcid reads the dates as “10 Deer” and “10 Water.” On the reverse side, B, Alvarez A. (1975, 283) saw “7 Water” and “7 Serpent,” Urcid “2 Water” and “10 Serpent.” Alvarez A. also reports that Caso read “7 Serpent” as equivalent to “13 Reptile Eye.” As if the basic readings of the glyphs were not uncertain enough, Interpretations of the meaning of the text range from attempts to force the dates into the schema of the four previous destroyed worlds of later Aztec cosmology to a historical reading identifying the dates as four kings of the site or royal couples, one per side (Urcid 2007, 121-122). Alvarez A. and Urcid agree at least that the style of the glyphs is related to the sculpture of Xochicalco. The stela is presently displayed in the Roman Piña Chan Museum on the site.

Another very little-known sculpture shares the space of the Piña Chan Museum with the Teotenango stela, a stela (Fig 38) retrieved from the nearby 4700-meter high volcano, El Nevado de Toluca. The crater at the top of this mountain contains two lakes, Lagunas del Sol and de la Luna, respectively, that were used by the Matlatzinca in prehispanic times as places of sacrifice to rain and water deities like the famous Cenote of Sacrifice at Chichen Itza. Divers have recovered objects of stone, wood, and copal incense since the 1950s, mostly in looting operations rather than controlled archaeological explorations (Luna Erreguerena 2000). According to Quezada Ramírez (1972, 63), Professor Otto Schondube discovered not only submerged offerings, but “on the edge of the crater he found a fragmented and very deteriorated stela of the Late Postclassic; it represents a personage of which the legs are visible. A large 'star' covers the torso; in the lower left corner it is possible to observe some Mexica numerals, but not enough to determine a

date."[56] Montero García (2003a) provides the date of this discovery as 1962.

Montero García illustrates the stela, and in another work (2003b), he gives the dimensions as 103 cm. high and 40 cm. wide. The top part of the stela, bearing the figure's head, was broken off, presumably in antiquity. What remains are the legs and torso. The figure is shown as standing, feet out to the sides like those seen on the Tula stelae. It displays sandals and ornate knee ornaments. The upper torso is covered by a circular frame, at the bottom of which appears a "star" with four large triangular rays corresponding to the four cardinal directions and four smaller rays corresponding to the intercardinal directions. The center of the "star" consists of a disk surrounded by a circle. The bottom of the ray corresponding to "south" looks like it is morphing into a serpentine appendage that extends downward between the figure's legs, over the right knee, and down the outer edge of the right leg. As the current label at the museum points out, the figure's feet seem to be clawed. Also hanging between the figure's legs is a belt or sash of geometric elements, the topmost square, the lowest two disks with depressions at their centers. Two additional small disks (dot numerals?) are visible to the figure's left.

Montero believes the stela served as a marker for astronomical observation by the Matlatzincas, marking a point from where one can see the sun set behind adjacent peaks of the mountain (both of which show evidence of prehispanic use) during the day of the solar zenith. He (2003b) interprets the image on the stela as a representation of Tlalchitonatiuh, Mexica god of the setting sun, "an incarnation of the sun as a precious mortuary bundle in the jaws of the earth as the setting sun. The occasion is the paradigm

[56] "…. en el borde del crater localizó una estela del Posclásico tardío fragmentada y muy deteriorada; representa a un personaje del que se pueden ver las piernas, cubriendole el torso una gran 'estrella', en el ángulo inferior izquierdo se pudieron observar algunos numerales mexicas, pero no suficientes como para determinar una fecha."

of decline, darkness, night, and death."[57] For its part, the wall text at the museum admits that the design of the monument has yet to be interpreted, but suggests that the iconography refers to rain rather than the sun, relating it (without arguments) to a colonial to present ritual performed by the modern residents of Teotenango to propitiate the rains.

The grounds on which Quezada assigned this monument to the Late Postclassic are not specified, and the current (as of February 2007) label text accompanying the stela in the museum gives it a date of 800-1200--the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic--though equally without explanation. The adjacent offering sites were used for a long time, and the oldest dated offering, a piece of copal incense, yielded a radiocarbon age of some 1500 years before the present (Luna Erreguerena 2000, 49). The disk and rays recall the solar figure portrayed on the El Cerrito stela, while some scholars have attempted to identify Tlalchitonatiuh among the reliefs of both Tula and Chichen Itza (Baird 1985). Its iconography and the question of its age clearly deserve more attention than the object has received in the extremely meager literature.

This concludes my survey of extant (and one no longer so) Epiclassic to Early Postclassic figural stelae in Central Mexico. Stylistically, they range over a broad spectrum, some with superficially obvious Maya parallels, some looking back to the artistic legacy of Teotihuacan, some (the Xochicalco Triad in particular) showing features not easy to harmonize with either the Maya or Teotihuacan visual traditions. This broad spectrum of variation exists within groups from individual sites as well as between sites, thus the differences between Tula stelae 1-3 and 4, and the significant disparities (faces only vs. full bodies, deep relief vs. sculpture in the round) between the Saenz triad and

[57] "encarnando al sol como precioso bulto mortuario en las fauces de la tierra como la puesta del sol. El ocaso es el paradigma del declive, de la oscuridad, la noche y la muerte."

the Xochicalco/Miacatlan "statues." In content, there is also a wide gamut, from frontal full-length portraits (Tula) to frontal faces and glyphs (Xochicalco Triad) to processing or moving profile figures (Tula Stela 4, Tlalpizáhuac), and from costume attributes compared to Classic Maya stelae to imagery resembling Terminal or Postclassic Maya (as well as local) iconography (El Cerrito, Nevada de Toluca) to concepts that are without any parallel (Cerro El Elefante). In many cases where Maya similarities were noted by previous authors, some of the forms and content in question are shared with Teotihuacan as well, blurring the issue of possible culture contact. Yet in a few instances—Tula, Xochicalco, and Cacaxtla—Maya resemblances remain apparent, an issue that I analyze in depth in Chapter 6. But before that, it is necessary to ask by what mechanisms might such long-distance cultural and artistic contacts have occurred? This brings us to review the types of explanations offered for Mexican-Maya interactions during the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic. It will be the next chapter's task to wade through the many published models to provide a critical review of the various hypotheses.

CHAPTER 3

CENTRAL MEXICAN ARTISTS UNDER THE INFLUENCE? A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON MAYA-MEXICAN INTERACTIONS AT THE CLASSIC-POSTCLASSIC TRANSITION

Introduction

Having surveyed the extant Central Mexican stelae of the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic, I now return to answer in greater detail the question posed in the Introduction: why do they matter in the greater scheme of Mesoamerican art history? Although they have historically played only a peripheral role, they are nonetheless part and parcel of a series of related debates that have (at times quite near literally) raged in Mesoamerican art history and archaeology for the past 120 years. While the focus of these debates differs by emphasis on various sites (Chichen Itza and Tula nevertheless commanding the jaguar's share), their shared essence can be distilled into two basic questions. First, granted that there are indeed similarities between selected art works and architecture from Central Mexican and Maya sites during the period from the collapse of Teotihuacan's cultural hegemony (c. 600) to the fall of Tula (c. 1150), by what mechanisms can these resemblances be best explained? Second, whatever the nature of Central Mexican contacts with Maya art during the transition from Classic to Postclassic, did such interactions have a lasting impact on the development of Central Mexican visual art traditions in the subsequent Late Postclassic period?

The adoption or hazily defined "influence" of Maya visual traditions has been

invoked to explain discontinuities between the art of Teotihuacan and its Postclassic successors: Toltec, "Mixteca-Puebla," Mexica. Marvin Cohodas rather broadly but clearly defined the differences between Central Mexican visual culture and the art of the Classic Maya. He states that while the "humanistic" Maya style places "emphasis on individualized portraits of the ruling elite along with their sacrificial victims and prisoners in which deity images are secondary," Central Mexican art

> focuses on anthropomorphic deities, rendered as accumulations of costume and attributes, attended by secondary humans who are usually not individualized... Unlike the fluid and interwoven compositions of Classic Maya monuments, the sculpture and painting of the Basin of Mexico are organized on the same geometric or gridwork plans that underlie architecture and urban design, resulting in unrealistically squat and squarish proportions for anthropomorphic images. (1989, 219)

These characteristics of Central Mexican art are especially typical of the styles prevalent in the Late Formative to Early Classic metropolis of Teotihuacan in the Basin of Mexico. Yet, beginning with the art of the Toltecs, elements traditionally identified as tending toward the lowland Maya pole of this stylistic dichotomy, like individualized ruler portraits and narrative scenes, make their appearance in the Central Highlands. To quote Cohodas again (1989, 219), “a much larger" stylistic "gap separates the monuments of Tula from those of its predecessor, Teotihuacan,” compared with greater evidence of continuity between Tula and the art of the Mexica capital, Tenochtitlan.

Although Cohodas himself is skeptical that the foreign connections evident in “the diversity of inspiration” of Toltec artists provide a sufficient explanation of this stylistic change, others suggest that they are crucial. Maya “influence” during the Epiclassic, as discerned in the sculpture of Xochicalco and the murals of Cacaxtla, has been repeatedly used to bridge the temporal and stylistic gap. Thus Mary Ellen Miller opines (2006, 187)

that “Tula was in many ways an experiment, a seeming union of the Maya and Central Mexico.” Some hypothesize that the full flowering of that experiment is to be found in the Late Postclassic art of Tenochtitlan. Kristan-Graham (1989, 356), Lincoln (1990, 34-35), and Miller have all speculated on Terminal Classic to Early Postclassic Maya influence on the visual arts of the Late Postclassic Aztec capital. Lincoln, for example, envisions,

> Chichen Itza as the transformational nexus between the Classic Maya and Aztec cultures, at least in terms of iconography and artistic style, but probably in terms of social and political evolution as well. Several art historians see the origins of central Aztec political and religious patterns among the Classic Maya.... [Cecelia] Klein emphasizes the rituals of autosacrifice and succession, whereas Miller and [Linnea] Wren point to more general similarities in coronation rituals as links between the Peten and the Basin of Mexico…Maya art and iconography and Mexican ethnohistorical sources indicate that similar patterns were followed in Maya and Mexican rites of kingship. (1990, 34-35)

Following Eric Thompson, Lincoln (1990, 188-189) adds his own voice to this chorus by identifying the earliest images of the Late Postclassic Central Mexican deities Tezcatlipoca (as we have already seen) and Tlalchitonatiuh at Maya Chichen. He concludes with the claim that "Chichen Itza presages and anticipates Aztec ritual and religion in a manner unparalleled at Central Mexican sites…Chichen can in fact be seen as the nexus between Classic Maya and Classical Nahua civilizations.”[58] Most recently, Miller (2007, 620) revives John Lloyd Stephens’ 19th-century assertion that the Mexica Stone of Tizoc strongly resembles the reliefs of “Toltec” Chichen.

The two linked questions are by no means marginal or tangential to the discourse of Mesoamerican studies. On the contrary, many of the greatest scholars of the last six

[58] Note how at one point he invokes the Peten and later shifts to Yucatan as the geographic source of the alleged inspiration for Mexica art.

generations entered the fray generated by these issues at some point in their careers. From Désiré Charnay through Eric Thompson, Alfred Tozzer, and George Kubler, up to the recent scholarship of Cynthia Kristan-Graham, Alfredo López Austin and Leonardo López Luján, and Karl Taube, the question of the nature of Mexican-Maya cultural interactions evokes often passionate opinions. Historically, many contributions to the debate have taken the form of a sort of partisanship, from subtle to blatant, on behalf of one Mesoamerican subregion at the expense of the creativity and aesthetic merits of the other. To introduce a polarity of extant opinions as a heuristic device for simplifying the convoluted mass of arguments, "Pan-Mayanist" scholars tend to emphasize the temporal and intellectual priority of their beloved Classic Maya in the origin of motifs, styles, and architectural forms shared by the Maya area and Central Mexico--at least when those traits correspond to those portions of the Maya artistic corpus that merit these scholars' aesthetic seal of approval. Frequently, these same writers interpret parallels between Central Mexican sites and those Maya monuments historically excluded from the Classic canon (like the whole northern half of Chichen Itza) as the result of Central Mexican intrusions into Maya territory, leading to "decadence" and works of art unbecoming of the Classic Maya. On the opposite side of the spectrum, another school of thought has historically granted Central Mexico the honor of place of origin of any shared artistic ideas. These authors therefore stress the chronological and creative priority of the Toltecs, or Teotihuacan, or Xochicalco, to explain points of similarity with Maya art.

This classificatory scheme for framing contributions to the literature on Maya/Mexican artistic interactions is, like all attempts at typology, an exaggeration and an abstraction offered for the sake of clarity and simplicity. Most participants in the

debate took more or less intermediate positions between these poles, though usually closer to one than the other, and if questioned, might well have denied any deviation from the ideals of objectivity espoused by their respective disciplines in the halcyon days before postmodernism. Yet, scrutiny of their language often betrays their biases. Terms like "decadence" and "barbarism," besides being artifacts of the teleological paradigm of art historical thought from Winckelmann to the 20th century, clearly betray the subjective tastes and preferences of the writer.

Over the past two decades, a number of contemporary contributors to these debates have attempted explicitly to frame their arguments so as to avoid the "who's on first?" trap. Rather than seeking to pinpoint the origins of shared visual vocabularies in either the Central Highland or the Maya lowlands, they inquire instead into questions of meaning. Why were these motifs shared by geographically distant elites during the Epiclassic? What function did their adoption serve the local ruling class at each site? Conversely, how did shared systems of visual symbols serve to mediate political and economic relationships between the numerous polities of the period? What, if any, pan-Mesoamerican mechanism facilitated the use of similar artistic forms and motifs over such wide areas? Trade, the spread of a political ideology tailored to the elite needs of this time of troubles, and mass missionary religions have all been proposed as explanatory frameworks. However, some of these attempts to escape from the trap of trying to locate the origins of shared traits in either the Maya region or Central Mexico appear more successful at jettisoning that framework than others, as we will see.

No discussion of these matters can avoid the central battlefield of the conflict for the past twelve decades, the question of the relationship between the art and architecture of

Tula and that of Chichen Itza. Readers unfamiliar with this contested topic are directed to Appendix 4 for my short history and overview of the evidence, relegated to the end matter for considerations of space, before continuing with the reading of this chapter. But before turning to a review of the myriad and sometimes muddled literature thrown up by 120 years of controversy, I briefly wish to position the controversies in their own larger social, historical, and ideological context.

Historical Context (1): "Influence" in Art History

> Theories that deploy the concept of "influence" from a superior culture to explain change…tend to beg the question. Such influence should not be presented as the natural outcome of contact, affecting the recipient culture like a disease, but requires explanation by an analysis of that culture's development, which could show why foreign features might be adopted or adapted at that particular stage.
>
> -Dickinson, *The Aegean Bronze Age*, 1994

First, a brief note on the rise, fall, and, yes, influence of "influence" in the discipline of art history. In the background of European culture history, of which art history and allied disciplines are recent products, "influence" was a term bound up with magic and the supernatural. Medieval and early modern demons and sorcerers, not to mention their successors among the Mesmerists and hypnotists of the 19th century, were said to put their victims under their "influence," overriding the subject's own volition and replacing it by the conjuror's own malevolent will. The medieval and early modern churches created a class of witch-hunting specialists to combat the influence of these alleged demons and witches. The latter-day counterparts of these specialists, the psychiatric profession, continue to employ the term influence among their taxonomies of human

misery and social deviance. A delusion of influence is a psychotic symptom in which the patient believes himself to be under the remote control of powerful forces, the fashion these days being for extraterrestrials or various governmental agencies rather than demons as the culprits of choice.

The way the term "influence" has been traditionally employed in art history does not much differ in essence from its folkloric or medical meanings. From the 19th century and ending, so we are often told, in the late 20th century, one of the major concerns of European art history was to trace the "influence" of a given artist, school, movement, or tradition--usually selected from among those subjectively privileged by the author as being the most original or aesthetically superior, as well as by relative temporal priority--on another artist, movement or regional tradition, often explicitly or implicitly framed as derivative and therefore inferior. As formalistic approaches dominated the discipline well into the 20th century, the usual procedure was to call attention to resemblances of morphology, composition, and by extension, concept between the two sets under comparison to argue that B derived from A. Documentary evidence of interaction or economic relations between the producers of A and B was then trotted out to increase the plausibility of the alleged connection. The hypothesized links varied in plausibility by case from almost certain to wildly speculative, but frequently missing was any consideration of the social contexts or motivation or volition of the "borrowers" of formal elements from the sources of "influence." As far as a sizable body of the literature was concerned, they might just as well have been victims of sorcery, magically compelled to copy works from other hands, lands, or even cultures, as if certain objects of art radiated magical forces compelling distant viewers to copy them to various degrees of fidelity.

Why certain aspects of the "donor" tradition were rejected by the "influenced" and others modified frequently went poorly explained, if addressed at all. Often chains or lines of "influence" among European artists and broader traditions were gathered together to create paradigms of the "evolution" of art, another way of removing volition and social context from consideration by employing the metaphor of a blind process from the natural sciences to describe human creative behavior.[59]

I am, of course, considerably simplifying a vast body of work here for emphasis, and perhaps overemphasizing its deficiencies, but not by much. And when by the 1960s, the European and Euro-American discipline of art history sought to formally annex the art of those parts of the world formerly colonized by its lands of origin, at first under the rubric of "primitive art," it brought this conceptual baggage with it. At its nadir in the 1950s and 1960s, this took the form of claims that the traditional arts of pre-Columbian America, Oceania, and Africa reflected the enlightening "influence," various degrees removed, of areas specially privileged as outside the territory of the "primitive," even if outside Europe, such as India and China. The term used for this transmission of "influence" from the Asian civilizations to the alleged backwaters--"diffusion"--derives from chemistry, where it refers to the mindless movement of molecules. As one pre-Columbian art historian put it succinctly, this approach "creates the impression that ideas, objects, and practices flow from one area to another of their own accord, like honey on toast" (Stone-Miller 1993, 32).

I use the past tense here because it is frequently alleged in settings from

[59] I am indebted to Professor William Clark of Queens College for the understanding of why "evolution" is an inappropriate framework for describing the history of art.

undergraduate introductory courses to graduate methods seminars, and taken for granted in many quarters, that with the advent of methodological advances in the late 20th century, particularly the various strands of postmodern thought that dissect notions of origins and authorship, we have discarded the idea of influence and ceased chasing its alleged trajectories in our published endeavors. Perusal of many recent journal articles, exhibition catalogs, and conference abstracts reveals otherwise. If "influence" as an ill-defined and mechanistic explanation for artistic interaction has been officially slain by the current ideological status quo in the discipline, then its corpse is still doing a lively *danse macabre* in certain sectors of the literature, particularly in medieval and Renaissance art history.[60] And if postmodernism has dissected the intentionality of the "influenced" as well as "influencing" artists into tesserae of textualities, scattered to the void and signifying nothing, this has not stopped artists and other humans, past and present, from at least acting as if they did have volition and choice, even if, to paraphrase Marx, they choose within social, political, and economic circumstances that are not of their own choosing.

In a specifically Mesoamerican art historical context, Esther Pasztory has penned a

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[60] For a characteristic example, no better (or worse) than many others, I refer the reader to the essay "'A La Facon Grece': The Encounter of Northern Renaissance Artists With Byzantine Icons" by Ainsworth (2004) in the catalog for a recent comprehensive exhibition of Byzantine art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. "Influence" remains a hazily defined concept. The author sets out the documented facts of contact between Byzantine art and the northern Renaissance world: the mass dissemination of religious icons from Crete to the rest of Europe, collecting of Byzantine art by Western European worthies, pilgrim souvenirs and the booty carried by returning crusaders. Her treatment of the motivations of northern artists in copying or emulating Byzantine art, however, remains rather superficial and fragmentary, ranging from broad generalities (fashions in the popularity of St. Luke in the north) to speculation on specific local political motivations (e.g., propaganda for plans for yet another crusade to liberate Byzantium from the Turks). In the end, very little of a vast and complex phenomenon is explained, and there is little treatment of the divergent contexts of northern European works from their Levantine models. While the author does attempt to address differences between the works of art under comparison, they are given relatively short shrift. The paper could have been published thirty or fifty years ago as far as the methodology goes. (I am again

pithy critique of traditional models of "influence." Referring to similar attempts to "explain" the wide distribution of Teotihuacan forms across large portions of Mesoamerica during the Classic period, she comments,

> The word influence suggests something oozing out of Teotihuacan-style objects that affects the arts of other areas rather like the physical properties of osmosis. As [Renaissance art historian] Michael Baxandall has shown...this is looking the wrong way at a situation, confusing the agent with the patient. Influence, in fact, works the other way around. What we have to examine is how and why someone draws upon, adapts, reinterprets, or appropriates another style or subject. (1993a, 118)

Historical Context (2): Ghosts of Colonialism?

From the general we return to the particular. Given the protracted nature of the conflict over the nature of Maya "influence" in Central Mexico (or the reverse), it is fitting to ask: besides the ambiguities of the available data, what mechanism or motivation might account for the ferocity of these debates and the appearance of what looks like posthumous advocacy on behalf of long dead cultures? One persuasive analysis of the historical antecedents of the acrimony in the Mexican/Maya art controversies comes from historian of religion Lindsay Jones (1995, 22-26). Employing the continental hermeneutic tradition as his methodological point of departure, Jones identifies analogies to the caricatured constructs of "peaceful civilized Maya" and "barbaric Toltecs (or Aztecs)" that mar many 19th -and 20th -century versions of the debate in the history of colonial discourse concerning Native Americans in general. From the time of the first European conquests of the New World in the 15th-16th centuries, images of Native

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indebted to William Clark for his insightful critiques of this essay.)

Americans in Western writing and art followed a similar dichotomous structure, marked at one extreme by a view of American Indians as barbarous, immoral savages (and thus justifiable victims of European enslavement, conquest, and forced conversion to Christianity). At the opposite pole, other colonial authors and an 18th-century continental tradition influenced by Rousseau, envisioned Native Americans as idealized innocents, closer to nature and to classical conceptions of a Golden Age than the corrupted civilization of the colonizers.

Jones identifies how these Manichaean tropes reappear in the debate over the nature of pre-Columbian cultural/artistic relationships between Central Mexico and the Maya. One culture area was often assigned to the privileged position corresponding to the romantic stereotype of Native Americans. For most early to mid-20th-century Anglophone Mesoamericanists, the area selected to play this part was the Maya (Jones 1995, 32-37), the "Greeks of the New World," conceived at the time as an impossible utopia of non-violent astronomer-priests and devout peasants. These scholars gave the Maya temporal priority in matters corresponding to their Eurocentric concepts of "civilization," while attributing a Central Mexican origin to motifs and traits inconsistent with their idealized vision of the Maya, like images related to warfare and sacrifice. The Central M exicans were thus cast as the "bad Indians." When the Toltecs, and/or their Maya allies who had become culturally "Mexicanized" via their influence, allegedly invaded Yucatan in the Early Postclassic, an event created from dubious archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence to explain the similarities between Tula and Chichen Itza, they corrupted a previously monotheistic Maya by introducing them to human sacrifice, idolatry and even sodomy (e.g., Thompson 1970). They compounded their crime by

introducing decadent and "very unsympathetic" (Coe 2005, 179) Toltec art, to boot. At best, the Central Mexicans are "grim militarists" (Coe 2005, 177), Romans to the Maya Greeks; at worst, akin to the "barbarians" on the periphery of the classical world.

The resemblance between these racist caricatures and the more generalized stereotypes of Native Americans highlighted by Jones is most striking. And it is not only the Maya who are cast in the utopian mold. At the very beginning of the Tula-Chichen controversy, the 19th-century French antiquarian Désiré Charnay (1887) championed the Toltecs as the heroic bearers of civilization to the rest of Mesoamerica. But as a general trend, the Maya got to wear the white hats in 20th-century writing, enabling (and ennobling) them to be the donors of their artistic achievements to a relatively benighted Central Mexico. In their blatant form, such extreme views have long since fallen out of favor in discussions of Epiclassic artistic interactions between Central Mexico and the Maya. Yet, just as traditional colonialism transformed into neocolonialism and now hides behind the mantra of "globalization," so kindler, gentler, more PC ghosts of the old stereotypes continue to haunt some of the more recent literature on relations between Central Mexican and Maya art traditions at the end of the Classic.

Explanatory Models

The Migration Maze

Having provided some of the larger ideological context for the debates over the

relationship between Mexican and Maya art, and in Appendix 4 highlighted the central nub or focus of these conflicts in the relationship between Tula and Chichen Itza, it is time for me to provide a critical survey of theoretical options. It will already be apparent to the reader of Appendix 4 that the majority of solutions to the Tula/Chichen impasse, from Charnay's time on, involve actual movements of people--migrations, invasions, exiles--to explain similarities in art. Either Quetzalcoatl and company invade Yucatan or misplaced Maya end up in the central highlands of Mexico. The fondness for this rather concrete species of explanation for cultural similarities is an artifact of the biases and thought habits of archaeology from the 19th to well into the 20th century. If ill-defined "influence" on passive recipients was the dominant interpretation for formal similarities in art history during the same time, archaeologists invoked the even more concrete and unnuanced processes of migration or invasion to explain the same or analogous phenomena. In both instances, the proposed "recipients" of a trait or style are marginalized into passivity. In the case of migration explanations, local artists don't need their own reasons for adopting "foreign" forms or motifs. They were simply forced to do so at obsidian spearpoint by their conquerors, or learned in awe at the feet of enlightened culture bearers--if they in fact, and not the alleged invaders themselves, actually produced any of the art in question. As with art historical constructions of the direction of "influence," 19th- and early 20th-century archaeology invoked migrations out of specially favored "cradles of civilization," like Mesopotamia or Egypt, to explain the development of art and culture in outlying areas judged as benighted by European standards. The parallels with the policies of the colonial homelands of the majority of archaeologists of this period are most interesting.

However, by the 1970s, migration fell out of favor as an explanatory mechanism for cultural change and parallels in archaeology, Old and New World.[61] In part, this was a result of a shift in ideological fashion, as processual or the "New Archaeology," with its emphasis on the role of local responses to the environment as a motor of cultural development, reached dominance (Smith 2007, 591). But it was also a product of the absence of substantial evidence for many proposed invasions and migrations. Even the alleged saga of migration of Indo-European peoples out of the Russian steppes, and the postulated incursions into Ireland of Iron Age Celts from the European continent, long staples of the mental landscape of Old World archaeology, have been called into question for lack of evidence (Mallory 1992; Raftery 1994), despite their explanatory use for understanding the distribution of major language groups. An obvious problem for migration models is the historical fact that not every occurrence of a trait or even an object outside its place of origin implies it was carried by invading hordes or colonists. A future archaeologist unacquainted with the history of 21st-century North America, using the same logic, might conclude on the basis of Japanese manufactured technology in North American sites that the US and Canada were provinces of a Japanese empire. As Richard Diehl puts it, bringing us back to Middle America,

> Previous generations of archaeologists have justly criticized migration as an 'explanation' for every culture change they identified but could not explain. Mesoamericanists in particular have been guilty of this practice, and some of their reconstructions resemble great ethnic chess games in which groups shoot across the landscape in ways only queens and bishops could equal. (1983, 50)

[61] This is not to say that contemporary Mesoamerican archaeologists do not believe any migrations took place in the prehispanic era. As Tim Pugh points out, the population of the lowland Classic Maya centers went somewhere after abandoning their cities, and there is much ethnohistorical and linguistic evidence for migrations from Yucatan to the Peten during the Late Postclassic (personal communication, January 25, 2008). But migration is no longer the first explanation of choice for similarities like those discussed in this chapter, and the evidence for the migrations invoked to explain Central Mexican-Maya cultural parallelisms is definitely wanting by the standards of recent assessments (see Smith 2007).

As we saw in Appendix 4 in discussing the peregrinations of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl and Kukulkan, some modern archaeological narratives of prehispanic migrations in the Epiclassic and Postclassic rest on literal (and Eurocentric) understandings of indigenous histories as preserved at the time of the Spanish invasion. As ethnohistorian Alexander Christenson (1996) notes, many Conquest-era Mexican and Maya migration legends served primarily to explain and emphasize the gap between ruled and rulers by attributing exotic origins to the latter. While most of these accounts do seem to be set in the Classic to Postclassic transition, any historical veracity, in addition to their propagandistic value, is difficult to validate from the archaeological record for this time, which Christenson calls "the murkiest period." As he puts it,

> It is clear that it was a time of transition and change everywhere, but specific evidence for population movements is hard to come by. The situation is best in Central Mexico, where an Epiclassic archaeological horizon has been defined that seems to correlate very well with what is known linguistically and historically about the Nahua migrations...However, this pre-Toltec horizon antedates most of the ethnohistorical sources. (Christenson 1996, 9)

Since most of the population movements described in indigenous histories, if they have any basis in historical occurrences, most likely involved numerous small elite groups rather than migrating hordes, they would leave few traces to confirm their existence archaeologically. Although Christenson qualified his skepticism with the proviso that some excavators were undertaking "promising efforts," he was forced to conclude that "No clear archaeological signature has been found for any of these groups." Ten years later, the situation remains the same. This has not completely stemmed the tide of migratory models to explain cultural convergences between Epiclassic Mexico and the

Maya, and I will now examine two particularly persistent, if not fully persuasive, variants.

The Putun as Deus Ex Machina

As discussed in the treatment of Chichen Itza in Appendix 4, Eric Thompson (1970) invoked the Putun or Chontal Maya of the Gulf Coast as go-betweens responsible for ferrying Central Mexican traits, and in his version, even the exiled Quetzalcoatl himself, to Yucatan. His hypothesis generated a trend among authors through the following three decades to bring in the Putun to explain any and all artistic or cultural parallels between Central Mexico and the Late Classic, Epiclassic/Terminal Classic, and Postclassic Maya world. These energetic merchants are variously credited with concrete feats like distributing plumbate pottery from Soconusco to the Toltecs (Diehl 1983, 152) to more grandiose endeavors like mediating Epiclassic artistic exchange over an area ranging from Cholula and Xochicalco to Tajin, east to Yucatan and south to Soconusco and the Usumacinta (Fig. 3) (Kowalski 1989). As noted in Appendix 4, Thompson (1970, 45) equated them with the Itza of the ethnohistorical sources at Chichen Itza, and described their far-flung influence in superlative terms, even suggesting the existence of a Putun "empire." Some pundits bring them into Central Mexico during the Epiclassic as either merchants or migrant mercenaries (e.g., Coe 2005, 164), where they are made responsible for the Maya features at Xochicalco and Cacaxtla. The fact that ethnohistorical sources[62] describe the latter site as invaded by a shadowy people known as the Olmeca-Xicallanca,

[62] In particular, a passage from Chapter 3 of the *Historia de Tlaxcala* of Diego Muñoz Camargo,

whose name refers to the site of Xicalango in Putun territory around 800 tends to reinforce this interpretation. From such Epiclassic footholds in the central highlands, Coe (2005, 165) writes, they "must have played a very aggressive role in a time of troubles, and their presence in the Mexican highlands may have played a formative role in what was to become the Toltec state."

For suggested Maya contacts with the incipient Toltec state that might be reflected in the Tula stelae, several hypotheses linking the Putun or related peoples with the Nonoalca, a people claimed in traditional Nahuatl histories like the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*[63] to have formed one part of the Toltec population alongside Chichimecs from northern Mexico, are of potential relevance. Davies (1977, 168, 200) interprets the consensus of the evidence from these post-Conquest sources as indicating that a component of the Nonoalca came from an area of the Gulf Coast "heavily dominated by Maya cultural influences," suggesting that "the possibility should not be overlooked that some have been speakers of a Mayoid tongue" and were "perhaps not uninfluenced by Mayan [sic] civilization". He invokes the presence of these alleged Gulf Coast immigrants to explain Maya features at Xochicalco, and from there, their diffusion to Tula. Archaeologist and Postclassic Maya specialist John Fox (1991, 214) overtly identifies the Nonoalca with the Putun and places them at Xochicalco and Cacaxtla as well as at Tula.

The Putun are thus kept very busy by their modern employers, so much so that they seem to become superheroes, flying in to the rescue whenever a better explanation is lacking for some artistic trait found in both Central Mexico and the Maya area. Their

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reproduced by Piña Chan (1998, 32-33).

ubiquity amounts almost to omnipresence, and the sheer magnitude of cultural mediation ascribed to them in itself should provoke a degree of skepticism. Such skepticism is reinforced by a closer look at the evidence. We have no direct and unambiguous historical accounts of the Putun invading Central Mexico, or even plying their wares between Tula and Yucatan. The ethnohistorical evidence basically consists of extrapolating into earlier times the role of the Putun at the time of the Spanish Conquest, when their trading center at Xicalango was the commercial meeting place of the Mexica and Maya, and identifying other peoples referenced in Conquest-era indigenous histories--the Olmeca-Xicallanca, Itza, etc.--with the Putun, to varying degrees of plausibility. The equation of the Nonoalca with the Putun, for example, is interesting but unproven. Other interpretations of the same indigenous sources place the homeland of the Nonoalca at Teotihuacan (Jones 1995, 320-321). Davies himself (1977, 169) suggested that the Nonoalca were a multi-ethnic and polyglot group, who "possibly owed their unique qualities to a rich blend of different genes, combining in their blood the ancient heritage of Teotihuacan and El Tajin with Mixtec, Mazatec-Popoloca, and even Maya elements." In a similar fashion, Diehl speculated that the evident "linguistic diversity" attributed to the Nonoalca suggests that

> they were not a single ethnic group, but rather 'civilized' people who migrated to Tula from almost everywhere, except the northern frontier. They probably included middle and upper class people from Teotihuacan, Monte Alban, Xochicalco, Tajin and other centers who were forced to search out new lives when their home communities declined in power and influence. (1983, 50)

Such an eclectic amalgam of Epiclassic diaspora becomes hard to define or trace to any specific geographic roots. Michael Smith (2007, 592) takes an even more skeptical

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[63] A 16th-century manuscript created in Cholula. See Kirchhoff (1976) for facsimile.

view: given the propangandistic and mythological character of Nahua historical sources, he doubts if the Nonoalca ever existed outside of legend.

The notion of Maya *condotierri* prowling and subjugating the highlands of Mexico may not find much support in the artistic and archaeological material. Were the Maya or "Maya-influenced" artists of Cacaxtla truly the conquerors of that city? Pasztory (1993a, 130), arguing on the basis of the coerced employment of artists from conquered city-states by the Classic Maya as a form of tribute, suggests the reverse: the painters of Cacaxtla were prisoners, the vanquished rather than the victors.

Archaeologically, a significant obstacle to testing "Putun-centric" models of Maya-Mexican interaction is the paucity of monuments and dearth of excavated materials for the Putun homeland of Campeche and Tabasco during the Epiclassic to Early Postclassic. If the Putun were ferrying artistic and architectural ideas back and forth between Central Mexico and the Maya lowlands, they do not appear to have taken any of these notions back to their place of origin. No sites closely resembling Cacaxtla, Xochicalco, Tula or Chichen Itza have emerged as yet from the jungles and swamps of coastal Tabasco. This gap constitutes a major objection to the Itza's seminal role at Chichen for Coe, who complains that "This hypothesis cannot be tested, given the almost total lack of archaeological information on the Putun homeland…but it seems likely that had there ever existed a Tula-like center with stone monuments in that area, it would have been discovered by now." (Coe and Koontz 2002, 172) However, Coe does not let the same observation stand in the way of a putative Putun role at Cacaxtla or even Tula, as we have already seen.

Closer scrutiny of the extant archaeological data from the Putun homeland does

reveal some features shared with Toltec art, but they are indeed meager if the locals were indeed involved in the formation of Toltec culture or bridging the gap between Tula and Chichen or the Classic Maya. Fox cites,

> a modeled ceramic piece… from Pajaro, a unique concatenation of four sitting atlantes are portrayed in local styling (i.e., attired only by loincloth). They uphold a platform with a single, towering, typically Toltec uniformed warrior displaying large ear plugs, cotton armor... and with Toltec weaponry-- an atlatl lance in one hand and, in the other a round shield with... symbols (i.e., perhaps conventionalized 'step frets') [like those adorning building friezes at Tula]. (1987, 41-42)

In other words, they could be taken as Toltec atlantids in miniature (Fig. 99). The rendering of the faces, however, suggests the local Classic Veracruz style to the north of the Putun area, around Cempoala. What the actual nature of the relationship between this piece and the similar atlantean figures of Tula (and Chichen) might have been is anyone's guess. But in scale, medium and scarcity, such miniatures make unlikely vehicles or even plausible markers for the movement of ideas between Central Mexico and the Maya, and even less probable precursors to actual monumental architecture.

A relief of a feathered serpent from Maltrata, Veracruz (Baird 1989, fig. 39), is similar to Toltec images of this mythical hybrid (Fig. 100). However, Nicholson (1971, 107) interpreted the style of the Maltrata reliefs as related to Xochicalco rather than Tula, and this seems to be the current scholarly consensus (Morante López 1998). A prowling jaguar relief from Atasta, Tabasco (Kowalski 1989, fig 8) bears formal similarities to the felines processing across the surviving veneer of Tula's Pyramid B (Fig. 101). The Atasta site's connection to the Putun is reinforced by its proximity to the Late Postclassic Putun trading center of Xicalango (Kowalski 1989, 182). Fox (1987, 58) even implies that this jaguar frieze marks the site of a Toltec barrio in Putun Xicalango, but there is no

artifactual material from this location to support this. A jaguar throne similar to those found in the substructures of the Temple of the Warriors and the Castillo at Chichen Itza was also turned up at Atasta (Kowalski 1989, 183). However, the mechanisms underlying these scant similarities remain uncertain in the absence of firm chronological placement for these Gulf Coast monuments. And, even if one block and one seat were sufficient evidence to declare Putun Atasta the bridge for artistic ideas between Tula and Chichen, that still would not settle the question of which direction(s) the putative "influences" moved between Mexico and the lowland Maya. If the sculptural forms in question were pioneered by the Putun in their homeland and than spread to both Hidalgo and Yucatan, they apparently did not catch on in their place of origin. In the absence of further archaeological data from the Gulf Coast, all or none of these suggestions may approximate the processes involved, and that is precisely the problem. In any case, the question remains why certain traits appear over a wide area of Mesoamerica, even if they do not appear everywhere.

Even the most basic archaeological evidence for movements of Putun sweeping over wide swathes of Mesoamerica at the end of the Classic, the broad distribution of Silho Fine Orange, an elite ceramic ware manufactured on the Gulf Coast, does not necessarily support the omnipresence of the Chontal. If the Putun were truly merchants, merchants have middlemen. Not every discovery of Fine Orange implies that an intrepid Putun porter brought it to the site of the find. Movements of pots do not imply movements of people. The assemblages of Chinese ceramics in British Victorian households do not imply a vast Asian diaspora pouring into 19th-century England. I am reminded of a comparable misunderstanding in the history of European archaeology. Because decorated

vessels called Bell Beakers are found in Neolithic and Copper Age contexts in western and central Europe, archaeologists invented a group of migratory traders and warriors, called rather unimaginatively the "Beaker Folk," who supposedly plied their wares across the Continent. Scrutiny of the evidence by the 1980s (e.g., Harrison 1980) later proved that while some vessels spread by trade and others by local copying, no single "Folk" was responsible. Some aspects of the post-Thompson extended concept of the Putun may eventually suffer the same fate in Mesoamerican studies. While the Putun may well have played a part in artistic interactions between Central Mexico and the Maya area during the Epiclasssic to early Postclassic, the heroic monopoly role reserved for them in some models remains unsubstantiated by the available data. Making them the authors of our stelae fails to explain the divergences in style noted among the Central Mexican stelae and their putative Classic Maya analogs, and minimizes the contribution of local artists to Epiclassic eclecticism.

Migration Model (Slight Return)

The history of the "Beaker Folk" provides an additional analogy to migration-based models of Epiclassic Mexican-Maya cultural interaction. A German prehistorian, Sangmeister, posited that Bell Beakers originated in Iberia and the idea was then carried by migratory smiths and traders into central Europe in a "flux" movement. Later, central European wanderers reintroduced the ceramic types, plus new costume elements and technologies, back to Spain and Portugal ("reflux") (Harrison 1980, 14). Like Sangmeister, some Mesoamericanists, noting that simple migratory movements provide

inadequate explanations for the complexity of highland/lowland artistic interactions, created complex scenarios where Central Mexican groups leave home during the Classic and belatedly return during the Epiclassic/Early Postclassic bearing all sorts of exotic "influences" as souvenirs acquired during their peregrinations. In one of the earliest examples of such scholarly saga-making, the Mexican ethnohistorian Jiménez Moreno (1970, 71) speculated that the Nonoalca may have been the same as the Pipil, the Nahuat-speaking peoples of coastal Guatemala. At the time of his writing, the Pipil were supposed to have left Central Mexico some time during the Classic and to have created the monuments of the Cotzumalguapan sites (Fig. 3) on their arrival in Guatemala. Because of similarities between Cotzumalguapan and Toltec art, he suggested that the Pacific Coast centers "could even be coeval with the beginning of the Toltec era," and that the Pipil then returned to Central Mexico, "bringing metallurgical knowledge and collaborating as Nonoalcas in the cultural evolution of the Toltec empire." Jiménez Moreno's dating of the Cotzumalguapan centers has proved to be closer to the mark than Parsons' placement of them in the Middle Classic (Chinchilla 1996), and the resemblance between Cotzumalguapan and Toltec sculpture, indeed striking, is overdue for detailed treatment. However, the equation of the Cotzumalguapa culture with Pipil speakers, though repeated in a number of survey texts, is no longer certain.

While Jiménez Moreno's "boomerang" model was not widely accepted, his notion of Central Mexican diaspora journeying to the Maya area and later returning to their ancestral homeland to participate in the formation of Toltec culture is echoed in several subsequent formulations. To explain the Maya-style murals of Cacaxtla, McVicker (1985) proposed that the nobles of Teotihuacan had fled to the Gulf Coast after the

collapse of their polity. In the coastal lowlands, they became acculturated to Maya traditions and politically tied to the Olmeca-Xicallanca. Returning to the highlands with their new allies during the Epiclassic, they conquered Cholula (credited to the Olmeca-Xicallanca in colonial sources) and had their exploits commemorated in the frescos of Cacaxtla. Baird (1989, 119) suggests a convergence between this model and "pan-Putunism" when she speculates "there surely would have been interactions between the Teotihuacanos or Teotihuacan-influenced Gulf Coast people and the nearby Chontal Maya, as well as the somewhat enigmatic Olmeca-Xicallanca, if in fact they were ethnically diverse peoples." Schele likewise saw the Olmeca-Xicallanca as neighbors and allies of the Putun on the Gulf Coast who "provided the conduit by which Maya symbolism and styles spread to western Mesoamerica [she cites Cacaxtla and Xochicalco in this context] and Teotihuacan symbolism spread to eastern Mesoamerica" (Schele and Mathews 1998, 360).

For the American archaeologist John Paddock and other "pan-Mixtecists," to employ a term coined by Nicholson (Nicholson and Quiñones Keber 1994), the cultural and political elite of Teotihuacan who undertook their amazing journey to the Gulf Coast and back again were Mixtec speakers. Paddock invokes an exodus of Mixtec speakers from Teotihuacan at the time of its collapse. Their wanderings took them to coastal Tabasco, where they mixed culturally and genetically with their Maya-speaking neighbors, becoming the Olmeca-Xicallanca of the chroniclers in the process. However, their fortunes in their new lowland realm waned when the power of the Maya city of Palenque in northern Chiapas blocked their further migration eastward into Maya territory--a conflict conspicuously absent from the epigraphic record at Palenque. Some then

migrated in reverse back to their Central Mexican homeland, captured Cholula and Cacaxtla as the Olmeca-Xicallanca, and laid the foundations for Postclassic highland art and civilization. This foundational involvement in the new political and cultural order of Central Mexico extended to their "Participation in early Tula" (Paddock 1994, 4).

Right from the initial premise, this version of the argument hinges on speculation. While the linguistic affiliations of the inhabitants of Classic Teotihuacan are still debated, with Nahuatl, Otomí, and even Totonac suggested as the language of the City of the Gods, a Mixtec hypothesis has never been favored by linguists or archaeologists. This flight of speculation mounts higher when Paddock addresses the events of the Epiclassic in Central Mexico. He regards the murals of Cacaxtla as a discovery that uniquely "adds so much right to the idea of Teotihuacan as a Mixtec capital" (1994, 3). While he concedes that in form, the murals betray the hands of Maya artists, "the content of the murals shows both traces of Teotihuacan culture and anticipations of Mixtec codex iconography." Exactly how they display the latter feature goes without explanation. Certainly on the formal level (Nicholson 1982, 242), there is no "anticipation" of "Mixtec" codex art, by which Paddock means the products of the broad and nebulous "Mixteca-Puebla" style, no longer understood as confined to or strongly linked in its origins to Mixtec-speaking peoples. Oaxacan affiliations have been discerned in the glyphs at Cacaxtla and Xochicalco, but the Cacaxtla murals display none of the distinctive deity attributes that characterize the "Mixteca-Puebla" codices, where they identify flatly colored and highly stylized and non-naturalistic anthropomorphic gods (Figs. 102, 103). While there is archaeological evidence both for Classic Oaxacan (probably Zapotec) migrants in the Tula region (Flannery and Marcus 1983), and, less

clearly, for contact between the Early Postclassic Mixtecs in the Mixteca Alta and the Tula polity, there is no data supporting a seminal role for Mixtecs in the foundation of Tula. Certainly no one supports the notion that they were the bearers of the Maya art elements suggested for that site.

In support of this sweeping epic of Mixtec migrations, Paddock also invoked the work of Bodo Spranz (1982) at the site of Xochitecatl, adjacent to Cacaxtla. Spranz identified the costume elements of deities from the Postclassic "Mixteca-Puebla" codices on ceramic figures from the Epiclassic occupation at the site. While this may indeed tie the Cacaxtla area to the genesis of the codex styles, the figures in question certainly do not bear any formal resemblance to the battle murals. There is nothing "Maya" about their appearance, which, as Paddock admits, "show[s] strong Teotihuacan reminiscences" (1994, 4). It is also worth noting that the subgroup of "Mixteca-Puebla" codices used for comparison by Spranz is the Borgia group of manuscripts, which recent consensus holds to originate from Puebla and Tlaxcala--precisely the Cacaxtla region--rather than the Mixtec area. With no links to either Mixtec or Maya art, these figures cannot be used to bolster claims for Mixtec-Maya hybrid invaders at Xochitecatl. Yet this did not stop Foncerrada de Molina (1993, 89, 163) from following Paddock in identifying the Cacaxtla mural artists with the Mixtec Olmeca-Xicallanca who left Teotihuacan to mingle with the Putun on the Gulf Coast.

While there is no evidence for this romance of mobile Mixtecs as mediators of Maya culture in Epiclassic Central Mexico, Paddock's work influenced subsequent claims for Maya "influence" on the formation of the "Mixteca-Puebla" style in the Puebla-Tlaxcala region. The principal contemporary excavator of Cholula, Geoffrey McCafferty, credits

Paddock for "suggest[ing] to me the Mixteca-Puebla [ceramic] polychromes may have derived with modification from Late Classic Maya polychromes, which include both orange-based and white-based types" (1994, 98). McCafferty's comparative analysis of Early Postclassic Cholulan polychrome wares with Late Classic lowland Maya parallels identified what he calls "striking" formal and decorative parallels, making Paddock's suggestion a "powerful hypothesis." Combining this archaeological data with his reading of Nahua traditional histories, McCafferty identifies the Olmeca-Xicallanca with the Putun. After their conquest of Puebla, "A syncretism of Classic Lowland and Central Highland cosmology may have been forged at Cholula, which succeeded in integrating diverse peoples throughout Mesoamerica into a new world order exemplified by the Mixteca-Puebla style." Apart from the anachronistic employment of a term coined to the describe the U.S. imperial world-system in the 1990s to describe very different ancient Mexican sociopolitical phenomena, McCafferty's invocation of physical migrations, whether or not alleged in colonial histories, goes against the prevailing current of theoretical explanation in archaeology, though his observations on the ceramic similarities seem to point to another Early Postclassic Maya-Mexican artistic linkage in need of explanation.

Paddock's s views on the Olmeca-Xicallanca's linguistic affiliations were echoed by Fox:

> [They were] thought to have originated as Popoloca Mixtec, who variously controlled Cholula and perhaps… had a relationship with intruders of nearby Cacaxtla in Tlaxcala during the Epiclassic… Not coincidentally, the Puebla-Tlaxcala region has long been recognized as a source for the brightly painted Mixteca-Puebla ceramic and pictorial styles, and goes a long way toward explaining their sudden appearance in the Chontalpa at this time. (1987, 39)

The implications of the last "explanation" are not clear. Did the Putun encounter the Olmeca at Cacaxtla and Cholula, giving rise to the Mixteca-Puebla group of styles, which then spread back to the original Putun homeland in the Chontalpa? Thompson would no doubt have re-invoked his metaphor of brisk Virginia reels for these increasingly complex migration models had he lived to see their publication.

Both these "reflux" migration models and the variants of the Putun hypothesis discussed above emphasize Cacaxtla as a possible point of entry for Maya "influence" into Epiclassic Mexico. The undeniably Maya style, iconography, and even pigments of the murals certainly qualify the site as the locus of some sort of foreign contacts. Yet, Marvin Cohodas is skeptical of Cacaxtla's alleged role as the "missing link" between Toltec and Maya art that theoretically accounts for the stylistic gaps between Tula and Teotihuacan. On the contrary, he notes, the visual language of the Cacaxtla murals is very different from that employed at Tula. "Although Tula's monuments may be stylistically and iconographically related to those of Teotihuacan, the Pasión Maya, and Chichen Itza, there is actually little evidence of direct continuity with the eclectic style of Cacaxtla and Xochicalco" (1989, 225). While the evidence I discussed in Chapter 2--the formal and iconographic similarities shared by the Tula and Xochicalco stelae and the "steliform" figure from the Cacaxtla mural--calls Cohodas' sweeping skepticism into question, there is also sufficient difference between Cacaxtla and Toltec art to cast grave doubt on any notion that the latter derived predominantly or exclusively from the former. Ironically, reassessment of the C-14 and stratigraphic data from Cacaxtla and the calculated arrival of the Olmeca-Xicallanca at the site from the ethnohistorical sources by Sandoval and Delgadillo (1990) suggests that the murals antedate the invasion by at least a few years

and possibly over a century. In fact, they were purposely buried close to the time of the Olmeca-Xicallanca entrada around 800. The architecture and ceramics associated with the murals are local, not foreign. If Sandoval and Delgadillo are correct, the Olmeca-Xicallanca were not the artists but rather the destroyers of the site, which would effectively collapse an important support of the theoretical edifices making them the bearers of Maya art into Central Mexico.

In the end, the eclectic nature of the art of Epiclassic and Early Postclassic art in Central Mexico renders simplistic models based on migration unlikely and necessitates multi-stage "reflux" migration models that accommodate some of the data but strain under the weight of their own complexity. Zapotec glyphs and formal similarities to the art of El Tajin in northern Veracruz appear alongside Maya features in the art of Cacaxtla, Xochicalco and Tula. Should we then posit Zapotec and Tajin migrants joining the Putun on their adventures or bring the Olmeca-Xicallanca out of southern Oaxaca? Because of this complex eclecticism, Hirth (2000, 265) argues (correctly in my view) that migration cannot account for the stelae or other foreign influences in the art of Xochicalco. Instead, he suggests that “It is more likely that much of this variation was a product of interregional interaction with information about artistic and architectural style moving through interelite communication networks." And, while Cacaxtla remains a probable exception, we have no direct stylistic evidence for the presence of Maya artists to execute the Tula and Xochicalco stelae or any other works at those sites. For example, Smith and Hirth (2000, 34) consider it unlikely on stylistic grounds "that a Maya scribe or painter prepared the walls of the Pyramid of the Plumed Serpents for the carvings lack the spontaneity and calligraphic quality of Maya art." We have already seen that despite

their similarities, the Tula and Xochicalco stelae differ substantially from each other. While many concepts are shared, their unique expression at different sites makes migratory carvers or invaders an unlikely explanation, as well as illustrating the active role of the "influenced" local artists and traditions in actively modifying and interpreting any stimuli from abroad. But remember the notion of "reflux." We will be encountering it again in less concretized forms as we examine the complexities of Mexican-Maya cultural interaction.

The Business of Business

Hirth's remarks about "interregional interaction" and "interelite communication networks" quoted in the preceding paragraph represent the general trend in explanations of Maya-Mexican interaction since the decline of migratory models. Rather than wandering tribes or even the heroic efforts of one group of super-merchants, the flourishing of trade networks across Mesoamerica during the Epiclassic may have permitted the transfer of artistic ideas and their local emulation. Certainly, there is extensive evidence of far-flung commercial connections at Tula, Xochicalco, Cacaxtla, and Cholula, including interactions with the Maya world. The volume of long-distance trade, already considerable during the Classic, mushroomed to its greatest extent in Mesoamerican history by the Late Postclassic (Smith and Berdan 2003, 7), and the Epiclassic represents a pivotal time in this process of expansion. Kristan-Graham (1993) identifies images of merchants, akin to the later Aztec commercial caste or *pochteca,* in relief friezes on benches at Tula, suggesting that they played a prominent role in Toltec

society. Xochicalco served as major market center of the sort that "attracted merchants who trafficked in high-value, exotic merchandise" (Hirth 2000, 280). However, there is no direct correlation between the number of imports from the Maya area and the amount of putative Maya "influence" reflected in monumental art at each site.

Surprisingly, given its Maya-like facades, ballcourts and stelae, Xochicalco has the weakest evidence of trade relations with the Maya world. A number of greenstone plaques or pendants depicting seated figures with arms crossed over the chest and face framed by the jaws of a serpent (like the Triad stelae) occur in caches and burials at the site (Fig. 104). Although they are often viewed as Maya imports, as art historian Debra Nagao (1989, 95) points out, their "closest parallels" are an eclectic lot-- not only Maya jades from Copan, Nebaj and Palenque, but also examples from Late Classic to Postclassic Monte Alban, Tula, and even El Salvador. With a wide distribution and unknown sources, "Whether these Xochicalco plaques constitute evidence of Maya contact is unclear at this point," a statement as valid today as at the date of Nagao's publication. Hirth critically reviews past attempts to interpret the ceramic record at Xochicalco as evidence of Maya contact (2000, 201). Wares (blackware, one dubbed False Plumbate, and allegedly, Puuk slate ware from Terminal Classic Yucatan), vessel forms, and techniques of decoration (modeled reliefs) have all been used to argue for Maya trade with the Morelos center. However, such claims remain unsubstantiated owing to the inadequate descriptions and paucity of illustrations of these alleged Maya ceramics in the literature. The ceramic materials themselves, from mid-20th-century excavations, have apparently been lost. The identifications of plumbate-like ceramics and Puuk slate ware were tentative preliminary judgments by the excavators, and the formal parallels

with Maya vessels are sparse. Hirth (2000, 203) is forced to conclude that Xochicalco's trade "contact with the Maya area is questionable" outside of a Gulf Coast connection hinted at by reports of fine paste wares (the Putun again?). Hirth's collaborator in excavation and surveys of Xochicalco, Ann Cyphers, concurs that she has identified no Maya imports in the ceramics of the site, though she adds that a few examples have been identified from later excavations in the mid-1990s. Any formal similarities between Classic Maya and Xochicalco ceramic vessels may be the legacy of Early Classic contacts between the Classic Maya and Teotihuacan, leading to a wide distribution of such forms across Mesoamerica (Cyphers 2000, 13).[64]

Apart from its murals, Cacaxtla also has not yielded many artifacts tying the site to the Maya realms. Two polychrome ceramic urns decorated with naturalistic figures in appliqué closely resemble Maya incense burner stands from Tabasco (a Putun connection?) (Nagao 1989, 90, fig. 9) (Fig.105). Yet, scientific analysis shows that while these vessels betray knowledge of Maya goods, they are imitations rendered in local clay. A jade pendant in crude human form (Fig. 106) may constitute another Maya import, but it belongs to same poorly provenienced class of effigy pendants discussed for Xochicalco.

Evidence for Maya commercial links is stronger at Tula. While Evans (2004, 386) correctly maintains that "There is no Maya section of Tula," in the sense of an ethnic enclave like the Zapotec barrio discovered at Teotihuacan, her statement that "Maya

[64] Confusingly, she also speculates that the similarities are the result of "Mexicanized Maya" or "Mayanized Mexicans," whom she equates with the Olmeca-Xicallanca but places in Classic Teotihuacan. John Paddock would doubtless have approved, but such quickly mentioned speculations do little to clarify anything, and represent migration, with all its attendant problems, rather than trade as a mechanism.

forms of expression are not apparent" in the visual arts of Tula is, in light of the evidence discussed in Chapter 2 and further in Chapter 6, questionable. Kowalski (1989, 182) suggests that the Toltecs partnered with the Putun in trade with Soconusco (southern Chiapas and the adjacent part of Guatemala), or took control over trade routes previously utilized by the Putun. Certainly the Toltecs had trade connections and probably political clout in Soconusco, where plumbate pottery was manufactured to Toltec tastes and distributed both within and beyond the Toltec heartland (Diehl 1993, 270). An ax blade made from the Pachuca obsidian source controlled by Tula was found in the tomb of the 7th-8th-century Maya ruler Itzamnaaj Bahlam (Shield Jaguar) at Yaxchilan (Garcia Moll 2004, 270), while a carved shell plaque showing a seated Maya ruler in Late Classic style was collected at Tula in the 19th century (McVicker and Palka 2001). A Classic Maya polychrome vessel bearing yet another image of a seated lord turned up in excavations at Tula in the 1980s (Cobean 1990, 488-493, lám. 222) (Fig. 107). Maya ceramics--or local imitations of Maya ceramics--turned up in the same decade during the excavation of pre-Tollan Phase elite residences near the present site museum (Sterpone 2007, 41). Apparently on the basis of these last findings as well as iconographic considerations, Sterpone (2007, 56) believes that Tula received both artifacts and symbols from southeastern Mesoamerica during the ninth century. While all of these finds may have reached their destinations indirectly, changing hands through several intermediaries, they do support some degree of interaction and therefore knowledge of the lowland Maya by the inhabitants of Tula in the Late Classic, the time of the formation of Toltec art styles.

Yet, while interregional trade brought objects and perhaps travelers' tales of the Maya realms into Central Mexico, by itself it cannot account for the presence of Maya features

in Epiclassic Central Mexican monumental art. Even in the event that large-scale sculptures like the Xochicalco stela triad took their inspiration from portable objects like jade plaques (see Chapters 6 and 7), or the highly unlikely circumstance that the figural columns of Tula were patterned on pottery precursors like the Pajaro effigy, invoking trade does not explain why the local artists only chose to imitate some imported ideas, and modified those extensively. Again, as in traditional attempts to demonstrate chains of "influence" in Old World art, the intentionality and its attendant social and historical context of the "borrowers" remains unexplained, leaving them magically "under the influence" of exotic objects. Thus, trade must be paired with politics and ideology--local and regional--to explain why Epiclassic Mexican elites should draw upon and modify Maya forms (or vice-versa) for public art designed to bolster their claims to power. I will now present critical summaries of some of the most popular composite theories integrating art, ideology, politics, and economics.

Ideological and Systemic Explanations

The Reality of Zuyua?

In a conscious attempt to circumvent migrational models and the "Who's on first?" logjam damm(n)ing past efforts at solving the Tula/Chichen Itza question, anthropologist Alfredo López Austin and his son and collaborator, archaeologist Leonardo López Luján, presented (2000; 2001, 283-291) a broader sociopolitical explanation for Maya-Mexican

cultural interaction at the end of the Classic. They suggest that the similarities between Tula and Chichen Itza, as well as the artistic parallels among these sites, Cacaxtla, and Xochicalco, reflect the spread of a political and religious ideology in Epiclassic Mesoamerica. To avoid giving this complex a name suggestive of a specific point of origin, they dub their construct "Zuyuan," after the semisecret "language of Zuyua" that Conquest-era Yucatec Maya elites were tested on by their peers to establish their noble pedigree (Roys 1967, 88-98).[65] Features of this putative political ideology include confederations of elite lineages, the adoption of the cult and myth of the Feathered Serpent (Quetzalcoatl) as creator deity as a legitimating ideology, specific rituals of rulership, and the tracing of elite lineages back to various "Tollans" as part of a mythic charter of rule. The authors are careful to distinguish their "Zuyuans" from the Toltecs or any other specific peoples. They are defined not in terms of a single ethnic group, linguistic affiliation, or shared geographical origin. Rather, "Zuyuans" were all those peoples sharing the alleged widely distributed Postclassic model of government. The ideology's appearance in different regions could be the result of different mechanisms, from conscious adoption by local elites to outright conquest by foreigners.

As an attempt to define the essential features of Postclassic religion and politics that set them apart from those of the preceding Classic and to explain them as reflecting a unified body of beliefs and practices, López Austin and López Luján's Zuyuan construct is perceptive and of great potential heuristic value. As a mechanism for explaining how these ideological developments and their reflections in art traveled or were exchanged between regions, however, it represents little advance over its predecessors. Although

[65] On the other hand, Piña Chan (1980, 33-34), among many others, gave Zuyua a more concrete location in

they envision their model as a way out of the wars over the direction of influence between Central Mexico and the Maya lowlands, in fact, they argue "that the direction of the flow--regardless of who were its historical agents--was from Central Mexico to Maya territory" (2000, 27). After having kicked the Toltec invasion model for the Tula-Chichen parallels out the front door, they seem to sneak it back in through the rear entrance in different language. López Austin and López Luján seem to prefer a Central Mexican origin for the Zuyuan complex, perhaps at Cacaxtla or Xochicalco (2001, 289), and identify the Zuyuans at Chichen Itza as foreigners, either Tula Toltecs or Toltec-influenced Maya. The "Zuyuans" are thus still the invading conquerors of Chichen Itza, "dressed like warriors from Tula" (2001, 271), who set up a "dual Zuyuan/Maya government" at the Yucatec site. The Itzas represent a second wave of "Zuyuans." The "Zuyuan" features of Chichen imitate the features of Tula in Yucatan (2001, 275). There was a deliberate attempt to copy Central Mexican styles at Chichen Itza (2001, 286), where "the architecture and the iconography imitated elements found in Tula in Central Mexico, which itself was the most prestigious terrestrial copy of the mythical Zuyua" and "principal center for the transmission of Zuyuan ideology" (2001, 275). They cite in support of their position Hers' claim for Chalchihuites chacmools, as well as her argument for a northern origin for the skull rack or *tzompantli*. In Appendix 4, we have already seen that both propositions are open to question. Despite the attempt to recast explanations in terms of ideologies rather than migrations, it all begins to sound rather like Tozzer and Thompson redux, with the Zuyuan ideology behaving much like the Toltec invaders of days of yore. The term for this sort of thing is having it both ways, rejecting the standard diffusionist model on one hand while clinging to it with the other.

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the Putun enclave of Xicallango, while Coggins (2002, 48) seems to place it in Teotihuacan.

And if the Zuyuan ideology did indeed take birth in Cacaxtla and Xochicalco, that still leaves us with the question of how and why stelae and other Maya forms appear at these sites, and how they were adapted to fit local traditions.

Semantic Escape Clause: Coggins and the Toltec Redefined

The art historian Clemency Coggins (2002) attempts to step outside of migration as an explanatory framework for the far-flung distribution of visual traits in Epiclassic to Early Postclassic Mesoamerica by redefining the term Toltec as a rather diffuse ideology. Rather than denoting an inhabitant of Tula, she broadens the label to include all peoples throughout Mesoamerica who claimed to carry on the political and cultural heritage of Teotihuacan. For the Mexica, *toltecatl* could be used as a general honorific for a master craftsman. For Coggins (2002, 36), "Toltec" likewise expands and "refers to qualities of military and commercial leadership exemplified by traveling and emigrating citizens of ancient Teotihuacan, by their Epiclassic descendants after the collapse of the city, by their descendants at Tula, Hidalgo, and finally by their descendants at Tenochtitlan--although this cultural continuity took different forms at different times and places." Or, in other words, "Toltec refers to the distinctive culture emanating from Teotihuacan beginning AD 250-350, which was a critical element in the formation of Classic Maya culture. In the Epiclassic period, a more complex and diversified Toltec culture was widespread and especially evident at Xochicalco, Cacaxtla and Chichen Itza, although not at Tula, Hidalgo" (2002, 41). One word gets semantically stretched to cover broad terrains in space and time. Accepting the current consensus that Chichen Itza predates the

Tollan phase "by as much as two centuries," alleges that this confirms

> the Teotihuacan origins of much that is Toltec at Chichen, in which Toltec signifies the condition or practice of Toltecness [sic], lived by men of Teotihuacan ancestry, however far in the past the connection may have been...In my view, this description and the ideal of Tollan was based on Teotihuacan, while Tula was one of several Postclassic Mesoamerican Tulas founded after the fall of Teotihuacan that emulated the ever-developing yet ancient Toltec ideal. (2002, 45)

Coggins' suggestions--especially in the last sentence quoted-- force one to confront the question of how far one can stretch a term before it loses any specificity and, ultimately, any usefulness. It seems that her use of "Toltec" refers both to an ideology of Teotihuacan origin and to people of Teotihuacan descent practicing that ideology. In the former sense, her ideas converge with López Austin and López Luján's. They also tie their "Zuyuan" system to Teotihuacan, but less rigidly than Coggins, since they emphasize its innovative features vis a vis Classic cultures. Coggins, however distinguishes her "Toltecs" from their Zuyuans: as a "supraethnic ideal," Zuyua "describes a more systemic militaristic and multicultural political phenomena" than her "Toltecs" (2002, 49). But if the putative Teotihuacan rulers of Early Classic Tikal, the Late Classic Maya rulers of the same site who revived Teotihuacan imagery to tie themselves to a glorious past, and the Itza are all Toltecs as Coggins would have it, what then, should we call the builders of Tula? If "Toltec" is stretched to accommodate peoples living all over Mesoamerica, from the time of Teotihuacan to that of Tenochtitlan, and is simultaneously an ideology, an ethnicity, and elites claiming an ethnicity as an ideology of legitimation, its semantic focus snaps and collapses, rendering it too imprecise to be of any use.

That New-Time Religion?

In an influential paper, William Ringle and his colleagues Tomas Gallareta Negron and George Bey (Ringle et al. 1998) invoke a novel pan-Mesoamerican religious ideology, complete with corresponding governmental structures and pilgrimage cities, to tackle the Tula/Chichen dilemma and explain the dynamics of artistic and cultural interaction in the Epiclassic. On the basis of radiocarbon and inscriptional dates from Chichen Itza, they agree with many contemporary Mayanists that Tula was later than its alleged sister city in Yucatan. Although they stress the temporal priority of Chichen Itza, Ringle and company attempt, like López Austin and López Luján, to escape the constraining parameters of the Tula/Chichen debate and avoid tracing the shared features of Epiclassic cities to specific points of origin. Rather, these shared features are identified as pan-Mesoamerican markers of an Epiclassic "world religion" of Quetzalcoatl identifiable at Cacaxtla and Xochicalco and distributed across the Maya sphere from Putun Tabasco through Yucatan south into the Cotzumalguapa sites of Pacific Coastal Guatemala. Besides the obvious emphasis on feathered serpent imagery shared across these regions, the claimed markers of this cult include a greater emphasis on depictions of human sacrifice than during the preceding Classic, chacmools, Taube's War Serpent helmet (identified by Ringle as Quetzalcoatl himself in his role as creator), the Reptile Eye glyph, increased preoccupation with the ball game, and the spread of Fine Orange and Plumbate wares. The major centers of the Epiclassic participated in a network of linked pilgrimage centers doubling as regional political capitals or "Tollans" used, like medieval Rome, for the investiture of kings. The "Mixteca-Puebla" style figures in their

reconstruction as a Postclassic development of the Epiclassic "Maya-Toltec" style associated with the cult. Lind's work on the alleged influence of Maya ceramics on Early Postclassic pottery at Cholula is cited in support. More recently, Ringle (2004, 169) acknowledged the convergence and compatibility of his model with the Zuyuan hypothesis of López Austin and López Luján, and accordingly now places greater stress on the political aspects of the Quetzalcoatl cult" as a set of imagery, beliefs and practices associated with an ideology of leadership" (2004, 167) reflected in rites of royal investiture.

Ringle and his colleagues' model is well argued and seems to fit the latest data on relative chronology of Central Mexican and Yucatec Maya sites. It also attempts to explain many of the features of our stelae, like the serpent headdresses, the ball game imagery, the Reptile Eye glyph, in terms of shared religious ideology rather than migrations or conquests unsupported by archaeology. By including Cacaxtla, Xochicalco, Tula, and Cholula as nodes in a far-flung pilgrimage and commercial system extending into the Maya region, they provide a possible explanation for both the wide distribution of artistic ideas and the unique regional variations we have noted in reviewing the Central Mexican stelae. However, the Quetzalcoatl cult model is not without its own problems and limitations. Some of the identified markers of the cult are indeed defining traits that form the basis of the concept of the Epiclassic itself, creating room for confusion (and a degree of circularity) between the features of the period to be explained and an explanatory hypothesis for those same features. The authors' claim for an increased representation of human sacrifice as part of their Epiclassic cult does not seem fully accurate for the Maya area, and their assertion that Classic Maya images of sacrificial

death are limited to "some Late Classic lowland Maya ball game reliefs" is hard to sustain in light of the past thirty years of iconographic work that has identified sacrificial gore galore in Classic Maya painting, sculpture, and ceramic figures. While some of the Epiclassic representations may be more explicit, they are hardly an innovation. It remains an open question whether the ophidian images from across diverse regions of Mesoamerica they identify as Quetzalcoatl all represent the same pan-regional mythic being, or many supernaturals. Their identification of the War Serpent helmet as Quetzalcoatl based on Late Postclassic/Conquest era beliefs read back into the Epiclassic is not consistent with Taube's (2000a) extensive iconographic work referenced in the preceding chapter. Some of the Maya "feathered serpents" seem to be part of the Vision Serpent complex of the Classic Maya, rather than representing a novel development of the Epiclassic. Ringle et al. appear to admit the Vision Serpent analog themselves, noting that perhaps serpent head helmets are related to "the serpent as a means of transformation" (1998, 207).

Their theory of a region-wide cult as an explanation for the spread of linked artistic and architectural changes reminds me of earlier attempts to explain the spread of "Olmec" art or the "Middle Formative Ceremonial Complex" (Reilly 1996) across Mesoamerica, or the diffusion of megalithic monuments through western Europe, by invoking "missionaries." Although Ringle and company's arguments are not framed using such Eurocentric terminology and analogies, it is open to question whether it will fare the test of time any better than these failed and discarded models of change in the artistic and archaeological record. Like López Austin and López Luján, although their work represents an effort to break loose of the "who's on first" of the Chichen/Tula" war of

words, they seem reluctant to fully break with those terms. They stress the priority of Chichen Itza (e.g., 1998, 223) as much as López Austin and López Luján stress the importance of Central Mexico in transmitting "Zuyuan" traits to Yucatan. The cult acts in one sense as the same kind of sweeping explanation for the evidence as the Putun hypothesis, and indeed they acknowledge a debt to Davies, Fox and Thompson, whom they acknowledge as anticipating some of their own conclusions. Still, their hypothesis represents a far more nuanced explanation than many of its rivals and predecessors, and possesses great heuristic value. But while it might explain the sharing of certain costume elements on our stelae and provide a plausible reason for the kind of long-distance contacts permitting artistic contacts between Central Mexico and the Maya, it cannot explain the adoption of the stela form, which pre-dates the Epiclassic and has no special significance in the putative Quetzalcoatl cult.

The Worlds of World-Systems Theory

Ringle and his collaborators' model represents an example of the most popular theoretical options for explaining long-distance interaction and cultural change in Mesoamerica--Epiclassic and other--among contemporary archaeologists: variants of world-systems theory. This proliferation of ever-ramifying versions stems from the original world-systems theory of sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (1974; 2004)[66] which

[66] It is important to distinguish Wallerstein's version--or any other individual variant--from the world-systems perspective as a whole. As Peter Peregrine (1996, 1) points out, many archaeologists seem to reject the world-systems perspective, which he defines as a research program and general world view, because of the limitations of Wallerstein's or other specific theories of world systems, basically tossing the baby out with the bathwater.

in turn traces its intellectual lineage back to Marx. In its original form and focus, Wallerstein's work represents an attempt at a continuation of the Marxist project of social and political analysis of modern capitalist society in terms relevant to historical conditions from the 1970s onward, and retains many concepts and terminology from Marx's original analysis of the capitalist and earlier modes of production as well as later Marxist theories of imperialism. It is also a critique of the static, ahistorical concepts of the structural-functionalist sociologies dominant in American academia in the 1960s, and related Eurocentric approaches to modernization characterized by gradualist evolutionary models of cultural development upholding the modern West as a model the "Third World" nations could emulate if they could shed their traditional "backwardness" (Shannon 1996, 1-8). In contrast, Wallerstein drew on another Marxist variant, the dependency theory of Andre Gunder Frank (1967) and others, analyzing the exploitation of the underdeveloped "periphery" by the Western imperial powers (the "core"). This concept of core economic/political powers and the peripheral areas playing a subordinated but important function integral to the total network is incorporated into most definitions of world systems, raising critiques about its own anachronistic and Eurocentric aspects when applied to the analysis of pre-capitalist societies. By the 1980s, archaeologists working in Mesoamerica and other areas adopted and modified Wallerstein's ideas as heuristic devices for explaining cultural change. This active borrowing of sociological "influence" in turn represented an attempt to bypass the problematic theories prevalent in archaeology at the time, specifically the "New" or "processual" archaeology focused on local cultural evolution in response to the environment (itself related to "vulgar" or mechanistic variants of Marxism) (Kepecs and

Kohl 2003, 15).

A simple definition of a world-system is an integrated global or multi-regional economic and political system, encompassing multiple but economically interdependent nations, states, and/or societies, characterized by core-periphery relations and a single mode of production (e.g., capitalism in the modern era from around 1450 to the present). The economy, and its political superstructure, in each part of this system conditions and is in turn conditioned by the economies of the other parts. The immediate and obvious problem with this definition for archaeologists trying to adapt the theory to understand pre-capitalist societies of the days before modern technologies integrated the world into the global matrix it is today is its basis in modern conditions. In fact, Wallerstein argued that earlier systems like the Roman, Chinese, or Inka spheres of influence, which he called world-empires, were distinct systems, integrated within their own boundaries, but not global economies like the modern world-system. The first anthropologists to employ world-systems theory to elucidate of prehispanic Mesoamerican cultural interactions (e.g., Blanton and Feinman 1984) argued that rather than the massive commercial trade in goods that maintains the capitalist system, interelite trade and exchange of prestige goods and high status ritual objects in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica created extended networks of economic relations between different polities, with recognizable cores and peripheries, over varying expanses of geography. These networks changed dynamically over time.

These modifications by anthropologists working in different cultural areas, along with critiques of the concept from within sociology and economics, have made the term "world-system" a bit nebulous, dependent for its meaning on context and which author is deploying it any time. Some of the proposed modifications of the definition are not only

excessively elastic, reducing its utility, but exacerbate the problem of Eurocentrism implicit in the original.[67] We find the underdevelopment theorist Gunder Frank, for example, now claiming that Europe, Asia and Africa have been parts of a single world system for the past 5000 years, and a capitalist one, with capital accumulation and profits, at that (Gills and Frank 1993)! On the other hand, critics charge that keeping the powerful core/exploited periphery polarity as an essential feature of world-systems makes for a bad fit with the Mesoamerican and other pre-capitalist economies, where peripheries by no means always occupy a subordinate or underdeveloped position vis-a-vis large cultural centers--if they exist at all (Kepecs and Kohl 2003, 15, 18).

Perhaps the most useful definition for studies of pre-capitalist systems, including Mesoamerica, is provided by Chase-Dunn and Hall: world-systems are "intersocietal networks in which the interactions (e.g., trade, warfare, intermarriage) are important for the reproduction of the internal structures of the composite units, and importantly affect changes that occur in these local structures" (1993, 855), in which "the fundamental unit of social change is the world-system, not the [individual] society" (1993, 851). These networks may be mediated by trade in bulk goods, elite exchange of prestige goods, military conquest and political interaction and information (like ritual practices and esoteric lore shared by elites) (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997, 52).[68]

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[67] Archaeologist Randall McGuire (1987, 123), writing from the perspective of Southwestern US Native American prehistory, puts it best when he states that "Wallerstein directs us to the right questions, but his work does not provide us the conceptual tools to answer those questions in non-capitalist world-systems."

[68] Their suggestion that world-systems may be classified into four types--kin or family based, tributary systems, capitalism, and socialism, is less useful for Mesoamericanists. While local states in Central Mexico and the Maya area presided over local tribute networks during the Classic through Early Postclassic periods, only the Mexica created an almost pan-regional tribute "empire" during the Late Postclassic. Yet, the evidence for intensive regional interactions in Mesoamerica goes back to the Formative.

In its emphasis on systems, processes, and interactions, world-systems theory dispenses with the clumsy, mechanistic, and unsubstantiated migrations and "diffusion" of earlier efforts to explain cultural interaction. If all polities and cultural systems in, say, Epiclassic Mesoamerica, were integrated by economic ties and interdependent, change in each part of the whole causes reverberations in all other parts of the system. This potentially provides a more decentered, if more complex, framework for studying Central Mexican/lowland Maya interactions, avoiding the "who's on first" trap (if we can dispense with that core/periphery dogma). In its modified forms, it is also less Eurocentric than earlier applications of Marxist theory to Mesoamerican studies, like the equation of the Mexica tribute state with Marx's "Asiatic mode of production" (see Offner 1981 for critique). It has been applied, in varying forms and with various degrees of success, to the understanding of exchange and cultural processes in Late Postclassic Mesoamerica (Smith and Berdan, eds. 2003) and has proven useful for modeling the economic and political sphere of Epiclassic Chichen Itza (Kepecs et al. 1994) and its relationship with Tula (Kepecs 2007). On the other hand, its drawbacks and detractors remain many. Is the heavy focus on economic factors as the prime drivers of cultural change a helpful heuristic device or simply a forcing of pre-modern, non-European cultures into the anachronistic mold of modern capitalist society?

One problem shared by many variants of world-systems theory with some of its Marxist predecessors is a tendency to regard art, religion and other ideological developments central to our inquiries, as "superstructural" and therefore secondary outgrowths of economic and political relations, unworthy of the same degree of attention and analysis (Shannon 1996, 205). This approach ignores the observation that in pre-

capitalist societies esoteric knowledge sometimes functioned as an elite commodity in itself (Helms 1979), as well as trends in Marxist theory giving these "superstructural" cultural issues an important place in creating legitimacy for ruling systems and even constituting a relatively autonomous sphere (e.g., Gramsci 1971). In Mesoamerican and particularly Epiclassic studies, this deficit of the original formulations is being addressed by approaches like Ringle's work, which integrates religion and art into world-systems, hence their construct of the "world-religion" of Quetzalcoatl, and in recent world-systems analyses of the "Mixteca-Puebla" style and iconography as means of elite communication among economically and politically linked but linguistically diverse polities in Late Postclassic Mesoamerica (Boone 2003; Boone and Smith 2003; Masson 2003; Pohl 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Smith 2003). Smith and Berdan (2003, 4, 8) link these two projects. They separate the iconography of the Mixteca-Puebla style ("Late Postclassic international symbol set") from the stylistic components ("international styles"), and seek its origin in the "Early Postclassic symbol set," a "set of common symbols painted and incised on ceramics (including geometric designs such as the step-fret and stylized serpents) spread along the coastal trade routes" during the Epiclassic, citing Ringle's Quetzalcoatl cult in this connection.[69] Kristan-Graham (1998, 8) observes that ideas, symbols, and myths as well as tangible trade goods can move through the multiple channels of interaction in a world-systems model.

But in its specific utility as a framework for analyzing cultural interactions during the

[69] Interestingly, Smith (2003, 183) places the origin of "Some or all" of the motifs comprising the Early Postclassic symbol set in Late Classic Maya art, though he does not give his reasons for this suggestion, and in apparent contradiction to his statement on the same page that "Our approach to world-system dynamics suggests that the movement of ideas and symbols throughout the area is better viewed as a network with nodes than as a pattern of outward flow from a small number of centers."

Epiclassic and Early Postclassic periods that concern us here, the world-systems approach is limited by the patchy nature of the evidence. Even two proponents of world-systems approaches are forced to admit that "Although the dynamic economies of the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic periods can be analyzed usefully from a world-systems perspective...it is more difficult to provide a comprehensive, Mesoamerica-wide framework for that time period, due to the smaller number of excavated sites and some serious gaps in archaeological knowledge" (Smith and Berdan 2003, 4). In addition, most of the worlds-systems models for the spread of international styles and symbol sets among elites across Mesoamerica in the Epiclassic (Smith and Berdan 2003, 4) and Postclassic invoke the movement of portable goods, like painted ceramics, as the medium. This makes them of limited utility for understanding our stelae, which are certainly not easily portable objects, especially over long distances! With regard to the Epiclassic or Early Postclassic symbol system, it is not entirely clear whether Late Postclassic "Mixteca-Puebla" iconography can be so easily equated with its Epiclassic predecessors, though the latter may be usefuly viewed as antecedents to the former. Nicholson (1971, 109) originally included the art of Tula and Chichen Itza under the "Mixteca-Puebla" rubric, but later Nicholson and Quiñones Keber (1994) rejected this position as too broad, reducing the utility of the Mixteca-Puebla concept. While we will be returning briefly to world-systems theory in the concluding chapter, it is perhaps most beneficial as a kind of contextualizing framework, an ideal mode of understanding to which our meager data concerning the stelae cannot fully aspire, but of great potential heuristic utility.

Elite Networks and the Transmission of Art as Ideology

A further problem of world-systems theories is that their broad scope sometimes makes them poor candidates for explaining local phenomena. Fortunately, sociopolitical models of Epiclassic artistic exchange also come in smaller packages and less complex and totalizing versions. Sticking to archaeological and art historical evidence from one site, Hirth maintains that the interaction between the rulers of Xochicalco and other Mesoamerican elite groups, inferred from the site's eclectic monumental art, served

> two important functions at Xochicalco. First, it helped to maintain political alliances important for ensuring the state's independence [from rivals]. Second, interelite communication networks provided the emergent dynasty with access to a multiethnic and pan-Mesoamerican symbolic system. This provided ruling dynasties with a broader array of nontraditional belief systems about the role of elites in society than existed in Central Mexico under Teotihuacan domination…It is access to new symbolic and ideational systems that best accounts for the art and architectural diversity at Xochicalco. The site's emerging elite were part of a new sociopolitical order in Central Mexico, and were interested in forging new social identities that emphasized their power and importance. Instead of replicating the old social order of Teotihuacan, the Xochicalco elite turned to new ideologies. (2000, 265-266)

Besides demonstrating access to distant political allies and thus their prestige as traders, warriors, and "fellow travelers" of ruling groups at similar influential sites, foreign affiliation allowed the Xochicalco elite to reinforce their sociopolitical position "using both traditional and new religious ideologies" --a nod in the second case to Ringle's model.

Hirth assumes that Xochicalco looked to foreign models for alternatives to the ideology of Teotihuacan because it was involved in a power struggle with the ancient metropolis over control of trade routes. Art historian Debra Nagao (1989) proposes a

similar motivation but, consistent with the increasingly early C-14 dates for the fall of Teotihuacan, hypothesizes instead that the elites of both Xochicalco and Cacaxtla borrowed Maya and other foreign art styles to distance themselves from a city that had already failed. Consistent with Nagao's reading, Hirth also infers that at Xochicalco "Foreign affiliation was itself prestigious and provided ideational systems for reinforcing new forms of social organization" (2000, 266). Though he does not further elaborate on the argument, his suggestion is of potential heuristic value since analogous proposals have proven fruitful in explaining similar mechanisms in other cultural contexts (Helms 1979; Knight 1989). Elites around the world, including the pre-Columbian Americas, appear to have strengthened their status by monopolizing not only luxury goods but esoteric ideas and secret lore brought from distant regions (and prestigious foreign elites). It is perhaps tempting to picture the overlords of Tula and Xochicalco erecting stelae as a kind of visual name-dropping advertising their knowledge of how the distant Maya do things.

Hirth's suggestion parallels Kristan-Graham's hypothesis, discussed in Chapter 2, that the Tula Toltec drew upon Classic Maya royal imagery and costume elements to create a visual language of individual rulership lacking in the art of Teotihuacan.[70] Kristan-Graham (1989, 7) argues that the Toltecs adopted Maya conventions for representing kings in the absence of a tradition of individual royal portraiture in the central Mexican highlands. "Ancient and well-established Maya canons of rulership were ideal to mediate the status of Tula as a new regional power, since there was no recognizable indigenous Central Mexican tradition of representing rulership" (1989, xviii). This might explain the

[70] But see Headrick (2007) for possible evidence of individual ruler images at Teotihuacan.

Central Mexican adoption of the stela, the Maya royal monument par excellence:

> Tula seems to have been the first tradition in Central Mexico in which the human figure, especially the ruler, is so pervasive. However, that institution was expressed primarily with recognized symbols of the Maya, who had a long tradition of representing the office of king. In this sense, the symbolism of rulership was largely derived by following lowland Maya patterns from the Late and Terminal Classic. It is noteworthy that while the attributes of rulership are largely derived from the Maya area, some of the warrior attributes (winged pectoral and back shield or mirror) seem to be derived from Teotihuacan. (1989, 342)

However, the borrowing did not take place in a vacuum but reflected the proliferation of interregional trade contacts and alliances in the Epiclassic.

One must be cautious, however, since theories about collective rulership and the "anonymity" of art at Teotihuacan popular in the late 20th century (e.g., Pasztory 1997) are now increasingly called into question by archaeological finds implying the existence of despotic individual rulers at the Classic metropolis (Sugiyama 2005) as well as by new interpretations of iconographic evidence (Headrick 2007). Tula is also neither unique nor the first Central Mexican center with "pervasive" images of elites--Cacaxtla and Xochicalco obviously share this feature.

These more narrow sociopolitical hypotheses for Maya-Mexican artistic interaction have a number of advantages. Being site-specific, they avoid the sweeping claims of some alternative models and, with this narrower focus, may be more amenable to archaeological or art historical testing than complex explanations involving multiple sites. They avoid privileging or championing one site as font and origin--at least in comparison to models hinging on Tula or Chichen Itza. They also give local elites and their artists an active role and plausible motivations in actively selecting and recontextualizing alleged Maya and other outside ideas--no mechanistic and passively

obeyed "influence" here--and bypass unsubstantiated migration models.[71] In fact, Sandoval and Delgadillo (1990), having rejected the chronological evidence for an Olmeca-Xicallanca authorship of the Cacaxtla murals, suggest that local elites must have borrowed the trappings of Maya art and costume to gain prestige, rather than reflect their own ethnic origin. Kristan-Graham's hypothesis that specific Maya ideas were selectively adopted from abroad to fill a gap in local visual languages appears to me somewhat more plausible than either Hirth's or Nagao's suggestions that Central Mexican elites were looking for ways to avoid making visual allusions to Teotihuacan, because of its enemy or shamefully fallen status. If such was their intent, they did not do such a good job. Kristan-Graham calls attention to the Teotihuacan regalia on the "Maya" stelae at Tula, and in Chapter 2 I highlighted a number of other Teotihuacan features of these monuments. And if Cacaxtla and Xochicalco certainly drew on visual traditions from a wide area of Mesoamerica, Teotihuacan's legacy does not go ignored at these sites. We have already seen such features as Tlaloc and the trapeze and ray headdress at Xochicalco, and Cacaxtla's "Maya" mural art is replete with Teotihuacan parallels as well. In addition to following Paddock down the great circular route of Mixtec to Maya migrations, Foncerrada de Molina presented a plausible argument for Cacaxtla's murals as an outgrowth of late Teotihuacan art, which she characterizes as cosmopolitan (1993, 95). She correctly points out that Maya motifs and Maya-like naturalism in rendering the human figure appear in the frescoes of the Tetitla residential compound several centuries before the Cacaxtla paintings, a point confirmed by Taube's (2003) iconographic analysis of the Tetitla material. Clearly, we have to deal with a synthesis of the Teotihuacan

[71] At the same time, as Michael Smith (2007, 597) points out, such constructs are quite compatible with world-systems theories.

legacy with other elements, rather than its deliberate suppression, in all of these Epiclassic sites. And, if elites in Maya jade jewelry found their final resting place in Teotihuacan's Pyramid of the Moon (Demarest 2004, 104); if, as David Stuart (2000) asserts from his translation of Early Classic inscriptions from the Maya site of Tikal. Guatemala, a Teotihuacan military intrusion forcefully installed a son of the Teotihuacan ruler on Tikal's throne in 378 CE[72]; if a Maya architectural arrangement (the so-called E-group) is replicated in the Ciudadela at Teotihuacan (Valdés and Wright 2005, 347-348) and Maya images appear in the palace murals of Tetitla in Teotihuacan (Taube 2003); and, finally, if, as noted in Chapter 2, Teotihuacan imagery and regalia passed into Classic Maya art, including some of the stelae suggested as models for those at Tula, many of the Maya traits found at Epiclassic Central Mexican sites might have been the direct legacy of Teotihuacan rather than the result of renewed long-distance contacts. In any event, it is clear that the foreign ideas were modified and integrated into a local base, and indeed the question must be raised: *would an outside concept of artistic form and function like Maya stelae have been successful enough in its local propagandistic functions to be adapted at several Central Mexican sites if it were totally unprecedented or without any analogy in local tradition? Would not its impact be vitiated if it were completely alien to Central Mexican art?* This is the question I will attempt to address in the following chapter.

[72] Although trace element analysis of the skeleton presumed to be the Tikal king in question, Yax Nuun Ahiiin, indicates that he grew up in Tikal (Wright 2005). As an alternative to Staurt's model, Braswell suggests that the "invaders" at Tikal were local usurpers who were returning from a pilgrimage to

CHAPTER 4

FORGOTTEN FOREBEARS? STELAE IN CENTRAL MEXICO BEFORE THE EPICLASSIC

Introduction

In concluding the previous chapter, I called attention to the fact that at Cacaxtla, Xochicalco, and Tula, supposedly novel and Maya forms and images, including stelae, occur in Epiclassic to Early Postclassic art alongside deity images, costume elements, glyphs, motifs, and stylistic aspects stemming from Classic Teotihuacan. It is as if the elite patrons of Central Mexican art during this time of transition, by pairing eclectic innovations with evocations of the region's past traditions, were trying to legitimate their status by simultaneous strategies. On the one hand, supposed foreign forms and subjects advertised the "new": the local rulers' far-flung and cosmopolitan connections within the Epiclassic world-system(s), whether defined predominantly in trade or political terms and/or as part of an ideological system--the world-religion of Quetzalcoatl, "Zuyua," or other. On the other hand, Teotihuacan artistic and architectural quotations referenced the grandeur of a powerful local predecessor. The pairing of novel and traditional visual languages as a strategy of legitimation at Tula was described by Lindsay Jones as pairing the ugly lover (the new) with the mother to make him more acceptable to the folks at home (1995). For Jones, however, the novel here is the allegedly increased militarism of Toltec art, which he follows numerous predecessors in projecting onto the fragmentary remains of the site. I have also noted how some of the "foreign" elements identified in the iconography of the Tula and Xochicalco stelae are actually of Teotihuacan origin,

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Teotihuacan where their right to rule had been endorsed by that influential city (Braswell 2003).

whether they got there via direct local transmission from that site, observation of the great center's ruins, or a convoluted process of "reflux" from the Classic Maya.

Given both what looks like the deliberate practices of mixing local and external art forms and the historical processes that intertwined the two in Gordian knots for archaeologists and art historians to struggle to untangle, it seems legitimate to inquire whether the stela form itself, rather than representing a genuine novel phenomenon in Epiclassic Central Mexico, did not in fact have local precursors or antecedents as well as Maya (or other) distant analogs. As we saw in Chapter 2, those writers who present these stelae as an anomaly and enigma emphasize their novelty in the Central Mexican archaeological record. None of the published discussions of the Tula stelae acknowledge local precursors of this sculptural form. However, Kenneth Hirth and Virginia Smith, in their coverage of the Xochicalco stelae, mention the Middle Formative (c. 900-400 BCE) stelae of Chalcatzingo, Morelos, as possible local antecedents. This is not surprising, since Hirth worked on David Grove's excavations at Chalcatzingo, some 60 kilometers from Xochicalco. In fact, as we shall see shortly, at Chalcatzingo the pairing of figural stelae commemorating rulers with altars even predates the oldest instance of this monumental combination in the Maya realm itself.

The Chalcatzingo monuments are by no means the only local instance of use of the stela form prior to the Epiclassic. At present, the oldest known Mesoamerican stela--or at least perhaps an evocation in stone of a cosmic tree--comes not from the Maya region, nor from the Gulf Coast “Olmec,” but from Central Mexico at Cuicuilco on the southern edge of Mexico City, in a good archaeological context dated by stratigraphic placement and associated carbon samples to c. 1000-800 BCE. Further, two Late Formative (c. 400

BCE-250 CE) sites, Tlalancaleca and Xochitecatl in the Puebla-Tlaxcala region include stelae, although there is some ambiguity about the date of the stela at the first. While stelae are not a common form at Teotihuacan, at least one clearly carved in the style of that city is known in the literature, and is currently displayed in the Rockefeller Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The iconography of this sculpture, featuring an abstract version of the Teotihuacan Storm God, links it to the second member of the Xochicalco triad. In addition, several small stelae or at least steliform sculptures have been excavated at Teotihuacan or are of probable Teotihuacan provenience. Two of them bearing human images wearing costumes and carved in a style evoking the Tula stelae, suggest continuities with the Epiclassic to Early Postclassic monuments. All of this evidence not only casts doubt on claims for the uniqueness of the latter in Central Mexican culture history, but suggests that the stela carvers of Tula and Xochicalco may have been drawing on local as well as (or even in some cases, rather than) Maya precedents.

In calling attention to these possible local precursors, I am not trying to play a Chichen/Tula "Who's on first?" game, championing Central Mexico over the Classic Maya, though whether my contribution succeeds in transcending these terms any more than some of the revisionist constructs critiqued in the last chapter, I leave to my readers to judge. Rather, I am attempting to redress the skewed view of the genesis of the Epiclassic stelae that the neglect of this earlier local material has generated. I do not know if the Tula and Xochicalco sculptors and their elite patrons inherited a local stela tradition and integrated it with Maya and/or other ideas, or saw earlier stelae in the highlands and used them as models in a type of revival or visual allusion to these local

forms. They are long dead, and unlike some other writers, I do not presume to know with certainty what they saw or what their motivations were, nor do I assume that any of our explanatory constructs correspond completely (and some at all) with pre-Columbian Mesoamerican realities. But clearly, taking local antecedents into account expands the possibilities of what plausibly *might* have occurred beyond models based solely on Maya parallels. It leads to the formulation of new hypotheses that take indigenous traditions seriously as possible contributors to what may prove to be a genuinely hybrid (in the generic sense, rather than Homi Bhaba's) art form.

In this chapter, I survey the Formative through Classic stelae of Central Mexico by site. If the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic stelae are obscure and neglected in the literature, that goes double and more for these possible precursors. In each instance, I briefly summarize the descriptive and contextual data for each and discuss its possible relevance to the origins of the later monuments.

In the Beginning: Phallus, Fire God, or World Tree? The Cuicuilco Stela

The Site

The ancient city of Cuicuilco (Fig. 3) occupied the southern edge of what is now Mexico City during the Early through Late Formative period (c. 1000-50 BCE) and seems to have been a major population (estimated at some 20,000 at its Late Formative height) and cultural center until its catastrophic destruction by the eruption of the nearby volcano Xitle. This disaster resulted in the entombment of the city and its environs under

a layer of lava up to 33 feet thick, leaving the igneous rock stratum know as El Pedregal spread over some 32 square miles of the southern Basin of Mexico. The exact date for Cuicuilco's fiery end is difficult to pinpoint by physical dating methods. Some early 20th-century geologists erroneously put the eruption as early as 8000 years ago, a figure still cited in some of the literature on "ancient mysteries" occupying the New Age section of bookstores. At present, Xitle's fatal blow to the city is estimated to have fallen in the interval between 400 BCE and 400 CE (Evans 2004, 210), with more precise dates ranging from 50 BCE (Pasztory 1997, 77) to 100 CE (Coe and Koontz 2002, 55). The physical, psychological and ideological impact of Cuicuilco's fiery end--no doubt perceived as the result of divine wrath, or at least of lack of supernatural protection and favor--may have been a major factor in the growth of Teotihuacan's population and prestige, as refugees from the eruption fled north to the unaffected city. Besides making life difficult for the inhabitants of Cuicuilco, volcanic burial hindered the study of the site by modern archaeologists because of the difficulties of removing the solid rock of El Pedregal to reach the remains of the settlement. This obstacle has necessitated rather drastic alternatives to standard excavation techniques, including, in the early 20th century, the use of dynamite (Schavelzon 1983, 17, 21)! In the 1980s, the far more subtle technology of magnetometers and chemical prospecting was employed to locate buried features at the site (Linares Villanueva 1998).

The most prominent visible structure at Cuicuilco is a 66-foot high, circular, stepped pyramid platform constructed of local basalt rocks and earth, now preserved in a park with a small museum and visitor's center. Its form imitated the conical shape of Xitle. The first major excavation of this edifice took place from 1922 to 1925, under the

direction of the U.S. archaeologist Byron Cummings, invited for this purpose by the pioneer Mexican archaeologist Manuel Gamio. These digs revealed, among other finds of interest, altars, rows of upright stones around the base of the structure (perhaps erected in a vain effort to protect it from oncoming lava) and ceramic effigies of, appropriately enough, the Central Mexican fire god. Unfortunately, Cummings lost his excavation notes to theft on his last return to the U.S., and while he issued several short reports, he never fully published his findings. This left him open to accusations that he had damaged the structure with explosives and erroneously reconstructed parts of the platform. Several Mexican archaeologists, including Jorge Acosta, worked at this pyramid in the following decades, but they too published little. In 1967, the construction of the Olympic Stadium across the busy thoroughfare (Avenida de Insurgentes) from the park revealed further vestiges of the ancient city, including several large rectangular pyramid platforms. Sadly, at least one of these ancient shrines was destroyed on the altar of modern sport, and others poorly reconstructed. On the positive side, a salvage excavation conducted by Florencia Müller (1990) led to an expanded understanding of ceramic types and sequences.

These events would not be the last instance where the need to study and preserve Cuicuilco's remains clashed with urban development in Mexico City. In Müller's model, the main ceremonial center at the core of the site is designated Cuicuilco A. This nucleus in turn was surrounded by a zone of urban habitation, Cuicuilco B, laid out with streets and plazas alongside small man-made ponds. A third component, however, Cuicuilco C, another round platform and other architectural remains, unfortunately fell prey to modern bulldozers in 1990 to make way for a high-rise office complex (Salazar Peralta 1997).

Further modern developments encroached on the site in 1997, prompting a lawsuit by the local community and extensive public discussion of the risks to cultural patrimony.

The Discovery

The Cuicuilco stela emerged as a discovery of Mario Pérez Campo's excavations at the circular pyramid in the park during the spring and early summer of 1996 (Pérez Campo 1998). In front of the pyramid, Pérez Campo uncovered a rectangular stone chamber containing a single burial and a huge cylindrical block of andesite. This last proved to be the upper portion of a four meter high stela that had been erected on a surface now buried three and a half meters under the pyramid, clearly antedating its construction (Fig. 39). A ring of local river cobbles at the base probably served as additional support for the monument. Red pigment still adheres to the stone. From the stratigraphic position, Pérez Campo suspected that he had found the oldest known stela in Mexico, and estimated its age at around three thousand years B.P., placing it in the Early Formative. This conclusion based on relative dating techniques was confirmed by absolute geophysical dating techniques in 2005, when an associated charcoal sample yielded a radiocarbon date of 800 BCE (*Aztlan Virtual* 2005; *Tabasco Hoy 2005*; *Terrae Antiquae* 2005). At time of writing, a full archaeological report on the stela is still forthcoming. Pérez Campo (1998) published a drawing in his notice in *Arqueología Mexicana* (Fig. 39), and a video of the discovery is displayed for the public in the Pre-Classic Central Mexican hall of the Museo Nacional in Mexico City (as of February 28, 2007).

At its discovery, the stela was leaning to the south at an angle deviating 6.5 degrees from vertical. It was unclear to the excavator whether this inclination was deliberately intended or the result of time and subsidence. There was speculation that the stela served as an astronomical or calendrical marker, since it is brightly illuminated by the sun during the beginning (May) and end (August) of the agricultural cycle (Ortíz Pardo 1997, 1-2). Some connection with agrarian rites is reinforced by the discovery of burnt maize near the monolith.

Pérez Campo comments that in shape the stone is closer to an obelisk or column than a stela (1998, 37), though these are of course European terms and concepts borrowed by Mesoamerican archaeology and art history and may mask conceptual equivalences (or not) between these forms in the minds of ancient Native Middle Americans. The monolith is plain except for its north face, which is decorated with geometric carvings. Three rhomboid forms with double outlines and eyeball-like circular forms at their centers are clearly discernable in a vertical row from the drawing accompanying Pérez Campo's report in *Arqueología Mexicana,* while what looks like the eroded traces of another rhombus tops the row. Beneath these lozenge-like designs are two vertical rows of eight roughly circular forms each. As Pérez Campo points out in his initial notice of the discovery, the abstract style of these carvings resembles no known contemporary art tradition in Mesoamerica. In general visual impression, the only Formative art works the stela evoked for him were a row of greenstone celts placed vertically as the miniature architectural backdrop of a tableau of stone figurines buried as an apparent offering during the Middle Formative at Olmec La Venta (e.g., González Lauck 1996, 77-78, fig. 3; Castro Leal 1996). In this deposit, known as Offering 4, the celts may represent stelae,

although it is also possible that they were intended to portray in miniature the unworked basalt columns used in the construction of tombs and other features at La Venta. Pérez Campo did not, however, suggest a direct link between the Cuicuilco find and "Olmec" stelae. More cautiously, he told a journalist that the discovery suggested a "parallel development between Cuicuilco and the Olmec Culture" (Ortiz Pardo 1997, 2).

In his initial speculations on the possible significance of the stela's iconography, Pérez Campo (1998) suggested some connection to fertility--hardly inconsistent with the monument's phallic shape--with the circular forms representing drops of rain. Alternatively, he proposed that the circles might be a precursor of later dating systems employing dots to represent numbers. On the other hand, he also raised the possibility that the cylindrical trunk-like form of the stone might represent the oldest concrete representation of the Mesoamerican World Tree. Susan Toby Evans (2004, 210) identifies the stela as a symbol of the Old Fire God, called Huehueteotl by the later Mexica, whose image occurs in carved stone and ceramic figures and incense burners at Cuicuilco. In a personal communication (August 18, 2005), she clarified this suggestion by noting that the lozenge is part of this deity's iconography in later Central Mexican cultures, like Teotihuacan. This hypothesis would make the stela a fitting work of art for a city in the shadow of a volcano, if ultimately unsuccessful in any intended prophylactic function against eruptions.

For my immediate purposes in this dissertation, it is necessary to qualify whether or not this remarkable and ancient monument truly represents a stela and thus whether it counts as evidence for an ancient stela-carving tradition in the Basin of Mexico prior to the Epiclassic. Is it a stela simply by the same criteria as a dream image is a phallic

symbol (as the Cuicuilco monument plausibly is as well) in classical psychoanalysis (especially the cocktail party pop versions) by virtue of being longer than it is round? As Pérez Campo himself observed, its columnar shape corresponds more to Western concepts of obelisks or pillars. But let us recall the possible origins of the stela form in Mesoamerica, as reviewed in Appendix 2, as a representation of the shamanic World Tree or axis mundi and/or an ear of maize and/or a ceremonial celt. None of these are completely flat, tabular objects like Classic Maya stelae, but cylindrical or at least partly so (the butt or poll end of a celt). Whether or not the Cuicuilco monolith is indeed the oldest stela in Mesoamerica, it is very early. If indeed the stela form does symbolize one or more of these objects, it would be likely that the earliest examples might have had a more cylindrical shape closer to the putative object(s) represented. Thus, the Cuicuilco monument does seem to be, if not a fully-fledged stela, than at least a plausible prototype for at least some of the Mesoamerican monument forms classified under this Western term, with its variant shape and abstract adornment understandable in light of its very early chronological placement.

Morelos Before the Maya: The Middle Formative Stela-Altar Complex at Chalcatzingo

The Site

There is no ambiguity, however, concerning the next group of Central Mexican stelae, the Middle Formative examples at Chalcatzingo, Morelos (Fig. 3). This site,

situated in a bowl or natural amphitheater between two mountains, has a long history of occupation, from the Formative into the Postclassic. The earliest monumental construction, in the form of platform mounds, date to the Early Formative (Aviles 1995), during which time the inhabitants also sculpted the landscape into massive terraces for agriculture. The stelae date to the best known component, the Middle Formative (c. 900-400 BCE) habitation. During this time, the rulers of the substantial town maintained trade and probably diplomatic relations with polities in Guerrero to the southwest and with the Olmec chiefdom or kingdom at La Venta in Tabasco. Chalcatzingo's art during this phase of its long development shows clear ties to the monumental sculpture of the Gulf Coast center, and it is probable that Gulf Coast artists worked at Chalcatzingo, perhaps as part of diplomatic exchange with La Venta (Grove 1984). Rock faces and boulders on the local hillsides were adorned with reliefs of ritual and religious subjects, while elite residences, platform mounds, tombs with rich offerings, and monuments alluding to rulership occupied the valley below. Although Chalcatzingo is frequently discussed in general works as an "Olmec" site, and despite its political and artistic links with the Gulf Coast, it was an independent local polity and not a Gulf Coast colony in the highlands, as revealed by its pottery and other aspects of its material culture. During the Classic, further construction took place on the site (Arana 1987, 387-390), and there are signs of connections with Teotihuacan, including tombs containing Teotihuacan ceramics (Grove and Cyphers Guillen 1987, 49), a Teotihuacan-style ballcourt marker (Grove and Angulo V. 1987, 131, fig. 9.28), and cave paintings in the style of the great city (Apostolides 1987, 192-193). Occupation continued into the Postclassic, leaving behind ceramics, small stone sculpture (Grove 1987, 340), and the remains of domestic structures.

The accidental discovery of Olmec-style relief carvings on the hillside above the site, following a rain storm in 1932, attracted the initial attention of archaeologists. Although the rock carvings were examined and brought to scholarly attention by the Mexican archaeologist Eulalia Guzman two years later, formal excavations did not get off (or into) the ground for a further two decades. The ubiquitous Roman Piña Chan, whom we have encountered several times in these pages, conducted test excavations which provided the first solid archaeological evidence for Early and Middle Formative occupation. From the 1970s to the present, the U.S. archaeologist David Grove's extensive and intensive labors at the site have brought to light many buried features and monuments, including the stelae, as well as clarified the cultural sequence. Grove and his associates, especially Jorge Angulo, also surveyed and catalogued all the extant monuments, and I employ their numerical classification system here. For a complete history and survey of the site through the mid-1980s, see Grove's edited, multi-author site report (1987); for a briefer summary, see his popular book (1984).

The Stelae

The Chalcatzingo stelae emerged during Grove's labors at the site during the 1970s. One of his earliest discoveries of this type in 1974 was Monument 27 (Figs. 40-41), a stela bearing a relief of an apparent elite male in profile, facing and walking toward his left. A sizable section of the upper left portion of the stela is missing, the result of deliberate ritual destruction, obscuring the figure's face and hands, but he seems to be either wearing deer hide or carrying a dead deer over his visible shoulder. He appears to

carry a bar or cylinder-shaped object, perhaps a scepter, in the crook of his arm. The slab was discovered in front of a stone platform (Grove 1984, 57-59, fig. 27; 1981, 58-59, fig. 8; Grove and Cyphers Guillen 1987, 35-37, fig. 4.17; Grove and Angulo V. 1987, 129, fig. 9.25; Angulo V. 1987, 151-152, fig. 10.22). Near the same platform were two other stelae, designated monuments 28 and 26. The former (Fig. 42), badly eroded, shows yet another striding costumed human, probably a ruler, with a clearly portrayed loincloth and disk and pendant ear spool, surrounded by plumes or tassels that seem to emanate from his body. In addition to the destructive impact of years of water, the figure suffered deliberate damage: the face was erased by abrasion (Grove 1984, 62-63, fig. 13; 1981, 59, fig. 9; Grove and Angulo V.1987, 130; Angulo V. 1987, 152-153, fig. 10.24). The remains of the destroyed visage seem to show that the personage's face was painted in horizontal stripes, which Angulo associates with the iconography of the Postclassic Venus deity Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli (1987, 152). Though the fragmentary nature of the evidence and the temporal disjunction between this Formative monument and the known depictions of this deity in the Postclassic cast doubt on this identification, his alleged presence is interesting in light of the iconography of the probably Late Formative stela of Tlalancaleca (see below).

Discovered in 1973, Monument 26 had unfortunately been quite thoroughly destroyed, and only the base remains. But its significance lies in its association with another sculpture, a circular or cylindrical altar, Monument 25 (Grove 1984, 63-64, fig. 14; Grove and Cyphers Guillen 1987, 35). This pairing of stela and circular altar predates the common Classic Maya practice by up to a millennium, and the examples of this combination at Izapa mentioned in Appendix 2 by centuries. Nor does the same practice

characterize Olmec centers on the Gulf Coast, though presumably the idea for carving tabular stelae was adopted by the lords of Chalcatzingo from La Venta. At La Venta and its predecessor San Lorenzo, David Grove (1970) has demonstrated that the rectangular forms called altars in the earlier literature were thrones. It seems in this instance that we have a case of a quintessentially Maya trait presaged at a Central Mexican site--a reverse of the expected pattern if the predictions of some earlier "pan-Mayanists" are to be credited.

Perhaps the most interesting Chalcatzingo stela, Monument 21 (Fig. 43) in the Grove/Angulo system, occupied a similar context near a mound, but in this case the remains of a stone support structure for the stela showed that it originally stood atop the associated platform. Again, an elite figure processes in profile across the face of the upper two thirds of the 2.4 meter slab, but here the individual portrayed is definitely female, with clearly delineated breast. She touches or carries (?) in front of her an elaborately carved pillar or bundle, at least as tall as herself (the top of the stela is missing, obscuring the rest). She wears a long skirt and long veil-like head covering (or hair) (Grove 1984, 60-61, fig. 12; 1981, 60, fig. 10; Grove and Angulo V. 1987, 126-127, fig. 9.21; Angulo V. 1987, 150-151, fig. 10.21). Grove (1989, 144-145) suggests that she may represent a royal bride from another prominent Middle Formative polity, Teopantecuantitlan in modern Guerrero, whose marriage with Chalcatzingo's ruler added to the latter's prestige and consolidated his regional alliances. The lower third of the surviving slab bears a stylized Earth Monster face representing the ground beneath the figure’s feet. Interestingly enough, in the middle of the monster's maw is a lozenge shape. Writing a decade before the discovery of the Cuicuilco stela, Angulo (1987, 151)

nonetheless noted its presence at Cuicuilco as a symbol of the Old Fire God. The occurrence of the sign on two Central Mexican stelae of Formative date is worthy of note, though of uncertain significance.

Only the base remained of another stela, Monument 23, atop a platform mound (Grove 1984, 61; Grove and Angulo 1987, 127), while the fragment of another, Monument 24, was reused in a Classic wall construction (Grove and Angulo 1987, 127-128, fig. 9.22). It bears badly eroded glyphs, but Grove and Angulo disagree whether it is in its correct reading orientation as found or upside down (Angulo V. 1987, 153-154, fig. 10.25).

The association of stelae with stone platform mounds at Chalcatzingo clearly recalls the same phenomenon at Epiclassic Xochicalco, where, as seen in Chapter 2, it is documented for the Stela of the Two Glyphs, which stood atop a platform like Chalcatzingo Monument 21. Because the content of the Chalcatzingo stelae seems to commemorate individual rulers of the site, Grove suggests that the platforms which supported them were also somehow linked to the individuals portrayed, perhaps their residences or ancestral shrines to their family lineages (Grove 1984, 61-62). Erection of stelae atop separate, freestanding architectural features is not a common Classic Maya trait, nor known from other regions of Mesoamerica. These facts support the continuity of a local Morelos tradition from Chalcatzingo to Xochicalco, although examples from the intervening interval of over a millennium are lacking to date. The deliberate mutilation of the Chalcatzingo monuments also recalls the later ritual breakage of the Xochicalco triad, though this practice is common to the Maya as well, probably a common legacy of the Formative traditions that produced the stelae of the Gulf Coast Olmec centers as well as

those of Chalcatzingo (Grove 1981). The Chalcatzingo stelae certainly qualify as pre-Epiclassic Central Mexican ruler portraits, if Grove's reading of their iconography is correct, though their profile figures contrast with the frontality of the Tula and Xochicalco examples (and if the latter represent rulers rather than deities). The ambiguity over the identification of the Chalcatzingo stelae as images of gods vs. rulers is reminiscent of the same conundrums concerning the reading of the Xochicalco triad's iconography.

It is interesting to speculate whether, rather than inheriting a tradition through living transmission, Xochicalcan artists might have imitated abandoned stelae they observed at Chalcatzingo, like the Mexica imitating the art of Tula. We have already seen that Classic building activities at Chalcatzingo unearthed earlier monuments, like the stela fragment (Monument 24) pragmatically reused as part of a wall, and construction continued at Chalcatzingo during the Late Classic (Martín Arana 1987, 391), coeval with the florescence of Xochicalco. The "excavation" of old materials associated with new construction and habitation activities continued through the Early Postclassic: a trash pit dug into the site contained a fragment of a Mazapan figure, contemporary with the Tollan Phase at Tula (Martín Arana 1987, 395).

Full Frontal Deity? The Mysterious Stela of Tlalancaleca

Next in chronological sequence in our survey of pre-Epiclassic Central Mexican stelae are the Late Formative stelae of the Puebla-Tlaxcala region. One of these, from the site of Pedrera de Tlalancaleca, near the modern town of San Matías in Puebla, may

represent the earliest known instance of a stela bearing a frontal image of an individual, like those at Tula and Xochicalco, in the highlands, if in fact, it truly dates to the Formative.

The Site

Although a settlement existed at Tlalancaleca in the Early Formative, the center did not reach full political and cultural flower until the Late Formative (c. 300 BCE-100 CE), when it became a city of some 10,000 souls. Its acres of monumental architecture, stretching east-west atop a volcanic ridge between steep canyons, featured pyramids up to 15 meters in height (García Cook 1973, 25). Many architectural features regarded in the literature as veritable "signatures" or "trademarks" of Teotihuacan, like talud-tablero platform profiles, appear at Tlalancaleca centuries before their appearance at Teotihuacan, suggesting that the great metropolis to the north "borrowed" these traits from Formative Puebla. Stone carvings included monumental basins and disks and a petroglyph of Tlaloc--perhaps another precursor of Teotihuacan art. But by c. 100 CE, Tlalancaleca had been largely depopulated, and soon was completely abandoned (Toby Evans 2004, 216-217), although a few peasant families (5 to 7) sparsely settled the site around 1400 (García Cook 1973, 26). Angel García Cook, a specialist in the archaeology of the Puebla-Tlaxcala region, surveyed the site and conducted test excavations in the 1973 under the auspices of the German Foundation for Scientific Research in Mexico.

The Stela

The Tlalancaleca stela (Figs. 44-45) was first published by García Cook (1973, 28-30). A more extensive treatment--the longest published to date--is the iconographic analysis of Carmen Aguilera, which appeared in the *Comunicaciones* of the German Foundation for Scientific Research in Mexico (1974). The sizable (2.70 meters high by 1.30 m. wide by. 60 m. thick) monolith was still standing at the time of García Cook's survey, alongside the talud of the lower stage of a 4 meter high platform, with its base embedded in the talud. This construction is the smallest of a group of three buildings surrounding two springs. One of these water sources emerges from the earth south of the platform associated with the stela and north of a bigger construction; the second issues from a nearby grotto (García Cook 1973, 28). Especially since the presence of stone basins and a Tlaloc image at the site seem to point to water-related rituals at Late Formative Tlalancaleca, the association of the stela and monumental architecture with these water sources seems to mark the locale as a sacred site. As García Cook (1973, 29) states, "The stela, like the architectural group, was erected in homage to the birth of water and to have control of the same."[73]

In contrast to the fully finished specimens at Chalcatzingo, the Tlalancaleca stela is a roughly worked monolith. There is no evidence that the stone slab or shaft was trimmed or shaped prior to the creation of the shallow relief images, which Aguilera notes seem to be adapted to the shape of the existing surfaces, incorporating natural indentations and

[73] "Tanto la Estela como el conjunto arquitectónico fue erigido en homenaje al nacimiento del agua y para tener control sobre la misma."

protuberances to create the figures. At the time of García Cook's survey, the stela still bore the traces of a covering of white paint, into which lines had been incised and filled with red pigment. The natural shape of the stone is steliform, if roughly so, with a broad base tapering to a point at top, two well-defined broad faces,and less well-defined lateral edges . One face, oriented toward the east, bears the image of a standing frontal figure, presumably male as indicated by its loincloth, with its arms resting at its sides. The right leg is clearly visible, while only a shallow depression remains of the left leg. He is surrounded by emblems of death. He wears two skulls joined together at their occipital regions as a chest ornament, while sixteen other grinning profile crania adorn the reverse (west) face of the stela and both of its lateral edges (four on the south face, six on the west side, four on the north side, and two on the northern corner of the slab).

Besides his loincloth and macabre adornments, the personage wears a complex headdress consisting of, from bottom to top, first, a trapezoidal element decorated with five vertical rows of five punctuate dots each, and from which plumes or tassels protrude at the sides. Above this we see a row of ten plumes of varying widths, and finally, the topmost component, four dots within a square enclosure, framed in turn on top and sides by what looks like a squared inverted U-shaped arch or bracket with an additional dot or circle at the base of each vertical "arm." The right "arm," however, is difficult to distinguish because of the shallow carving and erosion, and may not have been part of the intended design. Here García Cook and Aguilera disagree in their readings of the eroded low relief. The former (1973, 29) sees in the top of the headdress a device with six dots or circles in total, while the latter, apparently not counting the ambiguous half of the "arch" and its pendant dot, which could be connected to one of the plumes, discerns only five

dots, which greatly influences her reading and her speculations about the dating of the carving. The figure also sports circular earspools, and a series of further dots or indentations on his arms and right leg suggest jaguar pelt coverings or perhaps body paint in imitation of that beast's distinctive spots. Alternatively, García Cook suggests (1973, 29) that the indentations represent rain drops or precious stones, employed at Teotihuacan as a water symbol, both readings befitting a monument found near two springs. It is not clear whether the entity portrayed on the stela is living or dead. While his round eyes are open displaying pupils, his quadrangular mouth appears to be fleshless, displaying eight teeth in a frontal version of the profile grin of the surrounding skulls. The feet of the image are obscured by the talud of the adjoining platform, and García Cook did not obtain permission from the property owner to excavate in this area (1973, 29). According to García Cook (personal communication November 13, 2006), the monument is still apparently ("parecer") in situ at Tlalancaleca, although the site is not open to the public.

Since Tlalancaleca was founded in the Early Formative, flourished in the Late Formative, and was then abandoned, with the exception of a tiny settlement of Late Postclassic date, García Cook (1973, 31; 1995, 13, 16) continues to date the stela to the Late Formative, and is followed in this placement by Evans (2004, 217). Aguilera, however, expressed art historical doubts about what otherwise would seem a reasonable date from context. She observes (1974, 1) that the simplicity of the carving style does not in itself constitute proof of an early date for the monument. In terms of iconography, she draws parallels between the skeletal imagery of the Tlalancaleca image and Postclassic Mexica and "Mixteca-Puebla" depictions of death, underworld, and stellar divinities. In particular, she identifies the figure as Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli on the basis of the alleged

quincunx or five-dot pattern in the headdress it bears, which is a distinguishing attribute of this god of Venus as the Morning Star in "Mixteca-Puebla" manuscripts (Fig. 108, 109). She compares the skulls on the figure's torso and decorating the lateral edges of the stela with a depiction of this deity in the *Codex Borgia*. On page 45 of that screenfold manuscript (Díaz and Rodgers 1993, pl. 33), Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli stands on a platform with six skulls beneath his feet (Fig.108). The three on the left face left and the same number on the right face in that direction, and Aguilera suggests that the two skulls in the middle of the row correspond to the opposite-facing skulls on the chest of the Tlalancaleca figure (1974, 2). She notes that the Tlalancaleca figure's headdress resembles Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli's in the Postclassic painted manuscripts, and that the traces of red and white paint would be consistent with the iconography of the god, whose body paint of red and white "candy-stripes" alludes to the decoration of sacrificial victims. At the same time, the five rows of 25 points on the Tlalancaleca's figure's headdress, and jaguar spots, support an identification with Tlamatzincatl, an aspect of the mercurial deity Tezcatlipoca as a hunter, or another avatar of the same divinity, Tepeyollotl, a mountain and underworld god with jaguar attributes. Aguilera notes that the location of the stela in Tlalancaleca's landscape, near the entrance to a subterranean stream, is consistent with a monument honoring this underworld divinity.

While drawing parallels between the Tlalancaleca monument and Postclassic deities, Aguilera seems ambivalent about assigning a date to the stela. She claims that

> [s]tylistically it recalls the Late Classic by its character of massive and heavy block, broad face, headdress that tends more to the horizontal than the vertical, and large ear ornaments, but it would appear to be Postclassic by the style of the skulls that are already in the tradition of the Mixtec and Aztec codices and those of the Tlaxcala-Puebla zone, although in the Stela, perhaps because of the erosion of the same it has not been possible to follow the line faithfully and while some skulls appear to

> approach more closely the tradition of those that have the nasal bone terminating in a point or hook, others pertain to those that do not bear this characteristic, although both styles were common in the Postclassic.[74] (1974, 3)

Contrasting what Aguilera sees as the sophistication of Tlalancaleca's art and architecture with the "poor" work of the stela carving leads to her speculation that the monument was the work of a "folk cult" that flourished alongside the more sophisticated official religion of the site. Conceding that García Cook places the stela in the Late Formative, Aguilera closes by commenting that if this is indeed the case, it speaks strongly for the continuity of symbolism across time from the Formative to the Conquest.

The resemblances Aguilera points out between the imagery of the Tlalancaleca stela and Postclassic Mixteca-Puebla art are indeed interesting, but there are problems because of the late date she implies. The archaeological evidence indicates that Tlalancaleca was deserted around 100 CE, and only a thin scattering of commoners (5 to 7 families) reoccupied the ruins around 1400. It was not uncommon for abandoned sites to be used for rituals by later peoples in Mesoamerica through the pre-Columbian period right up to the present, but there is no evidence to suggest that our stela was the intrusive result of such activities. I doubt that any "rustic cults," before or after the fall of Tlalancaleca, had the means to be moving megalithic rocks about the landscape; monument (especially stela) commissioning and carving was an elite prerogative in ancient Mesoamerica, beyond the resources of the tiny Late Postclassic occupation. The stela was associated (embedded in, in fact) with Late Formative, not Late Postclassic, constructions, and is

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[74] "Estilisticamente recuerda al clásico tardio por su caracter de bloque másivo y pesado, rostro ancho, tocado que tiende más a la horizontal que a la vertical y grandes orejeras, pero parecería posclasico por el estilo de los craneos que ya estan dentro la tradición de los códices mixtecas, aztecas y de la zona Tlaxcala-Puebla, aunque en la Estela, quizá por lo erosionado de la misma no se haya podido seguir fielmente la linea y mientras unas calveras parecen acercarse más la tradición de las que tienen el hueso nasal terminado en punta o gancho, otras pertenecen a los que no llevan esta característico, de cualquier manera ambos estilos erán communes en el posclásico."

therefore almost certainly of the same vintage. A year after Aguilera's paper appeared, García Cook published the results of radiocarbon dating on materials taken from the vicinity of the stela (1975, 262). Samples from the layer of earth around the base of the stela yielded a date of 70 CE +/- 110 years. Granted, there is no way to absolutely date the stela itself, and theoretically, such a reading could be explained by later activity churning up and reusing older soil. But when combined with close dates of 320 BCE +/- 170 years and 120 CE +/- 100 years from the adjacent platform, there is strong, if circumstantial evidence for a Formative placement for the monument. Given these findings, an equally plausible explanation for the "crudity" and aberrations of the image compared to Postclassic work is that the stela antedates the Postclassic and represents a very early stage in the development of what became standardized and common stylistic and iconographic traits centuries later (the Mixteca-Puebla style may have originated in the Puebla-Tlaxcala region, as seen in Chapter 3).

I am skeptical of any conclusive deity identification from such a simple and atypical representation. In the Mixteca-Puebla painted manuscripts, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli is indeed associated with the quincunx pattern, but this usually takes the form of facial paint (Spranz 1973, 247). In any event, whether the Tlalancaleca figure sports a quincunx or six dots on his panache is a matter of dispute. As noted above, any comparison between the paired skulls on the Tlalancaleca figure and the image of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli on *Borgia* 45 is a bit of a stretch--context, composition, and medium being quite different. The plumed middle section of the Tlalancaleca figure's headdress corresponds to Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli's eagle feather crown, but recalls many other later depictions of feathered headdresses as well, from the attributes of other deities to the headgear of Tula

warriors. The defleshed jaws and possible jaguar spots are not only consistent with Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, but also as Aguilera admits, with other divinities as well. And, if Angulo is correct and the striding figure on Chalcatzingo's Monument 28, an undeniably Formative sculpture, does display attributes of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, than if the Tlalancaleca image represents this deity, it need not raise doubts about a Formative vintage for that work, either.

At present, García Cook (1995, 13) accepts both this identification (or, as an alternative, the related Venus deity Xolotl) and the Formative date. Earlier (1973, 29), he related the Tlalancaleca figure with its fleshless jaw and living face to Early Formative ceramic masks and figurines from the site of Tlatilco in the Basin of Mexico showing beings with half-fleshed, half-skeletal faces, reflecting the ancient and persistent Mesoamerican belief in a cosmos characterized by dynamic oppositions arising from an underlying unity. Though the form of the Tlatilco images is very different from the Tlalancaleca carving, they may indeed be linked conceptually. He also noted other Late Formative images of skeletal entities, like Stela 50 from Izapa (see Appendix 2), and images of skulls from Teotihuacan. He concluded (1973, 33) that the stela may represent one of the oldest images of the death god in Mesoamerica.

Supporting an early date for the Tlalancaleca stela is the fact that no monuments of this type are known for the Puebla-Tlaxaca region in the Postclassic (nor am I aware of any stelae in the “Mixteca-Puebla” visual tradition), while Late Formative Xochitecatl in nearby Tlaxcala, coeval with Tlalancaleca and displaying many resemblances in architecture, does feature a stela in the form of a serpent (see below). And skulls with pointed noses, resembling (though far more sophisticated than) the crania of the

Tlalancaleca monument, occur in the sculpture of Teotihuacan (e.g., Berrin and Pasztory, eds., 1993, catalog 1), another city with close connections to Tlalancaleca. In all, the evidence, while far from direct or definitive, indicates that the Tlalancaleca stela is a possible precursor, rather than a rustic relative or descendant, of the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic Central Mexican stelae, perhaps the earliest stela with a frontal human figure (dead or alive) in the region.

The Xochitecatl Snake

The Site

Across a rugged barranca from the hilltop citadel of Cacaxtla in Tlaxcala lies its twin hilltop center, Xochitecatl. As we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, this site flourished in the Epiclassic alongside Cacaxtla, producing the ceramic figures of women clad in serpent helmets that we compared to the Xochicalco stelae and that Bodo Spranz and John Paddock compared to "Mixteca-Puebla" art. But this Epiclassic period of prosperity was actually Xochitecatl's second flowering. Its first florescence occurred during the Late Formative. Construction of three of the monumental structures at the site--the Pyramid of the Flowers, the Building of the Serpent, and the Building of the Spiral--started as early as the Middle Formative, around 700 BCE (Serra Puche 1998, 31), but the Formative public architecture did not reach its maximum extent until five to six centuries later. Like Tlalancaleca, Xochitecatl was abandoned around 100 CE, probably as a result of the eruption of the volcano Popocatepetl. Following Bodo Spranz's excavations at the site in

the 1970s (Spranz 1982), Xochitecatl has been the subject of an excavation and restoration program sponsored by INAH under the direction of archaeologist María Carmen Serra Puche.

The Stela

Tlalanceleca's stela, representing a snake, is associated, not surprisingly, with the Building of the Serpent, to which it gave its name (Fig. 46). This rectangular, multi-level stepped platform rises to some forty feet at its maximum height. During the Late Formative, what appears to have been a water cult appeared at Xochitecatl and other sites in the Puebla-Tlaxcala region (Manzanilla 2000), and monumental carved stone basins, presumably for ritual use, were placed at both the Pyramid of the Flowers and the Pyramid of the Serpent, associated with flights of stairs and with rough stone sculptures. In addition to unusual if crude carvings, including images of a masturbating man and possible portrayals of facial paralysis (Serra Puche 1998, 55), is the stela, simply carved into the form of a serpent. Its tapered rectangular body, with two clearly defined broad faces and two narrow edges, is plain. Its top is carved in the round into the form of a greatly simplified ophidian head. It was discovered resting at an acute angle in the stone basin, leaning on its rim, though whether this was its primary position is impossible to ascertain.[75] At some time after its carving, the snake's head was deliberately mutilated for unknown reasons—a pattern familiar from Chalcatzingo before and Xochicalco after.

The Xochitecatl stela meets the bare minimal traditional criteria for the definition of a

[75] It is currently displayed in this position at the site, where I photographed it in July 2005.

stela, being a sculpted stone shaft that at least in its final context or setting, is in an upright position (or at least partly so), and is classed as such by Serra Puche and by García Cook (1995, 13). Beyond this, its credentials as an exemplar of this sculptural category as usually applied to Mesoamerican art are less than stellar. It is relatively small (about a meter high), and bears its carved decoration--which is theriomorphic rather than human--at its apex in the round, rather than on its front or sides in relief. Apart from the general idea of a carved, vertical monument, it has little in common with the later stelae of Tula and Xochicalco, and is the very weakest link in the chain of evidence adduced in this chapter for a continuity of a local stela tradition from the Early Formative forward in the Central Mexican highlands. Yet, it tends to reinforce the presence of the stela concept in Puebla-Tlaxcala in the Late Formative as suggested by the Tlalancaleca stela, an idea later continued or revived during the Epiclassic when the "blank" stelae were erected in the Plaza of the Altars at Cholula.

Teotihuacan Stelae, Great and Small

As noted in Chapter 2, a commonplace of the sparse published literature on the Epiclassic to Early Postclassic Central Mexican stelae is the claim that stelae are not part of the art tradition of Teotihuacan. While it is certainly true that stelae do not comprise a major or common Teotihuacan art form, this absolute statement of absence is incorrect. At least one large stela and one smaller steliform sculpture are known from this culture.[76]

[76] In addition to steliform figural slabs, the inhabitants of Teotihuacan also erected blank stelae, serving as markers of astronomical events, in artificial caves. One in the Astronomical Cave, near the Pyramid of the Sun, is situated so that a ray of light from the surface crosses the center of the slab on the summer solstice (Manzanilla 2000, 97) and is completely illuminated on another date when the sun is near its zenith

Several other small objects more doubtfully belong under the rubric of Teotihuacan stelae, one because of doubts about whether it fits the definition and another due to questions of age and provenience. If not plentiful, this monument form nevertheless was part of the sculptural range of Classic Central Mexican artists.

The Metropolitan Museum Stela

The largest extant example of a Teotihuacan stela stands at present in the Rockefeller wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fig. 47). Unfortunately, like many other pre-Columbian objects in western museums, this monument's exact place of origin remains unknown, though its sculptural style leaves no doubt concerning its cultural affiliation. Presumably a looted piece, this work first appeared at the MMA as part of the 1970-1971 exhibit "Before Cortes: Sculpture of Middle America," and was published in the accompanying catalog (Easby and Scott 1970, 152, catalog 111). At the time it was part of the extensive private collection of Fred Olsen of Guilford, Connecticut. In 1980, the Metropolitan purchased the work as an acquisition of the Michael Rockefeller Fund.

This 41.75 inch high monument is a well-carved tabular shaft surmounted by a disk at top. In this feature it differs from the Tula and Xochicalco examples, but since the disk represents the head of a deity, it may be conceptually analogous with the Xochitecatl snake with its head atop the shaft. All four faces of the shaft are plain, but the disk is outlined by a feathered border in low relief. Within the border, we find the face of an

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(Cabrera Castro 2000, 198, 200, fig. 7.4). A similar monument from another tunnel (Cave 2) is reproduced by Cabrera Castro (2000, 202, fig. 7.6)

abstract Storm God or Teotihuacan Tlaloc. Three circles denote the deity's goggle eyes and perhaps his nose, over a clearly-carved representation of his upper jaw and "handle-bar" moustache.

Noting a similarity in the circular forms at the top, Easby and Scott compared this stela with another class of Teotihuacan monuments, the so-called ballcourt markers, elaborately carved pillars. We have already noted the presence of one of these objects in the Classic remains at Chalcatzingo, but the best known example is the so-called Stela of La Ventilla (Easby and Scott 1970, 47), excavated from a residential compound near the outskirts of Teotihuacan (Fig. 110). They are called ballcourt markers because they appear alongside an apparent scene of ritual ball players among the teeming figures of a painted landscape, presided over by a goddess, in a famed fresco from the Teotihuacan apartment compound of Tepantitla. However, the La Ventilla specimen was not excavated from a ballcourt. In fact, no ballcourts are known at Teotihuacan, nor any additional representations of a ball game, and the game portrayed in the Tepantitla murals seems to a stick ball game different from the one practiced throughout the rest of Mesoamerica, so the function of these sculptures remains in doubt. The La Ventilla example dates to c. 375-400 CE and is covered with vestiges of decoration in plaster and paint.

While the disk atop the La Ventilla "marker" is similar to that crowning the Metropolitan monument, the latter differs from the class of "ballcourt markers" in a number of aspects. First, like others of its kind, the La Ventilla sculpture is columnar or cylindrical, not tabular like the New York stela. Whether the La Ventilla "stela" merits that epithet is unclear. Perhaps, like the Cuicuilco stela, this form represents a variant of

the same notion of a stone world tree or axis mundi as other stelae, this one more closely retaining the shape of a tree. The feathered ornament atop both the La Ventilla and New York sculptures would be fitting symbols to place atop a monument based on the template of a mythic tree bridging levels of the cosmos, with the sky—the avian realm—at the summit.[77] In this regard, the feathers could be analogous to the placement of the so-called Celestial Bird atop Classic Maya reliefs of the World Tree at Palenque to denote the heavens.

But the La Ventilla sculpture is not a monolith, like the Metropolitan piece. It is a composite creation formed of four separately carved elements joined by tenons—a major divergence from both its putative New York counterpart and Mesoamerican stelae in general. The La Ventilla carving's crown also differs from the New York shaft's feathered disk in framing an openwork geometric design rather than a deity image. Easby and Scott also note the similarities of the carved top of the New York stela to stone disks adorned with Storm God faces within a circular feathered border discovered at the so-called Palace of Quetzalpapalotl ("quetzal butterfly") at Teotihuacan. These allegedly were associated with the remains of tenoned pieces resembling the components of the La Ventilla marker. Although Easby and Scott provide no reference to support this claim, Acosta's (1964, figs. 16-17) excavation report illustrates four such disks found with tenoned fragments, among many other fragmentary sculptures. But Acosta does not identify them as parts of "ballcourt markers." Rather he calls them *almenas*—roof ornaments, though he suggests that they may have been placed atop pyramidal rather than residential roofs (1964, 23). The Teotihuacan Tlaloc images on these carvings also differ from the New York example in being less abstract and having an additional frame, within

[77] For other examples of possible World Tree symbolism at Teotihuacan, see Headrick (2007, 29-32).

the circular feathered border, in the form of a five-pointed star.

Owing to its shady provenience, we cannot know the Metropolitan's stela's original context. Easby and Scott even suggest that it may have been set up alongside a road in a fashion analogous to later Mexica roadside shrines, but they offer no evidence to support this. In comparing its form to later Central Mexican stelae, the Metropolitan example differs in the circular form at top. However, in its prominent Storm God imagery, it resembles Stela 2 from Xochicalco, and provides perhaps a precursor closer to home for the latter than the very different ruler portraits of Classic Maya stelae. The focus on this deity also evokes the Tlaloc headdresses of the Tula stelae, a further legacy of Teotihuacan.

All Things Great…and Small

In addition to the large example in New York, several smaller sculptures from Teotihuacan, or in that city's style, have also been called stelae, though these small rectangular reliefs would be dwarfed by any Maya counterparts. In some cases, the label in the strictest traditional sense is questionable, since the objects differ from other Mesoamerican stelae not only in size but in form and decoration. In other cases, these objects do seem to represent a small-scale version of an analogous concept to the larger stelae, and some of these last provide striking formal and iconographic parallels to the Epiclassic and Postclassic examples.

Let us dispose of the most questionable example at the outset. In Rubén Cabrera Castro's contribution to the catalog of the 1990 Metropolitan Museum of Art special

exhibition “Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries” (1990, 99, catalog 35), he illustrated what he dubs a “small stela” excavated by his team during his 1980-1982 excavations at Teotihuacan. It was unearthed in Conjuncto 1D in the architectural complex known as the Ciudadela (Pacheco and Martínez Vargas 1982, 122; foto 8). It is only 16 inches high, but what makes its credentials as a stela in the classical sense (whether or not this is a proper category for categorizing Mesoamerican sculpture aside) even more dubious is the fact that it cannot stand upright without some other element supporting it. Certainly, the ends of large Mesoamerican stelae were buried and anchored in the ground, but any attempt to bolster this piece's struggling verticality by such a technique would probably wind up obscuring the whole beneath the earth. In addition, its iconography, an image of a rectangular shield, suggests we are dealing with an altogether different concept.

Much more relevant for my purposes are the two miniature stelae discussed and illustrated by Berlo (1992, 142-143) (Fig. 48), which I have already noted in the discussion of the Tula stelae. One of these, Berlo’s Figure 16, was excavated by Cabrera during the same season as the shield, but Berlo does not indicate where. It is not illustrated in the excavation reports edited by Cabrera Castro and his associates (1982), though she credits her photo of the object to Cabrera Castro. It may be the same sculpture described in a brief report by Noguerón (1982, 202), which notes that “a stone sculpted with a female figure” was found in a patio. If this is the same sculpture, it came from the Zona del Gran Conjunto at the south end of Teotihuacan’s Avenue of the Dead.[78] Berlo identifies the relief on this small (no dimensions given) rectangular tablet

[78] Unfortunately, some of Berlo's Mesoamerican files were since destroyed in a basement flood, and the rest dispersed as she shifted her research focus to Native North American art in the 1990s (personal communication, March 6, 2006).

(Fig. 48, left) as "the" goddess, the alleged tutelary divinity of Teotihuacan. This construct has recently been dissected with vigor by Paulinyi (2006), who convincingly argues that both Berlo and Pasztory erroneously lumped together six or seven discrete deities—some of them male—in defining this entity on iconographic grounds. Be that as it may, the figure is perhaps a female, if details are lacking owing to abstraction and/or possibly the unfinished state of the carving. She wears a *quechquemitl* with a double outline, probably representing a decorated border. The face is blank—perhaps it was intended to be painted—but cut with a deep outline creating a recessed effect characteristic of Teotihuacan sculpture, and, of course, the stelae of Tula and Xochicalco. She wears an elaborate multi-tiered headdress. At the bottom is a shallow bracket shape (hair?), surmounted by a long horizontal bar, atop which is double circle with a pupil-like pit at the center (a mirror?), flanked on either side by four projecting horizontal plumes, or perhaps bloodletting ribbons. Four more project out past the first row on the figure's right side; a less clear amount extends to her (?) left. An inverted triangular element topped by additional plumes caps the disk. The figure wears large earspools and a necklace of five beads. What may be a belt or a skirt, consisting of parallel horizontal lines with a triangular indentation in the bottom line, marks the figure's torso below the *quechquemitl*. There are no indications of arms, and the figure's feet seem represented by a protrusion at the base of the tablet.

The resemblances of this sculpture to the later stelae at Tula and the Xochicalco triad are striking. The recessed face is shared with both groups, while the *quechquemitl* recalls Tula stelae 2 and 6. While neither of these Epiclassic groups is as abstract and reduced as this Teotihuacan carving, its minimalism recalls Tula stelae 5 and 6, while the greater

attention paid to the headdress evokes the bodiless heads over abstract designs of the Xochicalco triad. If the figure is indeed female, it may find its closest parallel with the woman (?) sculpted on Tula Stela 6. The frontal pose in a rectangular frame harmonizes with both groups of later stelae.

The second "miniature stela" discussed by Berlo is of more questionable provenience, being a bit of loot offered up by a New York auction house, Harmer Rooke Gallery, in 1987. Berlo reproduces a drawing of one carved face of this object, and merely a description of the reverse. Rooke identified the fifteen-inch high sculpture (Fig. 48, right) as a Toltec stela, "depicting on one side a chief and on the other, 'Choc [sic], the rain God'" (Berlo 1992, 142).[79] Berlo reproduces the "chief" side, which for her "clearly represents a version of the goddess in human form," while the unseen "Choc" (Teotihuacan Tlaloc?) she reads as the same entity "in her fierce, fanged, open-mouthed, and taloned aspect." Without a picture, I will not hazard a speculation on the identity of the supernatural on the dark side of this stone, which leaves us only the sketched anthropomorphic image to work with. This does represent a very similar figure to that rendered on its properly excavated counterpart. Again, we see a figure wearing a *quechquemitl* and an elaborate headdress. This last features a trapeze and ray design, flanked by plumes atop a horizontal bracket-like element. The face is carved in detail, in contrast to Cabrera Castro's discovery. The eyes are coffee-bean shaped; the trefoil nose rests atop a slit mouth. Large earspools frame the face, and the necklace consists of five rectangular beads or plaques. The *quechquemitl* seems to have a banded zigzag decoration. A "belt" or "skirt" like that of the Teotihuacan figure, is present, but there are no indications of feet, which perhaps broke off.

If this carving is indeed of Teotihuacan origin (and the drawing and description are vague enough to allow for the slim possibility that Rooke was right and that what we have here is another Toltec stela, with provenience bad enough to match the rest), we again have a monument that despite its small size does bear some significant resemblances to our stelae. The frontal pose in steliform frame, the trapeze and ray, *quechquemitl*, all evoke Tula, while the emphasis on the face over the body could be precursor to the treatment of the figures on the Xochicalco triad. The prominent female figure—whether human or divine—could be related to the imagery of Tula Stela 6 and the statues of Miacatlan and Xochicalco.

A final small steliform sculpture of definitively Teotihuacan origin to complete our list comes from Acosta's previously mentioned excavations in the Palacio del Quetzapapalotl (1964, 37, fig. 60). The fragmentary tablet (Figs. 49) measures 45 c. in height and 50 c. across in its present state, probably representing about 2/3 of the complete sculpture. It is carved from a slab of *tecalli* (so-called cave onyx) and bears the torso, legs, and arms with clawed hands (the "Goddess" again?) of a richly attired frontal figure, identified as the Teotihuacan Tlaloc by the excavator. This being's elaborate tasseled sandals, outward turned, profile feet and leg ornaments recall the Tula stelae, though the proportions of the figure are squatter than these, except perhaps for Tula Stela 5. It wears a broad belt of rectangular elements, each decorated in turn with a pattern of five dots, two horizontal rows of two framing a single central dot (more Venus symbolism?). A thin band of alternating upward and downward pointing triangular forms below the belt may represent an embroidered or feathered skirt. On the figure's chest or abdomen, and partially obscured by the breakage of the tablet, is a double-outlined disk

[79] An attempt to render "Chaak," the Maya rain deity.

or shield-shape with triangular rays at the edges like a sun and small concentric circles at the center, again perhaps a mirror if not an actual celestial luminary. The arms are ornately decorated with ribbon-like and geometric forms that seem to represent textile decorations. Although the claws have no later counterpart, the disk on the chest recalls the statues of Miacatlan and Xochicalco, as well as Tula stelae 4, 5, 6, and the Xico Stone.

The similarities in composition, form and costume elements between these small Teotihuacan carvings and the later stelae suggest some sort of continuity between Teotihuacan traditions and the Epiclassic monuments. The evidence of a connection would be strengthened if it could be demonstrated that the Toltecs and/or the Gobernador Phase sculptors of Xochicalco made small versions or at least forms analogous to their large monuments. Such evidence may exist in the form of a steliform plaque illustrated in the catalog to a 1993 North American exhibition of Teotihuacan art (Berrin and Pasztory, eds., 1993, 274-275, catalog 182) (Fig. 50). Dated provisionally to the final Metepec Classic phase at Teotihuacan before the city's fiery destruction, or to the Epiclassic by the entry's author, Esther Pasztory, this incised travertine tablet was acquired by the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago in 1894. Reportedly, it was accidentally unearthed by laborers digging a canal at Axtapalulca (or Ixtapaluca: Urcid 2007, 117) near Chalco in the southern Basin of Mexico. Pasztory compares its style to Xochicalco Stela 1, and rather predictably asserts that both may be later versions of the Teotihuacan "goddess." Burr Cartwright Brundage (1982, 76), a popular writer on the Mexica, identifies both instead as Quetzalcoatl. The incised frontal figure on the plaque wears what Taube (2000a, 284, fig. 10.10f) identifies as a War Serpent helmet like the persons

on Xochicalco stelae 1 and 3, as well as the statues of Miacatlan and Xochicalco. It also bears the Reptile Eye glyph in Xochicalco style as a chest ornament, and a numerical sign that Urcid (2007, 117) notes is similar in style to those on the missing Xochicalco-related stela from a Houston gallery discussed in Chapter 2. This plaque, with its similarities both to the Teotihuacan miniature stelae and to the full-size examples at Xochicalco, and in a style that makes Pasztory waver in her dating between Classic and Epiclassic, may represent both a conceptual and chronological bridge between the two classes of sculpture.

From Afar: The Oaxaca Barrio Stela

One last Teotihuacan monument (Fig. 51) remains to be considered for comparison to the Tula stelae, and it is not a Teotihuacan monument at all despite its impeccable archaeological context at that site. I am referring to a relief associated with a Zapotec-style tomb in a foreign enclave known in the literature as the "Oaxacan barrio." A cosmopolitan place, Teotihuacan attracted groups of people from far outside the Basin of Mexico. Merchants from Veracruz occupied one section of the city, and as noted in Chapter 2, someone wound up buried with Maya jewelry in a Maya burial position in the fabric of the Pyramid of the Moon. The Oaxaca barrio was the first of these foreign neighborhoods to be excavated, starting in 1966 (Paddock 1983). The housing compound was occupied by people who continued to make Zapotec-style pottery in the tradition of the Oaxacan center of Monte Alban and to employ Zapotec glyphs. Speculation has changed over the years concerning their precise reasons for being in the Central Mexican

metropolis so far from their original home: were they lime workers, obsidian miners, even diplomats?

The object in question, "found on the ledge between a tomb and its antechamber" (Berrin and Pasztory, eds., 1993, 271), became, like many other things concerning the finds at this locale, a matter of dispute between two of the excavators, Teotihuacan specialist Rene Millon and the late Oaxaca expert John Paddock, whom we have met tracking mythical Mixtecs across the Classic landscape in Chapter 3. Millon calls the vertical rectangular slab a stela (Flannery and Marcus 1983, 165), and some other authorities follow him in this (e.g., Adams 1991, 223). Paddock (1983), however, in a critique of many of Millon's other ideas about the Oaxaca barrio, identifies it as a doorjamb, by analogy with many very similar tomb doorjambs at Zapotec sites in Oaxaca, and is followed by other Zapotec specialists in this regard (e.g., Marcus and Flannery 1996, 253; Spence 1991, 60). It is not my intention to resolve a dispute between two competent dirt archaeologists here. While the object does indeed resemble Oaxacan doorjambs, it also resembles stelae allegedly found at Tula (and presumably not doorjambs, though with the discovery of Zapotec tombs at Tepeji del Río in Hidalgo, one never knows). For this reason, whatever its intended function, it is of potential interest.

Though forming part of a Zapotec funerary structure, the stela or jamb was carved from local stone, a reused block pilfered from an earlier version of the Temple of the Feathered Serpent. The stone measures 96 cm. in height and 39 cm. across the two broader faces and 28 cm. across the two narrower faces. On one of the broad faces the 260 day calendar glyph for 4 Earthquake or 4 Movement is carved in relief (Marcus and Flannery 1996, 253). The numbers are rendered in Zapotec style, using the bar and dot

numeral system.

This object, whatever its original function, bears a strong resemblance to the reverse of the Xico stela (Fig. 16). They share a similar composition, with a glyph in a rectangular cartouche placed at the top of the stela. It also resembles a stela of questionable Tula provenience discussed and illustrated in my catalog, de la Fuente's Catalog 159, a similar rectangular slab bearing a date on the upper surface. The reader will also note the formal similarity to the Stela of the Two Glyphs at Xochicalco (Fig. 29), though here the archaeological context is known and quite different from the mortuary setting of the Teotihuacan relief. These morphological parallels may hint at farther connections—and not Maya ones—for the Tula and Xochicalco stelae, perhaps mediated through Classic Teotihuacan, perhaps via direct contacts. In doing so, they point in us in the direction we shall take in the following chapter.

Conclusion (or a Pause Along the Road)

I have now traced a Central Mexican stela-making tradition, or more probably traditions, from the Early Formative through Classic Teotihuacan. Whether any of these trends or trajectories led, directly or otherwise, to the Epiclassic and Postclassic stelae is impossible to determine with certainty. However, they do represent a plausible antecedent to the latter. If the stela concept was known in the Basin of Mexico by 800 BCE, if the inhabitants of Chalcatzingo erected monuments commemorating rulers, if the carvers of Tlalancaleca did indeed create (pace Aguilera) a stela with a frontal anthropomorphic image, and if the Teotihuacan Metropolitan Museum of Art stela and

the miniature stelae discussed by Berlo are related to the Tula and Xochicalco stelae, as their formal and iconographic similarities clearly indicate, than perhaps the Epiclassic stelae are not merely local adaptations of Maya exemplars, but incorporate indigenous traditions as well. This is only to be expected, since at Tula, Xochicalco, and Cacaxtla we see a repeated pattern of the pairing of the old and local with the new and foreign in creative synthesis, in an attempt to forge new identities and ideological supports for the rulers of the post-Teotihuacan highlands. Combining both Maya and local styles in the forms of the stelae would create just such juxtaposition. And if the artists and their patrons drew on elements from near and far, far does not necessarily mean Maya, as we will see in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

GO WEST AND SOUTH? STELAE OF OAXACA AND GUERRERO

Introduction

Traditionally, efforts to explain the presence of stelae in Epiclassic and Early Postclassic Central Mexico looked to the east for answers, comparing these monuments to the Classic Maya stela tradition. But just as these explanations have mostly failed to take into account the evidence of earlier stelae in the Central Highlands discussed in the previous chapter, they have also largely ignored similar sculptures of Formative, Classic, and Epiclassic date to the south and west. The Classic Zapotecs in the modern-day state of Oaxaca (Fig. 111) created stelae commemorating individual rulers and historical events long before the Epiclassic, and had a history of close interaction with Teotihuacan and the Tula region. In the Mixteca Baja of northern Oaxaca and adjacent parts of Puebla and Guerrero, the Classic/ Epiclassic Ñuiñe culture produced stelae inscribed with a glyphic system related to the inscriptions of Cacaxtla, Xochicalco and Cotzumalguapa. On the Pacific Coast of Oaxaca, stelae quite literally abound at archaeological sites ranging in age from Late Formative to Late Classic. These monuments vary considerably in style and doubtless in cultural and ethnic affiliations, but include stelae bearing frontal figures with theriomorphic helmets that exhibit strong stylistic and iconographic similarities with both the Xochicalco and Tula stelae. And in the west, in the Río Balsas region of the modern state of Guerrero (Fig. 112), a poorly studied corpus of stelae, some

of Epiclassic date, but others perhaps older, also display multiple, striking parallels in form and content to the Xochicalco and Tula examples, including specific costume elements and the prominence of Tlaloc imagery.

These artistic parallels do not constitute the only line of evidence in support of possible cultural connections between the Central Highlands and these southern and western regions. The archaeological record indicates that at its height Xochicalco maintained extensive trade links with Guerrero to a much greater degree than with the Maya region. There is evidence as well of Toltec connections to this western area, perhaps even including invasion or settlement. Zapotec migrants took up residence in the the vicinity of Tula during the Early Classic, and Zapotec materials have turned up at the Toltec capital itself. Clearly, Oaxaca and Guerrero were as integrally linked to Central Mexico as parts of the Epiclassic Mesoamerican world system as the Maya. Yet when analogs or precedents are sought for our stelae, the monuments of these areas are rarely discussed. The exception to this pattern is the same as the exception to silence about the relevance of Chalcatzingo--again, Kenneth Hirth. In discussing external connections of the Xochicalco stelae, he even mentions Oaxaca before the Maya: "Stelae are...a common means of portraying information in the Valley of Oaxaca, the Mixteca Baja, and the Maya regions" (2000, 221). Probably one of the main reasons most other scholars fail to note these parallels is the fact that the Guerrero and Oaxaca stelae are as marginalized and neglected in the general literature of Mesoamerican art and archaeology as the Tula stelae, particularly in the anglophone literature.

In this section, I explore the similarities to, and potential relevance of the southern and western Mexican stelae for their Central Mexican counterparts. In some cases (e.g.,

Zapotec and Ñuiñe monuments), the former appear to antedate the latter, and may possibly have been among any external models assimilated and modified by the Central Mexican artists and the elites they served, alongside possible Maya ideas and local traditions. In other instances (e.g., many of the Guerrero stelae), poor archaeological context makes them difficult to date, and their relation to the Central Mexican examples more ambiguous. Are they earlier sources, parallel developments, or contemporary manifestations of the same broad tradition? (Perhaps all of the above?) Some of the western material additionally parallels the Tula and Xochicalco stelae in generating analogous claims of a Maya presence or "influence" in Guerrero, but, as in the highlands, the presence of local stelae dating back to "Olmec" times supports the contribution of indigenous regional developments as well.

For each region, I will assess the archaeological evidence for contact with Central Mexico and suggest speculative models of possible mechanisms facilitating the sharing of similar stela forms and iconography. The perceptive reader might venture to object at this point that this sounds like the traditional art historical attempts to establish plausible routes of "influence" that I criticized in Chapter 3. Hopefully, my suggestions differ from these in being decidedly more agnostic concerning the nature (and even the existence) of artistic interactions, in formulating hypotheses in terms of systems of multiple connections rather than unidirectional transmission of ideas, and in not assuming that the Central M exican carvers were passive recipients of "influence" from Oaxaca or Guerrero (or vice-versa, for that matter), no less than from the Maya. Again, my primary purpose is not to exclude the probability of Maya links or reductively argue for the primacy of Oaxacan or Guerrero "influence." Rather, the point is that if foreign ideas were indeed

incorporated into the design of the Central Mexican stelae, the Maya region need not have been the only source. The evidence for Oaxaca and Guerrero connections, both artistic and archaeological, is equally robust, if not more so. Again, my intent is to open up possibilities that have historically been neglected or received only minimal attention.

The Classic Zapotec Stelae of the Valley of Oaxaca

Monte Albán

I noted in the preceding chapter the similarity of the stela or door jamb from the Oaxaca barrio at Teotihuacan to the Xico Stone and to the Stela of the Two Glyphs at Xochicalco. These resemblances are consistent with evidence of contact with Classic Oaxaca in both pre-Tollan Phase Hidalgo and Gobernador Phase Xochicalco. But the Classic Zapotecs also had a tradition of creating stelae with human figures in addition to glyphs, stelae recording the deeds and images of Zapotec rulers, as may also be the case with the Tula and Xochicalco stelae. This Zapotec tradition antedates the latter and thus could be a source drawn upon by the Epiclassic Toltec and Morelos carvers.

The best-known Zapotec stelae are a group of eight incorporated into the fabric of the South Platform at the great regional capital of Monte Albán (Fig. 111). This city, founded in the Middle Formative (c. 600 BCE), occupies a militarily and politically strategic site overseeing the three branches of the Valley of Oaxaca. The capital and its polity may have been deliberately created as an alliance or amalgam of several previously separate and mutually hostile groups, in the interest of mutual defense. Since arable land is scarce

at the site, the settlement had to be supplied from the adjacent valleys. The builders leveled the top of the mountain to create a ceremonial and elite residential center. Monumental sculpture and architecture appear from the beginning of the center's history and include carved slabs, the so-called "Danzantes" (dancers) that probably depict slain enemies conquered by this incipient state, accompanied by the earliest examples of glyphic dates from the Mesoamerican 260-day ritual calendar.

Monte Albán continued to expand during the Late Formative, both in its architectural ambitions on site and its territorial expansion abroad. By the Early Classic, the site featured massive temple platforms and elite residences around a central plaza. Public art and inscriptions record Monte Albán's subjugation of other Oaxacan polities. The city also maintained diplomatic and trade relations with Teotihuacan, apparently as an equal, rather than subordinate, to the Central Mexican giant. But during the Late Classic, Monte Albán's star waned, and the site was largely deserted by the end of the Classic, though it remained a sacred place. During the Late Postclassic, intruding Mixtecs held the ground of Monte Albán sufficiently hallowed to evict the "occupants" of a Classic tomb, Number 7, and use it to inter their own royalty, replete with spectacular treasures in gold and lapidary work.[80]

As at Tula and Chalcatzingo, a number of Monte Albán's stelae were eventually incorporated into construction at the site, although it is unclear, and impossible to prove, if that was their original position. Eight stelae bearing reliefs of elaborately garbed anthropomorphic figures "were associated with the four corners" of the South Platform (Marcus 1983a, 137), a structure marking off the southern edge of Monte Albán's

[80] For the history and archaeology of the site, see Blanton (1983), Blanton et al. (1999), Marcus and Flannery (1996), and González Licón (2001).

ceremonial plaza, and restricting access to elite residences or administrative areas to the south. This architectural context differentiates them from stelae narrowly defined as freestanding slabs, although that label has been applied to them since the 1920s; one wonders whether they might be better called orthostats,[81] and Urcid (2005) does just that. It also introduces a significant caveat to any attempted comparison to the Xochicalco and Tula examples though, as we saw in Chapter 2, some of the latter have been suspected of architectural origins, rather than proper stela credentials, as well. At the same time, the similarity in format and ideological function between these Zapotec examples and other Mesoamerican slab monuments points to some degree at least of conceptual unity, whether the individual sculptures are set into masonry constructions or not--or whether or not the term "stelae" in its traditional Old World sense fits in every sense.

In any event, the position of the Monte Albán stelae, mortared into place, happily also helped preserve them from plunder until the late 19th- to early 20th-century Mexican "archaeologist" Leopold Batres--notorious for his dynamite-fueled "excavations" and inaccurate restoration of the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan--removed several of them for exhibition at a World's Fair in 1902. Luckily, he used less explosive techniques in this endeavor. Allegedly, Batres removed Stela 1 from the northeast corner of the structure, and discovered stelae 2, 3, and 4 in the same area (Marcus 1983b, 175). Two stelae (assigned numbers 5 and 6) came from the northwest corner. A third stone from this location, was called the Estela Lisa ("plain") by Batres, who failed to notice that it bears a carved scene as well, though not on its broad face. At the time of his "excavation", the carving was face down on the bottom edge of the stela. On the opposite side of the

[81] A term generally referring to upright slabs taller than they are wide, usually in an architectural context, frequently used in the literature of Egyptology, Near Eastern studies, and European megalithic architecture.

structure, Batres removed Stela 8 from the southeast corner and Stela 7 from the southwest corner. In the late 1950s, Jorge Acosta restored the monuments--or rather, cement copies of most--to their placement in the architectural matrix, not always accurately, while the originals remain to this day in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City. In the course of his restoration work, he uncovered the decorated face of the supposedly "Plain" Stela. Pottery buried as foundation deposits or offerings in the South Platform, directly under stelae, date the structure to the Monte Albán IIIa phase--the Early Classic, coeval with Teotihuacan. The style of the glyphs adorning the figures suggests that the stelae were carved during the same period. An additional carving that seems part of the same group, a decorated corner stone, came to light in excavations by Marcus Winter in 1993 (Urcid 2005, 22-23).

The iconography of these stelae was first seriously studied by pioneer Mexican archaeologist Alfonso Caso in the 1920s and 30s, during his extensive work at the site that brought to light the treasure of Tomb 7 along with many other important discoveries. Consistent with the prevailing modes of interpretation of his time, Caso identified the human forms as representations of Zapotec divinities. But, just as the "priests" and "gods" of early 20th-century readings of Classic Maya stelae proved to be images of rulers and historical events with the hieroglyphic decipherments of the second half of the century, so too the interpretation of these Monte Albán sculptures has shifted to politics. Archaeologist Joyce Marcus (1983a), an indefatigable investigator of ancient Oaxaca (and expert in Maya glyphs and politics), pointed out that since the figures are accompanied by name glyphs in the 260-day ritual calendar, they cannot be gods, who from her understanding of ancient Zapotec religion, did not have calendrical names. She

reads the content of this stela group as commemorating the lives and military exploits of the rulers of Monte Albán. In her interpretation (Marcus 1983a; Marcus and Flannery 1996, 218), six of these stelae (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8) show bound captives, arms tied behind their backs, and glyphs, in the form of stylized symbols of hills accompanied by distinctive individual attributes, representing place names indicating their towns of origin. Two of the prisoners (Marcus 1983a, 138, fig. 5.7) are costumed as animals, Stela 2, a jaguar (Fig. 53), and Stela 3, an opossum, suggesting their importance as high-ranking nobles or lords of their fallen towns, as well as some possible ritual treatment of uncertain significance.

On the other hand, Stela 1 (Marcus 1983a, 139, fig. 5.8) depicts not the vanquished but the presumed victor, a Zapotec king Marcus (Marcus and Flannery 1996, 217) calls 12 Jaguar after his accompanying calendrical glyph, probably his birth date (Fig. 52). The over 2 meter (7 ft.) high monument shows him at his accession to the throne, thematically paralleling Maya stelae. He wears a jaguar-skin costume and sits upon a mat or cushion of the same material, referring to royal power and aggression as well as to his personal name. The cushion rests atop another seat, a ceremonial throne with two long-nosed heads portrayed back to back at its base. While earlier writers identified this creature as the Zapotec rain deity, Cocijo, Marcus, who does not believe that the Zapotecs had discretely defined "gods" but rather believed in more nebulous spiritual forces associated with natural phenomena, simply calls this supernatural "Lightning." Marcus interprets two columns of glyphs as "referring to [12 Jaguar's] divine descent, pilgrimages, divination, and offerings that were part of his preinaugural and inaugural rites." The shaft he holds in his left hand might be scepter (Headrick 2007, 31), consistent

with his taking the throne, or a spear emphasizing his martial prowess in taking the six noble captives depicted in the accompanying stelae, presumably to be sacrificed in the accession ceremony; its tassel resembles the decorated spears depicted on the Piedras Negras warrior stelae (see next chapter). She suggests that 12 Jaguar erected, enlarged, or at least took credit for the South Platform and officially dedicated the structure at his coronation, in a fashion reminiscent of Pharaoh Rameses II usurping the monuments of his predecessors for his own glory.

Another Monte Albán notable is the subject of the relief decoration of Stela 4 (Fig. 54). This individual is probably named by the calendrical sign 8 Deer--not to be confused with the Mixtec conqueror who subjugated parts of Oaxaca in the Early Postclassic and is commemorated by the famed *Codex Nuttall*, among other screenfold manuscripts. Like his later namesake, the 8 Deer of the stela is depicted as a conqueror, symbolically piercing a place glyph with his spear to represent his victory over the unfortunate locale signified. In his right hand, he wields a stone knife. Footprints--a symbol for motion, procession, or travel in the visual language of both the Classic Zapotecs and Teotihuacan--placed below his name glyph allude to a journey. Marcus suggests that 8 Deer may be related to the other ruler, 12 Jaguar, as "a distinguished ancestor" (Marcus and Flannery 1996, 217), whose presence on 12 Jaguar's monuments invokes ancestral blessings on the new ruler's claim to the throne. A third stela apparently found near the South Platform, number 11, shows a Zapotec lord holding the head of a fish or turtle (Marcus 1983a, 139), presumably engaged in "ritual activity" (a frequent and convenient archaeological and art historical shorthand to express our ignorance of the meaning of the actual activity portrayed).

A strange feature of the Monte Albán group is the presence of small inscriptions and figures on the buried bottom edges of four of the stelae, the aforementioned Estela Lisa (Plain Stela) and 1, 7, and 8 (Fig. 55). These images would not have been visible to an ancient observer, and were not noticed in modern times until Acosta's discovery of the Estela Lisa scene led him to examine the others in search of similar hidden carvings. Two of these scenes (under the Estela Lisa and Stela 7) depict calendrically-named figures in procession wearing characteristic Teotihuacan costumes. On the bases of Stelae 8 and 1, the figures are represented only by their glyphic names. Marcus (1983b; Marcus and Flannery 1996, 217, 219-220) interprets these figures as visiting Teotihuacan emissaries, reflecting diplomatic contacts between Monte Albán and the Central Mexican metropolis.[82] More specifically, Marcus interprets the foreign figures featured on 12 Jaguar's accession monuments as bestowing the political recognition and prestige of the great Central Mexican power on his accession, Teotihuacan magi blessing his political nativity. Perhaps he even took the throne in a Teotihuacan-sponsored coup. As for the hidden location of this important carvings, Marcus hypothesizes that by burying them face down, 12 Jaguar was calling upon the earth itself as witness to his inauguration.

Epigrapher Javier Urcid (2005, 22-23) suggests a different construction sequence and interpretation for the South Platform and its associated carved slabs. First, an Early Classic ruler, whose name Urcid reads as 5 Jaguar, built a small structure in his own honor, probably not at the present site of the South Platform, where the slabs used in an upright position in the latter context were originally employed as lintels. Rather than

[82] Such a reading seems supported by a *tecalli* slab found at Mound X at Monte Alban, named La Lápida de Bazan after its discoverer. This object bears a scene of two elite figures--one, dressed in a jaguar costume, a lord of Monte Albán, the other, by his apparel, a dignitary from Teotihuacan.

bearing witness to the earth, the scenes on the narrow edges of the stones would have been quite visible to onlookers in this setting. Urcid interprets the processing figures not as Teotihuacan dignitaries putting their imprimatur on a Zapotec ruler's accession, but vassals bearing homage to 5 Jaguar's ancestor, 12 Soap Plant, a different kind of Epiphany. Later, an ambitious successor of 5 Jaguar Urcid calls Lord 13 Night[83] but Marcus calls 12 Jaguar, took the opportunity provided by the ending/beginning of a 52 year calendar cycle--the prehispanic counterpart in significance to the end of a century in the modern West-- to demolish 5 Jaguar's construction and "borrow" its components for his own project, perhaps a pyramidal platform. 5 Jaguar's lintels were recycled as upright slabs, and further stelae added to complete a sculptural program commemorating Lord 13 Night's accession to power. The bound prisoners depict the elite captives Lord 13 Night took as part of the preparations for his enthronement rites. At a later date still, a successor of 13 Night in his turn dismantled his predecessor's monument and reused the carved slabs to decorate the corners of the South Platform.

These Zapotec stelae thus record political and cultural contacts between Oaxaca and Central Mexico during the Early Classic and bear comparison with some of our Central Mexican examples. They might also afford a conceptual parallel to the Xochicalco triad in their accession/conquest narratives, if Virginia Smith's reading of the latter is correct. The profile figures on the Monte Albán monuments bear very general stylistic resemblances to the image on the Xico Stone (Fig. 16). One notes the same rough blocky quality of the carving, speech scrolls to signify verbal events, and a resemblance in the rendering of facial features. However, the speech scrolls also represent a Teotihuacan tradition.

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[83] Based on the inscribed stone found by Marcus Winter in 1993.

On the other hand, the Zapotec examples offer fewer fruitful formal analogies for Tula stelae 1-6 and the Xochicalco group. The only Monte Albán stela of Classic vintage bearing a frontal figure (but among numerous other designs) is Stela 9, located at the bottom of the stairway of the North Platform at the opposite end of the plaza from the South Platform (Moser 1977, 148-149, fig. 70; Paddock 1970, 147, fig. 145)

The Tomb Stela of Suchilquitongo

Another Zapotec monument more tightly fitting the traditional art historical criteria for a stela came to light in November 1985 at the site of Cerro de la Campaña, also known as Suchilquitongo, in an elite family tomb situated, as was the Classic Zapotec practice, under the this-worldly residence of the noble lineage (Fig. 56). The tomb, designed in the image of a house for the living, dates to Monte Albán IIIb, but the stela was introduced into the sepulcher at a later date, Monte Albán IV, corresponding to 700-800 CE, during the Epiclassic. At the time of its discovery, the stela was lying on its back near the rear wall of the burial chamber, though it presumably had been in an erect position at one time (Urcid 2005, 69, 98). A pit cut into the tomb floor presumably served as a socket into which the slab was set. The stela was covered in red cinnabar pigment, evoking the treatment of the Xochicalco triad. The iconography and inscriptions of the stela have been extensively analyzed by art historian Arthur Miller (1995, 192-205, figs. 81-85), both in the context of his discussion of the painted decoration of the tomb and in a separate paper (1991). Miller identifies the stela as a genealogical register, a common monument form during the Late/Epiclassic in the Zapotec region. This broad definition

encompasses carved doorjambs as well as freestanding slabs corresponding to the traditional definition of stelae and even small, portable examples (Urcid 2005, 115), yet another reminder that the categories employed by Western art historians do not always harmonize with the apparent conceptions of prehispanic Mesoamerican peoples. Over fifty of these monuments have been documented to date (Miller 1995, 193). Like its counterparts at other Zapotec sites, the Suchilquitongo genealogical register features reliefs of seated ancestral couples, portrayed facing each other across stacked horizontal levels or registers. In this instance, there are two scenes separated by a line or band. The top register shows a dead lord, 13 Monkey, as a mummy bundle, facing another younger male. A pair of descendants, one a female named 12 Soap Plant (Urcid 2005, 101), appears in the lower, offering a bird in sacrifice. The top and sides of the stone slab bear glyphs referring to other descendants of the original couple. Urcid (2005, 72-73, 99-104) suggests that the stela continues the family genealogy recorded in the door jambs, stucco decoration, and mural paintings of the tomb, as well as recording a series of bird sacrifices to royal ancestors by successive generations of descendants.

In their thick-bodied, high-relief carving and rendering of facial features, the Suchilquitongo figures resemble their artistic ancestors adorning the earlier Monte Albán stelae. A major difference between the Suchilquitongo stela and Tula reliefs, in addition to the less angular, more flowing outlines of the former, is the Zapotec portrayal of paired figures on separate registers. The only instance known to me among the entire corpus of sculpture at Tula of the depiction of seated figures in separate registers is a fragmentary slab excavated by Acosta in the Palacio Quemado (Jiménez García 1998, 317-219, fig. 151). Although there is only one figure, apparently male, in each register, the seated

posture and towering headdresses recall Zapotec work.

The Ñuiñe Stelae of the Mixteca Baja

To the northeast of the Valley of Oaxaca, in the hot valleys where the present-day state of Oaxaca meets Puebla to the north and Guerrero to the west (Fig. 111), another culture flourished during the period c. 600-900 CE, after Zapotec Monte Albán went into decline. This Late Classic/Epiclassic civilization produced large urban centers with monumental architecture, elaborate ceramic sculpture (figural urns and heads), and carved stone monuments including stelae. Paddock (1983b, 208) christened this regional tradition Ñuiñe in 1966, after a Conquest-era Mixtec term signifying "hot lands". The Ñuiñe sites seem to be contemporary with the Gobernador Phase at Xochicalco and the Epiclassic florescence of Cacaxtla, but appear to have declined just before the Tollan Phase at Tula. Glyphic and stylistic features tie Ñuiñe art with developments as far away as Cotzumalguapa and Classic Veracruz (Paddock 1983b, 210-211). The definitive study of Ñuiñe stone sculpture remains the late Christopher Moser's monograph (1977; see also Moser 1983). Moser dates the origin of the Ñuiñe sculptural style to the middle of the Classic period, coeval with Monte Albán IIIb in the Zapotec area and with the last stages of Teotihuacan before the fiery destruction of its ceremonial core c. 550-650 CE. However, he admitted there is no direct evidence available to confirm this genesis, apart from the resemblance of Ñuiñe art to both Classic Zapotec and Teotihuacan styles (1977, 18).

Kenneth Hirth explicitly ties the Ñuiñe monuments to the Xochicalco stelae. He points

out that stelae

> are…a common means of portraying information in the Valley of Oaxaca [and] the Mixteca Baja... Similarities in the iconography and epigraphic style of the carvings on Xochicalco stelae are greatest with those of the Ñuiñe area in the Mixteca Baja…The spread of this style into Guerrero and Western Morelos during the Gobernador phase may also account for the introduction of stelae as an artistic convention at Xochicalco. (2000, 221)

He later speculates that the use of stelae at Xochicalco "was borrowed from either the Maya or *Oaxaca regions* and was used to date events and convey information about the names and life histories of Xochicalco rulers" (2000, 265, my emphasis). Hirth is certainly correct concerning epigraphic similarities. The distinctive Ñuiñe glyphic system differs from both the Zapotec system (with which it nonetheless partially overlaps and from which it presumably originated) and its later Central Mexican counterparts, and is one of the defining features of this archaeological culture (Moser 1983, 211). In particular, decorative square and circular cartouches surrounding glyphs are a prominent feature of the Ñuiñe sign system shared with Xochicalco (as well as with the Zapotec). Urcid (2005, 7) interprets the Ñuiñe as a type of cultural conduit mediating the similarities in elite sign systems between Oaxaca and Central Mexico, both during the Classic (at Teotihuacan) and the Epiclassic (related to glyphic systems at Cacaxtla, Teotenango, and Xochicalco.

But as far as iconographic comparisons go, there is little similarity between the Ñuine monuments and the subjects of this dissertation, owing to the fact that human figures play very little part in the visual repertoire of the Ñuiñe style, especially in comparison to Zapotec and Oaxacan Coast monuments (Moser 1977, 189). Also, even in terms of basic form and function, most of the Ñuiñe monuments are not stelae by any definition. Many are horizontal in orientation, while many others were architectural components, and not

just vertical orthostats as at Monte Alban, but lintels and even simple building blocks. Very few of the sculptures illustrated in Moser's monograph are stelae comparable to the Central Mexican works. He describes one Ñuiñe carving (Fig. 57), a stone now located in the modern town of Tequixtepec, ambiguously as "a vertical standing stone, possibly a stela or door jamb stone" (1977, 48). We have already encountered the blurry boundaries between stelae and Oaxaca door jambs in the discussion of the inscribed stone from the Oaxaca barrio at Teotihuacan in the previous chapter, but in the case of this Ñuiñe monument, stripped completely of its unknown original context, the range of possibilities for its original use probably extend beyond the two suggested by Moser. The object does meet Jiménez García's minimal height criterion for a stela, being 1.49 m. high, 66 cm. wide, and 39.4 cm. in thickness. On one broad face of the stone shaft, at the middle, is a characteristic circular cartouche "supported by two curved volutes that rest like legs" on a bar and dot numeral eleven below. From the top of the cartouche numerous geometric elements project, the whole assemblage crowned by the image of a cut conch shell (Moser 1977, fig. 18a). The resemblance in form to the glyphs of the Xochicalco triad, and their shared arrangement in stacked registers is readily apparent, but what is lacking in the Ñuiñe stela (if it is one) are the anthropomorphic faces. The remainder of the stones Moser reproduces from Tequixtepec clearly do not correspond to the classical art historical definition of stelae in form or function.

Other probable Ñuiñe stelae illustrated by Moser are Stone II and Stone III (note his nondescript and ambiguous terminology, consistent with lack of context) from the site of Rancho Sauce. Moser (1977, 91) ventures as far as to state that II (Fig. 58) at least "may have been an upright stela" because its lower section, demarcated by an incised line

across the primary face (the only one illustrated—1977, fig. 51) seems designed to anchor the slab in the ground or in an architectural base. On the upper half of what would have been the visible primary face if the slab were implanted and erected, we see a complex glyph which he describes as "two dots beneath a circular cartouche with what appears to be 'flint' [day-] sign in its center. 'Crescent bows'....join the cartouche, one on each side" (1977, 91). Atop the cartouche is what Moser calls "a three-pointed crown element," which does indeed resemble a headdress. Stone III (Fig. 59) has a similar composition, with a glyph in a cartouche at the top of a surface of the rectangular slab, but in this case it is carved on one of the narrow edges, rather than the broad faces of the stone, which were left blank.

Moser (1977, 107-110, fig. 63) also calls another Ñuiñe monument a stela (Fig. 60). Presently located far from its unknown original location, in Rome's Pignorini Museum, he notes that the Pignorini Stone shows stylistic traits characteristic of the Postclassic Mixtec as well as the Ñuiñe. He suggests that it derives from the transition between the two stages of cultural development in the Mixteca Baja, perhaps bringing it closer in time to Tollan Phase Tula rather than Xochicalco's heyday. But its glyphic iconography more strongly recalls the sculpture of the latter city. The stela is a tabular slab, rectangular with a lobe or protuberance at the top, giving it a resemblance to a modern Euro-American tombstone. What Moser judges to be the front of the monument bears an elaborate stack of glyphs, with the greatest prominence in both size and visual impact allotted to a trapeze and ray sign that could pass for those found at Xochicalco. Above this sign we see two small ellipses enclosing central dots, almost resembling eyes, each under "pillared crown" elements (brows?). Below the "year sign" is what Moser (1977, 109)

calls "a horizontal ornate knotted element" over a bar that he does not think is a numeral, and, at the bottom, a round water vessel containing a cross from which emanate water drops and curling volutes (more water?). On the opposite broad face of the stela, we see another, somewhat less baroque glyphic assemblage. This one features a profile jaguar head enclosed within a cartouche. The lower half of the cartouche takes the form of a stylized serpent (or saurian Earth Monster) jaw, complete with hanging forked tongue.

One Ñuiñe stela that does feature human figures in its complex iconography is presently displayed in the plaza of the town of Cerro Yucundaba, Micaltepec, in southern Puebla (Fig. 61). This 1.75 meter tabular slab, known as Monument 1 (Urcid 2005, fig. 1.10), features intricate glyphic carvings on both broad faces. On one side, the head and arms of a snarling figure with a trapeze and ray headdress and Tlaloc's moustache tops the composition, resting upon glyphic elements in a fashion recalling the placement of the heads above glyphs on the Xochicalco triad. In this instance, the iconography of the top portion of the stela resembles that of Xochicalco Stela 2. However, nothing like the second human image in the vertical column of glyphs on this face of the Cerro Yucundaba stela, an apparent descending or "diving" figure with profile head and frontal arms but no visible shoulders or torso, occurs at Xochicalco.

Visual comparison of the composition and glyphic morphology of these Ñuiñe stelae with Xochicalco's Triad, the Stela of the Two Glyphs (Fig. 29), the posterior face of the Xico Stone (Fig. 16), and de la Fuente's Catalog Number 159 (allegedly) from Tula reveals the obvious similarities. The question remains, however, as to the nature of the relationship: whether the Ñuiñe stelae preceded and perhaps served as models for some of their Xochicalco counterparts, represent a contemporary and related phenomenon, or

represent separate regional developments out of shared ideas, or derive from Xochicalco's art. The shared epigraphic features linking the Ñuiñe to Cotzumalguapa and El Tajin as well as Xochicalco suggest that this culture was part of the same Epiclassic cultural world-system, define it as one may (world-religion of Quetzalcoatl, Zuyua, etc).[84] On the other hand, Moser (1983, 213) points to the evidence of surface collections of pottery from sites in the Ñuiñe region suggesting "a Late Classic and Early Postclassic occupation during which Xochicalco or Puebla and Toltec ceramic influences can be recognized" following the Ñuiñe florescence. If this sequence is correct, then the Ñuiñe culture preceded Xochicalco and Tula. But the evidence of surface collections, with artifacts out of their original stratigraphic context, is weaker than the results of excavation. Controlled digging alone can clarify issues of relative chronology. Moser was further influenced in his dating by Parsons' (1969) erroneous concept of a mid-first millennium "Middle Classic horizon" uniting Chichen Itza, Cotzumalguapa, Xochicalco and the Ñuiñe.[85] However, the exact chronological placement of Ñuiñe in relation to its neighbors remains to be settled by further excavations in the Mixteca Baja, though the most recent estimate of the initial and terminal dates for this culture--4th to 8th century (Urcid 2005, 7)--is consistent with earlier attempts. The problem of its Central Mexican connections remains unresolved in the state of present knowledge, but clearly the Ñuiñe

[84] The relation of Central Mexican Epiclassic and Early Postclassic art, including the stelae, to Cotzumalguapan and "Classic Veracruz"--that is to say, to Parsons' "Peripheral Coastal Lowlands" tradition-- is beyond the scope of this thesis, though it was the starting point for my research leading to the present dissertation, and will be the subject of an extended treatment once the present manuscript is completed for publication. Suffice it to state here that there are indeed numerous parallels in form, iconography, and concept between Cotzumalguapan monuments--including the stelae from El Baul and other sites--and the sculpture of Xochicalco (as previously emphasized by Parsons 1969 and Piña Chan 1980) and, less emphasized by previous commentators (though nonetheless noted by Thompson 1948 and Parsons 1969), Tula.

[85] I briefly trace the rise of this model and its critique in reviewing the Tula-Chichen Itza wars in Appendix

stelae, if that is what these decontextualized sculptures really are, have little to compare with the anthropomorphic figural, rather than purely glyphic, iconography of their Tula and Xochicalco counterparts. The closest parallels require going farther south in Oaxaca.

Forgotten Forests: The Stelae of the Oaxaca Coast

The Pacific Coast of Oaxaca (Fig. 111) is an immense territory stretching some 190 miles east to west, but for all its vastness, it remains one of the most poorly known and little excavated archaeological zones in Mesoamerica. Though the arid climate and sandy soils made much of the region ill-suited for agriculture, it was a conduit for prehispanic long-distance coastal trade routes, possibly reaching as far as Ecuador and Peru (González Licón 2001, 203). This factor no doubt formed the economic basis, at least in part, for the flowering of many urban centers and settlements, ranging in date from the Formative to the Postclassic. Among the surviving remains of these sites are numerous stelae, in an almost bewildering variety of styles among sites and within the same site. The vast majority of these stelae occur in the middle third of the coast, where settlement appears to have been most dense and where the local polities seem to have dominated their neighbors to the east and west. To date, publication of these monuments has been scanty. The most extensive coverage remains the work of María Jorrin (1974), a survey and descriptive catalog of surface sculpture at 128 coastal sites carried out in 1969 in conjunction with a multi-disciplinary regional archaeological project, including excavations at several centers, under the direction of archaeologist Donald Brockington. One strong point of Jorrin's contribution is her explicit attention to the definition of the

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stela form from the start of her chapter, in contrast to the nebulous criteria we have seen applied in other regions, especially the Ñuiñe. In the 1990s, further surveys and epigraphic and iconographic analysis of coastal stelae were carried out by archaeologist and epigrapher Javier Urcid (1991; 2005; Urcid and Joyce 2001).

All sorts of analogies and "influences"--"Olmec," Maya, Zapotec, Mixtec, even Cotzumalguapan--have been discerned in the manifold forms and iconography of the Oaxaca coastal stelae. A major obstacle in the path of assessing any skein of this tangle of alleged connections is the lack of sound archaeological associations for many of these objects. Owing to limited resources, Brockington's team excavated only three sites featuring stone monuments, obtaining controlled stratigraphic and ceramic associations for nine sculptures. Jorrin's dates (1974, 25) for the remainder of her sample are inferences based on surface collections, which she admits are shaky, given the long occupation of the settlements and the portable nature of some of the smaller monuments.

Brockington's group also surveyed a large number of plain stelae at 24 locations, though Jorrin questions whether all of these were intentionally left undecorated by the sculptors. She observes that most of these objects are presently located on farmland repeatedly cleared by burning, which would have destroyed any painted or applied stucco decoration (1974, 27). The most common architectural setting of these blank stelae are the tops of platform mounds or patios at the base of mounds, the former recalling the placement of stelae at Chalcatzingo and Xochicalco. At two sites, they are associated with ballcourts, like Stela 4 and its fragmentary companions from Tula. The range of dates suggested by the surface ceramic evidence for these "blanks" is very broad, from Formative to Postclassic, and the known cultural affiliations include Postclassic Mixtec,

though Jorrin tentatively suggests that the bulk were erected during the Classic. Following Brockington, Jorrin notes the presence of numerous uncarved stelae in the Maya area, but cautions about assuming Oaxaca-Maya links since "the stela complex is not intrinsically Mayan [sic], as there are...many occurrences of stelae outside the Maya area" (1974, 33).

Jorrin's prudence in these matters extends as well to her treatment of figural stelae as a group. She explicitly states the need of the researcher to examine local antecedents and analogs in addition to looking for distant connections: "It is also necessary to show inter-relationships among the coastal stelae themselves; it cannot be supposed that coastal Oaxaca stone carvers were receiving influence from, for instance, Chiapan styles, without having some cognizance of carved stones in their own backyards" (1974, 71). She accepts "diffusion of traits," consistent with the lingering intellectual fashions at her time of writing, from Monte Alban and from Chiapas to explain the origins of coastal Oaxacan stela carving, but rules out large-scale migration for lack of supporting evidence. One wishes that some past commentators on the Tula and Xochicalco stelae had been as cautious and cognizant of these facts in matters of Maya linkages to those monuments.

As for these figural stelae, some present remarkable similarities to the subjects of this thesis, while others are quite different from anything found in the central highlands. Some, for example, display frontal anthropomorphic images (Jorrin 1974, fig. 4c-d, 8c), but in a crossed-arms pose unlike the Tula and Xochicalco stelae. In her general analysis of selected formal and iconographic traits of her sample, using the simple computers available in her day for assistance, Jorrin identifies a range of styles falling between two highly distinctive "poles" with different hypothesized geographic connections. One

group, represented by five stelae from the Rio Grande #2 site, show affinities with Classic Monte Alban sculpture. Another, comprising two examples from the town of Chila (see below), appears to be older and has closer similarities with materials from Late Formative and Early Classic Chiapas and Veracruz. Observing bluntly that "three-ton stone slabs cannot be carried around like pottery" (1974, 76), she suggests itinerant sculptors traveled instead, moving from court to court and bequeathing these styles and techniques to local apprentices. As an alternative hypothesis, she suggests that portable miniature stelae may have circulated widely and inspired the design of the full-scale examples. She cites a Zapotec miniature model stela as plausible evidence for this suggestion, recalling as well the small steliform carvings in Teotihuacan I discussed in the preceding chapter. Less convincing as models are some alleged "Maya" jades of the type discussed in Chapter 3 in connection with Xochicalco. Since many of the other coastal stelae share attributes with both groups, but diverge equally from both sets of putative prototypes, Jorrin (1974, 71-72) suggests these two original styles merged over time to create local variants. I will now briefly survey some Coastal Oaxacan stelae, organized by site, of potential relevance to an understanding of their Central Mexican counterparts.

Río Grande

Río Grande is a largely Classic site, probably the work of speakers of the Otomanguean language group (González Licón 2001, 203). Jorrin divides the remains in the area into two sites, Rio Grande #1 and #2. From the former comes a remarkable stela

(Fig. 62) now displayed in the Oaxaca hall of the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City (Piña Chan 1960, foto 4; Paddock 1970, 197, fig. 230), though there seems to be some uncertainty when Jorrin (1974, 39) refers to the site as the monument's "presumed original location." Although the caption to González Licón's illustration of the monument provides the date as Monte Albán V, that is, the Postclassic, this is not based on any firm archaeological evidence, and seems unlikely on stylistic grounds. Jorrin (1974, 78) notes that no figural stelae on the Oaxaca coast occur on sites with exclusively Postclassic archaeological materials, though plain stelae are found in such contexts. González Licón's text in the same book contradicts the caption by ascribing the stela to the Classic period, a temporal placement also advocated by Jorrin, while the label at the museum puts the initial date for the Postclassic to which it assigns the stela at 825 CE. Unfortunately for considerations of precise dating, the archaeological record at Río Grande #1 --if the stela really is from this locale-- has been confused and disturbed by the activities of modern humans. Earth, and the ceramics buried in it, from Río Grande #2 was brought to #1 as fill for an airstrip. The ceramics at Río Grande #1 range widely in date from Late Formative to Postclassic, as well as in original location, and do not constitute solid contextual material for the sculpture. In her stylistic analysis of coastal Oaxacan stelae as a group, Jorrin (1974, 71) claims that the Río Grande #1 stela combines features of her hypothesized Monte Albán-related and Chiapas/Veracruz-linked groups, and thus represents a relatively late development.

The main face of the stela is occupied by the frontal figure of a male, with arms folded across his chest, right over left, open hands at his shoulders. Jorrin interprets this pose as indicative that the subject is deceased, flexed into a mummy bundle, a suggestion made

by analogy with Parsons' (1969, 119) reading of similar images in Cotzumalguapan sculpture. This reading seems supported by a stela removed from an unknown location to the backyard of a hotel in the modern town of Río Grande, showing a cross-armed human with a skeletal appearance (Jorrin 1974, 46; fig. 8c). Most recently, Urcid (2005, fig. 2.1:5) concurs in identifying the Río Grande #1 figure as "a ruler in a funerary box," though the pose also occurs in Toltec sculptures of subjects who by all other indications appear to be living (de la Fuente et al. 1988, catalog 5, 8, 9). The outline of the MNA figure's face is deeply cut, creating an impression evoking both the Xochicalco triad (Figs. 21-26) and Tula stelae 1-3 (Figs. 4-10). The rendering of the facial features differs from the former in the closed eyes, consistent with the purported post-mortem portrayal, and greater reduction and abstraction. The flat triangular nose resembles those of the rulers shown on Tula stelae 1 and 2, and the squared slit mouth is closer to its Tula than its Xochicalco counterparts. Like the individuals depicted on Xochicalco stelae 1 and 3, the statues of Xochicalco and Miacatlan (Figs. 30-33), and Tula Stela 4 (Fig. 11) and perhaps 3, this figure's face emerges from the jaws of an animal enclosing the visage like a helmet, the lower jaw under the human's chin, the fanged upper jaw framing the figure's brow. However, unlike the avian headdress of Tula Stela 4 and the War Serpent helmet of the other Xochicalco and Tula examples cited, the Río Grande figure sports a jaguar as its headgear, its paws visible on either side of the feline's head and reaching down to touch the human's shoulders. The jaguar may represent the animal's skin worn as a costume as portrayed in Zapotec royal representations (Urcid 2005, 21), a helmet, or a supernatural patron hovering over his earthly counterpart. Paddock (1970, 193, n. 8) alleges that the human "is apparently being embraced from above and behind by a tiger [sic]", while

Jorrin (1974, 70) suggests more menacingly that the ruler is "in the clutches" of the feline. What look like plumes surmount the jaguar's head, consistent with the headdress interpretation via the parallels to the Xochicalco and Tula images, but the central "plume" over the vertex of the feline's skull bears two horizontal stripes and might also be read as the animal's tail. Circular ear ornaments complete the Río Grande figure's head garb.

The Río Grande stela strikingly resembles the Xochicalco triad in that where the figure's lower torso and legs would be expected, we instead find an arrangement of glyphs in a vertical stack. Jorrin compares the form of the prominent architectonic glyph (Urcid's "funerary box") to "late Xochicalco" work. Besides this sign of uncertain meaning, the name/date 3 Jaguar appears at the bottom of the stela, perhaps naming the ruler portrayed (appropriately enough, given his attire and/or company), and the number 7 can be seen above it. Urcid interprets an element above the numeral, resembling the tail of a rattle snake, as the sign for "Tail of Fire Serpent," yielding another name/date when combined with the 7. Piña Chan (1960, 70) offers a possible alternative reading of this group of signs as the date “7 House.” Paddock (1970, 193, n. 8) observes that the inscription is a "relatively late (Xochicalco) glyph," reinforcing the suspicion of connection to the Morelos metropolis.[86]

[86] Río Grande #2 also features a group of five stelae (Jorrin 1974, 40-43, figs. 6-7) which had already been disturbed by looters when Jorrin conducted her survey. They depict human figures, some with calendrical names, and their composition and glyphic dates seem related to Classic Zapotec sculpture (Jorrin 1974, 70), with which they appear contemporary on the grounds of ceramic associations. Their abstract, curvilinear style, however, makes them unlikely analogs to the Altiplano stelae except in the general sense of being stelae with images of anthropomorphs. While Jorrin links them to the Rio Grande #1 stela on technical grounds, the overall visual impression is quite different and makes such a connection unlikely.

Cerro del Rey

A hilltop site very close to Rio Grande, Cerro del Rey seems on the evidence of surface ceramic finds to have been occupied from the Classic to the Late Postclassic (Jorrin 1974, 43). The site features three stelae, but the most impressive is the monument which led to the site being called "The Hill of the King" in Spanish. Stela 1 (Fig. 63) was one of a pair of stelae[87] erected in a plaza between two platforms, and stands 2.10 meters high, measuring .70 meters wide and .30 meters in thickness. Its image of a frontal figure is one of the most unique and remarkable representations in all of Mesoamerican art. It shows what Jorrin (1974, 43) was forced to call "a fabulous being, half man and half jaguar," but which is now understood, after three decades of ethnographic and epigraphic work, as a ruler with his shamanic animal alter ego/guardian spirit, commonly called *nahual* in Nahuatl and *way* in Chol Maya (Masson and Orr 1998, 165-175, fig. 144; Urcid 2005, 19-20, 27). This incredible relief sculpture illustrates the simultaneous spiritual identity and duality of king and jaguar by rendering the face in a mixture of frontal and profile views. The frontal head of the ruler, paired with the profile head of the aggressive feline, form a split face, in a manner reminiscent of some Northwest Coast Native American and Oceanic art and Picasso's Surrealist-influenced work of the late 1920s. While ceramic figures and masks showing faces divided into living and skeletal halves date as far back as the Early Formative and as late as the Conquest era in Central Mexico, the mixture of frontal and profile representations to form the gestalt of a frontal face is the only extant example of its kind in Mesoamerica. An additional interesting and

[87] Its companion bears a badly eroded relief of a figure with crossed arms--presumably a corpse--like the stela from Río Grande #1.

subtle touch is the slight asymmetry between the sides of the split headdress shared by the faces. The human's arm is bent across his torso, and his outstretched index finger touches his animal companion's paw. The Reptile Eye glyph, familiar to us from the Xochicalco stelae, surrounded by a square cartouche, rests on a bar and dot numeral over the abdomens of human and jaguar. Urcid (2005, fig. 2.9) reads this combination of signs as the name of the ruler portrayed, 5 Alligator.[88]

The unusual compound nature of the Cerro del Rey figure should not distract us, however, from some more general traits it shares with the Tula and Xochicalco stelae. The figure faces front, with feet (both human and feline) pointing outward, is apparently a ruler portrait, the human side of the face displays a snarling or scowling expression similar to Xochicalco stelae 1 and 3 (in addition to matching that of his feline alter ego), and the prominent glyphs where we would expect a continuation of the figure(s) recall the same series of sculpture. The relatively naturalistic proportions and flowing outlines recall Classic Maya carving. Jorrin (1974, 70) groups this stela together with the Río Grande #1 monument on the basis of the frontal position of the figure and the carving technique. They are also linked by the obvious connection of the jaguar imagery.

Chila

Two stelae are recorded in situ for this site by Jorrin, both toppled and lying in pits courtesy of looters. Fortunately, Brockington and his associates conducted salvage excavations which clarify the history of these sculptures. The looters missed an offering of 35 ceramic vessels and a jade ornament which, along, with the stratigraphic

[88] Since alligators are not indigenous to Mexico, this should be amended to "5 Caiman" or "5 Crocodile."

associations of the broken stelae, permitted the excavators to reconstruct a complex sequence of ritual activities. Stela 1 was erected by its creators on a prepared floor of clean sand, with its carved face oriented to the east. At a later date, the slab was deliberately toppled and broken in two, a pattern of ceremonial destruction akin to that observed at Chalcatzingo and for the Xochicalco triad as well as Maya examples. Later still, someone raised the upper half of the broken stela again, but this time facing west, and buried the ceramics and skeletal remains of a secondary burial nearby as a dedicatory cache. The evidence suggests that Stela 2, plain except for five dots, presumably numerals, underwent the same sequence of erection, toppling, and restoration, receiving its own associated deposit of ceramics and secondary burial at its second raising. Most important, the ceramics and the radiocarbon dates from the bones provide firm evidence for dating the monuments, and the results are most interesting when paired with the artistic evidence from the sculptures themselves.

Stela 1 (Fig. 64, below) is much more interesting for our purposes. Almost three meters high in its reassembled state and over a meter wide, the rectangular slab bears the relief image of a standing male ruler, wearing a towering headdress featuring a mythological saurian or ophidian head in profile. The rather fluid and naturalistic body outlines show the figure's arm bent at the elbow across his chest, cradling in its crook the body of a serpent (a supernatural or a ritual object akin to a Maya serpent bar?). What might be the snake's head (the carving is broken and eroded in this section) rises over the ruler's right shoulder, at the height of the profile head of the headdress. The reptile's body, decorated with spots in the form of double concentric circles, makes a nearly right angle bend under the human's right forearm and extends across his abdomen before

making a similar bend at his left hip. The man's left arm, bent slightly at the elbow, hangs by his side and his hand grasps the serpent, whose sinuous form bends once more to the figure's left at the level of his knees; the tail, with apparent rattle, terminates at the ruler's waist level. The human's right hand appears to grasp an object represented by a series of parallel lines (feathers? vegetation bundle?) that seem to branch out from the snake's body. A similar form emanates from the serpent near the left arm, while what looks like a spray of long feathers extends from the creature's tail to arch over the ruler's head. A necklace of circular beads, loincloth, knee ornaments also composed of circular elements, and sandals complete the elite human's costume. His outward turned profile feet recall the Tula stelae.

Which brings me to a hypothetical proposition. If this stela were found, devoid of archaeological context, at Tula or some other Central Mexican site, its elaborate headdress, frontal posture, sinuous naturalistic forms and supernatural snake cradled by a ruler would doubtless evoke claims of Classic Maya connections. In particular, the serpent would be interpreted as a variant of the Maya Serpent Bar and compared with a depiction of this object in the Building A murals at Cacaxtla. Further afield, an analogy might be drawn, on reasonable enough grounds, to Maya monuments like the unprovenienced stela now in the De Young Museum of Fine Arts in San Francisco (Miller and Martin 2004, 98, fig. 54), with a ruler (female in this instance) holding a Vision Serpent which curves up over her head. But of course, Chila Stela 1 was found at Chila, not Tula, and in clear association with datable ceramics and other materials. The pottery associated with the re-erection of half of Stela 1 is of Monte Albán III type, that is to say, Early Classic (c. 150 CE), a placement supported by the C-14 date of 1800 +/- 130

years before present (Jorrin 1974, 62). But considering that an undetermined but perhaps substantial interval seems to have ensued between the first and second raisings of the stelae, Jorrin concluded that they were probably created during the Late Formative.

Jorrin observed a stela in a very similar style to Chila Stela 1 in the modern town of Chila, to where the modern villagers dragged it from an unknown location to display in front of the town administrative hall. (Apparently the practice of raising old monuments revealed by Jorrin's excavations is a very persistent regional tradition!) This stela (Fig. 64, above), broken at the top and decapitating the relief figure in the process, shows a male personage dressed in similar jewelry and other garb to Stela 1's elite character, though with a much more ornate loincloth. The left arm is bent across the chest and the hand touches the right shoulder while the right arm, flexed at the elbow along the figure's side, holds a knife over his abdomen. On stylistic grounds, she judged this sculpture as contemporary with the excavated example. She is almost certainly correct.

Jorrin (1974, 67) compares the decoration of the Chila stelae to both Late Formative stelae at Tonala in Chiapas and to Early Classic stelae from Cerro de las Mesas in Veracruz. In particular, she compares the sandals, the strange lines emanating from the snake's body, and the snake's elaborate tail, to Cerro de las Mesas Stela 9. Examination of the latter (Stirling 1943, 37, fig. 11a) confirms the similarity of the plumes or rays, but the similarity of the sandals is more generic, the pose of the Veracruz figure, kneeling and in profile, is quite different, and the "snake" in this instance seems to be an ornamental back rack. The Cerro de las Mesas stelae represent a visual tradition developing out of late Olmec art in the Veracruz region, and include the use of Long Count inscriptions with dates in the fifth century CE. Although Chila 1 antedates these

counterparts across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, if its date is truly Late Formative, it may represent a local outgrowth of the same common Isthmian tradition represented as well at Izapa. As discussed in Appendix 2, the Pacific Coastal stela traditions, of which Izapa represents one example, seem to have played a formative (pun intended) role in the origins of Classic Maya art. Therefore, the apparent surface similarities to Classic Maya art displayed by the Chila stelae probably represent an independent regional development out of a shared background rather than contemporary connections or "influence." One wonders whether similar mehanisms might explain some of the Maya features of later Central Mexican stelae, or whether some of these features might be accounted for by Oaxacan contacts, for which we have very substantial evidence (see below and Chapter 4's discussion of the Oaxaca barrio stela at Teotihuacan), a hypothesis suggested by Jorrin to explain the Xochicalco triad (1974, 77).

La Humedad

The three meter-high La Humedad stela (Fig. 65) was located by Brockington's survey team in 1970 (Jorrin 1974, 37; fig. 4e). It features a frontal image of a human head with headdress and perhaps part of the torso, recalling the bodiless heads of the Xochicalco triad, rendered in blocky low relief. The elaborate headdress includes dots in cartouches and a horizontal bar with up- and in-curving ends, both elements recalling the morphology of glyphs in the Ñuiñe and at Xochicalco. The opened, slightly downturned mouth recalls the aggressive expression of Xochicalco stelae 1 and 3, though the carving is far less detailed than that of those Morelos monuments. Below disk and bar ear

ornaments, curved lines extend to the figure's right, perhaps indicating plumes from an ornamental back rack, while where the individual's chest or shoulders would be, we see two rough circular elements containing smaller dots, perhaps additional costume elements. Though most of the surface ceramics in the vicinity are of Classic date, it is possible that the stela is of comparable vintage, but Late Formative and Postclassic sherds were recovered as well, and in any event, no firm conclusions can be drawn in the absence of excavations. Jorrin (1974, 70) compares the style to the Monte Albán stelae, especially stelae 3 and 6 (discussed above) and to the Piedra Labrada stela from Guerrero (see below).

Nopala

The coastal center of Nopala, near the modern town of Puerto Escondido, seems, like Rio Grande, to be a Classic settlement constructed by Otomanguean speakers (González Licón 2001, 203-204). Fortunately for our purposes, the site included fourteen stelae, all carved with human figures in frontal view; unfortunately, the modern local inhabitants removed these objects from their original settings and incorporated them into a wall around a public building, destroying the original context. Compounding the misfortune is the fact that at the time of Jorrin's survey, no excavations had been conducted in the alleged vicinity of the stones' original resting place. Only surface finds of Classic Zapotec ceramics hinted at a date (Jorrin 1974, 47), though Jorrin (1974, 76) assumed "a general Classic date" for the stelae.

The most interesting of the Nopala series for comparison to Central Mexican

examples is the 2 meter high (Jorrin 1974, 47, figs. 9a and b) Stela 1 (Fig. 66, above). Its relief depicts a decidedly menacing figure whose oval eyes and scowling mouth recalls Xochicalco 1 and 3. His forceful expression is well matched with the objects he holds, a flint or obsidian knife in his right and what appears to be a bleeding heart in his left. He wears what seems to be a diadem surmounted by plumes, circular ear ornaments, a heavy collar that looks like twisted material (rope?), possible armbands, and, hanging from his belt over his breechclout, a cross-shaped ornament surmounted by a dot or bead. The lower part of the stela is missing or buried in its current setting, with the loss of the figure below the thighs. Though the pose and armament carried differs from Tula stelae 1, 2, 3, and 5, and the style less hieratic and somewhat more naturalistic, the frontal depiction of a ruler in a martial role reflects the same concept, and possible Maya connections.

Nopala Stela 2 (Fig. 66, below) shows an elite individual whose theriomorphic helmet headdress, with spiral or tendril-like forms apparently emanating from its nostrils, resembles a stylized War Serpent and recalls Xochicalco stelae 1 and 3 (Figs. 21-22, 25-26), the statues of Miacatlan (Fig. 30) and Xochicalco (Figs. 31-33), and Tula Stela 3 (Figs. 8-10). The broad face does not, however, evoke any Central Mexican parallels, nor does the unknown object held in the figure's hand. The unusual style of Nopala Stela 3 (Jorrin 1974, 47-49, figs. 10a and b) resembles neither Central Mexican stelae nor some of its Nopala compatriots, though the upturned snout of the War Serpent seems to be visible above the figure's brow. The badly damaged and eroded Nopala Stela 4 (Figure 67, above), however, seems to show a goggle-eyed, mustachioed figure--a Tlaloc, like Xochicalco Stela 2, the outward-turned feet recalling Tula. The broken and now-headless Stela 10 (Fig. 67, below) illustrates a female (?) wearing what looks like a *quechquemitl*,

and is identified as such by Jorrin (1974, 52), with a disk on her chest. The disk contains cruciform design and is surrounded by circular elements; Jorrin calls attention to its resemblance to a Zapotec glyph (E), but its placement on the *quechquemitl* is reminiscent of the disk worn by the female (?) from Tula Stela 6. Other Nopala stelae are of the crossed-arms type, presumably mortuary monuments, and Jorrin posits Maya affinities for the group because of the resemblance of these examples to Cotzumalguapan art. This is a questionable argument since the linguistic affiliations of the builders of the Cotzumalguapan remains an unresolved problem. Jorrin (1974, 76) also invokes the same type of "Maya" jade pendants used as evidence for Maya contacts at Xochicalco as analogs for the Nopala stelae, but as seen in Chapter 3, these are not exclusively or conclusively Maya in origin.

Río Viejo

Jorrin (1974, 37) documented one monument at the site of Río Viejo. Twelve years after the appearance of the Brockington team's publications, Marcus Winter located five more carved stones. American archaeologist Arthur Joyce conducted excavations and surface surveys at the site from 1988 through 1995, locating six additional monuments (Urcid and Joyce 2001, 199-201). The monuments formed two clusters near or atop two platforms, Mounds 1 and 9, both of which supported public buildings spanning the Late Formative to Late Classic. Already an urban center by the end of the Formative, the city reached the height of its power and influence in the region during the Late Classic (Joyce 2008, 224), after which it suffered a rapid decline and depopulation, with only small

scale vernacular structures erected among the ruins of the former ceremonial core during the Early Postclassic. The residents of these houses do not seem to have recalled their life under the Late Classic elites with fondness. They may have built over the ceremonial center to symbolically undo its former power, and their opinion of their previous lords seems reflected in the reuse of a broken stela as a corn grinding stone (Hamann 2008, 147; Joyce 2008, 239), a reminder of the continuing relevance of models based on class conflict for understanding ancient Mesoamerican societies. Stelae were replaced in the Postclassic at the site by more three-dimensional sculptures showing anonymous figures, probably divinities (Joyce 2008, 235)

The secondary incorporation of one of the carved Classic monuments (Number 12) into an Early Postclassic wall offers a terminal date for the sculptural tradition--the stone must predate the wall. Therefore, the stelae and other sculptures must be of Late Formative to Late Classic date, and Joyce and Urcid (2001, 202) date thirteen of the monuments to the Classic on artistic and glyphic stylistic grounds, though they are unable to pinpoint their chronological placement more exactly. The styles exhibited by the Río Viejo stelae vary, though all seem related to Classic Zapotec work, and this diversity in form may reflect diversity in age as well (Fig. 68) . The stela labeled Monument 6 (Joyce and Urcid 2001, fig. 5), for example, bears a strong resemblance to the Rio Grande #2 stelae, which Jorrin would put earlier in her regional sequence. On the other hand, Monument 14, which Urcid and Joyce (2001, 203, fig. 7; Joyce 2008, 233, fig. 7.4c), refer to as a block but which by the published sketch, size and proportions (2 meters high by 73 cm. wide by 36 cm. thick) meets traditional art historical criteria for a stela, bears

an elaborate glyph.[89] Its scroll-decorated cartouche inevitably recalls both Xochicalco and the Ñuiñe, as well as the reverse face of the Xico Stone. Urcid and Joyce (2001, 212) speculate, on the basis of the use of Zapotec calendric signs on the monuments, that the builders of Rio Viejo spoke Chatino, a branch of the Zapotec language, though the glyphs also betray Teotihuacan, Xochicalco, and Ñuiñe connections.

Río Viejo's Monument 15 also meets classical formal criteria for a stela, being a trapezoidal slab with a curved top, and measuring 1.92 meters high 90 cm. across by 15 cm. thick. It was found lying flat on the ground, but may once have stood erect (Urcid and Joyce 2001, 203, fig. 8). The eroded carving shows a profile figure, presumably male and perhaps seated, with loincloth and feathered headdress. It bears a great similarity to the Toltec-related stelae of Tlapa, in Guerrero, to be discussed below.

Archaeological Evidence for Oaxacan/Central Mexican Contacts

Oaxacan Materials at Xochicalco

The possibility of direct connections between the stelae of Oaxaca and those of Epiclassic to Early Postclassic Central Mexico is supported by ample archaeological evidence of strong and persistent contact between the two areas. Already noted in Chapter 4 was the actual presence of Zapotec settlers in Classic Teotihuacan in the Oaxaca barrio. This Classic Zapotec presence seems to have extended beyond Teotihuacan into the vicinity of Tula, as evidenced by an actual burial site of Oaxacan

[89] Urcid identifies the primary glyphic element, a dart or arrow shaft, as the Zapotec day-sign Quihlana, corresponding to "reed" in Central Mexican calendars.

colonists at Tepeji del Río. Sculptural and artifactual materials at Tula suggest that Zapotec contacts persisted at least into the period of the founding of the Toltec capital. While there is no evidence of such direct Zapotec migration at Xochicalco, the archaeological record at that site reflects some commercial ties with Oaxaca. Saenz's excavations produced sherds of Zapotec gray ware dated to Monte Albán III, and a pair of small figures retrieved from a structure at Xochicalco resembles Classic Zapotec effigy urns (Hirth 2000, 201; Nagao 1989, 96). However, such finds are relatively rare compared with domestic and other imported wares (Hirth 2000, 199-201, table 9.9). Hirth suggests that these materials reached Xochicalco via the Mixteca Baja, perhaps along with the Ñuiñe glyphic system.

A Zapotec Tomb in Tepeji del Río

Given the conceptual, figural, and glyphic similarities between the Tula stelae and Oaxacan counterparts discussed above, I find it interesting that these connections have been ignored in favor of exclusive attention to Maya links. While there is evidence of Maya trade with Tula as discussed in Chapter 3, there is solid evidence of actual Oaxacan migration and settlement in the vicinity. Zapotecs not only had contact with the Tula region, but actually established at least one enclave, comparable to the Oaxaca barrio at Teotihuacan, during the Late Formative/Early Classic juncture. The discovery of a Zapotec tomb, as well as ceramics, at the site of Tepeji del Río, constitutes proof of the long-term presence of these outsiders in the area acceptable to the most fastidious and finicky of contemporary archaeological critics of migration models.

Tepeji del Río is an area to the south of Tula across the Hidalgo border in the present-day state of Mexico. In 1974, Robert Cobean conducted an archaeological surface survey and test excavations at two sites with monumental architecture, finding numerous surface shards at both locales similar to the Oaxacan types common at the barrio at Teotihuacan. The most frequently occurring ware in the surface collections was identified by Cobean as similar to Juanito Decorated Fine Gray, a Classic through Epiclassic type produced in the Mixtec region of northern Oaxaca (Flannery and Marcus 1983a, 181). Flannery and Marcus, reviewing Cobean's evidence, noted the inconsistency between the claimed similarities to the Oaxaca barrio at Teotihuacan and the Mixtec origins of Juanito ware. For them, the presence of similar grey ceramics in the Late Formative in the Valley of Oaxaca, hinted at a Zapotec rather than Mixtec connection. An accidental discovery by a local farmer at the site of El Tesoro, one of those tested by Cobean, in 1988 seems to provide confirmation for Flannery and Marcus's suspicions.

What the landowner unearthed was a stone tomb constructed in Zapotec fashion. The find did not come to the attention of the antiquities authorities until the following year, and archaeologist Carlos Hernández Reyes (1994) conducted a salvage excavation of the disturbed feature. The grave goods had already been removed by the site owner, but he permitted Hernández Reyes to study and photograph them. They included a cylinder vessel of orange clay similar to Late Formative examples from Monte Albán, as well as other ceramics resembling Zapotec mortuary vessels from the Late Formative through Early Classic. Also among this assemblage were what appeared to be Zapotec copies of Teotihuacan ollas and shell ornaments similar to grave goods at the Zapotec site of Cuilapan. Fragments of Zapotec urns and figurines are documented from nearby surface

finds. From the use of stone slabs rather than stucco for the floor of the sepulcher, a Late Formative Zapotec practice, Hernández Reyes dated the tomb to c. 100-300 CE. At El Tesoro, 63 percent of the ceramics are of Oaxaca types, while at the nearby Classic site of Acoculco, 54 percent of the ceramic assemblage recovered corresponded to Zapotec wares and forms (Mastache, Cobean and Healan 2002, 57). Because of the similarities of the ceramics from these sites with pottery from the Oaxaca barrio at Teotihuacan, Mastache, Cobean, and Healan (2002, 59) interpret the presence of Classic Zapotecs in the Tula region as colonists sent from Teotihuacan in the interests of this city, perhaps professional masons of Oaxacan descent dispatched north to exploit the limestone resources around Tula.

From Oaxaca to Tula

If Zapotecs were present in the Tula region in a long-term settlement by this early date, could they have maintained these contacts through the Classic and contributed in a direct fashion to the formation of the Toltec polity and its art? There exists fragmentary evidence in support of such a proposition. During his early work at the site, Acosta excavated a roughly rectangular block of stone bearing a Zapotec glyph in the wall of a house (Caso 1941, 93, fig. 9; Dutton 1955, pl. 4a; Hernández Reyes 1994, 129). The clearest illustration is the line drawing in Dutton's article, and seems to show the profile head of an entity with inward-curving trunk-like proboscis and clearly delineated eye and earspool, enclosed in a square cartouche with trapezoidal projections at the top and both sides. This sign stands above a horizontal double bar with two transverse bars cutting

vertically across its midsection. The face bears some resemblance to the Zapotec rain deity, but may be a variant of the Zapotec day-sign Ballcourt as rendered in Oaxaca in the Pitao Phase (400-500 CE) and the Peche-Xoo Phases (500--800 CE) (Urcid 2005, fig. 121), which it also strongly resembles. Urcid (personal communication, January 15, 2007) suggests that this carving may date to c. 750. In 1980, Clara Luz Díaz Oyarzabal excavated fragments of Zapotec pottery at the site of Chingu, a Teotihuacan settlement near the oil refineries that deface the present landscape at Tula (Hernández Reyes 1994, 129). Hernández Reyes reports (1994, 129) seeing cylindrical Zapotec vases similar to the one he recovered at Tepeji del Río, but darker in color, in the bodegas at Tula; he suggests these are of later date than the example from the tomb.[90] However, whether these finds represent the continuous presence of Oaxacan settlers and artisans from the time of the Tepeji del Río burial, new migrations, trade, or diplomatic contacts remains to be elucidated by future excavations.

The nature of Tula's political, economic, and cultural relations with its contemporaries in Oaxaca also remains unclear. A type of incense burner employed at Tollan Phase Tula, Alicia Openworked incensarios, may be related to earlier censers in the Mixtec region (Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002, 48). Paddock (1983b, 208) and Flannery and Marcus (1983b, 214) suggest that Tula's rise to power contributed to the decline of the Ñuiñe centers. Whether the Tula Toltecs intervened in Oaxacan affairs in the Mixteca Alta as well hinges on the interpretation of the origins of a figure named 4 Jaguar, who appears in the famed Postclassic screenfold manuscript *Codex Nuttall*. This

[90] In addition, recent excavations at Tula unearthed another stone-lined tomb, not containing Zapotec artifacts and clearly of Toltec origin, but paralleling Zapotec practices both in its construction and in the apparent reentry and reuse of the tomb for successive burials (Sterpone 2007, 41-42).

character bestows legitimacy on the renowned Mixtec conquering king (and usurper) 8 Deer, investing him as ruler in a nose-piercing ceremony, and accompanying him on what seems to be a mythic journey to visit a solar deity. The accompanying pictographic toponym identifies the site of 8 Deer's painful investiture rite as a Place of Reeds--a Tula or Tollan, but as we saw in Chapter 2 and Appendix 4, not all such instances of this place name signified Tula in Hidalgo. Maarten Jansen and Gabina Pérez Jiménez (2007) identify 4 Jaguar rather concretely as Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl himself, whom they see as genuine historical figure. More cautious interpretations identify 4 Jaguar as a native of a local Mixtec "Tollan," Tulancingo, or at least from Cholula rather than Tula (Byland and Pohl 1994). Pohl (1999, 184) notes formal resemblances between a sculpture labeled Monument 6 from Tututepec and the atlantid warriors from Tula's Pyramid B (Piña Chan 1960, fotos 5, 6). This seems like a boost for Jansen's theory, since it was at Tututepec that 8 Deer first made contact with 4 Jaguar. But the sculpture is probably Late Postclassic in date (Blomster 2008a, 31; 2008b, 318-319), postdating the Toltecs, and as noted, Pohl elsewhere has rejected the hypothesis positing 4 Jaguar as ruler of Tula.[91]

Flannery and Marcus (1983, 215) suggest considerable Toltec cultural "influence" in Oaxaca affecting both the Zapotec and Mixtec, manifest in the Early Postclassic in the form of "greca-panelled architecture, with screenfold manuscripts and with a whole new set of ceramic vessels." However, they date the spread of these traits to the fall of Tula rather than its period of dominance, with Toltec diaspora from the wreck of the capital as the agents, too late to be of relevance to the question of our stelae. More recent discoveries confirm the presence of Tula-related traits, including a stone bench relief from the site of Etlatongo (Blomster 2008a, 31; 2008b), but date these to the Late

[91] Unlike the Tula warrior columns, the Tututepec figure is probably female (Piña Chan 1960, 72).

Postclassic. Blomster (2008a, 33; 2008b, 316-318) suggests that the Late Postclassic Zapotecs and Mixtecs, like the Mexica, claimed an affiliation with the Toltecs after the demise of Tula in order to strengthen their ruling credentials by connection to a renowned seat of artistry and civilization.

The Stelae of Guerrero

Early Stelae and the Olmec

The present-day state of Guerrero, lying to the west of Oaxaca, is a hot and arid region (Fig. 112). Whether its pre-Columbian landscape was as desolate as the present day or whether modern conditions are the result of deforestation and exploitation during the early days of Spanish settlement remains an open question (see Niederberger 2002). The dry climate has been favorable to archaeology, preserving wooden masks and cave paintings dating as far back as the Early Formative. Archaeology, however, did not start returning the favor until within the last few decades. Guerrero was sorely neglected by the profession for much of the 20th century, leaving recovery of many of its well-preserved treasures to local looters, with controlled excavations relatively rare. Like that of the Oaxaca Coast, the prehistory of Guerrero was, and to a degree remains, a marginalized area, a kind of terra incognita, often inappropriately lumped together with West Mexico (Gutiérrez Mendoza 2008, 368). But the territory seems to have been anything but marginal in the prehispanic period. The Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias, one of the few scholars who recognized the archaeological importance of Guerrero in the

mid-20th century, speculated that the Gulf Coast Olmec may have originated in this arid region far from Veracruz and Tabasco, owing to the plentiful looters finds of artifacts in "Olmec" style. While this proposal has proved to be incorrect, explorations and excavations since the 1970s in Guerrero have revealed evidence of major Formative settlements, political-ceremonial centers, and monumental art. We already alluded to an Early to Middle Formative polity, Teopantecuantitlan, in Chapter 4, when discussing the stelae of Chalcatzingo, which center apparently allied itself to the Guerrero site via a royal marriage of convenience. Two painted cave sites used for ritual purposes, Juxtlahuaca and Oxtotitlan, an elite burial site at Chilipancingo, and a tradition of remarkably naturalistic ceramic figurine sculpture centered on the site of Xochipala, are among the ample evidence of Early to Middle Formative cultural florescence. By the end of the Middle Formative around 400 BCE, a distinctively abstract regional stone sculptural style, dubbed Mezcala by modern collectors, had emerged, unfortunately a favorite target of looters (and forgers). In the Classic period, Guerrero's peoples participated in long-distance trade networks linking them both to Oaxaca and to centers as far away as Teotihuacan and the Maya region. As we shall see, there is strong evidence that this exchange continued into the Epiclassic, when Xochicalco maintained strong commercial ties with Guerrero, and Early Postclassic, when there is evidence of Toltec contacts. In the Late Postclassic, the Tarascans, political rivals of the Mexica, occupied part of Guerrero.

The cultures of Guerrero also produced and raised many stelae, a long regional monumental tradition dating as far back as the Formative. The earliest example is probably Monument I of San Miguel Amuco, a sandstone slab bearing a profile figure in

"Olmec" or "Middle Formative Ceremonial Complex" style (Diehl 2004, 174, fig. 122; Paradis 1981, 202, fig. 4). Given the political and trade connections between Guerrero and Chalcatzingo during the Formative, the impetus for creating stelae may have come from the latter site, via local Central Mexican antecedents and/or the Gulf Coast Olmec. What is certain is that this stela tradition persisted through the Classic and into the Postclassic,[92] although the dearth of controlled excavations makes the precise dating of many individual examples even riskier business than fixing some of the Oaxaca Coast stelae in time. As on the Oaxaca coast, the stelae of Guerrero vary considerably in style, but some bear striking resemblances to our Central Mexican examples, which may be of potential significance for hypothesis framing, given the other archaeological evidence for contact between the two regions. Other Guerrero stelae appear to be *sui generis* and bear no resemblance to their Central Mexican counterparts, or for that matter, any other Mesoamerican stelae, e.g., the Mexiquito Stela (Osborne 1943, pl. 11; Reyna Robles 2002c, 366-368, 387, fig. 10), where strange skeletal beings ascending and descending may have some distant affinities with Cotzumalguapan iconography. As in the above discussions of Oaxacan stelae, I discuss the pertinent Guerrero monuments for comparative purposes by site, a useful organizational rubric in spite of the fact that some of them are only questionably linked to their reputed places of discovery.

[92] Díaz Oyarzabal (1990, 14-15) identifies one stela, now in the MNA (Catalogue 11-3326), as Postclassic, since it bears the Mexica place name glyphs for the Central Mexican locales of Chicomoztoc and Culhuacan.

Point of Departure: The Acapulco Stela

I owe to H.B. Nicholson (personal communication, October, 2004) the initial suggestion that if I were embarking on dissertation research on the stelae of Epiclassic to Early Postclassic Central Mexico, I should pay attention to the presence of stelae in Guerrero. The significance and importance of this recommendation did not impact me fully until January 2005, when I first viewed a stela (Fig. 69) said to be from Acapulco, the modern resort center on the central coast of Guerrero (see Fig. 112), in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City (Catalog MNA 2.6-712). I was struck immediately by its conceptual and visual relationship to the Tula and, especially, Xochicalco stelae I had first viewed earlier the same week. The 1.14 m. high slab[93] features a relief of a standing personage identified by Díaz Oyarzabal (1990, 11) as an image of Tlaloc, clearly distinguished by his goggle eyes and fangs, wearing a plumed headdress, loincloth, earspools and a collar of multiple strands of linked elements.. The figure is portrayed with the arms crossed over the abdomen.

As a rectangular stela decorated with the image of this mythic entity, the Acapulco stela struck me immediately as conceptually analogous to Xochicalco Stela 2 (Figs. 23-24). Apart from two notable Early Classic exceptions, one (Stela 32) from Tikal (Greene et al. 1972, 291, pl. 137; Coe 2005, 100, fig. 49) and the other (Stela 11) from one of Tikal's dependencies, the city of Yaxhá, Guatemala (Greene et al. 1972, 342, pl. 163; Clancy 1999, 107-108) (Fig. 113), there are no comparable Maya stelae depicting the

[93] The remaining dimensions, published by Díaz Oyarzabal (1990, 11), are width .57 m.; maximum thickness .20 m.

Central Mexican Storm God.[94] These Tikal-related stelae reflect the strong ties with Teotihuacan that characterize the Maya city-state's Early Classic politics and culture. Stela 32 is also clearly a representation of a mortal ruler garbed as the god, rather than the supernatural himself, as human features are apparent under the goggles. This distinguishes it from Xochicalco Stela 2, where, whether or not Virginia Smith's similar interpretation of the subject as a ruler in a costume is valid, the facial physiognomy depicted pertains to the divinity only. But in the Acapulco stela, we similarly see no visual evidence to suggest that the image was intended to be anything other than the god. The frontal pose and the manner of depicting the feet in profile resembles the conventions of the Tula stela group as a whole, while recession in the area of the chest evokes the use of such deep negative spaces in both the sculptural technique of the Xochicalco triad and the faces of Tula Stelae 1-3. The rendering of the rain deity's visage is similar both to the face of the figure on Xochicalco Stela 2 (though less detailed), and to the Tlaloc mask in the headdress of the ruler portrayed on Tula Stela 1. The rectangular border surrounding the image along the edges of the carved face of the stela also parallels the Xochicalco triad, though in the Acapulco stela it is limited to the sides and top, rather than framing the bottom as well. The most significant difference between the Acapulco Stela and Xochicalco Stela 2 is the full-body portrayal of the god on the former, without substitution of the body by glyphs.

Since it is without any firm archaeological context, the date of the Acapulco Stela is uncertain, but because of the Teotihuacan Tlaloc iconography, it is at earliest contemporary with Classic Teotihuacan, the apparent source of the deity imagery.

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[94] Another Early Classic Tlaloc stela is on display in the town plaza at Tonala, Chiapas, though the ethnicity of the carvers is uncertain.

Teotihuacan produced at least one stela, the Metropolitan Museum of Art stela discussed in the previous chapter (Fig. 47), with attributes of the same supernatural, albeit in far more abstract form. The Acapulco Stela also bears stylistic and thematic affinities to a pair of similar monuments, now sharing the space of the Guerrero room in the MNA's Hall of Northern and Western Cultures, said to be from the site of Tepecuacuilco, Guerrero, to which we now turn.

The Stela Pair of Tepecuacuilco: Teotihuacan Rain Deities Go West?

Like their counterpart from Acapulco, the Tepecuacuilco stelae (Schmidt Schoenburg 2006, 29, 32) (Figs. 70-71) immediately struck me as potentially significant for understanding the origins and meaning of the Central Mexican subjects of my study as they loomed in the dim light of the same room. These objects share with the Acapulco Stela a less than solid provenience. They were donated to the Museo Nacional de Antropología in June 1990 by a collector from the state of Mexico, who alleged that his father obtained them in Tepecuacuilco, in north-central Guerrero (Díaz Oyarzabal 1986, 203).[95] Both sculptures have suffered greatly at the hands of time; the carvings are eroded and both stelae lack their upper portions, effectively decapitating the figures. Both apparently functioned as free standing stelae in their original context, since their bases are plain, suggesting that they were buried to anchor the slabs in an upright position

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[95] Another illustration of the fact that extensive looting activity, rather than archaeology, was the conduit by most ancient Guerrero art reached public display and scholarly attention during the last century.

One of the duo, MNA Catalog 2.6-1508[96] (Figs. 70-71), shows an apparently female figure identified by Díaz Oyarzabal (1986; 1990) as the Nahua water goddess Chalchiutlicue. Given its Teotihuacanoid affinities and the reticence over the past few decades of many anglophone art historians (following the lead of George Kubler and Esther Pasztory) to apply later Nahuatl names to the deities depicted in Classic art, she might be more neutrally labeled a water goddess. Followers of Pasztory might opt to call her the "Great Goddess," but as noted in the last chapter, Zoltan Paulinyi's recent (2006) critique puts the validity of this construct in grave doubt. The Tepecuacuilco goddess is missing her head, but the remaining image shows a human figure clad in an elaborate skirt divided into three vertical decorated (tasseled?) sections, knee bands and sandals. Over what looks like a shawl or blouse, she sports a large pendant or pectoral in the form of a disk containing another circular motif ringed with petal-like projections and with a badly eroded design, perhaps a Teotihuacan Tlaloc or frontal serpent face. With feet shown in profile, pointing outward, she stands on a glyph consisting of a row of five small rings over a bar decorated with incised scroll-like designs and curving upward and then inward at both ends.

The goddess's companion on the second Tepecuacuilco stela (MNA Catalog 2.6-1507)[97] is labeled as Tlaloc by Díaz Oyarzabal (Figs. 70-71). The upper section of the god's face has been destroyed by the breakage of the slab, but the deity's distinctive "moustache" and fangs are still visible, as is a type of mouth ornament or buccal plaque of Teotihuacan origin. In the figure's chest is a roughly circular concavity that Díaz

[96] Dimensions: maximum height, 1.24 m.; maximum width, .62 m.; maximum thickness, .20 m.

[97] Dimensions: maximum height, 1.14 m.; maximum width, .57 meters; maximum thickness, .20 meters.

Oyarzabal identifies as probably a receptacle originally holding an inlay of semiprecious stones (1990, 13). What appear to be drops of water fall from his hands, a common gesture and attribute of Teotihuacan deities. The figure's garb, skirt and sandals, resembles that of his apparent consort on the companion piece.

In both a 1986 paper and her catalog of the collection of Guerrero materials in the MNA's holdings (1990, 6), Clara Luz Díaz Oyarzabal interprets these stelae as "clear evidence" of Teotihuacan influence because they "show clearly the Teotihuacan style in its symbolic elements, in the attire of the figures, and in the position of the feet."[98] While the frontal view and outward pointing feet are redolent of Teotihuacan art, she admits (1986, 204) that the stela form itself is not characteristic of Teotihuacan, as I have already noted. She does not mention the Metropolitan Museum stela, a major exception to this generalization, but she perceptively points out the strong resemblances among this stela pair, the onyx plaque recovered by Acosta from the Palacio de Quetzalpapalotl I discussed as a stela analog in Chapter 4 (Fig. 49), and the Chalco plaque also discussed in the last chapter (Fig. 50). In the case of the Quetzalpapalotl piece, the resemblance to the Tepecuacuilco goddess is indeed striking. As Díaz Oyarzabal notes, the skirts of the two are virtually identical. On the basis of style and iconography, she places the Tepecuacuilco stelae in the Classic, coeval with Teotihuacan.

To explain both the artistic similarities of these Guerrero sculptures to Teotihuacan art and what she believes is the absence of the stela form in the latter tradition, Díaz Oyarzabal identifies a convergences of circumstances that could explain why there are Teotihuacan stelae in Guerrero but not in Teotihuacan: Teotihuacan contacts, the long

[98] "muestra claramente el estilo Teotihuacano en los elementos simbólicos, en el atuendo de los personajes, y en las posiciones de las pies."

tradition of lapidary work in Guerrero, and the idea of erecting stelae, which she traces to Oaxaca. As seen in Chapter 4, the Metropolitan Museum stela shows that the creation of steliform deity images was indeed a part, although a relatively rare part, of the Teotihuacan tradition, and, since the practice of erecting stelae in Guerrero dates back to Formative times at San Miguel Amuco, it need not have derived from Oaxaca.

The Tepecuacuilco "Tlaloc" also strongly resembles the Early Classic Maya Teotihuacan Tlaloc stela at Yaxhá (Fig. 113). They share similar, traditionally Teotihuacan body proportions as well as the deity's buccal plaque. The major difference is the more dynamic action of the spear (thunderbolt?)-wielding divinity emblazoned on the face of the Yaxhá example.

Formal parallels between these fragmentary Guerrero stelae and the Tula group include the profile feet and frontal pose. Both the circular ornament on the chest of the goddess and the concavity on that of the god recall the discs held by the female figures on the “statues” of Miacatlan and Xochicalco, and the circular pendants of Tula stelae 5 and 6, and the Xico Stone. Two major differences between the Tepecuacuilco and Tula group are the subject matter--deities vs. rulers, though the latter on Tula Stelae 1 and 2 wear Tlaloc insignia, and the body proportions. Though the figures on Tula Stela 5 and perhaps Stela 6 are exceptions to this generalization, both are consistent with an earlier date and closer links with Teotihuacan for the Tepecuacuilco pair. The major convergence with Xochicalco Stela 2 is the concept of using stelae to portray water deities; the divergence is the full portrayal of the figure without substituting glyphs for the body. Interestingly enough, Díaz Oyarzabal (1986, 207) identifies the glyph upon which the Tepecuacuilco goddess stands as a Xochicalco water glyph, which would tend to weaken her date and

suggest a placement in the Epiclassic--coeval with the Xochicalco triad, the "statues" of Miacatlan and Xochicalco, the Chalco plaque, and thus closer in time to Tula than Teotihuacan. In the absence of archaeological context, the issue is difficult to resolve on purely stylistic or epigraphic grounds.

Three alternate hypotheses concerning the relation between these Tepecuacuilco stelae and our Central Mexican examples, especially at Xochicalco, appear to me as possibilities at present. 1. Both (and the Tikal and Yaxhá stelae as well) represent developments out of the Teotihuacan tradition represented by the Metropolitan Museum stela, either independent of each other (in which case the Tepecuacuilco stela may be Classic or Epiclassic) or in the context of continued reciprocal contacts in the Mesoamerican world system (in which case the Tepecuacuilco stelae may be Epiclassic or occupy the same transitional space in both time and style as the Chalco plaque). 2. The Guerrero stelae represent one of the antecedents of the Epiclassic Central Mexican stela tradition at Xochicalco. 3. The Tepecuacuilco stelae represent the result of Xochicalco's "influence" in Guerrero, with any apparent Teotihuacan features mediated through the Epiclassic center, and are Epiclassic themselves in date. In my opinion, the strength of the Teotihuacan features the Tepecuacuilco pair displays, from the iconography of the deities to the body proportions and gestures, makes the third alternative the least favored horse in the running, given the absence of such purely Teotihuacan images in Xochicalco's art. Both suggestions 2 and 3 could lead to "who's on first" claims and counterclaims of the type I have critiqued throughout the preceding pages, though 3 is the most suitable grist for a diffusionist mill. Both could find support in Tepecuacuilco's relative proximity in northern Guerrero to Morelos.

More Tlalocs: the Stelae of Acatempa, San Miguel Totolapan, and Piedra Labrada

But the Acapulco and Tepecuacuilco stelae by no means complete the roster of Storm God stelae in Guerrero. A very impressive example (Piña Chan 1977, 44, fig. 42) reportedly comes from Acatempa[99] near Teloloapan (Fig. 112) in the northern part of the state near the modern border with the state of Mexico (Fig. 72, right). As he did with the Xochicalco trio, Piña Chan fits the imagery of this stela into his speculative reconstruction of ancient Mesoamerican religion, identifying the figure as Tlaloc as Lord of Time, and ultimately a manifestation of Quetzalcoatl.[100] Be that as it may, this representation is the most human in appearance of any of the Guerrero Storm Gods. Only the goggles identify him with the deity, and he may be a human impersonator. His standing posture, frontal view, profile feet pointed outward, and martial accoutrements--shield and darts in his right hand, atlatl in his left--suggest the Tula and Piedras Negras "warrior stelae" invoking Teotihuacan imagery, an impression reinforced by the Teotihuacan war symbols above and below him. His feathered headdress bears an avian face, probably an owl, a Teotihuacan war emblem. He also wears heavy circular earspools, a double necklace of beads, a beaded arm band, and tasseled ornaments on his sandals. This anthropomorphic being stands atop what appears to be a more abstracted Tlaloc face in the form of a glyph, with circular eyes in a compressed trapeze and ray sign forming the upper face, and toothy mouth below. What seem to be rosettes and

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[99] Reyna Robles (2002c, 368) expresses doubt about its provenience.

[100] See Appendix 3 for critique.

foliage occupy the marginal spaces to left and right both of the main figure and the abstract face. Piña Chan identifies the style as late Teotihuacan; certainly the owl headdress, large head and short body would support this, while Reyna Robles (2002c, 369) dates it, with the other Guerrero Storm God images, to the eclectic Epiclassic.

The same abstraction and reduction evident in the second face on the Acatempa stela is generalized to the whole body of the Storm God on the Stela of San Miguel Totolapan (Niederberger 2002, 67, fig. 16g; Reyna Robles and Rodríguez Betancourt 1994, 96-98) (Fig. 112). This monument (Fig. 72, left) was investigated by an archaeological survey in response to local looting in 1989. The investigators certainly did not find the stela in its original context. It was part of an assemblage of antiquities discovered in a modern house, where they had been collected by a former owner of the dwelling (Reyna Robles and Rodríguez Betancourt 1994, 96). The other artifacts from this local collection included a Teotihuacan Tlaloc effigy incense burner and another Teotihuacan ritual object, a so-called candelero, consistent with the style and iconography of the stela.

Although this 1.4 meter high[101] slab is broken across the middle, we can see that the figure of Tlaloc is rendered one side in a kind of *pars por toto* sculptural shorthand (Fig. 72, left). The face, complete with eye-rings, moustache and fangs, and collar, forms a unit that seems to hover in space at the top of the composition. Where we would expect a torso, we see instead merely the arms, their upper ends terminating in inward curling forms. They too seem to hover in empty space, pointing outwards, each holding a stylized serpent-like form variously interpreted as representing lightning, rain (Reyna Robles and Rodríguez Betancourt 1994, 98), or torches related to the funeral rites of dead warriors (Taube 2005a, 273). The legs are treated in similar fragmented fashion. The reverse bears

a very badly eroded figure, owing to the fact that that side was reused as part of a stairway by the modern owner! What remains seems to show another Teotihuacan Tlaloc. Reyna Robles and Rodríguez Betancourt link this stela to Teotihuacan. They assert that the features of the god correspond more to Hasso Von Winning's Teotihuacan "Tlaloc A," supposedly a rain god, more than to "Tlaloc B," with more feline attributes (see also Reyna Robles 2002c, 368).

The site of Ometepec-Piedra Labrada (Piña Chan 1960; Schmidt Schoenberg 2006, 37; Guitiérrez Mendoza 2007, 333-354; 2008, 371-375), taking its name from its stelae ("carved stone"), is located on the Pacific coast close to the present border of Oaxaca (Fig. 112). The remains of a substantial prehispanic urban center lie largely covered by the modern town, but the visible remains include three clay platform mounds and an I-shaped ballcourt. The stelae and other stone sculptures constitute the most visually striking vestiges of the ancient center. Niederberger (2002, 42) notes their relation to Zapotec and Mixtec traditions, calling one monument's celestial subject matter "Tlaloc/Cocijo" given its geographical location and uncertain ethnic affiliations (another point in favor of using the neutral "Storm God"). Certainly the settlement is related to coastal Oaxaca developments, as is the presence of stelae. On the other hand, Guitiérrez Mendoza (2007, 333) interprets the glyphic system and stylistic features of the extant monuments as suggesting greater ties to Epiclassic Xochicalco, Cacaxtla, and Teotenango than to the Zapotec. Piedra Labrada's ceramics indicate Monte Albán IIIa occupation (Jorrin 1974, 70), though whether the Tlaloc stela dates to that time is an open question. Guitiérrez Mendoza gives the site's sculptures, of which eleven are visible and documented at present, a date range from the Classic through Epiclassic. More recently

[101] Complete dimensions: width, 50 cm.; thickness, 15 cm. (Reyna Robles 2002c, 368).

(2008, 375), he specifies the date of the sculptures as between 400 and 800, which would accommodate both Teotihuacan and Epiclassic Central Mexican ties within such a wide temporal frame.

Only the top portion of the Tlaloc stela survives (Niederberger 2002, 67, fig. 16a), and as this remnant measures 3.5 meters, it must have been of formidable size when complete. It shows the head and upper torso of the Storm God, complete with goggle eyes and moustache, wearing a broad collar, disk and bar pendant ear ornaments, and a massive feathered headdress (Fig. 73). A raptorial bird, probably an eagle, seems to be descending downward from the sky above the deity's crown, unless it too is intended to represent part of the headdress. Another stela from the site, Monument 1, also seems to show a Tlaloc with trapeze and ray headdress, though the carving is badly eroded (Guitiérrez Mendoza 2007, 339, fig. 255). A fragment showing a trapeze and ray sign along with a water glyph (Guitiérrez Mendoza 2007, 352, fig. 268) may also allude to the Storm God. The other relief sculptures from the site display a wide array of themes and styles. Stela 3 depicts a more "secular" image, the representation of a ruler whose name Urcid (2005, fig. 2.9) interprets as the calendrical birth date 10 Knot, wearing a jaguar helmet mask and jaguar claw gauntlets dripping blood. This image shares with the Tlaloc stela the frontal position of the main figure's body, although 10 Knot's head is shown in profile turned to his right. The ruler's broad collar, sandals, and arm and leg ornaments parallel Tula stelae 1 and 3, though the jaguar garb certainly does not. Two other reliefs, Monuments 2 and 7, show merchants carrying staffs and bundles (Guitiérrez Mendoza 2007, 341, fig. 257; 345, fig. 261), alongside Ñuiñe-like glyphs.

The lack of more certain dates for all of these Guerrero Storm God stelae renders

tentative any interpretation of their possible relationship to their Central Mexican counterparts. The three hypotheses suggested for the Tepecuacuilco stela above apply equally to these related materials. Stylistic affinities with Teotihuacan are not sufficient to rule out the possibility of the third alternative, that the Guerrero artisans incorporated motifs they 'borrowed" from contact with Xochicalco or elsewhere in the Epiclassic world.[102]

The Burial Slabs of Placeres del Oro: Stones of the Nivened Dead

The stylization of the lower Storm God mask on the Acatempa stela might have some kinship, however distant, with two unique and bizarre stylized storm gods decorating two slabs found buried in a horizontal position (Fig. 74). These were excavated (in a loose sense of the term) from a burial site at Placeres del Oro by the collector William Niven in 1910 and published in an article the following year by pioneer U.S. Mesoamerican anthropologist and art historian Herbert Spinden. Niven, like many of his contemporary dilettantes, was primarily interested in acquiring objects, and was not always discerning, purchasing among other things a large quantity of fake plaques or tablets that are still touted in New Age circles as texts from the lost continent of Mu or Lemuria (Williams 1991). He was not trained as an excavator, even to the standards of his day. Nevertheless, his notes and correspondence, as transmitted through Spinden's mediation, permit a fairly accurate reconstruction of the archaeological context of these interesting sculptures.

The site of Placeres del Oro featured surface indications of monumental architecture

[102] A Late Classic stela from Misantla, Veracruz shows a Tlaloc with his body in frontal view, although his head is rendered in profile (Taube 1992b, 134, fig. 72b).

in the form of badly eroded pyramid platforms up to thirty feet in height, which drew Niven's attention to the area. The corner of one of the slabs had been exposed by erosion in a river bank, protruding from under over a meter of sediment, and Niven dug to fully expose the object. What he found was a complex grave. Under two plain slabs lay a carved example 71 cm. long and 46 cm. wide, depicting a ferocious-looking Storm God mask resting on a glyphic element. Below the last were two equally intimidating back to back profile heads of an unknown creature with a mouth full of sharp teeth, all in a distinctive and striking style. Under this slab, Niven discovered the remains of a cremation burial accompanied by jade, shell, and stone ornaments and stone metates (grinding stones). Under the interment, he found a second carved tablet, this one longer (84 cm.) but narrower (38. cm.) than the first, again displaying an abstract Tlaloc.[103] Reyna Robles (2002c, 361) prefers to more neutrally call the image at the top of the composition "a fantastic face." The deity's visage rests on a form resembling an inverted and compressed Greek letter omega. This in turn sits atop an architectonic form with what looks like a roof surmounting a rectangular enclosure formed by two bicephalic serpents, their vertical bodies parallel, the heads joined to form simultaneous dual and single faces at the bottom and top of the enclosure. One serpent's body bears interlaced scroll decoration, while the other's is ornamented with geometric fretwork. The grave goods yield ambiguous dates for the interment. A jade pendant is clearly in the Mezcala style, which dates as far back as c. 440 BCE. The Mezcala style seems to have been persistent across time, however. Such sculptures were imported at Classic Teotihuacan and Epiclassic Xochicalco (see below) and continued to be valued in the Late Postclassic.

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[103] Spinden (1911, 52) wavered between identifying the subject as Tlaloc or as a jaguar; it is clearly the

The Mexica buried Mezcala masks, presumably heirlooms or looted antiquities by that time, acquired through tribute or trade, in offering caches in the Great Temple of Tenochtitlan. But one of the decorated metates resembles decorated stone palettes from another site, El Infernillo, that date to the Classic (Reyna Robles 2002c, 361).

In the century since the discovery, all sorts of analogs and influences have been invoked to explain these unique reliefs. Even Peruvian connections were seen by some commentators. No less important and perceptive an interpreter of pre-Columbian art as Miguel Covarrubias claimed to discern Chavin affinities in the imagery of the Placeres del Oro sculptures (Reyna Robles 2002c, 362). Several other carvings, one in a private collection showing a squatting Storm God, and a slab in the Museo de Arcelia seem to belong to the same, presumably local stylistic tradition (Reyna Robles 2002c, 362-363; 378-379, figs. 4a and 5). On the other, hand Spinden discerned Central Mexican connections in the form and iconography of the Placeres del Oro slabs, though he did not have the benefit of the past century's advances in understanding of Mesoamerican art traditions and their chronology. At least in the context of the burial, these slabs cannot be considered stelae, though one wonders if they served any other function before deposition with the burial. I nevertheless see potential points of comparison with Xochicalco Stela 2. The general compositional concept is the same--a slab with a Storm God face, but in place of a body below, a vertical stack of separate symbolic elements. In both Placeres del Oro reliefs, the Tlaloc mask rests on a form reminiscent of the outcurving "vase-element" (Virginia Smith's term) which supports the cartouches containing the Reptile Eye glyphs at the tops of the main faces of Xochicalco stelae 1 and 2.

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former (without necessarily ruling out feline attributes).

The Tenexpa "Bird-Man"

Besides the Storm Gods and their near relations, some Guerrero stelae show other supernatural creatures with Central Mexican parallels. Niederberger (2002, 38) refers to an unspecified number of stelae that she dates to the classic to Epiclassic (on no clearly articulated grounds), showing what she calls "bird-men" ("hombres-pajaro"). Though she admits in her description that the creature portrayed possesses attributes beyond the avian, as a representative of this group she cites (2002, 38, 67, fig. 16c) the Villa Rotaria stela from the modern town of Tenexpa on the Pacific coast west of Acapulco. The striding figure shown in profile not only wears an elaborately plumed avian helmet framing its human face and seems to have wings or at least a feather cloak or backrack in imitation thereof, but features a turtle shell in place of a human (or bird) torso (Fig. 75). Niederberger relates this feature to the turtle dances performed by modern indigenous peoples on the Guerrero coast. The ambiguous legs could be human or avian; no arms are visible. The odd hybrid being walks atop what looks like a truncated trapeze and ray sign resting in its turn on bar and dot numerals expressing the number 9. The bird helmet recalls the headgear of both the sun deity (?) on the El Cerrito stela and the royal ball player of Tula Stela 4, while the glyphs tie it to Xochicalco and suggest an Epiclassic date. I note this stela, however, as much for its divergence from anything in Central Mexico (or anywhere else) as much as for its similarities. Clearly, any convergences or borrowings occured in the context of unique regional traditions, diversity within a degree of unity, belying any invocation of simplistic linear models of "influence" moving from point A to point B.

Toltec Stelae in Guerrero?

In a paper on the archaeology and prehistory of the mountainous region around Tlapa in eastern Guerrero on the Oaxaca border, Jiménez García (2002) refers to a number of stone monuments. In the Postclassic, the Tlapa region was the seat of a major regional polity with a population of up to 150,000 (Blomster 2008a, 23), but its history extends back into the Classic. The area was the western edge of the Ñuiñe cultural zone, and reliefs in the distinctive style of that culture characterize the Classic in the vicinity of Tlapa (Fig. 112). During the Early Postclassic, Toltec ceramics appear, and Toltec iconography (back mirrors, the flayed fertility god Xipe Totec) shows up on stone monuments retaining the formal characteristics of the Ñuiñe style, suggesting a blending of Toltec and local ideas (2002, 392). From the site of Tetmilincan (also spelled Texmelincan), a large settlement covering the southeastern slope of the mountain Tezquilcatemic, come a group of stelae dating to this period of flux and exchange in the Tlapa region. These monuments were discovered when archaeologist Eduardo Noguera carried out salvage work at the site following the looting of a rich Postclassic tomb in 1932 (Gutiérrez Mendoza 2008, 371). As seems to be the curse of stelae of Toltec affiliation, there is disagreement in the literature over descriptive data, in this case, number of stelae. Jiménez García lists and describes 3, while Gutiérrez Mendoza (2007, 234; 2008, 371) places the quantity at 4. These sculptures adorned a platform adjoining a ballcourt at a sector of the site called Ixcuintomahuacan (Gutiérrez Mendoza 2008, 371, 380), providing a parallel to Stela 4 and its fragmentary companion pieces at Tula.

According to Jiménez García, Stela 1[104] (Fig. 76) resembles the Xochicalco stelae in its carving technique. Gutiérrez Mendoza (2008, 380) seems to concur. Without detailing his reasons, he places Stela 1 in the Late Classic (600-800) on the basis of style, while assigning the other Tetmilincan stelae to the Epiclassic/Early Postclassic (900-1100). In an early survey of the site, García Payón identified the sculptural corpus as coeval with or derived from Tula (1941, 361). The form of this particular carving, along with the description Jiménez García provides, suggests the form and subject matter diverge significantly from those of the Xochicalco triad. It depicts

> a personage seen in profile from whose mouth issues a flowery scroll. It shows a feathered headdress, collar of beads that fall over the back and round ear ornament. At the height of the abdomen hangs an object that could be a bag of incense sustained by the left arm...but that more likely appears to be a bleeding mutilated arm. Crowning the personage is a quadrilateral composed of four feathers surrounding a double scroll; above this there is a line of seven stiff feathers, and it is flanked by volutes. The whole group rests over a bar and two circles, which indicate the number seven of a glyph that remains unidentified.[105] (2002, 394, n. 17)

From the description Jiménez García provides here, the resemblance of the subject matter seems stronger to the Xico Stone and to the sculpture of Tula than to the Xochicalco stelae. This point seems reinforced by de la Fuente and associates' (1988) decision to include this monument in their catalog of Tula sculpture, under the rubric of pieces of different or questionable provenience, as Catalog 157, while omitting reference to its place of origin. De la Fuente and her co-authors maintained that the sculpture was housed in the MNA at the time of writing, though they do not give the Museo catalogue

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[104] Gutiérrez Mendoza (2008, 372, fig. 11.2) refers to this sculpture as “Slab number 1.”

[105] "Retrata un personaje visto de perfil de cuya boca sale una vírgula florida. Luce tocado de plumas, collar de cuentas que caen sobre la espalda y orejera redonda. A la altura del vientre cae un objeto que pudiera ser una bolsa de copal sostenida con el brazo izquierdo...pero que mas bien parece tratarse del brazo mutilada que sangra. Al personaje lo corona un cuadrete hecho con cuatro plumas que rodean una doble virgula; encima de este hay una linea de siete plumas rigidas y esta flanqueado por volutas. Todo el conjunto descansa sobre una barra y dos circulos, lo que indica el numero siete de un glifo que aun no se identifica."

number in their entry. But Reyna Robles (2006, 84) illustrates the stela as part of the collection of the Museo Regional de Guerrero.

The male figure's headdress resembles the "pillbox" headgear worn by the Tula Pyramid B atlantids and pillar relief figures, while an apparent beard recalls Tula Stela 1. The forms of the blood issuing from the truncated wrist seem to be intended to suggest as well the head of a snake; the eye, supraorbital arch, and snout seem clearly visible. This recalls the use of snakes to signify the spurting blood of decapitated sacrificial victims on the reliefs of the Great Ballcourt at Chichen Itza (e.g., Kubler 1984, 311) and in Classic Gulf Coast art (e.g., the El Aparicio Stela, Miller and Taube 1993, 47). An alternative explanation, suggested by de la Fuente and associates (1988, 215), is that this is a ballplayer's gauntlet.

The glyph atop the human form is complex. At the center is a roughly square form, each side formed by a bar with double outline, enclosing what looks like a C-shaped element over a rough bar. On top of the square is a bar surmounted by a row of vertical forms quite similar to the depiction of plumes in Toltec headdresses, especially those of the "pillbox" type. On either side of the rectangle are complex scrolls, each terminating at the top end in a turned outward, bifurcated form suggestive of flowing liquid. At the lower end of each of these scrolls is a doughnut-shaped element. A bar-like form made up of three elements and curved at either end rests under the central square, and together with the scrolls and headdress constitute an enclosing cartouche. The glyph recalls but is not identical with the Reptile Eye sign on the Xochicalco stelae and Teotihuacan glyphs identified by Langley (1991, 250-251) as Storm God signs. It bears some resemblance to, though is distinct from, the so-called Zapotec glyph C (Leigh 1970, fig. 14). Gutiérrez

Mendoza (2008, 372, fig. 11.2), however, reads the glyphic assemblage as the calendrical name of the figure, 5 or 7 Vulture.

Besides Tula, Tetmilincan Stela 1 bears some resemblance to Río Viejo Monument 15 (Fig. 68). The general, simplified rendering of the facial features of the latter resembles the treatment of the face of Stela 1, but the most interesting and immediately apparent visual parallel is the string of circular forms (Urcid and Joyce refer to them as "beads") that seem to dangle from the ornate headgear of the Rio Viejo individual, matching the similar chain-like ornament that hangs from the rear of the headdress of the man shown on the Guerrero relief.

Jiménez García describes Stela 2 (Fig. 77) from Tetmilincan as in the Toltec style. Her more detailed description reads as follows in translation:

> It shows a warrior who bears Toltec attributes: a helmet in the form of a bird's beak with broad quetzal plumes, quilted band over his left arm, a pair of darts that point downward, and the spearthrower or atlatl held in the right hand. Also, his ornaments are those of the personages of Tula: tubular ear ornaments, a tube nose ornament, and a circular plaque over the chest like that borne by a personage associated with Tezcatlipoca [here she cites her catalog of Toltec sculpture]. This warrior also has a s speech scroll and volutes joined to both hands.[106] (2002, 394, n. 18)

De la Fuente et al. (1988) agreed with the stylistic attribution to the Toltec, as reflected by her inclusion of this incomplete monument as Catalog 156 in her survey of Tula sculpture, under sculptures of different or uncertain provenience. Different the monument's origins certainly are, but not uncertain, yet de la Fuente and associates do not even mention Tetmilincan or Guerrero in their entry. In fact, they fail to provide any data

[106] "Muestra a un guerrero que lleva atributos Toltecas: yelmo en forma de pico de pájaro con largas plumas de quetzal, banda acolchada sobre su brazo izquierdo, un par de dardos que apuntan abajo y el lanzadardos a atlatl sostenido con la mano derecha. También sus adornos son propios de los personajes de Tula: orejeras tubularesa, nariguera de tubo y una placa circular sobre el pecho igual a la que porta un personaje asociado a Tezcatlipoca…Este guerrero también tiene la vírgule de la palabra y volutas junto a ambas manos."

on its origins, except for noting that it was originally housed in the site museum at Teotihuacan. From de la Fuente's photo, we see that what remains of the original stela is the upper half, measuring 32 cm. high, 31.5 cm. across, and 6 cm. in thickness.

The bird's beak helmet of course recalls Tula Stela 4 (as does the association with a ballcourt) as well as the headgear of the male on the El Cerrito stela--if it is a bird. Two long bar-like projections, ending in looped forms, protrude from the snout of the mask, suggesting perhaps that we have here not a bird--at least not one of this world--but a variant of the Teotihuacan War Serpent, often shown with similar objects protruding from its nostrils. The atlatl and darts evoke Tula stelae 1 and 2. The nose bar and bar pendant ear ornaments are indeed standard issue for elite male figures in the art of Tula, as we have seen, while the pectoral disk mirrors (and may be a mirror) those worn by the figures on Tula stelae 4, 5, and 6, and the Xico Stone. Tetmilincan Stela 2 also parallels the last-cited stela in the speech scrolls and volutes. The three-quarter view pose also recalls 8 Deer's posture on Monte Albán Stela 4. The right arm is bent at the elbow, bears two heavy bracelets, and appears to be carrying an atlatl. The left shows three bracelets or perhaps the protective padding of a ballplayer. The damaged left hand has a rounded shape and may be an amputated stump for which adjoining volutes may represent gushing blood, another possible tie between Tetmilincan and Chichen Itza. It nevertheless manages to hold two javelins. De la Fuente and associates see a beard continuous with the top of the left arm, though this by no means clear from the accompanying photograph. The top of this stela differs from the Tula examples in being curved in a fashion resembling Maya stelae.

Jiménez García briefly describes a third Tetmilincan stela which she interprets as

bridging or fusing the styles of the other two. "It is a personage that wears a panache of short and flexible plumes, an ear ornament and a round pectoral, also similar to that used by many warriors at Tula. At the level of the mouth issues a double speech scroll" (2002, 394, n. 3).[107]

This description recalls an object included by de la Fuente et al. in their catalog of Tula sculpture as 158, although Jiménez García has not seen this sculpture. De la Fuente and coauthors claim it was found at Tula during the explorations of "archaeologist R. Abascal" according to information provided by Felipe Solís, but in the end opt to relegate it to the limbo of "Questionable attribution to Tula." Like their catalog 156, also from Tetmilincan, it was housed at one time in the Teotihuacan site museum. Perhaps this the fourth "stela" referred to in some accounts of Tetmilincan. No measurements are given. The figure (Fig. 78) is that of a wizened, bearded, elderly male, accompanied by the glyph "2 Jaguar." He is bent forward, facing left, and wrinkles are clearly indicated. He holds his left forearm horizontally in front of his torso, wearing a beaded ornament at the wrist. On the reverse side of the slab, the same name glyph is enclosed in a square frame of circular elements. Leaves emerge from the circular cartouche containing the jaguar head sign, oriented toward each corner of the square frame. As Urcid points out (personal communication, January 15, 2007), the speech scroll on 158 "is similar to other large volutes in the Tula corpus." The form of the glyphs "resemble more the graphic conventions of the Central Mexican scribal tradition rather than the Zapotec script, which by 900 ACE was becoming increasingly obsolete," according to Urcid. On the other

[107] "Es un personaje que lleva un penachode plumas cortas y flexibles, una orejera y un pechero redondo, tambien similar al que usan muchos guerreros de Tula. A la altura de la boca, sale una doble vírgula de la palabra."

hand, the portrayal of the old bearded man on Catalog 158 recalls for me the depiction of the aged, bearded individual in the lower register of the Suchilquitongo stela.

Relative to the other Guerrero stelae surveyed here, sufficient archaeological evidence exists from Tetmilincan to speculate about the nature of the processes leading to the appearance of stelae in the Toltec style. In this instance, the evidence suggests that the Tetmilincan monuments are possibly the product of a Toltec intrusion into the area. But this suggestion needs to be situated in a more systematic fashion in a general consideration of the evidence for Guerrero-Central Mexican contacts of relevance to the question of the stelae, to which we now turn.[108]

Guerrero Connections: The Archaeological Evidence

In judging the probable value of the set of hypotheses I suggest above to explain the nature of the relationship between the Tepecuacuilco stelae--and by extension the other Guerrero stelae--to Central Mexican stelae, much data points to a direct connection of some sort between the two regions during the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic, supporting some variants of the second and third hypotheses. There is considerable evidence of trade connections between Guerrero and Xochicalco during the Epiclassic, while it seems likely that the Tula Toltecs actually maintained a physical presence,

[108] Though space here precludes their consideration, stelae are also found in Mexican states to the west of Guerrero. They are known from the Postclassic in Nayarit (Barrera Rodríguez 2007, 68), where an example at the site of El Tepetate shows a cross-armed figure. Other Postclassic stelae on the West Mexican coast belong to the Aztatlan tradition (Mountjoy 2000, 104), a culture with links to Central Mexico, including Toltec-related Mazapan ceramic figures. At the site of Casas Grandes on the cultural border of the Mesoamerican and ancestral Pueblo worlds in present-day Chihuahua, cylindrical columns capped with carved heads have been called stelae in the literature, though the nature of their relationship, if any, with the slab monuments called stelae in other parts of Mesoamerica remains unexplored. These Casas Grandes sculptures date to c. 1280-1450 (Townsend 2005, 64).

complete with frontier fortresses, near Tlapa.

Guerrero Sculpture and Ceramics at Xochicalco

Ample evidence exists in the archaeological record at Xochicalco for trade connections with Guerrero during the city's Epiclassic florescence. Xochicalco's elite imported spiny oyster (*Spondylus*) shells from the Pacific Coast as a luxury item deposited in caches, and the most likely source is the Guerrero coast, transported via the Río Balsas (Hirth 2000, 203). Perhaps significantly, the San Miguel Totolapan and Acatempa stelae and the Placeres del Oro reliefs I have compared to Xochicalco Stela 2, all come from sites along tributaries in the Río Balsas drainage. Mezcala-style figures from Guerrero also made their way to Gobernador Phase Xochicalco, as did carved marble vessels "in Teotihuacan style" which may have been manufactured in central Guerrero (Hirth 2000, 203). Ceramics from the Balsas drainage were also imported into Xochicalco. In fact, the intensity of Xochicalco's contacts with Guerrero has even led to suggestions that alleged Maya traits at the Morelos center, including the corbel vault and Fine Orange ceramics, entered through the mediation of Guerrero (Hirth (2000, 204).

These last considerations could support yet another hypothesis. In addition to or instead of ideas and motifs stela moving between Xochicalco and the cultures of Guerrero, stelae in both areas might reflect Maya contacts with Guerrero. As indicated by Hirth, corbel vaults, a trait even more closely associated in the literature of pre-Columbian art history than stelae with the Maya and their "influence," occur at several sites in Guerrero. They are present at Xochipala (Reyna Robles 2002a, 125, fig. 5; 2002b,

243-244), where they were first noticed by Niven, Oztotitlan, and Pueblo Viejo III (Reyna Robles 2002b, 243-244). Paul Schmidt linked the origin of corbel vaults in Guerrero to other Maya traits, including the Fine Orange ceramics, the use of bar and dot numerals, and the possible employment in Guerrero of storage pits of the type referred to as *chultunes* in the Maya region. He speculated that these features all might have been introduced from Late Classic Tabasco (the Putun again?), traveling over land across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, then up the Pacific Coast of Guerrero, and ultimately inland as far north as Morelos (Reyna Robles 2002b, 245). However, the salvage excavation of an Olmec burial structure at Chilapancingo shows corbel vaults were being constructed in Guerrero as far back as the Early and Middle Formative, predating any known Maya examples. Thus, the Xochipala vaults date to the Epiclassic, according to Reyna Robles (2002b, 252), but she attributes their presence to an ancient indigenous building tradition. Just like the idea of stelae, corbel vaults predate any Maya "influence" in Guerrero. However, the notion of Guerrero as a conduit for Maya ideas to enter Epiclassic Central Mexico, in addition to or instead of some supposed Putun entradas directly into the Central Highlands, remains viable--as long, of course, as such a suggestion takes into account the flow of cultural "traffic" in more than one direction across such a route.

Guerrero: A Toltec Frontier?

The Tula Toltecs also maintained close ties with Guerrero that perhaps included outright military intervention. They imported jade from Guerrero (Mastache and Cobean 1995, 182). Like Xochicalco, Tula had contacts in the Rio Balsas drainage. Pulido

Méndez (2002, 311) notes the presence of Mazapan ceramic figures in the Balsas delta. In particular, the Barranco de Marmalejo site yielded Toltec-related ceramics (2002, 306) and other archaeological evidence of Toltec contact (2002, 312), and he illustrates a Mazapan figure from the site (2002, 320, fig. 7). But as we have already seen, the strongest evidence for a Toltec presence in Guerrero comes from the eastern margin of the modern state, around Tlapa, where a Toltec intrusion at the beginning of the Early Postclassic seems to have significantly impacted upon the local Ñuiñe culture. Jiménez García (2002, 392) concludes that Toltec warriors controlled at least two fortified sites in the Tlapa region. Besides ceramics and settlement patterns, the Toltec presence is supported by finds of Toltec art, in both large scale and miniature media. In addition to the stelae, Tetmilincan yielded green jade plaques like those found at Tula, the equivalents in gold of the back ornaments worn by the Tula atlantids, and a Toltec style ceramic effigy (Jiménez García 2002, 393-394). At the nearby site of Cerro del Molcajete, a serpent effigy column testifies to Tula connections. Given this context, it seems likely that the Tetmilincan stelae, like the El Cerrito stela, represent an extension of Toltec art and culture. Certainly there is more material evidence to support a Toltec presence here than at Chichen Itza. For once, migration might be the best explanation for the artistic similarities between the Tlapa monuments and Tula. Other aspects of the Late Classic to Postclassic material culture of the Tlapa are less clear in their external connections. The site of Tetmilincan includes five I-shaped ballcourts, the largest concentration of such structures found to date in eastern Guerrero (Gutiérrez Mendoza 2008, 379). Such structures also characterize the architecture of Xochicalco and Tula, but may possess geographically closer antecedents in Classic Zapotec ballcourts. The metal

and stone ornaments and luxury objects looted from the Postclassic burial that drew Noguera's initial attention to the site, on the other hand, resemble materials from Tomb 7 at Monte Albán, pointing to Mixtec connections.

The Tetmilincan case represents an exception, since for most other Guerrero stelae, we have insufficient knowledge of archaeological context or even certain provenience to clarify the nature of their relationships with the Central Mexican examples. The Storm God stelae, as discussed, have been assigned dates ranging from Classic to Epiclassic, and perhaps do not represent a chronologically homogenous phenomena, given the stylistic divergences between the Tepecuacuilco stelae with their strong Teotihuacan traits and more idiosyncratic forms like the oddly fragmented image on the San Miguel Totolapan stela. Among the Guerrero stelae may be precursors, derivatives, regional variants, and/or independent analogs, developing out of a shared Teotihuacan base, to the stelae of Tula and Xochicalco--probably all of the above, in the context of the complex web of multi-directional interactions characterizing the Mesoamerican world system. Further clarification of these relationships depends on further archaeological work in Guerrero to clarify the dates and sequences for the stelae there. Certainly Guerrero represents as potentially fruitful a springboard for research as the search for Maya connections, to which question we must now return with a detailed comparative analysis.

CHAPTER SIX

STONE TREES TRANSPLANTED? A COMPARISON OF CENTRAL MEXICAN STELAE WITH THEIR SUGGESTED MAYA COUNTERPARTS AT PIEDRAS NEGRAS, DOS PILAS, AGUATECA, CEIBAL, AND COPAN

Introduction

Having documented possible local antecedents for the Central Mexican stelae of the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic in Chapter 4, and possible Oaxaca and Guerrero connections in Chapter 5, I now return to the question of the suggested Maya "influences" raised in Chapter 2. How do the Central Mexican stelae compare with their supposed Maya counterparts? How well do the alleged relationships--between the Tula and Xochicalco stelae and the warrior stelae of Piedras Negras; Tula Stelae 1-3 and the pair of Dos Pilas Stela 16 and Aguateca Stela 2; the Tula stelae and those at Ceibal; and Tula Stela 1 and Copan Stela 6--stand up in light of a detailed comparison of the monuments in question? Are claims that the Maya examples are models or sources for their purported Central Mexican "imitations" substantiated by a comparative assessment of functional and architectural context, formal and compositional aspects, and iconography, particularly the representation of costume elements?

In this chapter, then, I present a critical review of these proposed links, organized by the site relations proposed in the literature, as listed above. While it seems clear that some sort of direct connection exists between some of the Maya and Mexican material, especially in the case of the Tula ballplayer stelae and their lowland Maya analogs at

Ceibal and La Amelia, assessment of the others is problematic because of a certain circularity characteristic of both the relation between the monuments and the claims of past pundits. In each case, the Classic Maya monuments suggested as models or analogs for Central Mexican stelae are themselves atypical in style and iconography among the range of Classic Maya sculpture. In most instances, this anomalous or atypical quality is defined by a preponderance of Central Mexican formal features, costumes, and religious iconography of Teotihuacan derivation. Thus, the Maya stelae used to argue for "Maya" connections for Central Mexican stelae themselves reflect "Central Mexican" imagery and concepts, threatening to send any simplistic framing of the question of relationships as "Who's on first?" into a recursive loop. Using "anomalous" "Central Mexican-style" stelae in the Maya area as an explanation for "anomalous" "Maya-related" stelae in Central Mexico has the potential to sink into an infinite regression without resolution. It will be necessary to escape such conceptual circles if any more plausible explanatory framework is to be generated. Any such effort needs to move beyond traditionally-framed "Maya"/"Mexican" polarities to a more holistic and unified approach to Mesoamerica as a cultural area. It must also take into account the pervasive legacy of Teotihuacan throughout the region as well as the complex and reciprocal web of connections between cultures that characterizes the Epiclassic.

Since much of the same iconography of royal costume is shared by the first two sets of Maya monuments under consideration, the Piedras Negras warrior stelae and the Dos Pilas 2/Aguateca 2 pair, my analysis of the former will be longer. Before proceeding further, I need to acknowledge the combined scholarship and draftsmanship of two authors whose work has made my task of comparison much easier. The late Tatiana

Proskouriakoff's *A Study of Classic Maya Sculpture* (1950) remains a classic study in its own right, not least because her drawings and tables present her classificatory system for the costume elements on Classic Maya monuments. While many of her interpretations have long been superseded after over half a century of progress in Maya archaeology and epigraphy, and although her project is conceived and framed within a Wolfflinian evolutionary model of artistic development that allows her to dismiss works she does not like as "decadent," her clear drawings and definitions remain important tools.[109] Equally helpful from the Tula side are Jiménez García's excellent line drawings from her 1998 catalog dissecting the complex and eroded images on the Tula stelae into their component elements. I reproduce them next to the images of the Maya stelae to facilitate the comparative analysis (Figs. 121-123).

The Warrior Stelae of Piedras Negras vs. Tula Stelae 1-3 and 5, the Xochicalco Trio, and the "Statues" of Xochicalco and Miacatlan

The Site

Located in the western Peten on the Guatemalan side of the present border with Mexico formed by the Usumacinta River (Figures 1, 3), Piedras Negras received its modern name after a late 19th-century logging camp in the vicinity, situated near the dark rocks referred to by the name. The Classic Maya inhabitants of the site called it Yokib' or Yo-Kib, according to current readings of its glyphic inscriptions (Sharer and Traxler

[109] See Kristan-Graham (1989, 118) on the historic importance and continued use of Proskouriakoff's classification of costume elements.

2006, 423). Literally meaning "entrance," it may refer to aspects of the local topography, either nearby canyons or a limestone sinkhole (Martin and Grube 2008, 139). The history of occupation at the site dates back to 500 BCE, but the city flourished between c. 450 and 808 CE, reaching its peak of artistic development and political power in the Late Classic. At its height, Piedras Negras was home to an estimated 30,000 residents. Epigraphers have identified a series of rulers of the site, beginning around 460, although some of their names remain resistant to the decipherers' efforts. The lords of Yo-Kib left abundant architecture and monumental sculpture to their ancestors' and their own glory--temples, palaces, ritual sweatbaths, stelae, altars, and an exquisitely carved stone throne. But in 808, during the reign of the seventh *ajaw*, Ruler 7, the royal glories of the city met a sudden and violent end. According to the inscription on Lintel 10 at Piedras Negras' neighbor--and rival--across the Usumacinta, Yaxchilan, Ruler 7 was captured by the ruler of that site. His palace was burnt, and the carved throne smashed to bits (Sharer and Traxler 2006, 430-431).

Like many other alleged "lost cities," Piedras Negras was never "lost" to the local population. It continued to be visited and revered by the local Lakandon Maya into the 20th century. Piedras Negras first caught the attention of archaeologists in 1894, when a logger showed the site to pioneering Austrian Maya explorer Teobert Maler in 1894 (Weeks, Hill, and Golden 2005, i). Intrigued by the remains, Maler worked at Piedras Negras from 1895-1897 and again in 1899 under the auspices of Harvard University. He was interested mostly in clearing and making photographic records of the extant monuments--a good thing for later generations of researchers, especially at present, since most of the sculptures were vandalized and destroyed by looters in the 1960s (Stuart and

Graham 2003). Only two Piedras Negras stelae, Stela 14 (Fig. 114) and Stela 6, remain substantially intact, and these owe their survival to their removal from the site to museums, the University of Pennsylvania Museum and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología in Guatemala City, respectively. The main figure from Stela 11 found its way to the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, and Stela 34 into a private European collection (Stone 1989, 154). Maler's report, *Researches in the Central Portion of the Usumacinta Valley* (1903), thus remains an indispensable aid to the student of the site's art.

After Maler, Sylvanus Morley conducted five expeditions to Piedras Negras between 1914 and 1931 (Herring 2005, 175), mostly to record the hieroglyphic inscriptions. These he published in the third volume of his opus, *The Inscriptions of Peten* (1938). The first major archaeological excavations were carried out under the direction of J. Alden Mason and Linton Satterthwaite for the University of Pennsylvania from 1931 to 1939. Unfortunately, the site reports have never been fully published (Sharer and Traxler 2006, 424), though intermittent publications appeared over the following decades (e.g., Coe 1959). The University of Pennsylvania Museum recently issued a useful collection of many of the extant excavation reports in 2005 (Weeks, Hill, and Golden 2005). U.S. archaeologist/epigrapher Stephen Houston and his Guatemalan colleague Hector Escobedo excavated at Piedras Negras in the late 1990s, beginning in 1997. At present, the site is visited only by more adventuresome tourists via whitewater rafting down the Usumacinta. Reportedly the area has become an important staging point in drug trafficking across the Guatemala border, compounding the risk to travelers, not to mention what little is left of the portable monuments.

The Warrior Stelae: History and Context

The group of stelae to which Mary Miller and Weaver compared Tula stelae 1-3, and Kubler (among others) compared the Xochicalco triad, as discussed in Chapter 2, represent a distinctive monument type at Piedras Negras, not found at any other Classic Maya site. There are six extant examples, Piedras Negras stelae 26, 31, 35, 7, 8, and 9 (Proskouriakoff'1950, 119). The most important work to date on these sculptures remains art historian Andrea Stone's 1989 paper. Stone calls them a "highly codified military portrait-type" specific to the site, but their unusual form and stereotyped iconography was recognized as unique and linked to Central Mexico as far back as the time of pioneer Maya art historian and archaeologist Herbert Spinden (1913). Their uniqueness among Maya monuments at the site and elsewhere in the Maya world drew comment from several generations of scholars. In Proskouriakoff's words "the 'warriors' preserve a remarkable degree of stylistic independence from current artistic trends. They maintain a measure of rigidity of composition at the same time when other subjects are rendered with greater freedom" (1950, 120). She suggests, as a speculative explanation, that the city early on may have had closer ties with southern Mexico than the rest of the Classic Maya world. A recent commentator says of the warrior stelae,

> Piedras Negras's kings favored a form of monumental presentation in which their persons stared out from standing monuments as frontal figures garbed in the war costume of central Mexico. It was an unusual, if not extraordinary, form of dynastic representation among the lowland Maya centers of the Peten, one that favored straightforward figurative illusionism over either a profile schematic of the human figure or orchestration of iconographic esoterica and the cosmic world...kings who lord over cowering captives also engage the viewer with a palpable directness born of the frontal view and the simple visual anthropometrics of like meets like. (Herring

2005, 178)

Note the emphasis in both quotes on the atypical nature of the warrior stelae. Perhaps to a lesser degree, they are anomalies or "foreign" to their Maya setting, just like the Tula and Xochicalco stelae to which they are compared are said to be in their Central Mexican context. Again, the suggested antecedents or analogs of Maya-related Central Mexican stelae are themselves atypical in the Maya area and have strong Central Mexican traits, adding a degree of circularity to the arguments.

The warrior stelae represent only one type among a range of stela forms at Piedras Negras. Other stelae portray rulers in a more conventional Maya fashion, in profile views, garbed in traditional royal regalia, often rendered in a sinuous, calligraphic line--in contrast to the frontal views, Teotihuacan-derived garb, and hieratic style of the warrior stelae. The warrior stelae form part of a series of monuments marking milestones in the careers of individual Late Classic rulers of Piedras Negras. For each of these rulers, the series began with the erection of a stela of another type unique to Piedras Negras, the "niche" or accession stela (Fig. 114), named for their frontal relief portraits of seated rulers in niches towards the top of the main scene. As the other name for them suggests, these sculptures mark the inauguration of the ruler's reign, and depict him at his accession ceremony. In each of these monuments, the new *ajaw* sits atop a scaffold platform erected for his coronation rituals.[110] The warrior stelae came later in each king's monumental sequence. For the first three Piedras Negras rulers to erect warrior stelae, these monuments postdate their accession stelae by 1-2 *katuns*[111], suggesting that they

[110] The remains of such structures have been found at other sites, like Yaxuna (Freidel and Suhler 1999, 260-273).

[111] Twenty-year periods.

mark intervals of whole *katuns* since each king's accession.[112] It is interesting to note for comparative purposes that with one possible exception, no accession[113] stelae, or any other Classic Maya stela forms known from Piedras Negras occur at Tula or Xochicalco, at least not in the same form. The exception, the lost Houston stela in Xochicalco style discussed in Chapter 2, shows a female figure in a niche which Urcid (2007) interprets as a scene of taking power. The suggested comparisons between Piedras Negras and Central Mexican stelae do not take into account the full range of Piedras Negras sculpture.

Consistent with their martial iconography, the warrior stelae commemorate military conquests. Neither accession stelae nor others at the site show the same clustering of Teotihuacan traits as the warrior stelae, and Stone, following Linda Schele, links this Central Mexican iconography to astronomically-associated sanguinary practices:

> Here, as at other Maya sites, the Teotihuacan pictorial complex is contextually circumscribed. Schele…proposes that the context revolves around blood sacrifice (warfare or autosacrifice) triggered by significant astronomical alignments [sic], such as the first appearance of Venus as the Evening Star, maximum eastern and western alignments of Venus, and stationary points of Jupiter.[114] (1989, 163)

Stone refers here to Schele's (Schele and Freidel 1990) identification of the trapeze and ray, Teotihuacan Tlaloc, Balloon Headdress, War Serpent, owls, jaguar costumes and atlatls as components of a Teotihuacan-derived Maya "Tlaloc/Venus war complex" adopted by Early Classic rulers at Tikal as a strategy of legitimation.[115] Stone links the

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[112] However, the pattern does not hold for Ruler 4 and his warrior Stela 9.

[113] Kristan Graham argues in her 1989 dissertation that some of the Pyramid B pillar reliefs at Tula may record royal accessions.

[114] See Martin (2000b) and Aldana (2005) for cautionary remarks on the astronomical timing of Maya warfare. Martin suggests that in many cases, the dates of recorded battles do not coincide with Venus events and more pragmatic considerations determined the timing of military events.

[115] See also Taube (2000a, 270): "In Classic Maya art, Teotihuacan imagery tends to appear not as piecemeal items in isolation, but rather within a complex of related motifs, such as Teotihuacan Tlalocs,

use of Teotihuacan elements to the identification--whether based on valid genealogical claims or not--of Maya elites with prestigious Central Mexican outsiders, a feature seen as far back as the Early Classic at Tikal. She parallels these Classic Maya uses of Central Mexican costumes and religious imagery with the claims of Postclassic/Colonial Maya ruling lineages to Toltec or "Zuyuan" affiliation (see Chapter 3). In her interpretation, the Piedras Negras warrior stelae, like other images of Classic Maya lords in Teotihuacan war garb, illustrate the concept that Maya rulers, as attackers of other Maya, become the powerful Central Mexican Other. Yet, despite many other Classic Maya parallels, the warrior stelae remain unique in their intense clustering of Central Mexican motifs and forms, and Stone (1989, 164) compares them to Chichen and Puuk "Toltec" aristic traits, which, predictably given the time of her writing, she links to the adventurous Putun (see Chapter 3).

Although Teotihuacan connections are evident in the monuments of the Early Classic Piedras Negras ruler Turtle Tooth (c. 510), who is shown being crowned with a Teotihuacan style mosaic helmet, overseen by a "foreign" ruler,[116] the warrior stelae are a Late Classic phenomenon. The earliest two, Stela 26 (Fig. 115) and Stela 31 are the work of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, who ruled Piedras Negras from 603 to 639. Stela 26, the oldest extant warrior stela, shows him wearing the War Serpent helmet and triumphant over prisoners he captured in 628, Ch'ok Bahlam, an official from Palenque, and Kab Chan Te, the ruler of Sak Tzi, a site of uncertain location (Martin and Grube 2008, 142). This monument stood alongside K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's accession Stela, 25, on a "low stela

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Mexican year signs, chevrons, and many other elements. In Maya art, this foreign Mexican imagery commonly focuses on the symbolism of war."

[116] But not necessarily non-Maya, since his overlord may be the king of the Maya city of Calakmul.

platform, really...the upper component of a high compound stela platform" on the basal platform of the pyramid Temple R-9, to the right of the staircase (Satterthwaite 2005b, 189, 191, fig. 7.7). In its placement on a platform, unusual for the Maya area, Stela 26 parallels practices at Xochicalco, although the only Xochicalco stela excavated in its original context (Stela of the Two Glyphs) stands on its own platform in the middle of a plaza, and not connected with a major temple. An interesting addition to the carved image is vestiges of inlays of semiprecious stone decorating the teeth of the helmet and the ear ornaments of the figure (Stuart and Graham 2003, 11). The king dedicated Stela 31 in 637. Both of these early warrior stelae were already in fragmentary condition in Maler's day. Stela 26 had broken into three larger pieces and numerous small shards (1903, 67), while Stela 31 was even more severely battered. Only the fragments containing the top of the king's figure and his feet were legible; the relief on the two fragments of the middle of the slab had been completely obliterated (1903, 70). Maler only photographed the upper section (1903, pl. XXV), showing the ruler's face in the jaws of the War Serpent headdress. Even less of the monument remains today after a century of looting, and only part of the hieroglyphic text remains visible on Stela 26 (Houston and Escobedo 1997).

The next warrior stela, 35 (Figs. 116-117), commemorates the martial exploits of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's successor, whose name still resists translation and as a result is still known in the literature as Ruler 2, who reigned from 639 to 686 (Martin and Grube 2008, 143). On another inscribed monument, Panel 2, Ruler 2 refers back to Turtle Tooth's crowning with a Teotihuacan helmet by a foreign lord, perhaps indicating a relationship between this historic event and the Teotihuacan garb affected by later kings on the warrior stelae. Stela 35 celebrates the ruler’s victories in 662 over rival sites. One

of the elite captives taken on these campaigns, perhaps a female, crouches at the base of Stela 35. Stela 35 stood with Stela 37 and three (Mason 2005, 19) or four (Martin and Grube 2008, 143) other stelae "on and in front of the terrace" (Mason) at the base of the pyramid. This does not match what we know of stela placement at Xochicalco; the original placement of stelae at Tula (apart from the ballcourt panels) is, of course, anyone's guess. The fragmentary remains of Stela 35 are now in a private collection in Germany (Stone 1989, 154).

The next in line on the throne of Piedras Negras, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II (reigned 687-729), erected the warrior stelae 7 (Fig. 118, right) and 8 (Figs. 118, left; 119, 126, left). This pair and the ruler's other six stelae stood in a row on the northeast end of Platform Structure J-1 on the West Acropolis at the site, near the king's palace, (Mason 2005, 25; Martin and Grube 2008, 145-146). This series commemorates the completion of five year intervals (quarter-*katuns*) between the year of the king's accession and 726. There is some question as to whether Stela 7 might be a posthumous monument to K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II. Stone (1989, 156) says that the text on the stela mentions the death of Ruler 2 and identifies him as K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's father, but the latest date on the monument falls within the reign of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's successor, Ruler 4. Whatever the case, Stela 7 bears a portrait of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II, and Stela 8 is firmly associated with this *ajaw*. Stela 7 was already broken at the neck of the figure when Maler rediscovered the monument, but the relief was well preserved owing to its position face-down in the soil, sheltering its details from the elements (1903, 50). Bright red pigment still adhered to the face and body of the royal image. Even though Maler called most of the other figures represented in Piedras Negras sculptures "gods" in line with the understanding prevalent

in his time, he recognized the powerful frontal image on this stela as a "warrior of high rank." The king wears the War Serpent helmet, the teeth of the ophidian supernatural forming what Maler whimsically calls a "penthouse" for the ruler's face. The rendering of the relief on Stela 7 shows some variation from the previous warrior stelae and incorporates more of the naturalism and calligraphic quality of more traditional contemporary Maya sculpture, thus earning the monument Proskouriakoff's conservative aesthetic seal of approval. While noting that Stela 7's iconography "repeats the warrior motif in virtually the same rigid form in which it was expressed on Stelae 26 and 31 some 80 years earlier...", she praises its stylistic divergences from its predecessors. "The technique and treatment of detail, however, show a marked advance…There is a finer gradation of planes and depth of relief than on previous sculptures; the rendering of the embroidered end of the loincloth and of the sandals with their delicate fringes is superbly realistic" (Proskouriakoff 1950, 135). This contrasts with the sparser rendering of the earlier warrior stelae, and for comparative purposes, with the much more minimalist treatment of the Tula stelae. Like other sculptures at the site, Stela 7 later fell prey to the depredations of antiquities traffickers, though a fragment preserving the face and headdress is now in the protective setting of the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología in Guatemala City (Clancy 1985, 150, catalog 85). The current location of the other fragments is unknown (Stuart and Graham 2003, 40).

Stela 8 (Fig. 118, left; 119) commemorates a Piedras Negras victory over Yaxchilan in 726. K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II stands over two captives, one identified as a *sajal* or high official of the Yaxchilan ruler Itzamnaaj Bahlam II, well-known as Shield Jaguar in the literature of the 1980s and 1990s (Martin and Grube 2008, 146). The Piedras Negras

king's martial ambitions are concretely mirrored in the dimensions of the stela, one of the largest at the site. Like its companion, Stela 7, Stela 8 bears some more traditionally "Maya" elements than the earlier warrior stelae, including a "headdress with its serpent wing and mat symbol flanges" (Stone 1989, 160) that offsets the foreign quality of the Teotihuacan-style Tlaloc mask attached to the plumes. K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's loincloth bears the Maya "God C" or *k'uh* sign, representing sacred force, and he wears a net skirt identifying him with the Maya Maize God, iconographic elements with no parallels on the stelae of Tula or Xochicalco. The style is also more "Classic" in its delineation and profusion of detail, again drawing Proskouriakoff's admiration (1950, 135).[117] The monument's size and display of royal splendor did not spare it the fate of its fellows. Already broken into several pieces at the time of Maler's first expeditions (1903, 51), only mere fragments remain of the stela at present (Houston et al. 2000). Most of the upper half was removed by looters in the 1960s (Stuart and Graham 2003, 43).

The last known warrior stela at Piedras Negras is Stela 9 (Fig. 120), raised by Ruler 4 (reigned 729-757) alongside Stelae 10, 11, and 40 on the second terrace of the pyramid J-3 (Satterthwaite 2005a, 146). Again the elevated position of these stelae forms a very general parallel to practices at Xochicalco, though the specifics vary considerably (pyramid terraces vs. separate platforms). Stela 9 draws on earlier warrior stelae for composition and costume (Stone 1989, 162). Originally towering about four meters high

[117] Proskouriakoff likes Stela 8 because of its "refined execution and eclectic integration of emergent trends in contemporary Maya art. The detail is shown in varying grades of relief. Quills of the feathers are indicated with a delicately raised line, and one can note a tendency, as yet not strongly marked, to outline motifs with a very fine raised fillet. The tongue of the serpent on the headdress of Stela 8, and also the crook at the end of the staff on both Stela 8 and Stela 7, resemble the late scrolls current after 9.16.0.0.0. Such forms just begin to appear at this time and are used in a limited range of contexts. Stela 8 has a serprent-fret type of apron; the corners of its shield are decorated with tassels in the manner of the 'sun' shields of Palenque and Quirigua. It is a monument which represents an almost perfect blend of Peten and Usumacinta traits."

by Maler's estimation (1903, 55-56), it lies in rubble with its fellows today. Only part of the glyphic text is visible in the site photos taken by Houston and Escobedo's expedition in the late 1990s (Houston et al. 2000), and the figure of a captive has been removed by from the monument by looters (Stuart and Graham 2003, 50). No warrior stela survives from the reign of Ruler 5, though his niche stela (Stela 14) (Fig. 114) is preserved in the University of Pennsylvania Museum. Although the ill-fated Ruler 7 did erect a stela (12) showing him as a warrior, it is not a warrior stela in the strict sense, showing him in profile view and traditional Maya style.[118]

In general contextual and historical terms, both similarities and differences stand out between the Piedras Negras warrior stelae and their proposed Central Mexican counterparts. The Piedras Negras examples represent a site-specific type of biographical monument, inscribed with texts recording the warlike deeds of their royal subjects, and form part of a recognizable series of stela forms erected in sequence by each successive ruler. At Tula, apart from the ballplayer stelae and the female figure (Stela 6), we have only stelae portraying armed kings, but without the inscriptions (not even a calendrical birth name), subsidiary figures of captives, or other narrative features found at Piedras Negras,, and no accession or other stela types commemorating other events in royal careers. The main general conception held in common at Tula and Piedras Negras is the stela as royal portrait, which as Kristan-Graham pointed out, is not part of the Teotihuacan art tradition in Central Mexico, though I document in Chapter 4 its apparent early presence at Chalcatzingo and in Chapter 5 its distribution in both Zapotec territory

[118] He did, however, dedicate the innovative Stela 15, which resembles monuments from Copan and Tonina—and the "statues" of Miacatlan and Xochicalco—in its fully rounded sculptural forms (Martin and Grube 2008, 152).

and the Oaxaca coast. The Xochicalco trio (Figs. 21-26) do seem to incorporate narrative information in their glyphic components, but the nature of that narrative--royal biography or mythic cosmology--remains in dispute (see Appendix 3). Virginia Smith's interpretations would bring the Xochicalco stelae closer to the Piedras Negras warrior stelae in this regard, if they prove more correct than any other suggestions advanced over the nearly half a century since Saenz's discovery. But even if this turns out to be the case, significant differences remain in the way the information is presented. On the Piedras Negras stelae, the narrative is reinforced by the presence of the subsidiary figures of the captives alongside the king. For the Xochicalco triad, only the ruler's faces (if that is what they are) are rendered. In architectural setting and context, we have no firm data for comparing the relevant Tula stelae to the Piedras Negras warrior stelae. As I noted above, there are general parallels between Piedras Negras and Xochicalco in the erection of stelae on platforms, though the specifics are very different between the sites.

Comparisons: Formal Considerations

In general, the Piedras Negras stelae follow the canon of proportions and conventions of representation for the human form in Classic Maya art as identified and formulated by Houston, Stuart and Taube (2006, 64).[119] The figures on Tula stelae 1 (Fig. 121) and 2

[119] "Generally the length of the limbs, in depictions of Classic bodies followed a set of rough and rather conventionalized multiples, the lower limbs for example being the same as the entire arm from shoulder to waist (Clancy 1999, 64-141). The torso was about the same length as the arm from shoulder to end of finger, the head approximated the length of the lower leg from knee to ankle. Body thickness accorded with a scheme in which the arms were treated as an acute triangle, the wrist half the width of the shoulder joint. With few exceptions, the upper thigh was as thick as the torso. Hands tended to be more elongated and expressive than the feet. Body contours were ... [usually] largely rounded." Since the ratio of upper thigh to torso size seems to refer to profile representations, it is not adhered to by the carvers of these Piedras Negras monuments.

(Fig. 122) also roughly follow the same system of proportions; Stela 3 (Fig. 123) seems to as well, though this is harder to assess since only one hand is visible. Their major point of departure from Maya conventions is in the rendering of body contours, which tend to be more linear and less rounded. Stela 5 (Fig. 14), also difficult to analyze in this regard because of its fragmentary condition, seems to diverge from the other Tula "warrior" stelae in its strange treatment of the arm (whichever of the two "candidates" for that limb proves to be the correct reading) and thus in its deviation from Maya-like proportions. Toltec sculpture exhibits diversity in the rendering of the proportions of the human form, consistent with its eclectic nature and probable multi-ethnic origin. The use of Classic Maya-like proportions on stelae compared to Maya examples would tend to support claims of a link. It is interesting to note in this connection that the carvers of the reliefs of Toltec rulers on the pillars of Pyramid B, which have also been compared to Maya art (see Chapter 2), employed roughly the same canon of proportions as those of Tula stelae 1-3. Since they depict only heads, it is impossible to determine if the Xochicalco triad conforms to the Classic Maya canon.

The pose of the rulers in both the Piedras Negras warrior stelae and the Tula royal stelae, with feet turned outward, is quite similar and corresponds to Proskouriakoff's pose type I: F1: "feet pointing outward. Axial pose. No directional devices to point to object held in hands" (1950, 24; e.g., 25, fig. 8p, which shows Piedras Negras Stela 8). She called this position of the feet "an unfailing criterion of the Late Classic Period" in Maya art (1950, 22). But, as already noted in Appendix 2 and elsewhere, the fully frontal view of the body and face, while not unknown among the Late Classic Maya, especially at Copan, Quirigua, and Tonina, is nonetheless not common. Proskouriakoff suggests that

this pose requires a three-dimensional treatment of the human form--as indeed is the case with many examples at these three sites--to be effective.[120] The similarity of the deeply sunk faces of Tula stelae 1-3 and the warrior stelae is striking, especially in the case of Piedras Negras Stela 26. On both this monument and the Tula examples, the deep and recessed carving of the face contrasts sharply with the shallow rendering of the rest of the image, a trait also observed in the niches of the accession stelae at Piedras Negras. To cite Proskouriakoff again, referring specifically to Piedras Negras stelae 25 and 26 (1950, 119): "Although there are strong contrasts between deep carving and lighter indication, which sometimes amounts to no more than incision, the transition between the two tends to be abrupt, and they are seldom both used in a single motif...". Consistent with her classicizing aesthetic bias, she sees this as a fault. But as I already pointed out in Chapters 2 and 4, deep recession of the face is a characteristic of Teotihuacan sculpture, as much part of the legacy of that site as the Tlalocs, War Serpent, trapeze and ray signs, and other iconography shared by the Piedras Negras warrior stelae and Tula stelae 1-3. Since both sets of sculptures invoke the heritage of Teotihuacan, the treatment of the faces need not represent evidence of direct artistic exchange between Piedras Negras and Tula.

The same caution applies equally to comparisons of the similar, though less pronounced, treatment of the faces of the Xochicalco triad. Besides Teotihuacan, Xochicalco, with its southern and western trade connections, could have drawn on traditions like that represented by the Río Grande #1 stela (Fig. 62), which also bears a

[120] "The full-front position is best suited to the composition of a stela, since it stresses the symmetry of the central axis, but without complicated devices to produce the illusion of depth, it is not altogether satisfying unless carved in deep round relief, for those proportions and dimensions which best reveal the essential structure of the human face and the human foot are foreshortened in presentation on a single plane. For low and flat relief sculpture, the common pose was one in which the head is turned in profile, while the body faces front and the feet are turned outward" (1950, 22).

face rendered in deeper relief than the rest of the figure, and shares the substitution of glyphic elements for most of the figure's body also characteristic of Xochicalco stelae 1-3. The Piedras Negras warrior stelae also contrast with the greater three-dimensionality of the "statues" of Miacatlan (Fig. 30) and Xochicalco (Figs. 31-33).

Clancy (1985, 150) remarks that the face on Piedras Negras Stela 7 seems to be an attempt at realistic portraiture. K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II is shown in this sculpture with sagging eyelids and cheeks and wrinkled forehead. Such detailed naturalism is not paralleled at Tula, where the treatment of the faces is much more reduced, geometric, and generic. The human faces on Xochicalco stelae 1 and 3 are more naturalistic, but their open-mouthed, aggressive expressions are quite different from the far more serene--despite their military context--visages of the Piedras Negras warrior stelae. In general, despite the boldly hieratic poses of the latter, they are rendered in the relatively naturalistic style and with the flowing lines of Classic Maya art. The Toltec stelae, though much more naturalistic than some other sculpture at that site and certainly more naturalistic than most Teotihuacan art, show much less of an attempt at portraying anatomical detail and a much less calligraphic line than Classic Maya sculpture. The artists of the Xochicalco triad were completely unconcerned with the representation of the body below the neck, naturalistic or otherwise. Again, the Miacatlan and Xochicalco "statues," while more lifelike in their three-dimensional treatment, show much less attention to both anatomical and costume detail than the Piedras Negras monuments. While the Piedras Negras stelae are tabular slabs, like those at Tula, the Xochicalco triad are thick, four-faced, and columnar in form. In size, the Piedras Negras stelae dwarf the

examples at Tula.[121]

Comparisons: Iconography

The most prominent costume element shared by the Piedras Negras warrior stelae, Xochicalco stelae 1 and 3, the "statues" of Miacatlan and Xochicalco, and (perhaps) Tula Stela 3 is the theriomorphic plumed helmet. This attribute falls under Proskouriakoff's classification V: D, which "represents a serpent head complete with lower jaw and tongue" in her simple description (1950, 51, fig. 18g, which shows the helmet of Piedras Negras 7 as an example). In Chapter 2, I reviewed various identifications of this creature as depicted on Epiclassic to Postclassic Central Mexican stelae and concluded that in these examples the helmet represents the Teotihuacan War Serpent identified by Karl Taube (2000a). Taube also identifies the helmet worn by K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II on Stela 7 as an image of the same entity (2000a, 283). Mary Miller (1999, 121) comments that this Teotihuacan War Serpent imagery "dominates" the warrior stelae of Piedras Negras. In fact, only the figures on stelae 26, 31, and 7 wear this headdress, though its prominent rendering creates an impression that more than compensates for the fact that it only occurs on half of the known warrior stelae. Stone (1989, 158) describes the form of headdress on Piedras Negras stelae 26 and 31 as follows: “The open snout forms a central arch crowned by smoking tubes which frequently are thrust into the creature’s nostrils. The great bifurcated tongue hangs to the waist.” On all three stelae, the artist clearly

[121] According to Maler, who measured the monuments when they were still relatively intact (except for Stela 31) compared to their devastated state today, Stela 7’s measurements were 349 cm. in height, 98 cm. across, and 47-50 cm. in thickness; Stela 8 possibly as high as 4 m., 128 cm. wide, and 43 cm. thick; Stela 9, also about 4 m. tall, 112 cm. across and 42 cm. thick; Stela 26 approximately 348 cm. high, maximum

depicts the plate-like shell tesserae forming the decorated surface of the helmet, presumably in imitation of the scales of its reptilian subject. The possible remains of such a shell mosaic helmet were found by the University of Pennsylvania excavators in Burial Five at the site, which probably contained the tomb of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II himself. Similar remnants of these headdresses have also been discovered in excavations at Nebaj, Kaminaljuyu, and Copan, as well as at Teotihuacan (Taube 2000a, 273).

As I briefly discussed in Chapter 2, the War Serpent helmet is part of the complex of Teotihuacan symbols and costumes which entered Maya art in the Early Classic period by mechanisms still incompletely understood. The reptilian supernatural it depicts was called *waxaklajuun ubaah kaan*, the "18 its image" (Taube 2000a, 281) or the "eighteen-headed" serpent, an epithet of unknown significance (Martin 2000a, 104). The helmet's huge size led Martin to call it the "largest and most cumbersome headdress worn by Maya kings." Stone (1989, 156-157) notes that it forms part of the Teotihuacan war costume--along with the back or hip mirror, fur (?) knee bands, *Pectin* shell collar, and turban-like Balloon Headdress—also shown on Early Classic Maya monuments like Tikal Stela 31 (Fig. 163), Uaxaktun Stela 5, and Tres Islas Stela 1. The first two of these stelae represent dramatis personae (Yax Nuun Ahiin and Sihyaj K'ahk', respectively) in what might have been a direct Teotihuacan intervention into Tikal politics in the fourth century, briefly discussed in Chapter 3.

The War Serpent, as costume element and as a supernatural image in its own right, persists into Late Classic Maya art, retaining its militaristic associations. In Classic Maya reliefs, however, the helmet is usually shown in profile. Stone observes that "The portrayal of a frontal mosaic headdress is unusual in Maya monumental art of the Late

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width 129 cm. and 30 cm. thick; Stela 35 270 cm. high, 1 m. wide, 46 cm. thick.

Classic," and only occurs in Yucatan among more "non-Classic" "influences" (1989, 158). But War Serpent headdresses also show up on three-dimensional ceramic images of Maya lords (e.g., Schele 1997, 103-107, pls. 10-13) and even on small effigies of royal mortuary bundles (Schele 1997, 112-114, pls. 18-20). It also appears in frontal view on several small portable steliform plaques in jade found as offerings in the Cenote of Sacrifice at Chichen Itza (Proskouriakoff 1974, frontispiece; 164-65, pl. 67, 1, 2, 3, 4; 166-67, pl. 68, 3, 4). These show a frontal royal figure in a War Serpent helmet, legs (albeit tiny in relation to the rest of the figure, unlike the Piedras Negras or Tula stelae) with feet turned outward, sometimes holding a baton (McVicker and Palka 2001, 191, fig. 13b) (Fig. 124) or, in one case (Proskouriakoff 1974, pl. 67, 4) a K'awiil scepter (see Appendix 2). On another steliform jade carving from the same location (Proskouriakoff 1974, 168-69, pl. 69, 6), a headdress with a Tlaloc mask takes the place of the War Serpent. It is tempting to speculate that such objects might have played a role in the transmission of stela forms and compositions across long distances in Epiclassic Mesoamerica, though in the present state of our knowledge this must remain just that--speculation.

That there is a range of variations in the depiction of the War Serpent headdress among the Piedras Negras and Central Mexican examples is not surprising, given the variety of forms evident among images of the same element in Classic Maya art and in Central Mexican visual traditions as illustrated throughout Taube's pioneering paper. Piedras Negras Stela 7 (Fig. 118, right), for example, shows a "diadem of circular beads" upon which the serpent's upper jaw rests, and clearly depicts a miniature human (not Teotihuacan Tlaloc) mask or effigy head over the War Serpent's teeth (Clancy 1985,

150). Neither feature is paralleled on Tula Stela 3 (Fig. 123), nor on Xochicalco stelae 1 (Figs. 21-22) and 3 (Figs. 25-26), nor the Miacatlan/Xochicalco "statues." There are long bead ornaments in the Piedras Negras War Serpents' nostrils from which emanate plumes representing smoke. This feature is also not paralleled at Tula, though it may be on Stela 1 at Xochicalco, in the objects identified by Saenz as bloodletting implements (see Appendix 3). Smith (2000b, 85) extends the same interpretation to some of the projections in the helmets on Piedras Negras stelae 7 and 25, while Taube interprets the plumed tubes emanating from the War Serpent's nostrils on Piedras Negras Stela 7 as the antennae of a butterfly (2000a, 282, fig. 10.9c).

The figures on Piedras Negras stelae 7, 26 (Fig. 115), and 31 wear War Serpent helmet masks to which a pendant element, perhaps the monster's lower jaw or tongue is attached (Stone 1989,158), suspended under the wearer's chin (Proskouriakoff 1950, 53, figs. A5 j and l; 55:D). A similar, though much simpler, three-lobed ornament appears under the face of the figure on Tula Stela 1 (Jiménez García 1998, 138, fig. 52) (Fig.121, F). Both elements serve as framing devices emphasizing the recession of the deeply carved area of the face. A U-shaped necklace above the broad collar of the figure on Tula Stela 3 (Fig. 123, E) serves the same visual function, though it is probably not the actual jaw of the ruler's War Serpent (?) headdress. These formal parallels might suggest a more specific relationship between the Piedras Negras and Toltec monuments. A common ancestry from Teotihuacan relief carving, and, less probably, ceramic sculpture with its recessed-faced "theatrical" incense burners (e.g., Pasztory 1997, fig 10.4), for this feature of both the Piedras Negras and Tula stelae remains one possibility. And, as I observed in Chapter 2, since the Tula Toltec, the Classic Maya of Piedras Negras, and the

Gobernador Phase rulers of Xochicalco all drew on the symbolic heritage of Teotihuacan, the sharing of the War Serpent helmet in itself is no guarantee of direct connections among their stelae.

The figures on the other Piedras Negras warrior stelae wear either the Teotihuacan Balloon Headdress (35 and 9) or more traditional (and elaborately towering) Maya feathered headgear (Stela 8). The images of the domed Balloon Headdress represented a costume element of woven cotton (Stone 1989, 157) or, at least at Dos Pilas and Aguateca, deerskin (Greene et al. 1972, 187) and crowned with the feathers of an owl, another Teotihuacan war symbol (Martin 2000a, 104). This headdress is clearly depicted in ceramic figures from Teotihuacan (Stone 1989, 156), but does not appear on the Tula or Xochicalco stelae, a clear difference between the Maya and Central Mexican material. Although both Piedras Negras and these Central Mexican centers drew on the iconographic vocabulary of Teotihuacan, they seem to have emphasized different elements. Stela 8 (Figs. 118-119, 126), despite its more local headgear, nonetheless shows a medallion with combined goggle-eyed Teotihuacan Tlaloc mask (shown on its side) and trapeze and ray sign. This parallels the Teotihuacan Tlaloc masks on the headdresses of the rulers portrayed on Tula stelae 1 (Fig. 121, B) and 2 (Fig. 122, B), and if not the War Serpent rather than the Storm God, on Stela 3 (Fig. 123, B).[122] The mask on the Piedras Negras monument is, however, much smaller than the visage of Tlaloc on the Tula stelae, and is attached to a plume rather than centrally placed in the headdress.

[122] Juxtaposition of the images of these two supernaturals occurs in Classic Maya art. Schele (1997, 103, pl. 19) reproduces a ceramic figure from Campeche showing a man wearing both the War Serpent helmet and a mask of the Teotihuacan Tlaloc. A Late Classic painted bowl (Martin 2000a, 105, fig. 161; Taube 2000a, 281, 282, fig. 10.8b) shows a Maya ruler wearing the Balloon Headdress with trapeze and ray riding a War Serpent with goggle eyes. This fusion of images probably also derives from Teotihuacan, where the War serpent sometimes has the goggle eyes of the Storm God (Taube 2000a, 273).

Nor are the Tlaloc masks conflated or merged with trapeze and ray signs on the Tula or Xochicalco stelae. Again, since this deity image was part of a complex of Teotihuacan martial imagery widely distributed across Mesoamerica, not much explanatory mileage should be derived from its shared use.

The trapeze and ray sign appears in a much larger form than the version on Piedras Negras Stela 8, crowning the apex of the War Serpent helmet on Stela 7 (Fig. 118, right) and the Balloon Headdress on Stela 9 (Fig. 120). In these images, its size and position corresponds more closely to Tula stelae 1 (Fig. 121, B) and 3 (Fig. 123, B), though the former features multiple representations of the symbol, and to Xochicalco stelae 1-3. However, on Piedras Negras Stela 9, the trapeze and ray is combined with an owl mask that Stone calls “Teotihuacan looking” (Stone 1989, 163), and that is not paralleled on the Tula and Xochicalco stelae. Again, as Smith and Hirth (2000, 55) observe, “The trapeze-triangle was widely dispersed during the Late Classic period," so it is not a terribly specific link.

Another Teotihuacan-derived war symbol, the "dripping fluid" (or bleeding heart) sign "occurs four times on Stela 7 (Fig. 118, right): below the great bifurcated tongue, on the shield, on the trapeze-and-ray device over the headdress, and on the feathers covering the left shoulder" (Stone 1989, 162-163). Baudez (1994, 136) also finds it on K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's apron. It also shows up on Piedras Negras Stela 8 (Figs. 118, left; 119) in the jaws of a monster mask in the king's headdress and on the Balloon Headdress of Ruler 4 on Stela 9 (Fig. 120). This symbol is not present on the Tula stelae. It does appear on Xochicalco Stela 3 (Fig. 25), but as a glyph among other signs rather than a

headdress ornament.[123] Again, all of these Late Classic to Early Postclassic monuments draw on the same Teotihuacan symbol sets, but which components of this fund of images by the artists and patrons emphasized at each site varies greatly.

In general, the plumes of the headdresses of the Piedras Negras war stelae are more elaborate, detailed, and naturalistically rendered than their counterparts on the Tula stelae and "statues" of Miacatlan and Xochicalco, if less three-dimensional than on these last. None of the Tula stelae show the shafts of the plumes, which the Piedras Negras artists often clearly indicate (e.g., stelae 35—see Fig. 117-- and 7) by incised lines. The Piedras Negras stelae show multiple and overlapping layers of plumes, while the Toltec examples emphasize single layers. However, the depiction of the plumes on Tula stelae 1-3 falls within the range of Maya conventions for portraying headdress feathers, corresponding roughly to Proskouriakoff's type IV:G1 (1950, 47; it most closely resembles her example in fig. 16y, from Ceibal).[124] The Tula examples vary from this Maya convention on her last point: on stelae 1 and 3, the ends of the feathers are curved at the ends, while the plumes on the right side of the ruler's headdress on Stela 3 have bifurcated or split tips. These correspond to Proskouriakoff's IV:F2 (47, 49, fig. 16u), which is also known at Piedras Negras as well as at Chichen Itza.[125]

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[123] See Berlo (1989) and Baird (1989) for further exploration of the history and meaning of this symbol from Teotihuacan to Cacaxtla and Xochicalco.

[124] "In arrangements of G1 the parallel lines of the feathers are usually stressed and related to the direction of other important elements. The panache is made to follow the border of the monument or adapted to some other feature of the design, which tends to modify its normal fall, and make a rectangular turn. The tips of the feathers, when beads are used in this type of arrangement, are usually very long and square at the ends."

[125] It is possible that the attachment of bead ornaments to the individual plumes in the Maya area had some Teotihuacan/martial connection. Proskouriakoff alleged that the image on Lacanha Stela 1 (Berlo 1989, 112, fig. 21) represents the first use of beaded plumes on a Maya monument, and they are attached to a War Serpent helmet with trapeze and ray sign.

The earspools worn by the Piedras Negras rulers on stelae 35, 8, 7, and 9 are simple forms, corresponding to Proskouriakoff's VI: A1 (1950, 58), which is "usually very large and tends to be round or slightly squarish but never oblong." This ornament turns up on stelae from the Early Classic at Uaxaktun and Yaxhá, both sites with Tikal/Teotihuacan connections, so its appearance on the warrior stelae, which invoke the legacy of Teotihuacan and the warrior costumes of the Early Classic, is not surprising. The Central Mexican stelae figures vary in their choice of ear wear. Tula Stela 2 (Fig. 122, C) shows a round earspool corresponding to those at Piedras Negras, but the ear gear, a disk with bar or tube pendant, sported by the ruler on Tula 1 (Fig. 121, D) corresponds to Proskouriakoff's type VI: D1, "Late Classic earplug, simple." So do the ornaments of the Tlaloc on Xochicalco Stela 2 (Figs. 23-24) and the female on the "statues" of Miacatlan and Xochicalco. The more elaborate earspools of Tula Stela 3 (Fig. 123, D) fall within Proskouriakoff's VI: C: "Flare or tau element within earplug shown en face" (1950, 60). This variation even among minor costume details suggests that whatever the processes involved in mediating the similarities among these monuments, they did not include any sort of simple "copying."

The Piedras Negras figures wear broad collars, and those of Stela 35 (see detail, Fig. 117), 7, 8, and 9 have multiple shell pendants, based on the *Pectin* shells worn at Teotihuacan and on Early Classic Maya monuments like Tikal Stela 4 (See Appendix 2, Fig. 150), though Stone (1989, 160) identifies the Piedras Negras examples as *Spondylus*, consistent with Late Classic Maya tastes. On Stela 35 (Proskouriakoff 1950, 63, fig. 21e) and Stela 7 in particular, the configuration of the shells suggests the shell and actual human mandibles worn by the Teotihuacan warriors buried under the Pyramid of the

Feathered Serpent (Cabrera Castro 1993, 100), consistent with the staffs (see below) and other Teotihuacan costume elements from this context paralleled on the Piedras Negras warrior stelae. The Tula stela figures do not wear shells, and the broad collars on Tula stelae 1 (Fig. 121, F) and 3 (Fig. 123, E) have a square and circular beaded element (respectively) seemingly suspending them from the neck, visually analogous to the lower jaws of the serpent helmets, but unparalleled as a distinct piece of costume on the Piedras Negras stelae. The collar forms of Tula stelae 1 and 3 correspond to Proskouriakoff's VII: A5 (1950: fig. 21i, from Ceibal Stela 9). The broad collar on Xochicalco Stela 1 (Figs. 21-22) also appears to be a variant of VII: A5, while Xochicalco Stela 3 (Figs. 25-26) shows a variation of her VII: A3, in which conceptual slot she also puts the shell collar from Piedras Negras Stela 35.

There are many divergences among the pendants shown on the warrior stelae and their putative Central Mexican analogs. Tula Stela 5's disk pectoral (mirror?) (Fig. 14) is not matched at Piedras Negras, except maybe on Stela 35 (Fig. 117), where "the central ornament of the headdress is a fringed cartouche with *akbal* infix, similar to mirrors identified by Taube...Indeed, the infix supports the mirror identification, as [the Maya sign] *akbal* marks obsidian mirrors..." (Stone 1989, 158). But besides the obvious difference of being on the head rather than chest of the ruler, this Piedras Negras mirror ornament differs from Tula Stela 5's disk in being bracketed by a supernatural snake "with a menacing flint blade tongue" (Stone 1989, 158). This combination of motifs occurs at other Late Classic Maya sites and represents a specific example of Maya-Teotihuacan syncretism. The snake may be Maya in origin, while the mirror derives from Teotihuacan (Stone 1989, 159). Perhaps the mirror (?) held by the figure depicted on the

"statues" of Xochicalco and Miacatlan is analogous to these Piedras Negras and Tula ornaments, but once again, there is as much diversity as unity apparent in these comparisons. The Maya bar pendant with skull worn by K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II on Stela 7 has no parallel among the Tula stelae. Nor does the butterfly pendant of Tula Stela 2 (Fig. 122, E) occur on any Piedras Negras stelae, although this ornament is as much of Teotihuacan origin and warlike significance as the War Serpent, with which it may be conceptually linked, especially if the War Serpent is really a caterpillar (Taube 2000a), trapeze and ray, and Teotihuacan Tlaloc mask. Again, Tula (and Chichen Itza) selected this element from the "palette" of Teotihuacan war regalia but the Classic Maya did not, as Stone (1989, 166) observes. Likewise, the descending bird ornament at Tula (stelae 1 and 2) (Figs. 121, E; 122, D) is not shared with Piedras Negras.

The clothing of the rulers on the Piedras Negras stelae, Teotihuacan regalia aside, is thoroughly Maya, and the Tula stelae lack the elaborate belts, huge aprons, and apron masks of Maya stelae in general. The bifurcated apron of Tula Stela 1 (Fig. 121, I) corresponds to Proskouriakoff's Maya type X:A1 but is much less elaborate. One odd possible clothing parallel is the presence of a triangular upper garment in the stela images at both sites. In Chapter 2, I compared the apparent *quechquemitl* of Tula Stela 2 (Fig. 122, D) with other images of the same garment in Toltec sculpture and in the Cacaxtla battle murals. It is interesting in this connection that Piedras Negras Stela 35 "…also wears a triangular neck piece gathered by a knot.... A bulkier version is worn on Stela 9" (Stone 1989, 160). This costume element also appears at other Usumacinta sites. It is unclear what type of garment is shown here. Stone notes that "Though it may be a form

of cotton armor, a similar garment is worn by God N [the Maya god Pauahtun[126]] on polychrome vases and ceramic figures." This garment is not a *quechquemitl* per se, but the existence of a triangular upper body garment worn by male figures and associated with war may help explain the occurrence of the *quechquemitl* on warriors and male deities at Tula. The *quechquemitl* occurs in later Mexica art only in religious contexts as the garment of goddesses or goddess impersonators, while in Late Postclassic Tlaxcala it is associated with fertility goddesses, and in the Postclassic Mixtec codices it is worn by both goddesses and elite women (Anawalt 1981, 36-37, 71, 128-129). It is still used in modern Hidalgo as a female garment (Anawalt 1981, 127).

Although the bloodletting knots or ribbons displayed on Tula stelae 1 (Fig. 121, J, P) and 2 (Fig. 122, F) are a Maya trait and strongly suggestive of contacts with the Maya area,[127] they are not part of the costume of the Piedras Negras warrior stelae. Even these "Maya" elements are deployed differently at the two sites. The rulers on Tula stelae 1-3 and 5 and on the Piedras Negras warrior stelae wear knee and ankle bands but the materials seem to differ in specific instances at both sites. Stone (1989, 160) observes that "The broad textile knee and ankle bands on Stela 8 are a Late Classic version of the furlike ones [she thinks coyote fur] seen in the Early Classic and later at Chichen Itza." But the knee bands on Tula Stela 3 (Fig. 123, I) seem to be neither fur nor textiles; they appear to be strings of round beads. The knee bands of the figure on Piedras Negras Stela 35 (Fig. 116) also appear to be composed of beads, while the knee bands on Tula Stela 2 (Fig. 122, J) do seem to be made of textiles like those on Piedras Negras Stela 7 (Fig.

[126] Aged deities who hold up the world.

[127] The ribbons on the arms/legs of Tula Stela 1 correspond to Proskouriakoff's type XI: A9. Her examples (1950, 79, figs. F, g') are from the Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itza.

118, left). The anklets on Tula stelae 1 (Fig. 121, Q) and 3 (Fig. 123, I) may be composed of beads and correspond to Proskouriakoff's XI: A1 ("One, two or three rows of beads": Proskouriakoff 1950, 78). On the other hand, the sandals on the Tula stelae seem to correspond to Proskouriakoff's types XII:B2-B5, described as Yucatec or "Toltec" types "from late Yucatan sculpture" (meaning Chichen Itza), rather than the Classic Maya XII-C types worn at Piedras Negras.

On Piedras Negras Stela 26 (Fig. 125), K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I "grasps a staff which turns into a serpent's head, a strikingly similar motif found on Stela 31" (Stone 1989, 158). Stone identified this serpent staff as part of the ideological baggage inherited from Teotihuacan, owing to its appearance on a Classic Maya painted plate in association with other Teotihuacan elements. She was clearly correct about the object's Teotihuacan pedigree: Sugiyama (2000, 131) compares the staff held by the ruler portrayed on Stela 26 to one he excavated from the sacrificial burials at the Temple of the Feathered Serpent at Teotihuacan (Fig. 125, left). The figure on Piedras Negras Stela 8 (Figs. 118, 119) also holds a crooked, serpent-headed staff. This feature is not paralleled at Tula, despite its geographic and cultural proximity to Teotihuacan. On Stela 7 (Fig. 118, right), K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II holds a staff capped with a supernatural head in profile, ending in a curved or hook-like form above, and decorated with a ring of plumes below the head. The scepter-like object carried by the ruler on Tula Stela 1 (Fig. 121, M), a staff with what look like ribbons attached to the upper end, has no analog at Piedras Negras. Conversely, the ritual wrist pouch (an incense bag?) shown on Piedras Stela 35 (Fig. 116) has no counterpart on the Tula stelae. According to Stone (1989, 159-160), this object "is carried in the Maya area in both religious contexts and combat scenes…in ritual contexts the

pouch conveys militaristic overtones." Such associations seem strengthened by Piedras Negras stelae 7 (Fig. 118, right) and 9 (Fig. 120), where the pouch is decorated with a trophy head. But despite the accusations of military preoccupations in the art of Tula, the rulers depicted on the stelae at that site do not sport this bloody accessory.

Piedras Negras Stela 35 (Figs. 116, 127) shows the ruler carrying a spear, decorated with plumes or tassels, which resembles the spear shown on Tula Stela 3 (Fig. 123, G), which also has hanging plumes at the top of shaft. Both weapon images correspond to Proskouriakoff's spear type XIII: K (1950, 96)[128] and probably represent ceremonial arms rather than actual combat weapons. A similar object is grasped by elite figures in a mural at the housing compound of Atetelco in Teotihuacan (Headrick 2007, 41, fig. 2.8). The object carried by the figure on Tula Stela 5 (Fig. 14) has some similarities to these lances, but is of uncertain use and significance, perhaps a furled banner. The atlatl and darts carried by the kings on Tula stelae 1 (Fig. 121, O, N) and 2 (Fig. 122, I, H) are rarely found in Classic Maya art.[129] Spearthrowers show up in the Early Classic as part of the Teotihuacan accessories carried by Siyah K'ahk' on Uaxaktun Stela 5 and Yax Nuun Ahiin on Tikal Stela 31, and later in Terminal Classic Chichen Itza, but are scarce in Late Classic representations (Chase and Chase 2004, 21). In spite of their Teotihuacan war regalia, the Piedras Negras warrior stelae do not depict atlatls.

There are also major differences in the forms of the shields carried at Tula and Piedras Negras. Tula Stela 3 (Fig. 123) shows a simple round shield decorated with what

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[128] Her corresponding fig. 34b is drawn from Piedras Negras Stela 35.

[129] The Tula darts correspond to Proskouriakoff's XIII: R1 and R2 (1950, 99, figs. 34p-s), She illustrates images from the Peten sites of Cancuen, Naranjo and Ukanal described as "Darts (?). Classic. Rare.", while "A group of darts held together in the hand, however, occurs only in association with Toltec [by which she means Chichen Itza Maya] figures (R3)".

may be plumes (Jiménez García 1998, 142). On the Piedras Negras warrior stelae, the shields are rectangular, and represent a fringed object made of flexible material. Yet, they also appear to have Central Mexican ties. Proskouriakoff comments that

> The small rectangular shield carried by the [Piedras Negras] warriors occurs only at Morales, Tabasco, within the Classic area, but similar shields are used in very late times at Halakal [Yucatan] and Chichen Itza. In view of the fact that the stone vault, which was an important trait in Classic culture, was apparently not used in the Early Classic Period at Piedras Negras, one may wonder whether this city did not originally form part of a cultural area distinct from the rest of the Peten and more closely allied to southern areas of Mexico. (1950, 119-120)

Summary

The Piedras Negras warrior stelae do indeed resemble the Tula stelae in their body proportions, individual ruler portraits, and in aspects of their Teotihuacan-derived royal battle dress. However, the warrior stelae are only part of the series of monuments types erected by the Late Classic kings of Piedras Negras, and the others, like the accession or "niche' stelae, do not occur at Tula. Only the "Central Mexican"-style stela type at this Maya site closely parallels the stelae of Tula and Xochicalco, leading to the risk of circularity in hypotheses positing relationships between the regions. That the Piedras Negras stelae that draw on Central Mexican motifs and religious symbol complexes most resemble Central Mexican stelae is not surprising, and in itself does not explain anything about either group of works. There are many differences in costume details and regalia between the Tula and Piedras Negras, representing differing emphases on, and selections of, Teotihuacan elements at the two sites. The Piedras Negras warrior stelae represent the narrative of royal conquests with dated glyphic texts and the subsidiary figures of

vanquished captives. The Tula stelae simply represent individuals without a clear narrative context, not even names.

The Xochicalco stelae share the recessed faces, War Serpent helmets, trapeze and ray and "bloody drops" symbols with the Piedras Negras warrior stelae, but they have no bodies, substituting glyphic elements for the human form. They might share an interest in narrative with the Piedras Negras, but use only as yet undeciphered glyphs to tell their story, which may prove to be cosmological in scope rather than historical. In the substitution of glyphs for the body, as well as the general style, the Xochicalco triad stand closer to the Rio Grande #1 stela than to anything at Piedras Negras, a direct link which would makes greater sense as well in terms of geographical proximity.

The chronological problem noted in Chapter 2 for Classic Maya connection to the Toltec stelae is particularly salient for the comparison to Piedras Negras. The warrior stelae date from the early seventh through mid-eighth century--two to three centuries before the Tollan Phase to which the Tula stelae possibly, though not definitely, pertain. How monuments from a Maya site destroyed in 808 could serve as models for Central Mexican monuments erected after 950 compounds the problem of geographic distance with the issue of timing.

The Dos Pilas 2/16[130]-Aguateca 2 Pair Compared to the Tula Stelae

In Chapter 2, I quoted from Marvin Cohodas' (1989, 225) reference to "two warrior

[130] Because two numbering systems, the Vinson and Greider system and the Navarrete and Luján system, were used to label Dos Pilas monuments until Stephen Houston's work (1993, 69), Stela 2 was sometimes formerly called Stela 16 (Milbrath 1999, 195), and Cohodas employs this label in his quote. Another stela at the site (Greene et al. 1972, 199, pl. 92) now is numbered 16; it was recently vandalized by looters.

stelae" (sic) at Tula, "which specifically imitate the Aguateca/Dos Pilas pair erected in AD 736 [sic]." Elsewhere, he states that the Tula Toltecs "produced versions of...the paired warrior stelae (Aguateca 2 and Dos Pilas 16)" (1991, 279). The first error in these quotes is of course obvious to the reader with the patience to follow me through Chapter 2; it is in the number of "warrior stelae" at Tula. They are not a pair, but include four sculptures (stelae 1-3 and 5). The second problem is the use of the term "imitation," which is not fully clarified by context. If we are to take "imitation" in its common meaning as signifying a copy, then, as I pointed out in Chapter 2, it is clearly erroneous, as even a glimpse at the Dos Pilas/Aguateca pair (Figs. 127-128) illustrates. Just for starters, the heads on these figures are shown in typical Classic Maya fashion in profile, versus the frontal portrayal of the heads of the kings on Tula stelae 1-3 and 5. In this section, I will further explore the suggested connection between the Dos/Pilas Aguateca pair by way of a comparative analysis.

The Sites

The ruins of the Maya kingdom of Dos Pilas are located in the Lake Petexbatun region of the Peten in present Guatemala. During the Late Classic, the inhabitants of the city called it Mutal, a name shared with Tikal to the east. In fact, Dos Pilas was deliberately set up as an extension of that great capital, to seize control of trade routes in the Pasión region (Demarest 2006, 27). Its self-proclaimed founder and first *ajaw*, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil (ruled 632-692) was a prince of the Tikal royal line. It was once believed (e.g., Martin and Grube 2000) that he was driven from his city of origin in a civil war.

But since later inscriptions at the site allege him to have established Dos Pilas at the tender age of four, it is now clear that he and his new capital were set up by the ruler of Tikal as a satellite to the west (Sharer and Traxler 2006, 383). His adult backers may have chosen the location of his new city to capitalize on the presence of geological features already held sacred. An extensive system of limestone caves runs under two of the major architectural groups, the Western Plaza Group and Eastern El Duende complex, which seem to have been deliberately sited over this feature (Demarest et al. 2004, 126). The Maya revered caves as entrances to the underworld and employed them for ritual purposes. Both of these complexes also contain springs, another natural feature imbued with supernatural significance in Maya belief. The numerous offerings left in the Dos Pilas caves suggest that the Tikal dynasts may have drawn prestige and supernatural power by taking over this sacred site (Demarest et al. 2004, 139). In 648, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil suffered defeat in battle with the ruler of Tikal's arch-rival for hegemony over the Peten, the city of Calakmul. Following this event, this scion of Tikal's royal house switched allegiance, became a vassal of Calakmul and launched a series of military campaigns in a long war against his former home state (Martin and Grube 2008, 57).

Bajlaj Chan K'awiil and his successors experienced advances and reversals in their attacks on Tikal, but were ultimately unsuccessful in surpassing their ancestral home either on the battlefield or in the size or grandeur of their new city. Because of its short history (founded 632, destroyed 761), it never reached the magnitude of Tikal with its 50,000--100,000 inhabitants; at its height, Dos Pilas probably held no more than 5,000 residents. But the second Mutal did succeed in controlling much of the territory along the Pasión to the north and east of the city by the end of its brief history (Demarest 2004a,

250-251), subjugating the centers of Tamarindito and Ceibal. The second Dos Pilas *ajaw*, Itzamnaaj K'awiil, undertook major monumental construction efforts, sculpting and terracing a natural limestone hill now known as El Duende to give the impression of an artificial platform, erecting stelae on the terraces and crowning it off with a 40 m. high temple on top. When this king was succeeded in 727 by a ruler whose still incompletely translated name is read as "Master of Sun Jaguar" but is most frequently still called Ruler 3 in the literature (Martin and Grube 2008, 60), the new ruler established a fortified second residence and capital at the nearby site of Aguateca (Sharer and Traxler 2006, 406). Built atop a limestone escarpment, protected by a natural chasm crossed by a single natural bridge, and bounded by a swamp on the east, Aguateca was well-suited by virtue of its topography for the defensive purposes of its royal builders (Sharer and Traxler 2006, 405).

But neither the military and architectural campaigns of its rulers, nor the seemingly impregnable fortress of Aguateca, prevented the second Mutal from meeting a violent end. In 760-761, Dos Pilas was destroyed by its former vassal, the king of Tamarindito. Improvised fortifications hastily cobbled together from dismantled temples and palaces and erected to protect the ceremonial core of the city failed to prevent defeat and destruction. The ruling class of Dos Pilas apparently escaped to the relative safety of Aguateca, where in 770, one Tahn Te' K'inich proclaimed himself the king of Mutal. Although he supported his claim to power by a victory over an unknown site in 778, as recorded on Aguateca Stela 19 (Martin and Grube 2008, 64), he was not alone in his pretensions to the title of lord of Mutal. At Ceibal, Ajaw Bot (ruled 770-802) used this title in some of his early inscriptions, reflecting the political fragmentation and chaos

prevalent in the region at this time. Tahn Te' K'inich's last appearance in the monumental record in 802 , not at Aguateca but at yet another city with claims to domination over the Petexbatun, La Amelia, corresponds with the archaeological date for the fiery destruction of Aguateca c. 800. Despite the addition of a palisade to the site's formidable natural defenses, it was sacked and burnt, and the resident *ajaw* forced to run for his life, leaving his ritual objects and royal regalia behind to be recovered from the charred remnants of the palace by the Vanderbilt University archaeologist Takeshi Inomata in the 1990s (Inomata 1997).

Unlike Piedras Negras and Ceibal, Dos Pilas remained undiscovered by the outside world, though doubtless known to local residents, until 1953-1954 (Demarest 2006, 33; Houston 1993, 15). It was visited sporadically over the next two decades by archaeologists, photographers, and adventurers who recorded the monuments on film and (in the case of American artist and Mayanist Merle Greene Robertson) rubbings, but the first really systematic site mapping and recording began with the work of Ian Graham in the 1970s. In the 1980s, a Yale team conducted surface surveys of the ruins, and Stephen Houston began the epigraphic study of the monuments as part of his doctoral research. They were succeeded by Vanderbilt University's Petexbatun Regional Archaeological Project, under the direction of Arthur Demarest, which conducted surveys and excavations at both Dos Pilas and Aguateca from 1989 through the 1996 (Demarest et al. 2005). Inomata's full report on Aguateca and Federico Fahsen's study of the sculpture of Dos Pilas are among the eagerly awaited Vanderbilt publications deriving from the work of this massive project.

The Stelae

The Dos Pilas/Aguateca stela pair, Dos Pilas Stela 2 (Figs. 126, right; 127) and Aguateca Stela 2 (Fig. 128) invoked by Cohodas in connection with the Tula stelae, are unique at both sites for their profusion of Central Mexican imagery, just like the Piedras Negras warrior stelae in their setting. The Dos Pilas monuments are rendered in a very conservative, ornate style related to that of Tikal, and most of the rulers portrayed wear traditionally Maya headdresses and garments. The other stelae at Aguateca also depict their royal subjects in conventional Classic Maya regalia and poses, e.g., Stela 1 (Fig. 129) (Greene et al. 1972, 185, pl. 85), showing a ruler making the scattering gesture,[131] or Stela 3 (Greene et al. 1972, 189, pl. 87), with an *ajaw* holding a K'awiil scepter. Even on other stelae commemorating battles, Teotihuacan costume elements are not common. According to Houston (1993, 92), "Despite the martial allusions at Dos Pilas, battle dress occurs on only a few sculptures. The best example is Stela 2 which projects an image laden with Teotihuacanoid elements." As Greene and associates (1972, 197) put it, the two Stelae 2 "have many Late Classic Mexican features in common. Among these are rectangular shields, Mexican year-signs in eagle down headdresses, Tlaloc masks, and bags hanging from the left arm of the personage." In fact, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Piña Chan (1980, 102) attributes Aguateca Stela 2 to a fusion of Classic Maya with Central Mexican-influenced Cotzumalguapa styles. In his model, artistic ideas linked to the cult of Quetzalcoatl from Xochicalco and El Tajin reached Pacific Guatemala at the end of the Classic, giving rise to the art of Cotzumalguapa. In turn, the Cotzumalguapans

[131] This gesture may have also ultimately derived from Teotihuacan (Martin 2000a, 104-105).

"influenced" the Maya of the Usumacinta and Pasión areas, some of whom took to the Gulf Coast and Yucatan to become the Putun-Itza.[132] One does not have to accept this elaborate cultural relay race to see the resemblance between Aguateca Stela 2 and its Dos Pilas companion and Central Mexican sculpture. As at Piedras Negras, the specter of circularity is raised by comparisons with the Tula stelae.

The Dos Pilas/Aguateca pair were erected by Dos Pilas Ruler 3/"Master of Sun Jaguar" (reigned 727-741), the founder of the royal residence at Aguateca, though Coe and Kerr (1998, 58, fig. 20) give his name on Aguateca Stela 2 as Pat Kawil. This king may have been the regent for a young heir, who later ascended the throne as K'awiil Chan K'inich, the fourth ruler of Dos Pilas. The monumental pair commemorates the victory of the Dos Pilas polity over Ceibal in 735 (not 736, as Cohodas claims), and both depict "a triumphant Ruler 3 in full warrior attire standing atop the captured Seibal king Yich'aak-Bahlam ('Jaguar-Claw')" (Martin and Grube 2008, 61). The Long Count date marks appearance of Venus as Evening Star, reflecting the possible timing of military events by the movements of this planet (Milbrath 1999, 199). On both monuments, the king is shown with his body in frontal view but his head, turned over his right shoulder, in profile. The unfortunate Yich'aak-Bahlam crouches in a contorted position of abject prostration beneath him, separated from his conqueror's feet by a thin blank horizontal band on the Aguateca monument and by a band of hieroglyphic text on its Dos Pilas counterpart. On both stelae, Ruler 3 wears the Balloon Headdress,[133] in this instance clearly representing a garment of deerskin, with the animal's paw visible over the king's

[132] More recent C-14 and ceramic dates for Cotzumalguapa suggest it flourished roughly contemporary with Dos Pilas, rather than earlier (Chinchilla 1996).

[133] Mary Miller (1999, 107) identifies the headdress of Ruler 3 on stelae 2/2 as "a rich variant of the

face. Two circles of deer pelt are attached to an antenna-like stick projecting from the front of the "balloon." Behind this projecting ornament is a row of plumes, which Greene and associates (1972, 187) identify as eagle down; below it is the trapeze and ray sign, resting above the deer hoof. At the back of the row of plumes we see a pair of elements identified by Taube (2000a, 270) as heron feathers, an ornament called *azataxelli* in Nahuatl. In Postclassic Central Mexican art, these are attributes of the deities Mixcoatl, father of Quetzalcoatl, and Tezcatlipoca (Fig. 130). In front of Ruler 3's face are elements composing the profile view of a Teotihuacan Tlaloc mask, the royal head non-naturalistically represented as visible behind the mask in an "X-ray" view. On Aguateca Stela 2, the mask consists of a goggle eye, what looks like a curved nose in front of it, and a bar representing the divinity's upper jaw, though the bottom of the mask is obscured by breakage of the stela. On Dos Pilas Stela 2, the upper half of the god's eye is damaged by cleavage of the slab and the mouth is formed by a series of triple curving elements. The Teotihuacan Tlaloc face mask is matched in each case by a second mask of the god on Ruler 3's apron. On both stelae, Ruler 3 wears the simple Proskouriakoff VI:A1 earspool, like the ones shown on the Piedras Negras warrior stelae.

On Dos Pilas Stela 2, the king wears a broad collar with pendant shells like that shown on the Piedras Negras warrior stelae, a tubular or bar pendant with skull decoration like the one worn by K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II on Piedras Negras Stela 7, and another pendant in the form of a frontal owl, the Teotihuacan war symbol (Milbrath 1999, 196). Greene (Greene et al. 1972, 196) calls this bird image "comical"; I much doubt that poor Yich'aak-Bahlam, recognizing an ancient symbol of conquest and bloodletting around the neck of his captor, would have found it equally amusing. Below this is another

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Teotihuacan War Serpent." This is clearly not the case.

ornament, identified by Schele and Miller (1986, 213) as a jaguar image, though its goggle eyes seem to imitate those of the Teotihuacan Tlalocs above and below it. These authors also think it has a butterfly mandible, which would connect it to the War Serpent, which Taube (2000a, 282-285) identifies as a caterpillar with serpent and jaguar features. On Aguateca Stela 2, the owl is also present, though with its head turned in profile like its royal owner's. The goggle-eyed hybrid pendant or belt ornament is here partly obscured by a rectangular shield emblazoned with the anthropomorphic feline face of the Maya Jaguar God of the Underworld, identified by the distinctive "cruller" between his eyes. "A bag with a baby jaguar's head at the top...slung over his arm" (Greene et al 1972, 187) adds yet another image of the jaguar to the array displayed by the king's costume. This feline is also represented by the jaguar-skin leggings the king wears on both stelae, and on the Aguateca stela, the *ajaw's* human feet have been replaced by the clawed paws of the cat. On Dos Pilas Stela 2, Ruler 3 also wears jaguar mits around his neck (Just 2006, 250). As noted above, jaguar costumes are part of the Teotihuacan war costume adapted by the Classic Maya, and jaguars are linked to Tlaloc imagery at both Teotihuacan and Cacaxtla. On both stelae, the king wears textile or fur kneebands of the type we have already seen at Piedras Negras, and which Stone identified at that site as a component of Teotihuacan battle dress.

On both stelae, the king holds a decorated ceremonial spear corresponding, like the weapons on Piedras Negras Stela 35 and Tula Stela 3, to Proskouriakoff's Type XIII:K. The Aguateca figure's shield, as noted, is rectangular and made of a flexible material like the shields shown on the Piedras Negras warrior stelae, and is emblazoned with the visage of the Jaguar God of the Underworld. On the Dos Pilas stela, the shield does not

bear a supernatural face, but a pair of atlatl darts is positioned diagonally across the shield.

Comparison

As with the Piedras Negras warrior stelae, the narrative context provided for the central figure on these Petexbatun stelae by the dated texts, and the figure of the captive, clearly differentiates this pair from any of the stelae at Tula, with their single, non-narrative images. In this sense, the Tula stelae are closer to the Teotihuacan "mini-stelae" discussed in Chapter 4 and to Teotihuacan sculpture in general. Likewise, the profile view of the head on the Dos Pilas and Aguateca stelae is quite unlike the frontal faces of Tula stelae 1-3 and 5. The frontal torsos and splayed feet represent a shared feature, but on the Petexbatun pair, the arms of the figures are bent and partly occluded. On Tula stelae 1 and 2, at least the left arm hangs straight down at the king's side. Only Tula Stela 3 matches the position of Ruler 3 with a spear in the right hand. On the Maya examples however, the royal forearm of the weapon-bearing limb is clearly delineated. On Tula Stela 3, the forearm does not appear, only the hand grasping the shaft of the lance

As already noted, none of the rulers on the Tula stelae sports the Balloon Headdress, in spite of Tula's greater proximity to that item's Teotihuacan origin point, nor does the pair of heron feathers, despite Tula's artistic and mythic connections with the cults of Tezcatlipoca and Mixcoatl, crown their headgear. Nevertheless, the presence of these Central Mexican deity attributes in the Dos Pilas king’s headdress is an important reminder--in case any was needed at this point-- that ideas traveled both ways in the

interactions between Central Mexico and the Maya area, rendering all simplistic models of unidirectional "influences" completely inadequate. While Tula stelae 1 and 2 share the Tlaloc mask with the Dos Pilas pair, on the former it adorns the headdress, not the face or the apron, and, in general, the elaborate and quintessentially Classic Maya aprons on the Dos Pilas/Aguateca pair are not matched on the Tula stelae. The trapeze and ray sign in the headdress of the Aguateca/Dos Pilas images is shared with Tula stelae 1, 3, and 5, though the Maya examples are in partial profile and the Toltec in frontal view. But the long, hanging, beaded plumes cascading over the shoulders on each side on the Tula stelae are not duplicated on Dos Pilas 2 or Aguateca 2. What goes for the earspool comparison between the Tula stelae and the Piedras Negras warrior stelae applies here as well--only Tula Stela 2 wears the same simple round earspool as displayed on the Aguateca/Dos Pilas pair.

While the broad collars are similar among the sites, the Tula stelae lack the depiction of shells. Likewise, as was the case with Piedras Negras Stela 7, the bar pendant with skull image on Dos Pilas Stela 2 has no counterpart at Tula. The image of the Jaguar Sun God, a specifically Maya deity, also does not appear at Tula, nor does the jaguar-butterfly belt ornament. Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2 share bird pectorals with Tula stelae 1 and 2, but this similarity proves superficial. The Petexbatun pectorals represent birds with their heads pointed upward; the Toltec birds are facing down, as if diving. The bird depicted on these Classic Maya pectorals is a Teotihuacan war owl, but the inverted bird at Tula is probably not an owl. Kristan-Graham (1989, 133-134) interprets a descending bird in profile, found as a headdress ornament in the art of Chichen Itza as well as Tula, as a name glyph for the Maya Tutul Xiu noble lineage, which ruled areas of

Yucatan in the 16th century. The name literally means “turquoise bird” in Nahuatl and seems to refer to a blue jay. Taube (1992b, 125, 127, fig. 67) points out this bird headdress ornament motif’s association with the Central Mexican fire deity Xiuhtecutli in Late Postclassic pictorial sources, both Aztec and Maya (including the Dresden Codex). This costume element may also ultimately derive from Teotihuacan. Mastache, Cobean and Healan (2002, 105) note the presence of this headdress ornament in the art of that site. Schele (1997, 67, pl. 10; see also 82-83, pls. 25-26) illustrates a Classic Maya ceramic figure of a man with medallions in his headdress representing blue paired birds hanging with their heads downward. She also links these features with the Xiu, and notes that while previous generations of Mayanists equated both the lineage and its symbol with Toltec invaders, here it appears as part of the regalia of an individual dressed in purely Classic Maya fashion. We are again reminded of the multiple, reciprocal, and complex connections between Central Mexico and the Maya across many centuries, confounding any effort to easily isolate sources and recipients.

Comparing other costume elements, the blood-letting knots on the Tula stelae, while apparently a Maya-derived feature of the site's eclectic art, do not form part of the costume of Ruler 3 on his paired stelae. Conversely, the Aguateca/Dos Pilas jaguar leggings and feet do not form part of the dress of the Toltec lords on the Tula stelae, though they do occur in the murals of Cacaxtla. The tunics or upper garments of the Maya rulers on the Dos Pilas/Aguateca pair are different from the less elaborate counterparts shown on the Tula stelae, and Tula Stela 2's apparent *quechquemitl* does not form part of Ruler 3's outfit. Ruler 3's kneebands do not match the range of forms on the Tula stelae. As was the case with the Piedras Negras armament comparisons, the round

shield borne by the ruler on Tula Stela 3 is quite different from the rectangular shields on the Dos Pilas/Aguateca pair, and lacks the Maya deity effigy decorating the example on Aguateca Stela 2. On the other hand, the ceremonial spear wielded by Ruler 3 resembles that carried by the anonymous Toltec ruler on Tula Stela 3. The king on Tula Stela 2 carries a pair of atlatl darts like Ruler 3, but over his shoulder, not across a shield. Unlike Ruler 3, he (and the figure on Stela 1) carries his spearthrower at his side. Although Taube (2000, 270) says that Ruler 3 is "portrayed as a Teotihuacan warrior wielding a spearthrower" on these monuments, no atlatl is visible on either stela.

General Comments

Again, as with the comparisons between the Tula stelae and the warrior stelae of Piedras Negras, those Maya monuments selected by previous authors as prototypes for their Central Mexican counterparts are precisely those that stand out from the other sculptures at Dos Pilas and Aguateca by virtue of their strong Central Mexican imagery. A resemblance is therefore not a surprise, and need not be indicative of direct contact between Tula and the Petexbatun. The Tlaloc masks, trapeze and ray, and other war costume elements are aspects of the common Teotihuacan heritage shared by the Classic Maya and the Toltecs, among many other Mesoamerican peoples. As in the comparison to Piedras Negras, while these general concepts are shared with Tula, the specific elements selected are often very different (the Balloon Headdress at Dos Pilas/Aguateca, but not at Tula) or rendered in quite different fashion (the frontal Tlaloc masks in the headdresses of the Tula stelae vs. the X-ray style Teotihuacan Tlaloc profile mask over

the face of Ruler 3). There is an additional Central Mexican element--the heron feather ornaments--on these Maya stelae, that does not occur on the Tula examples despite its connection to deities venerated at the Toltec capital. All of this supports skepticism about any theory of "influence" going in one direction only. Certainly, "imitation" is hardly an adequate term for whatever processes might link these two groups of stelae. The strongest and most basic conceptual link between the Tula stelae and this Maya pair, which cannot be explained by a shared fund of Teotihuacan symbolism, is the general idea of the stela as a vehicle for royal portraiture. It is not part of the Teotihuacan tradition, though known in Formative Central Mexico at Chalcatzingo and certainly present in the Zapotec area as well as in Classic coastal Oaxaca. Yet, the Tula stelae lack the narrative framework and historical context provided by the framing texts and subordinate figures on the Dos Pilas/Aguateca pair.

If a closer Central Mexican analog is to be sought for these Maya stelae, perhaps the "steliform" figure from the Cacaxtla battle murals is a better match. It is, after all, in the same Classic Maya style as the Petexbatun monuments. Nagao (1989, 88, fig. 5) illustrated Aguateca Stela 2 for general comparison to the costume iconography of the Cacaxta murals, of which she lists Maya features including "the Tlaloc mask worn with trapeze and ray sign headdress." The specific figure in question differs from the Dos Pilas/Aguateca pair in its pose with hands crossed across the chest as if holding an absent bar scepter. His (her?) *quechquemitl* finds no parallel on the Petexbatun pair. Most important, while Baird (1989, 114) comments that the Teotihuacan war symbols in the Cacaxtla battle murals suggests that the events portrayed are similar to the types of events referred to by the texts on the Dos Pilas and Aguateca stelae, Ruler 3 and the "steliform"

figure represent opposite outcomes of such an event. The Cacaxtla image represents a victim of warfare and sacrifice, not a victor like Ruler 3.

Ceibal, La Amelia, and Tula

On Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2 , the inscriptions proclaim that Ruler 3 not only defeated and captured the ruler of Ceibal but "chopped the writing" of the vanquished site, probably referring to monument destruction (Tourtellot and González 2004, 68). The protagonists in this conflict might experience some ironic posthumous amusement in the realm of ancestors if they learned that both Ruler 3's stela pair commemorating his destruction of Ceibal and a group of later monuments from that same site--the ballplayer panels or stelae 5 and 7 and a related pair from its neighbor La Amelia--would be linked together in the modern literature of Mesoamerican art history as possible precedents for stelae at Tula. Again, as seen in Chapter 2, Cohodas is the primary proponent of such connections, alleging that "Toltec artists imitated Pasión sculpture on several occasions. Notably these highland artists produced versions of both the paired ball player panels" (Cohodas 1991, 279). As noted as well in Chapter 2 and the Catalog, the evidence of the fragments indicates that there were apparently more than two ballplayer stelae at Tula. Nevertheless, the analysis I present below indicates that this is the strongest of Cohodas' suggested links between Toltec and Classic Maya stelae. There are indeed close stylistic and iconographic similarities here that cannot be explained by broadly shared Mesoamerican ideas. Be that as it may, as in the case of the other putative parallels reviewed in this chapter, the Maya monuments posited as analogs

for Toltec counterparts are not typical of Classic sculpture. In this case, it is their style rather than their iconography that is atypical. It has been derided in some of the past literature as unworthy of the Classic Maya, with some of the same epithets usually reserved to excoriate Toltec art. Additionally, in this instance, the Maya site suggested as font and origin for the imagery and form of Tula stelae is famous (or infamous) in the literature for the Central Mexican aspects of its Late and Terminal Classic art, in this case far more pervasive than that represented by the limited and still very "Classic" monument groups at Piedras Negras and Dos Pilas. The history of explanatory models for Ceibal's seemingly Central Mexican styles and iconography parallels the series of explanations for the Central Mexican stelae, not to mention the sorry saga of the Chichen/Tula debate. This analogous situation is worthy of some comment here, and some of the recent solutions to the problem of Ceibal's eclecticism may provide useful springboards for generating models to explain the similar eclecticism of Epiclassic Central Mexican art. In addition, one of the later Ceibal monuments also possesses some formal resemblances to the Tula stelae. But first some background to the site is in order.

The Site and Its Monuments in Historical Context

Ceibal is located in the western Peten on a high elevation above the bank of the Pasión River (Figs. 1, 3). It takes its name from the stands of ceiba trees noted in the vicinity by the ubiquitous Teobert Maler in the 1890s. Maler gave the name a Germanicized spelling, substituting an “s” for the initial “c” (Willey 1975, 1); the Guatemalan government and recent conventions in the spelling of Maya words favor the

restoration of the ”c.” The site was inhabited long before the unfortunate Yich'aak-Bahlam's day in the 8th century. People settled in this location by the Middle Formative Real Xe Phase (c. 900-600 BCE). A cache of Olmec-style jade celts laid out in the shape of a cross dates to this period (Willey 1990, 238). The inhabitants of the site were constructing monumental architecture by the Late Formative, when Ceibal became a significant regional political and ceremonial center featuring several large pyramids. Its fortunes--and population--decreased, however, in the Early Classic. The city regained both numbers (with an estimated population of 8000) and prestige at the beginning of the Late Classic, c. 660 CE. But then came the conquest by Dos Pilas Ruler 3 on December 3, 735, and Ceibal became a vassal of the Petexbatun Mutal kingdom. After the violent fall of its overlords in 760, Ceibal became one of the claimants to the legitimate title of Mutal. As already discussed in connection with the history of Dos Pilas, Ceibal's Ajaw Bot (778-802) claimed the title of Mutal ruler, at least in some of his inscriptions. He is the patron of stelae 5 (Figs. 133-135) and 7 (Fig. 132), which once adorned a pyramid known prosaically as A-10 in the archaeological literature, erected by the ruler. Another stela, 6, with purely glyphic carving--a text documenting his accession-- stood on the staircase.[134] Later, someone erected the broken upper half of Stela 6 upside down in the plaza in front of this temple.[135]

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[134] Whether he used the former Dos Pilas emblem glyph on stelae 5 and 7 seems to be disputed. Tourtellot and González (2004, 68) maintain that the inscriptions on these stelae use the Petexbatun emblem glyph rather than Ceibal’s. However, according to Just, whose 2006 dissertation focused on the monuments of Ceibal, Ahaw Bot did not use the Mutal glyph on stelae 5 and 7, and “the use of the Mutal title thus seems to have become less significant or possibly undesirable later in his term as Seibal ruler” (2006, 201).

[135] Schele and Mathews (1998, 177-178) speculate that "Perhaps the people of Seibal were making their true feelings known about this foreign ruler." Alternately, the stela may have been later broken and reset by Ajaw Bot himself to remove a reference to his sometime ally, the ruler of Tamarindito, after a change in their relationship (Just 2006, 212).

After Ajaw Bot's last known dated inscription in 800, there is a 30-year hiatus in the inscriptions and monuments of Ceibal. The silence of the record is broken by the monuments of the next king, Ah-Bolon-Abta Wat'ul-Chatel (usually called simply Wat'ul for convenience) (Schele and Mathews 1998, 179). Wat'ul was not a native of Ceibal. The texts on his most famous group of monuments, five stelae (8 through 12) associated with a small quadripartite temple, A-3 (Schele and Mathews 1998, 180-181), record his "arrival" at the site. His monuments display a number of "non-Classical" features related to Central Mexico, a trend that was to increase over the following decades, culminating in the truly unique monuments of the late 9th century. Some of Wat'ul's stelae show him with supposedly "non-Maya" features like a moustache and long hair; others show him without the distinctive artificial cranial deformation practiced by Classic Maya elites. Proskouriakoff (1950, 28) derided the small, splayed legs of Stela 9 (Fig. 136) as "non-Classic" (read: Mexican). Later stelae at the site show such Central Mexican elements as the duck-bill mask of the Nahua wind god (and avatar of Quetzalcoatl) Ehacatl (Fig. 137), speech scrolls (both together on Stela 19), amid seeming ideological and architectural parallels with Tula: Mexican calendrical dates/name glyphs replacing Maya hieroglyphic texts, calendrical glyphs in square cartouches (also like those at Xochicalco),[136] "adoratorios or small pyramidal altars in plazas…carved atlantids…low relief jaguars on pyramid facades" (Kristan-Graham 1987, 4). Not surprisingly, earlier generations of scholars saw these developments at Ceibal as the work of Central Mexican invaders, or Mexicanized Maya; Thompson (1970) credited Wat'ul's and later monuments

[136] As on Stela 3 (Just 2006, 300). The day sign may be Cipactli, which also occurs on the Tula Pyramid B reliefs. However, the numerical coefficients on Stela 3 are 7 and 5, while the Tula columns refer to 1 Cipactli, known from the Mexica as a coronation date for rulers. Just observes that the sign on Stela 3 also resembles the Reptile Eye sign—a possible link to Xochicalco.

to the Putun and compared them to the art of Chichen Itza. The appearance of the fine paste ceramics characteristic of the Putun homeland and Chichen at Ceibal seemed to clinch this argument.

Once believed to be the work of Mexicanized Maya intruders, Wat'ul's and later monuments are now seen, on the basis of decipherment, as the work of a dynasty which, while not native to the city, came from the Classic Peten and not the Mexican west (Schele and Mathews 1998, 175-196). Wat'ul tells us in his inscriptions that he was "sent" to Ceibal by the king of Ukanal, a city in the eastern Peten--the opposite direction from the Putun area or more distant Central Mexico. Despite previous assertions to the contrary, a recent review of the problem (Tourtellot and González 2004) finds no solid archaeological evidence for foreign infiltration at Ceibal, no change in burial practices consistent with an invasion, for example. Although the technology of fine paste ceramics came from the regions west of Ceibal (Demarest 2004a, 261), the fine-paste wares found at the site were manufactured locally, not brought in by raiders or traders (Demarest 2004a, 256). The absence of head deformation in some of Wat'ul's images (stelae 10 and 11) is an artistic convention. He is portrayed with a Classic flattened cranium in other portraits (Stela 9) (Schele and Mathews 1998, 187). Ironically, osteological evidence for head deformation from burials at Ceibal suggests the practice was not introduced here until Wat'ul's time. His long hair is matched on other Classic Peten monuments. Far from being a foreign invader, Wat'ul was recognized as a traditional Maya ruler by his colleagues among Peten *ajawob*; on Stela 10, he records the visit of the kings of Calakmul and Tikal to participate in the ceremonies around the dedication of A-3 (Schele and Mathews 1998, 185-186).

Nor are the "foreign" features apparent in Ceibal's Terminal Classic art all exclusively Central Mexican. Just (2006, 312-313) observes compositions resembling those of Puuk stelae, sandal styles of kinds found in the art of Chichen Itza, and stylistic traits seemingly derived from Cotzumalguapa. The style and content of Wat'ul's and later Ceibal monuments combine local roots in the art of Classic Maya Petexbatun and Pasión centers with novel features--some local inventions, some more distant "borrowings"--designed to create a new art to help prop up Ceibal's rulers during a time when many rival and allied Maya states were failing. In Demarest's words

> The new architectural and sculptural forms at Seibal...were not foreign, but rather were an amalgam of traditional Classic Maya forms combined into a distinctive amalgam...Many of the unusual features in the sculptures, strange costumes, long hair styles, and ubiquitous serpents may have been part of an experimentation with new legitimating ideologies [significantly, he cites here Ringle et al.'s 1998 Quetzalcoatl paper that I reviewed in Chapter 3] that would help these surviving enclaves pull t together a kingdom from the fragmented political systems and populations of the collapsed states of the Petexbatun and other adjacent zones. (2004, 261)

The mechanisms invoked by Demarest are both parallel and specifically refer to the models suggested to explain the eclecticism and innovations of the art of the Epiclassic Central Mexican discussed at length in Chapter 3. Here and elsewhere (Demarest 2004, 117), he relates the apparent adoption of Central Mexican iconography at Ceibal to Ringle's Quetzalcoatl world religion.[137] But Just criticizes very broad constructs like Ringle and associates' for their potential to obscure the particular dynamics operating at specific centers like Ceibal:

the sweeping character of their pan-Mesoamerican model, however, precluded them

[137] A similarly general, if more political explanation is given by Sharer and Traxler (2006, 522), who compare the Terminal Classic Ceibal stelae to the eclecticism of the Cacaxtla murals. "This mixture of styles appears to be an attempt to adopt symbols of royal power derived from traditional lowland Maya sources and from states in Central Mexico that emerged in the wake of the downfall of Teotihuacan at the end of the Early Classic period. This indicates Seibal's new masters were traditional Maya lords attempting to match their positions of power by adapting to the changing conditions of the Terminal Classic."

> from considering the distinct manifestations of their 'cult' in specific locations such as Seibal, thus potentially obscuring smaller-scale, historically specific, situations of ideological hybridity. At Seibal in particular, the possible evidence of a Quetzalcoatl-Ehecatl cult occurs simultaneously with other, non-Maya iconography suggestive of alternative competing ideologies and ritual practices. (2006, 171)

Some features of the broader model do not match the specifics in Ceibal's art. Just notes (2006, 301-302) that one of the figures on Ceibal Stela 3 wears an Ehecatl mask that Ringle and company readily interpret as related to their pan-Mesoamerica Quetzalcoatl cult. But Just points out that other figures on the same monument wear masks of another Central Mexican divinity, Tlaloc, but by no means appear to be in any way inferior in status to their duck-billed companion. The "world religion of Quetzalcoatl" model does not explain the adoption of Tlaloc as well as Ehecatl at Ceibal, nor the fact that other, local deities were depicted and worshipped there. Paralleling the efforts of Nagao (1989) to interpret the specific iconographic and ideological strategies of Cacaxtla and Xochicalco in light of their relation to Teotihuacan rather than generalize about "international styles" or "world religions," Just attempts to ground his explanation of Ceibal's Terminal Classic art in the specifics of the city's history and geography. He suggests that its position along riverine trade routes and on the western edge of the central Peten made it a “border town” for merchants and diplomats from Mesoamerican polities to the west. The site’s eclectic art style was addressed to both travelers and locals. “Seibal's late sculptural heterogeneity reflects a strategy of accommodating the expectations of a diverse audience, likely of merchants, emissaries and/or other visitors from a variety of locations, while striving to maintain some notion of ‘Maya' identity” (2006, 174). Of course, similar processes may be at work in the Central Mexican Epiclassic and Early Postclassic centers, where trade flourished--an issue I will return to

in the conclusion.

Stela 5 and 7 and the Ballplayers of Tula

Returning from our excursus in Ceibal's Terminal Classic eclecticism, matching the polyglot artistic vocabularies of contemporary Central Mexico in complexity and probably in some underlying social processes as well, let us continue with the comparison of specific monuments at Ceibal with their counterparts at Tula. Stelae 5 and 7 (Figs. 132-135) represent Ajaw Bot as a ballplayer to commemorate the passage of thirty years after his accession to the throne (Just 2006, 204), though it is unclear from the archaeological evidence whether any of the ballcourts at Ceibal had actually been constructed by the time these reliefs were carved. Their position flanking the stairway of A-10 is clearly different from the placement of Tula Stela 4 (Figs. 11, 131) and its fragmentary fellows in an actual ballcourt. But as at Tula, there is some question as to whether these Ceibal sculptures should be called stelae in the narrowest sense, given their architectonic context. Maler thought so, but the 1964-1968 Harvard excavation of the site under Gordon Willey proved them to be wall panels. Referring to "Stela" 7, John Graham (1990, 19) states that the "monument was set into the lower terrace of Structure A-10 at about plaza level and immediately north of the projecting lower stairway of the west or "public" side. With Stela 5 to the south of the staircase, the panels formed a symmetrical arrangement of ball-player portraits in mirror image." Just (2006, 157) calls them "two carved panels (erroneously classified as 'Stelae' 5 and 7)." In shape, this pair parallels the rectangular form of Tula Stela 4 and what can be inferred for its companion pieces. In

size, these reliefs are bigger than their Toltec counterparts, though not by the same order of magnitude as the Piedras Negras warrior stelae. The more complete Stela 7 is 1.86 m high, .96 m wide, and .26 m in thickness (Graham 1990, 19) (Fig. 132). Based on this, Just (2006, 204) concludes that both "panels" stood "just under 2 m."

The Ceibal panels are considered aberrant for their relatively reduced and non-naturalistic style when compared with the baroque curves of much contemporary Peten Maya relief sculpture. Their supposedly "un-Maya" forms drew Graham's contempt (1990, 20).[138] He compares them unfavorably to the "fine sculpture" of the La Amelia panels (see below). Just (2006, 204) notes that "Stela 5 and 7 have long been considered particularly crude sculptures, which some scholars have considered early evidence of foreign influence at Seibal." Foreign is usually shorthand for Central Mexican or "Toltec" in the literature of Ceibal. This point represents another connection to Tula, which has incurred its share of similarly pejorative terms for its sculptural tradition. Just (2006, 208) specifically observes that "The faces of the main figures are slightly divergent from the standard, 'idealized' Classic Maya face, with a less-gradual transition from the bridge of the nose to the forehead, prominent chins, and small lips," and that the ballplayer image on Stela 7 has "squat overall proportions. His arms are awkwardly stubby" (2006, 206). Perhaps more substantial as evidence of "non-Maya" affiliations, the Ceibal ballplayer stelae record dates using Maya hieroglyphs, but not in the Long Count system. Rather they use Calendar Round dates, as was the tradition in Central Mexico. It is interesting that Maya sculptures seen as not making the grade as art becoming the Classic Maya, and hinted at being of outside origin, also have been suggested as foreign models for stelae at

[138] "The ponderous quality of the sculptures and the less than successful attempts at impressive monumentality are no less notable than the distorted treatment of anatomical proportion. The latter is not

Tula. The problem of circularity returns again.

A more geographically and linguistically proximate counterpart to these Ceibal ballplayer sculptures than the Tula reliefs occurs at another Terminal Classic Pasión center, La Amelia. Here, stelae 1 (Greene et al. 1972, 179, pl. 82) and 2 (Greene et al 1972, 182, pl. 83) (Figs. 138-139) occupy an analogous position to the Ceibal pair, framing a stairway. As Graham (1990,19) points out, this pattern has local roots in the western Peten: "the idea of stela-like or vertical panels flanking a stairway is common in Pasión valley ruins; the earliest examples appear to be those of Altar de Sacrificios stelae 4...and 5". One major difference between the Ceibal and La Amelia pairs is the more flowing and naturalistic style of the latter, leading Graham to use them as a comparative cudgel with which to beat the Ceibal sculptor.

Martin and Grube (2008, 65) attributed the La Amelia panels to the same Ajaw Bot who dedicated the ballplayer stelae at Ceibal. But the La Amelia Ajaw Bot has a different accession date than that recorded at Ceibal, and the current consensus holds that they were separate persons (Just 2006, 213), rival claimants to the mantle of the fallen Dos Pilas polity. Adding to the confusion, Ajaw Bot of La Amelia uses the Mutal emblem glyph in his inscriptions, like his Ceibal namesake, but in fact appears to have been a vassal of yet another Mutal pretender, the aforementioned Tahn Te K'inich of Aguateca. The pose (Proskouriakoff's J1—1950, 26-27, fig. 9l) of the La Amelia figures generally parallels that of the Ceibal pair, but is much more active, with one of the king's arms extended behind him, the other bent across his abdomen and one heel raised off the ground in motion. His movements led Greene and co-authors to call La Amelia Stela 1 and 2 images of a dancer rather than a ballplayer.

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employed for any expressive or artistic purpose but seems to reflect the obvious limitations of the artist."

The general posture of the figures on Tula Stela 4 (Figs. 11, 131) and its associated fragments (Figs. 12-13, 140), a pose not found elsewhere in the corpus of Toltec sculpture, is quite similar to that of both the Ceibal and La Amelia panels. Particularly striking is the lifting of the heel off the ground in motion. There are, however, differences despite this essential resemblance. Only one arm of the Tula ballplayer is shown, in contrast to the Maya depictions, and its position, bent at the elbow but with hand alongside the knee, differs from any at La Amelia or Aguateca. The compact torso of the Tula ballplayers matches that of the Ceibal panels, though not the proportions of the La Amelia figures. The crowning panache of plumes (Fig. 131, B) strikingly parallels that of the Ceibal Stela 7 figure, with a row of long plumes falling, bent at a right angle, behind a row of shorter plumes rising from a row of much lower feathers. However, the Tula figure's longest feathers are not beaded like Ajaw Bot's on Stela 7 (which resemble the plumes of Tula stelae 1-3) and have bifurcated rather than square ends.[139] The shape of the Toltec king's headdress itself is quite different from any of the Maya examples. De la Fuente et al. (1988, 150) call it a helmet in the form of an avian head; Jiménez García (1998, 296) more neutrally calls it a helmet with visor, but it is not a skeletal supernatural as on the Maya examples. While La Amelia Stela 2 shows a bird mask in the headdress, it is of quite different configuration.

The pendant earspools of Tula Stela 4 (Fig. 131, D) match those of Ceibal Stela 7 (Fig. 132) and La Amelia Stela 1 (Fig. 138). The large disk (mirror?) pendant, however, of the Toltec stela does not correspond to any of the necklaces or pendants on its Pasión counterparts. Tula Stela 4 shows the royal ballplayer wearing a bar nose ornament (Fig.

[139] Proskouriakoff's IV: F2, associated with Chichen and Piedras Negras.

131, C). This object does not occur on the Ceibal or Aguateca panels, although, ironically, its presence on the Terminal Classic stelae of Ceibal is frequently listed as one of the Central Mexican traits at that site. Proskouriakoff saw this form as "non-Classic" (Proskouriakoff 1950, 61, fig. 20f'). Just (2006, 135) qualifies this, noting that similar ornaments are commonly worn by gods and supernatural serpents, though usually not by humans, in Classic Maya art.[140] The speech scroll issuing from the mouth of the player on Tula Stela 4 (Fig. 131, A) of course is not found on the Ceibal or La Amelia panels, though it does occur on Ceibal Stela 19 (Graham 1990, 57), alongside Central Mexican glyphs, and issuing from a figure wearing an Ehecatl mask.

The Tula figure lacks yoke or armbands; conversely, the Peten examples do not wear gauntlets. The Stela 4 figure wears a knee pad on his left leg (Fig. 131, G) that corresponds to Proskouriakoff's fig. 29 a' and b': "Knee pads worn by ball players" at Ceibal 7 and La Amelia 1. But the bloodletting ribbons on the Toltec king's right leg (Fig. 131, F) do not occur in the Pasión panels. Again, a Maya element is used differently by the Toltec carver than in the Maya works suggested as analogs, just as the Central Mexican elements used by the creators of the Piedras Negras warrior stelae and the Dos Pilas/Aguateca pair vary considerably from their use at Central Mexican sites. The *in situ* ballcourt stela fragment's left knee band (Figs.13, 140) corresponds to Proskouriakoff's (1950, 85, fig. 29x) type x of garters and gaiters, found in the art of Chichen Itza. The Stela 4 figure's knotted loincloth is a close match for the one on Ceibal Stela 7 (Fig. 132), though the long skirt of the latter is not paralleled on the Tula relief. The Tula ballplayers wear sandals, while the Maya lords at Ceibal and La Amelia are barefoot. The cascading

[140] An exception to this trend is the relief sculpture of Late Classic Yaxchilan, where humans do wear nose bars, often with feather ornaments.

(floral?) elements on the Tula fragment (Figs. 13, 140) do not correspond to anything in the Ceibal or La Amelia panels.

Of course, the Tula stelae have no glyphic texts, and the royal ballplayers there have no colossal glyph to stand upon, nor a jaguar, nor ambiguously gendered vassal or subordinate to face. While in this instance the Maya parallels in form and costume are quite convincing, again as with the previous comparisons at Tula there is no narrative provided by texts or secondary figures. And in terms of context, the Tula panels do not flank a temple staircase, but adorn an actual ballcourt.[141] Though the individual panels reflect a Maya-like concept of individual royal portraiture, their grouping in a ballcourt is somewhat reminiscent of collective images of elites found in the art of Teotihuacan. Still, the parallels in this case are the strongest evidence, in my opinion, for direct contacts between the Tula and Classic Maya stela traditions. They are certainly not explainable by any common Teotihuacan background. How they are to be explained--especially given the century and a half gap between these Pasión pairs and the Tollan Phase--is another issue entirely.

Ceibal Stela 2 and the Tula Stelae

In light of the similarity between the ball player stelae at Tula and Ceibal, as well as the possibility that Ceibal may have been a trading town on the Maya frontier, with some of its "non-Classic monuments" aimed at non-Maya visitors, it is interesting to note

[141] Interestingly, Satterthwaite (2005, 235, fig. 8.22) illustrates a Piedras Negras ballcourt marker that shows two figures, of which the one on the right looks like the Ceibal/La Amelia pair figures in his pose and knee ornament--and this sculpture is, of course, in a ballcourt.

another Ceibal monument with possible parallels to the Tula stelae. Ceibal Stela 2 (Greene et al. 1972, 217, pl. 102) (Fig. 141) was classified by Graham (1990, 5) as decidedly non-Classic in style. This sculpture is atypical even for Ceibal in its shape, a "squared columnar" form "with no resemblance to the traditional slab-like stela form" (Graham 1990, 54). This shape evokes both the form of the Xochicalco triad and that of the carved pillars atop Tula Pyramid B. In fact, Just (2006, 295) compares this monument's rectangular form to doorjambs, evoking the question as to whether the Tula "stelae" might have been architectural sculpture. On one face is carved a frontal male figure, with its arms "extended downward parallel to the body" and feet turned outward, shown in profile. The face is covered by a mask, and the figure carries what Just identifies as either a baton or a spearthrower in its left hand and a shield in its right. The frontal pose with outturned feet parallels Tula stelae 1-3, as does the position of the arms. While the mask has no counterpart on the Tula stelae, the baton and atlatl are both elements we have seen among those monuments. Stela 2 is the only Ceibal stela showing a fully frontal figure; it is also the only one lacking any glyphs (Just 2006, 293), marking another parallel to the Tula stelae, and lending Stela 2 the same static, non-narrative aspect as the latter. The carving of the relief also evokes both the Tula stelae and the Xochicalco triad. Stela 2 also features the deepest relief carving at Ceibal, especially in the treatment of the face, which is deeper than the carving of the rest of the figure. It also shares with the Tula stelae (and the Piedras Negras warrior stelae) the use of contrasting relief depths in the carving of the image.[142]

[142] "The relationship of the various parts is highly complicated because of the extreme diversity of the types of relief employed. The figure itself is carved in high relief against an almost completely obscured background plane. The torso and legs, however, despite the depth of carving of their silhouette, press forward and are flattened into the frontal plane. Modeling is confined chiefly to beveling of edges, while

In terms of costume elements, the Ceibal Stela 2 figure features a broad collar like those of Tula stelae 1 and 3, though it differs from these in the presence of three rectangular pendants. The towering headdress with death's head mask and a heron sitting at the top certainly differs from Tula and is more conventionally Classic Maya, as are the elaborate belt, skirt, and beaded mat-pattern apron. Greene's rubbing of Stela 2 reveals most clearly a goggle-eyed mask as a belt ornament. Graham (1990, 55) describes this object in minimal and neutral terms as "the whiskered mask," but it resembles both Tlaloc and the butterfly-jaguar hybrid with Tlaloc eyes on the Dos Pilas/Aguateca pair. If Tlaloc, it represents another parallel to Tula stelae 1 and 2, though, as in previous comparison, here it is in the form of a belt vs. a headdress ornament. Graham identifies the bracelets and anklets on Ceibal Stela 2 as Proskouriakoff's XI: A6. These differ from those displayed on Tula stelae 1-3, as do the complex knee bands. But the apparent knee pads of the Ceibal figure may offer a parallel to Tula Stela 4. The face mask, which Just (2006, 295) identifies as Palenque God I, "by the shell ear ornaments, T-shaped front teeth, and fish 'gills' flanking the mouth," has no parallel at Tula, but the carving resembles the depiction of Tlaloc (also a mask, in Virginia Smith's view) on Xochicalco Stela 2.

The figure's sandals, like those of the Tula stelae, are of a type more characteristic of Chichen Itza than of the Classic Maya (Graham 1990, 54; Just 2006, 293). The costume of Stela 2 is considerably less elaborate than that of most other images at Ceibal. The identity of the masked human deity impersonator portrayed on Stela 2 is unknown in the

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costume and details are indicated by quite shallow relief and incising. The arms, in contrast, are quite fully modeled--no trace of the frontal plane remains...The headdress is centered by a second mask in considerably lower relief which is surmounted by an elaborate but much-damaged cluster of elements in yet lower relief...long, heavily incised plumes sweeps backward and onto the sides of the monument" (Graham

absence of any text, but Just (2006, 297) identifies him as presumably a ruler. This anonymous, static, frontal depiction of a king therefore offers a broad conceptual counterpart to Tula stelae 1-3 and 5. Again, there are also significant differences as well, although the presumed late ninth century date for this undated Ceibal stela inches it somewhat closer to the Tollan Phase at Tula. And to confound the issue further, Stuart (2005, 121) identifies the figure as a full-length portrait of G1 himself, rather than a human impersonating the deity.

Copan Stela 6 and Tula Stelae 1-3 and 5

The last of the suggested comparisons I evaluate here is Bertha Dutton's suggestion (1955, 245), apparently following Alberto Ruz (1945, 27), that Tula Stela 1 (and presumably 2, 3, and 5 as well, since they have similar iconography,) resembled Stela 6 at Copan. Since, along with Tikal, Palenque, and Chichen Itza, Copan is among the most famous and heavily touristed of Maya sites, I will not review the review the site's history or that of excavations and other research at Copan, but I refer the reader to the detailed site histories, both popular (Fash and Fash 2001) and more scholarly (Andrews ed. 2005; Bell, Canuto and Sharer, eds., 2005), regional surveys (Boone and Willey, eds.,1988; Urban and Schortman, eds., 1986), and both general treatments of the site's sculpture (Baudez 1994) and studies of specific stela series (Newsome 2001).

Copan's Stela 6 (Fig. 142) was erected by King K'Ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil (Martin and Grube 2008, 201), formerly referred to in the literature as Smoke Imix (628-695) (Miller 2000, 201) and represents the king in three-dimensional relief, resembling the "

1990, 55).

statues" of Miacatlan and Xochicalco, though not the Tula stela with which Dutton compares it. On this Copan monument, the ruler is depicted in frontal view, as was common on Copan stelae, with arms held up to his chest holding a bar scepter. He wears a layered, cylindrical headdress that Proskouriakoff (1950, 117) and Baudez (1994, 133) call a turban, with a Teotihuacan Tlaloc mask affixed to the front. Baudez (1994, 132) calls it a "pseudo-Tlaloc," while Milbrath (1999, 194) identifies it as Pasztory's (1974) Teotihuacan Tlaloc A because it lacks a lower jaw. Above the Teotihuacan Tlaloc mask is a single tied ribbon, and above this a trapeze and ray sign that can be also read as a more stylized, second Teotihuacan Tlaloc face, capped by plumes. The same series of motifs is repeated on the left and right sides of the headdress. Baudez compares this pairing of the Tlaloc mask and trapeze and ray with the pair of Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2.

Clearly the same Teotihuacan war costume is alluded to here. Milbrath (1999, 194) illustrates the Petexbatun pair alongside Copan Stela 6. All have been compared to Tula, and all reflect a Central Mexican symbol complex associated with war and Venus (the date of Stela 6 marks the end of a Venus cycle, according to Milbrath). Underlining this connection, an additional Teotihuacan Tlaloc issues from each of the mouths of the bicephalic serpent scepter the king carries, and Baudez (1994, 136) identifies this ophidian as a netted serpent of Teotihuacan origin. The king wears elaborate scroll and bone earplugs and an equally ornate ribbon skirt. On his typically Maya ornate apron is emblazoned the Teotihuacan "dripping fluid," "heart" or "blood" glyph (Smith and Hirth 2000, 55) that we saw at Xochicalco and on the warrior stelae of Piedras Negras, as Baudez also notes (1994, 136). Again, as in all of the previous comparisons, the common

use of Teotihuacan symbols by the Maya and the Toltec confounds attempts to find direct connections between specific monuments from the two cultures. Below the "blood" sign are three inverted scrolls. K'ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil wears other symbols associated with sacrifice and bloodletting: a rope wrapped three times around his waist (equating the king letting his own blood with captive sacrifice), shells on his bracelets, and what Baudez interprets as owl feathers. His knee ornaments are elaborate: bands, over heart-shaped beads, over textiles with a zigzag pattern, over fringe.

Stela 6, like all of the Maya stelae discussed above except Ceibal Stela 2 differs from Tula stelae 1-3 in being an inscribed, dated monument with a glyphic text providing a chronological and narrative context. It was erected in a plaza, the usual Classic Maya setting for stelae, over a cruciform foundation vault of the type common at Copan (see Appendix 2) and containing an offering of ceramics. It was also associated with a cylindrical altar (Baudez 1994, 133). Except for the ballcourt panels at Tula, we have no context for the stelae from the Toltec capital, but nothing like the cruciform vault is associated with any Epiclassic Central Mexican stela. The rounded, three-dimensional carving of Copan Stela 6 is a sharp contrast to the relief of the Tula stelae. The frontal pose with outward-turned feet is matched on the Tula stelae, but not the hands holding the serpent bar. The latter is distinctively Maya, and known only in Central Mexico from the Cacaxtla murals. Tula stelae 1 and 3 share with Copan Stela 6 the trapeze and ray headdress ornament In the case of Tula Stela 1, multiple examples appear on the headdress, as on the "turban" of Stela 6 (and Tula Stela 5). Tula Stela 1 and Copan Stela 6 also share the single bloodletting ribbon in the headdress and the Tlaloc mask, as does Tula Stela 2. The rope belt, shells and owl feathers worn by K'ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil do

not occur on the Tula stelae, but the bloodletting ribbons on Tula stelae 1 and 2 form a conceptual parallel as Maya symbols of auto-sacrifice, and a strong Maya link in general. The knee bands of the Stela 6 figure differ from those of the Tula stelae, and Smoke Imix's fringed skirt of ribbons and elaborate apron with Teotihuacan blood sign find no counterparts on stelae from the Toltec capital. Conversely, the Copan *ajaw* does not seem to be wearing the tunics or quilted cotton armor of Tula stelae 1, 2, and 5, and certainly not Stela 2's *quechquemitl*. Nor does Stela 6 display weapons, bird and butterfly pendants, or nose ornaments. It bears repeating yet again that the problem of assessing the relationship between Stela 6 and the Tula stelae is compounded by the facts that 1) the Copan stela is laden with Central Mexican imagery, introducing circularity into any suggestion that it was somehow a template or inspiration for Central Mexican stelae, and 2) Stela 6 predates the Tollan Phase at Tula by over 250 years.[143]

[143] Having reviewed the Mexican-Maya stela parallels suggested in previous sources, I briefly toss out a proposal here, more as a suggestion for heuristic purposes, for one of my own. At the Puuk site of Xkalumkin, in the present-day state of Campeche in Yucatan, a pair of rectangular slab doorjambs is carved with frontal figures in relief (Figs. 143-144; Piña Chan 1991, 132-133; Graham and Von Euw 1992, 168-169). Piña Chan describes them as follows: “In the façade of the West Building, the door jambs are sculpted with finely carved glyphs, although not yet deciphered, and on all there are figures with complex costumes. One of the figures wears a long cape of plumes, a headdress also of plumes, and a baton in hand. The other figure is also laden with ornaments and lightly lifts his left foot as in the action of dancing. His headdress forms a central face with circles around the eyes” (Piña Chan 1991, 131). The face with the circled eyes is of course a Tlaloc mask, like those in the headdresses of Tula Stelae 1 and 2. The accompanying photos show figures with deeply sunk faces relative to the rest of the relief carving, and a reduced style closer to Tula than to most Classic Peten Maya carvings, but similar as well to the Ceibal ballplayer panels. They also share the dynamic “dancing” pose with Tula Stela 4.The connections of Puuk art with Central Mexico were noted as far back as Proskouriakoff, who called them “Toltec” traits. The sculpture known as the King of Kabah, from the Puuk site of the same name, is strikingly similar, in its cylindrical form and stony, geometric features, as well as its cylindrical “drum major” headdress, to Toltec sculpture, even the atlantids from Pyramid B. Since Puuk goes to 950 at some sites as late as 1050, it is partly coeval with the Tollan Phase.

Conclusion

In reviewing the suggested comparisons and possible prototypes for Tula and Xochicalco stelae, I have highlighted a number of problems pertaining to most of the proposals in the literature. In every case, Classic Maya stelae that stand out in the art of their respective sites for their abundance of Central Mexican, Teotihuacan costume elements, symbols, and formal aspects have been suggested as possible prototypes for Central Mexican stelae, thus introducing the problem of circularity into the respective arguments for dependency of later Central Mexican art styles on the Maya. The common artistic vocabulary drawn by both cultural areas from Teotihuacan remains an important confounding variable. In almost all cases, the narrative qualities of the Maya monuments, as represented by both narrative inscriptions detailing the rituals and conquests of kings and by subordinate figures in the visual representation, is completely lacking in the proposed Toltec counterparts, which, in their emphasis on one static figure, preserve the traditions of Teotihuacan sculpture. Stronger links to the Maya area are suggested by the body proportions of Tula stelae 1-4, by the concept of royal portraiture (though this is found earlier in Middle Formative Central Mexico), and a few costume details like the ribbons. The strongest formal and conceptual parallels, strongly supportive of direct contact between Tula and the Peten Maya, occur between Tula Stela 4 (and the other ballplayer fragments) and stelae 5 and 7 at Ceibal. Once again, however, the latter have been impugned as somehow foreign to Classic Maya art because of their alleged "crudeness." Even here, there are significant differences in costume elements (headdresses, and sandals or their lack).

With the Piedras Negras warrior stelae, many of the similarities to Tula in both costume and form reflect the enduring persistence of Teotihuacan ideas and imagery at both sites, but in many cases, the iconographic elements chosen by the Maya and Toltec patrons and carvers for depiction or emphasis from this common iconographic source vary greatly. The other stela types found at Piedras Negras--with which the warrior stelae form series recording major biographical events for each successive ruler--are not represented at Tula. The Dos Pilas/Aguateca stela pair makes a poor suggestion as a source for which the Tula stelae are allegedly "imitations." There are major formal differences between the alleged originals and the Toltec stelae, in addition to the usual contextual ones. Again, while both groups draw on a common fund of Teotihuacan images, they differ in their choices. The comparison between the Tula stelae and Stela 6 at Copan--which Dutton did not seem to connect with any causal hypothesis to explain the similarities--is also confused by the Teotihuacan legacy at both sites, though some of the conceptual analogies in Maya bloodletting symbolism are quite suggestive of more direct connections. A major problem for all the suggested parallels lies in the uncertain chronological placement for the Tula stelae. If they date to the Tollan Phase, this means there is a gap of at least a century and a half, and up to over two centuries, between the Classic Maya monuments and their alleged Central Mexican "descendants."

In the suggested comparisons for the Xochicalco trio of stelae, the Piedras Negras warrior stelae do fall within the range of the Gobernador Phase at the Morelos metropolis, although the differences between the two groups are striking. While sharing the Tlaloc, trapeze and ray, "blood drops" and other Teotihuacan symbols, they differ sharply in form--full body portraits at Piedras Negras, mere heads floating above glyphic

texts at Xochicalco. In this they bear greater similarity to the Río Grande #1 stela (right down to the glyphic system) than to anything Maya. While all commentators agree that the glyphs on the Xochicalco triad represent narrative, opinion seems split as to whether the events recorded are political (which would draw them closer in conception to the Piedras Negras stelae) or cosmological. The "statues" of Xochicalco and Miacatlan share the War Serpent headdress with the Piedras Negras stelae, but little else. Their three-dimensional style is closer to Copan's but lacks the baroque elaboration of costume details and narrative (or any texts). If Stela 2 does represent Tlaloc and not a mortal ruler impersonating the Storm God, then it has less similarity to the Piedras Negras stelae than it does to the Teotihuacan tradition of deity stelae represented by the example in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and by the Guerrero stelae discussed in Chapter 5.

Not only are the Maya stelae compared to Tula and Xochicalco in some way atypical, but there are also Epiclassic to Early Postclassic Central Mexican stelae with absolutely no parallels in the Classic Maya world: the headless stela of Cerro El Elefante, and the El Cerrito stela. Nor do all the Central Mexican elements on the Maya stelae overlap with their purported Central Mexican counterparts. The double heron plumes on Dos Pilas Stela 2 and its Aguateca equivalent, although deity attributes familiar from Late Postclassic Central Mexican art, are not depicted on Tula or Xochicalco stelae. They remain an important illustration of the fact that symbols and images were widely shared in ancient Mesoamerica, and confound any unilaterally directed theory of "influence." This should not strike us as too surprising unless we fancy ourselves partisans of the priority of either Central Mexico or the Maya. The shared traits and interactions are, after all, part of the basis of the original concept of Mesoamerica as a cultural area. One may

even be moved to question traditional attributions of what is "Mexican" or "Maya." If something as strongly associated with the Classic Maya as the scattering gesture is derived from Teotihuacan, many traditional assumptions stand in need of revision.

What all this means in conjunction with the findings of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 is another question (not another story, rather a springboard for stories yet to be written). To this I will now briefly return in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER *7*

CONCLUSION, OR MORE QUESTIONS

Though it is the traditional nomenclature for the closing or summary section of a dissertation, perhaps this heading is not the most suitable for this ending of my presentation. I do not intend it to represent an end of inquiry but the beginning of further processes of interrogation of the evidence. It is not a positive and conclusive statement about how exactly things happened in the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic to produce a set of stone monuments scattered around Central Mexico. Such events and processes are mostly unrecoverable. It is more of an assessment of probabilities. By subjecting some suggestions in the literature to critical scrutiny, and proposing alternative analogs and comparisons for the forms, iconography, and functions of the Tula, Xochicalco, and other Central Mexican stelae, I am not striving for a systematic, certain, and all-encompassing explanation. By virtue of the fragmentary nature of the evidence and the cultural distance separating me from my long-deceased subjects of study, such a project would be impossible. Rather I present some summary statements of the results of my research, in full acknowledgement that it is the product of one person's subjectivity, looking through the layered lenses of my own historical, social, cultural and personal contexts. It is one point in an ongoing dialogue of one scholar with the work of others and with the evidence as currently available. It is also the product of a particular juncture in the history of the relatively new discipline of pre-Columbian art history. I intend any statements here or anywhere else in the text as springboards for further research efforts, rather than

conclusions or pronouncements graven in stone like the stelae themselves. By critiquing some explanations and suggestions in the literature as less probable than others, I hope to clear the way for more plausible, though still by necessity uncertain, suggestions about the past. Some of the speculative way-stations I have built along the course of my inquiry will inevitably turn out to be as limited, partial (in both senses), and as likely to be swept away by further critique, as any previous efforts.

Sites, Monuments, and External Connections, or the "What"

The results of my comparative study suggest to me that of the stelae at Tula, the strongest case for a connection with Classic Lowland Maya art can be made for Stela 4, the ballplayer stela, and the fragmentary remains of its companion pieces. The formal qualities--style, pose--and conception clearly tie them to the ballplayer panels (Stela 5 and Stela 7) at Ceibal, as well as (but less strongly in style) to the similar pair at La Amelia, as originally suggested by Tozzer and Cohodas. How this resemblance is to be explained remains an enigma, although there are enough variations in monument context and costume iconography between the Toltec and Maya examples to weigh against any simple notion of "imitation." The Ceibal panels, ironically, have been castigated by the conservative aesthetes among older generations of Mayanists as "un-Maya" in style, redolent of “foreign” connections. The distinct and atypical quality of both sets of monuments in relation to the art of their respective culture areas indicate that whatever processes are involved, they are unlikely to have included any unidirectional transmission of ideas from the Maya area to Tula. It is possible that both groups of sculptures are

related to the art of the Peripheral Coastal Lowlands as Rex Koontz (2001) suggests in an unpublished paper.[144] But that still does not explain why both Ajaw Bot and the rulers of Tula elected to employ this format for their public portrayals.

Tula stelae 1-3, with their frontal figures of rulers in Teotihuacan martial garb, are not as clearly related to specific Classic Maya counterparts as has been suggested in the limited literature devoted to them. They are certainly not simple "imitations" of the Dos Pilas/Aguateca paired victory stelae of Dos Pilas Ruler 3, as Cohodas asserts. They share with Maya monuments in general roughly the same canon of body proportions, a specific costume element (sacrificial knots or ribbons), and the broad notion of using the stela form for royal portraiture. However, royal portrait stelae, though lacking in the Teotihuacan sculptural tradition, are not unique to the Maya. They are also found in the Zapotec area and in coastal Oaxaca. These Tula stelae, however, lack crucial narrative aspects of both Classic Maya and Zapotec stelae, such as glyphic texts and subordinate figures. Their set of Teotihuacan-derived regalia is indeed shared with the Piedras Negras warrior stelae, the Dos Pilas/Aguateca pair, and Copan Stela 6. But these symbols and accoutrements represent a broadly-shared Teotihuacan legacy to both regions. There are also numerous differences in details of the selection and emphasis of individual elements between the Toltec and Maya examples in their use of this Teotihuacan imagery.

The frontal pose of Tula stelae 1-3, and 5 and 6 as well, is consistent with Late Classic Maya traditions, but relatively infrequent in the latter. It is also found in Teotihuacan sculpture, and is certainly strongly associated with Teotihuacan imagery on the Piedras Negras warrior stelae. Frontal ruler portraits are also uncommon for the Zapotec, but documented for the stelae of coastal Oaxaca, as discussed in Chapter 5.

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[144] I have been unable to obtain more than an abstract of this work as of time of writing.

Portrayal of frontal figures on stelae extends back to the Late Formative in Central Mexico, as represented by the Tlalancaleca stela. It also characterizes the stelae showing Teotihuacan divinities found in Guerrero and probably dated to the Early Classic by their Teotihuacan style. Absence of adequate archaeological contexts is the curse haunting not only all but one of the Tula stelae but many potentially related sculptures as well. However the Tula artists arrived at this synthetic strategy, the Teotihuacan frontal format for presenting deities was adopted for images of rulers on the Tula stelae.

Tula stelae 5 and 6 recall Teotihuacan sculpture more strongly in their execution and proportions. On the other hand, as Kristan-Graham pointed out in her doctoral dissertation (contra Lincoln in his), the pillar reliefs of Pyramid B at Tula share features--including names, dates, and a sense of history or action--with Maya stelae, and in some ways have a stronger claim for Classic Maya connections. Other Toltec works like the Xico Stone and the El Cerrito Stela seem to bear no resemblance or relation to Classic Maya monuments, though the solar figure on the El Cerrito monument appears related to similar figures in the iconography of Chichen Itza.

At Xochicalco, carving of stelae in the Epiclassic Gobernador phase does not represent a novel phenomenon in Morelos, where a local stela tradition dates back to the Middle Formative at Chalcatzingo. An interesting feature of Chalcatzingo's stelae echoed at Xochicalco and suggestive of some historical continuity is the practice of erecting these sculptures on platforms. The Xochicalco triad of stelae from the cache excavated by Saenz differs even more strongly than the Tula stelae from the Piedras Negras warriors suggested as precedents or analogs--and from Maya stelae in general. The bodiless heads of Xochicalco stelae 1-3 do indeed share the War Serpent helmets and

trapeze and ray sign with their alleged Guatemalan counterparts, but the similarity ends below the neck. Once again, the shared elements are part of the widespread Early Classic Teotihuacan tradition and by themselves not substantial indication of contact between the Maya and Xochicalco. Xochicalco Stela 2, with its Storm God image, seems related to the Teotihuacan-Guerrero tradition of deity stelae. The triad seems to share the emphasis on narrative of Maya stelae, but of course using a completely different, local glyphic system. It also remains unclear as to whether the subject of the narrative was historical like the Maya stelae or cosmological. The Xochicalco triad resembles the Ñuiñe stelae, with which it shares glyphic elements, in its abstraction, but the closest parallel is the Río Grande #1 stela, with its substitution of the body by glyphs. Whatever the relative temporal position of the Rio Verde #1 monument *vis-à-vis* the Xochicalco triad, they are clearly products of closely related visual traditions. The trio, however, seem to be in a class of their own in many aspects of form and content.

The "statues" of Miacatlan and Xochicalco should be added to the corpus of figural stelae at Xochicalco, since they conform to the general stela form in spite of their three-dimensional qualities; if found at Copan or Tonina they would be classified as stelae without any hesitation. In their War Serpent headgear and full-rounded figures, this pair presents some general similarities with some Classic Maya stelae, but the headdress and other aspects of their iconography—possible mirrors, female deity (?) figures—point equally to a Teotihuacan connection. In spite of their bold carving, these sculptures may have more in common conceptually with the Guerrero deity stelae and their smaller counterparts in the Teotihuacan plaques discussed in Chapter 4.

Other Central Mexican stelae have no parallel, not only among the Classic Maya but

anywhere else in Mesoamerica. The Cerro El Elefante stela with its headless figure seems to be one of a kind. Both such unique manifestations and those works claimed as copies of Maya stelae may represent various developments by local artists and their patrons out of a longstanding, if poorly-known, regional tradition(s). The stela tradition in Central Mexico dates possibly as far back as the Early Formative, if we include the Cuicuilco monolith among the ranks. Stelae with ruler portraits occur at Middle Formative Chalcatzingo. The Late Formative Tlalancaleca stela probably represents a divinity, and, given the connections between Late Formative Puebla and the emerging art and architecture of Teotihuacan, may be related to the Early Classic deity stelae, large and miniature, known from both Central Mexico and Guerrero. In fact, this Early Classic deity stela tradition seems fairly widespread. It is represented by the Acapulco, Tepecuacuilco, and other Guerrero examples (although these are beset by the problem of dating by stylistic criteria alone), the Metropolitan Museum of Art Tlaloc stela, the miniature stelae illustrated by Berlo (1992), the plaque excavated by Acosta from the Palacio Quetzalpapalotl, and far away in the Maya lowlands by Yaxhá Stela 11.

The presence of stela traditions in Central Mexico prior to the Epiclassic does not in itself address the issue of "foreign" borrowings by the elites and their artists at Tula and Xochicalco. It would even seem to be a precondition for the deployment of cognate "foreign" forms. If the stela form was utterly unprecedented or completely alien to Central Mexico, it would not have served local elites well to use it as part of their artistic strategies of propaganda, nor would it have been readily adopted from elsewhere if there were no local conceptual parallels. From the later development of shared symbol systems in Postclassic Mesoamerica (the so-called "Mixteca-Puebla," "Mixtec-Nahua," or

"International" styles), it is clear that the elements of such widely shared symbol and style systems emphasized by the rulers of a given polity are often, not unsurprisingly, those that have analogs or antecedents in local traditions. If our stelae did draw on Maya sources, aspects of Maya "stone trees" were grafted and grew on Central Mexican trunks, not simply transplanted. They are not the work of "artists under the influence." Whether such ideas were obtained by Central Mexican Epiclassic elites via direct contact with Maya counterparts or via the indirect mediation of coastal Oaxaca or Guerrero traditions and sources, or through the cosmopolitan connections of late Teotihuacan, is an additional, and at present unanswerable question.

Stelae: What's in a Word?

One byproduct of my inquiry is the recognition of a need for changes in our present nomenclature for Mesoamerican sculptural forms. Using "stela" to describe Mesoamerican monuments represents the colonizing of New World art traditions by Old World terminology that originally described objects of very different function. We have seen through the course of this dissertation the same term "stelae" applied to freestanding slabs, architectural sculpture (panels, jambs) and to cylindrical or columnar forms, raising the question of whether these sculptures would have been conceptualized under the same rubric by their creators and intended audiences. I have been using the term in many instances as if that were indeed the case, and it can be argued that both columnar and slab monuments are unified by the equation of the World Tree, celts, maize, the body of the ruler, and supports of the sky in indigenous Mesoamerican thought—as far as we are able

to reconstruct it. Similarly, the strong formal similarities of the images decorating stones of varying shapes and contexts often seem strong enough to infer the existence of an underlying conceptual unity—the small Teotihuacan plaques and monumental Guerrero slabs being a case in point. But we need more precise terminology, and I do not mean more precise rules for the minimal height in meters to make the stela grade. The terminology needs to be revised so as to be both more descriptively specific and grounded in indigenous concepts—again with the caveat that this can be done only according to our imperfect reconstructions of such concepts, always a risky venture.

Models Revisited

In looking at the models of Maya-Mexican interaction summarized and critiqued in Chapter 3, it is clear that theories involving literal migration do not offer much help in explaining the extended connections of our stelae. The only significant exception here may be the long presence of Oaxacan peoples in the Tula region as well as at Teotihuacan, which may be of relevance to the adoption of stelae for royal portraits at the multi-ethnic Tula polity. However, both the length of time separating these Early Classic emigrations and the formal and conceptual differences (lack of interest in narrative[145]) between Zapotec and Toltec stelae greatly reduce any explanatory mileage derived from the fact of these migrations. In addition, some of the closest outside parallels for some stelae at Tula and certainly for the Xochicalco triad lie not in the Zapotec region, source of the Early Classic colonists, but Coastal Oaxaca. It would be tempting to credit here

[145] Or as Kristan-Graham comments, "Perhaps a different kind of narrative—a portrait tells/shows a story." (personal communication, June 2007)

Maarten Jansen's (2007) reconstruction of Mixtec history, as enshrined in the screenfold manuscripts, which interprets some allegedly Nahua allies of the 10th-century king 8 Deer as Tula Toltecs, who established their ritual and political contacts with the Mixtec lord when he was ruler of Tututepec on the Oaxaca Coast. But unfortunately, we bump up hard against the difficulties of interpreting indigenous "histories" and their relation to European concepts of historical veracity. This identification, as I discussed at the end of Chapter 5, is questionable: 8 Deer's Nahua friends may have been from Cholula, or even from Tulancingo in the Mixtec region—all Tollans, though not all Tula.

One thing is certainly clear: the Putun cannot fly to the rescue here to mediate between the rulers and artisans of the Central Mexican and Peten regions. There is no evidence for their presence at Piedras Negras and Dos Pilas, and despite earlier claims there is likewise no substance to the claim for their involvement in the artistic eclecticism of Terminal Classic Ceibal. Even if they were involved in mediating cultural contacts between Tula and Chichen Itza—itself a debatable proposition—there are no stelae at Chichen or in the Putun homeland.

A more relevant variant of the migration or "diffusion"/"movement" /"waves of influences" for the data presented here is the reflux model, which holds that by some means, Teotihuacan ideas and images made their way into the Maya zone during the Early Classic (which is certainly the case), and then returned to their place of origin in the Epiclassic with an accretion of Maya elements, thus explaining the eclectic art of Tula, Xochicalco, and Cacaxtla.[146] A proposal of this kind might explain both the Teotihuacan imagery shared by the Tula and Xochicalco stelae with Piedras Negras, Dos Pilas, and

[146] As Kristan-Graham notes, such imagery on return to Central Mexico "by this time would have prestige as Teotihuacan in origin and also foreign" (personal communication, June 2007).

Copan, and Maya aspects of the Central Mexican stelae. But this type of thinking still has one foot in the mass grave containing the remains of migration models and lacks a good explanation of the social processes underlying such a putative boomerang effect. It also fails to explain why in many cases the Maya and Central Mexican stelae differ in their selection and presentation of the shared Teotihuacan symbols and regalia. The broad sharing, with local variations, of ideas and images across wide regions and across time is after all the starting point for the concept of Mesoamerica as a unified cultural entity. The Teotihuacan war complex seems to have become such a pan-Mesoamerican trait that apart from its initial origins, its subsequent trajectories and ramifications across the region become both too broad and too complex to trace with certainty.

In itself, trade is an inadequate framework for understanding any Epiclassic/Postclassic artistic interactions possibly reflected in our stelae. Merchants can bring portable objects back to their places of origin, but that of course does not explain why some of this material gets integrated into local artistic traditions, not to mention the fact that most objects fitting the stela definition are not renowned for their easy portability. Nor do we have evidence for any prehispanic Villard de Honnecourt transporting drawings on bark paper of unmovable monuments across broad swathes of Mesoamerica (which is not to say that this was impossible). We are back to "influence," the mysterious volition of objects, again.

Trade at best supplies circumstantial evidence for the possibility of artistic contacts. For the type of active interaction needed to give rise to syncretistic elite arts in ancient Mesoamerica, many other processes would need to be involved. Just (2006, 320) makes a similar point regarding the eclectic Terminal Classic art of Ceibal. While some motifs

could have been introduced by foreign traders in this Maya frontier town, "Other aspects of Seibal's sculpture, however, such as the panel composition of Stela 3, seem inspired by the formal qualities of large-format sculpture at distant sites, suggesting that the artists and/or patrons responsible for the design of these stelae may have had first-hand knowledge of such foreign art." This still begs the question: HOW?

The Web of Networks vs. the Mechanics of "Influence"

> In the heaven of Indra, there is said to be a necklace of pearls, so arranged that if you look at one you see all the others reflected in it. In the same way each object in the world is not merely itself but involves every other object.
>
> -*Avatamsaka Sutra*

The world systems perspective, like other systems-based approaches, provides the basis for an understanding of Mesoamerican art and culture history in terms of reciprocal networks of communication, information, commerce, and ideology--a web of interconnections rather than mechanistic concepts of the "influence" of one culture on another. The distinction from older “influence” models is analogous to the difference between the entangled and interdependent universe of quantum theory and the Newtonian mechanics of one body or force acting upon another. It is well suited for attempts to understand the multiple interactions of the Epiclassic, themselves conditioned by the pan-Mesoamerican processes and exchanges of preceding periods. It is particularly apt for approaching a convoluted problem like Central Mexican stelae, which probably represent the intersection of numerous and reciprocal processes and ideas, in the context of equally dynamic social processes. With its emphasis on the interactions and rippling mutual

effects of multiple cultural regions, polities, and economies, it just might help in restoring the focus on Mesoamerica as a whole of a discipline long given to championing one subregion or another as prevailing fashions and scholarly bias dictate.

The Maya archaeologist Timothy Pugh has suggested (personal communication, January 25, 2008) that the term appropriation, as used by the Australian historian of Oceanic art Nicholas Thomas (1991; 1999). Thomas uses this term for the conscious borrowing, modification, and recontextualization of objects and images both by native Pacific peoples from European colonists, and by Western "primitivists" from the indigenous Oceanic peoples (1991, 83-184). The term has the advantage of stressing the active agency of the "borrowers" and their modification of the "borrowed" over "influence's" suggestion of passivity and hierarchy.

The Stela-*Tun* at the Feast?

The models generated out of world-systems theories to explain the Late Postclassic Mesoamerican symbol system, the "Mixtec-Nahuatl" or "international" style may provide useful springboards for understanding the similar broad distribution of motifs and art forms in the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic. Here, too, however, there are limitations inherent in such a comparative approach. These explanations, suggested by Pohl (2003a), Masson (2003) and other contributors to the Smith and Berdan-edited collection (2003) on the Postclassic Mesoamerican world system, draw on ethnohistorically documented trade relations, marriage alliances, confederations, and other forms of intensive elite interactions and exchange to provide context and mechanisms for the sharing of styles

and symbols. Unfortunately, we lack such detailed information for elite contacts and alliances for the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic.

Also, the “Mixteca-Puebla” symbol system seems to have spread through the exchange of portable objects—manuscripts, ceramics, which then were adopted for larger-scale murals--not in the form of monumental sculpture. Mixteca-Puebla ceramics and their associated ideologies may have passed between Nahua, Zapotec, and Mixtec lords at wedding and alliance feasts, but one does not take a stela to a fancy banquet, unless one brings some sort of miniature. Some portables suggested for the job of inspiring our Central Mexican stelae, like the nondescript jade plaques of helmeted figures found at Xochicalco and Cacaxtla, do not make good models for stelae on formal grounds, even if one takes a leap of faith to bridge the gap in scale and materials. But the strong similarities of the small Teotihuacan examples--the mini-stelae illustrated by Berlo, the Quetzalpapalotl plaque, the Chalco plaque—to the monumental forms in Guerrero shows that miniature steliform objects existed in the Early Classic, bearing designs that could be copied on a grand scale. The similarities are such as to suggest conceptual equivalence between the small plaques and larger slabs, analogous to the relationship between the "model" or miniature temples of Mezcala and the Zapotec region and their life-sized architectural referents. Clearly this observation shows that the relation between small objects and monumental equivalents in Mesoamerican art is an area in need of reassessment.

On the Maya side of any possible or alleged interactions, the steliform jades from the Cenote of Sacrifice discussed in Chapter 6 may be of relevance. Coggins (1984, catalog 59) suggests that one specimen, because of its frontal pose and War Serpent headdress,

may have come from Piedras Negras, perhaps suggesting a miniature version of a warrior stela. However "the rigid symmetry and little-modulated, low relief of the carving suggest it may have come from elsewhere in the region"—not quite a greenstone version of Villard de Honnecourt or a picture postcard. Perhaps also relevant here are the widely distributed Late Classic Maya plaques of the “seated lord” or Nebaj type. In their 2001 paper on a Maya shell plaque from Tula first published by Charnay, McVicker and Palka group that object together with these Maya jades displaying the characteristic image of a seated ruler. They interpret these jades as possible diplomatic gifts sent by Late to Terminal Classic lowland Maya rulers to elites in Central Mexico, Oaxaca, Michoacan, and other parts of Mesoamerica. McVicker and Palka note (2001, 178) the convergence of this hypothesis with Ringle’s speculation that these plaques were tokens of visits to sites on his hypothetical Quetzalcoatl cult pilgrimage network, rather like upscale versions of medieval European pilgrims’ badges. In such a model, these plaques would be concrete proof of the far travels and connections of elites throughout the network, reinforcing rulership as esoteric commodities restricted to the chosen few, which represents a convergence with the ideas of Helms and others referenced in Chapter 3. McVicker and Palka further suggest that these Maya plaques with seated figures served as the models for the reliefs of the Pyramid of the Plumed Serpents at Xochicalco, and have analogies to some large-scale Classic Maya sculpture as well (the Palace Tablets at Palenque, Panel 1 at Bonampak, a relief from Oxkintok, and lintels from La Pasadita and Chichen Itza). There are also extant plaques of this type intermediate in size between the miniature and monumental, suggesting a conceptual equivalency across a range of sizes. Though McVicker and Palka mention the frontal steliform plaques from the Cenote, they

do not elaborate on or speculate whether these could also have been templates for larger sculptures, like Central Mexican stelae.

What is very interesting in their paper is the discussion of the special ritual treatment given to these Maya "seated lord" plaques both within and outside the Maya region, which provide parallels to the "life histories" of Maya stelae. These plaques are almost never found in burials, but were "terminated" by interment in caches, often in specially prepared cists or boxes. Though drilled as if for attachment, many were too heavy to wear, and they are never portrayed in Maya art as royal regalia. The drilling of holes, and also occasional removal of slices from the plaques, may represent ritual termination, though McVicker and Palka also speculate that some plaques were attached heavy cloth hangings (a parallel to stelae as literal "banner-stones"?). They also suggest that the cutting may reflect the division of precious high-status objects into pieces to serve as gifts in displays of conspicuous consumption, like the coppers broken at Northwest Coast Native American potlatches. McVicker and Palka also stress that a number of these jade plaques, along with the steliform plaques discussed by Proskouriakoff, were burnt and broken before ending their careers as circulating objects at the bottom of the Chichen Itza Cenote. This would be another parallel with stela termination both in the Maya area and elsewhere (e.g., Xochicalco), although lots of other items were also "killed" before being tossed into the Well of Sacrifice.

It would be interesting to consider smaller plaques from the Maya area might have been models for larger monuments, including some Central Mexican stelae, and may have been conceived as sacred objects with "life spans" and termination rituals analogous to Maya stelae. But simply to point out the similarities and indulge in such speculation

risks bringing us back to notions of "influence" again, since we cannot explain why anyone would adopt and modify designs from such portable plaques without knowing more about the nature of inter-elite social/political interaction in Epiclassic Mesoamerica. Ringle (2004), Ringle and associates (1998), and McVicker and Palka's speculations offer some potentially useful suggestions. But we don't know—and can never know—the details of Epiclassic confederations, alliances, marriages, etc., though the archaeological evidence for trade discussed in Chapters 2 and 5 provides indirect evidence for their existence. Intermarriage and political alliances have been suggested as mechanisms for the spread of monumental sculpture styles and iconography at Middle Formative Chalcatzingo. In Chapter 4, we saw that even Grove, a critic of the "Mother Culture" model of the Olmec and their relationship to contemporaneous Mesoamerican cultures, believes that the rulers of Chalcatzingo intermarried with elites from the Gulf Coast and from Guerrero, and imported monumental sculpture styles and perhaps even Gulf Coast sculptors to demonstrate their prestige. Do the extensive trade connections and similar stelae between the later Morelos center of Xochicalco and Guerrero imply a similar situation of alliance, intermarriage, and artistic exchange as prevailed between Chalcatzingo and Teopantecuantitlan in the Formative? Did the Toltecs, with their apparent incursions (including the Tetmilincan stelae) into Guerrero, establish political/economic and cultural alliances in this region that facilitated sharing and borrowing of ideas for visual strategies of elite legitimation?

Certainly, the general idea of a common Mesoamerican sign system, derived from studies of Late Postclassic developments, may be relevant to Epiclassic and Early Postclassic stelae, which could be viewed as part of a Late Classic/Terminal

Classic/Epiclassic precursor to the "Mixtec-Nahua" "international style." Ringle's model of the Epiclassic world religion of Quetzalcoatl, though flawed by some circularity and a focus on the global at the expense of the particular, includes the notion of multiple political and religious capitals linked by pilgrimage and alliances as well as trade. Such a system would have provided the opportunity for sharing of elite art forms between far-flung courts. It would also have provided the motivation—to illustrate that one is part of the network and entitled to all the prestige and exotica conferred by membership. Unfortunately, the religious specifics of Ringle's model fail to explain any sharing or spread of the stela form in particular. Stelae don't fit into the trappings of a Quetzalcoatl cult, despite Piña Chan's unsuccessful hermeneutic efforts at Xochicalco. And, of course, the more complex the model, amplified by the spotty nature of our evidence of Epiclassic politics, the more such suggestions become unverifiable.

The greatest explanatory potential seems to come from a strategy integrating broad world-systems models with the particular local dynamics and development of each site. Kristan-Graham's suggestion that the stelae at Tula are the result of the need for a format for ruler portraiture as part of the ideological needs and strategies of the Toltec dynasts at the site has great heuristic promise. This remains the case whether the elites and their artists adapted the form from the Classic Maya, as she argues, or from Oaxaca, or modified a Teotihuacan format for deity sculpture, or all of the above. Debra Nagao's work concerning the differential use of Teotihuacan vs. Maya and other styles and imagery by the elites at Cacaxtla and Xochicalco is another promising step in the right direction.

Bryan Just's efforts at Ceibal on the other side of the increasingly porous Mexican-

Maya divide point in the same direction. He suggests that the eclecticism of Ceibal's Terminal Classic stelae is part of an elite strategy of legitimation and propaganda shared across Mesoamerica during a time of shifts and troubles, "a continued interest in presenting a generally 'cosmopolitan' ruler" who draws on and flaunts his far connections (Just 2006, 291). This strategy appears, of course, to be part of the reason for the eclecticism displayed at Ceibal's Epiclassic contemporaries in Central Mexico. It also offers a possible parallel to Tula, where an eclectic set of artistic features may have been borrowed and superimposed on a basically Teotihuacan visual heritage, analogous to the relationship of Classic Maya and external traits in Ceibal's art. Regarding both the anonymity and eclecticism of the latest stelae at Ceibal, Just questions whether

> lack of specific references to its patron-rulers who commissioned these works, while prohibiting consideration of the role of those individuals in the direction of such eclectic sculptures [another parallel to Tula's curiously glyph-free stelae] may in itself be significant--it seems as if the 'image' of local power made manifest in these stelae was based not on the Classic Maya conventions of genealogical legitimacy, political titles and iconography, but on the 'worldliness' of the patron. (Just 2006, 291)

I would refer here to Helms' concept of esoteric and exotic knowledge as elite prerogative and evidence of status rather than worldliness, with or without quotes, but the essence is the same. Just further suggests that

> This cosmpolitan 'image' may have been directed at two distinct perceived audiences: (1) to 'non-Classic' visitors, for whom the aspects of their own visual discourses evident in Seibal's art could have indicated past interaction or alliance; and (2) to classic Maya visitors, for whom Seibal's eclecticism may have indicated the polity's access to 'foreign' trade goods, religious ideas, and political support. (Just 2006, 291)

Analogous “dual audience” situations may have prevailed at Tula and Xochicalco as well.

Finally, related to a focus incorporating the local dimension, the concept of revival may prove helpful in explaining the relation of our stelae to earlier local forms. The Late

Postclassic lowland Maya revived some of the monumental and related cultic practices of their Classic forebears five centuries or more after the "collapse," including the erection of stelae and altars (Masson 2000, 266). As discussed in Appendix 2, the Late Postclassic inhabitants of Mayapan carved thirteen new stelae, while at other sites older monuments were raised anew or placed in new architectural settings. Could an analogous practice be part of the impetus for the stelae of Xochicalco, which, although they do not resemble the Chalcatzingo stelae in style of carving, share a similar unusual placement on independent platforms? Revival need not imply that the full significance of the originals was preserved unbroken down to the time of the "revivers," as the "Gothic," Egyptian," and other revivals of the last two centuries of Western art illustrate, occasionally amusingly. Nor did the Mexica plunderers, recyclers, and imitators of Teotihuacan and Toltec art necessarily comprehend the full extent and intent of their esteemed precursors' meanings and symbols. Revivals--artistic, religious and other--are frequently cultural coping strategies in reaction to pervasive, rapid, and even catastrophic change. Certainly the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic in Central Mexico, bracketed by the burning of Teotihuacan's civic-ceremonial core and the similarly fiery end of Tula, and characterized by the rise, competition, and fall of polities like Xochicalco and Cacaxtla, fits this bill. The Epiclassic was a dynamic time, and its shifting circumstances gave local elites plenty of reasons, general and regionally specific, to experiment with new—and perhaps not so new--ways of bolstering their power through monumental art like stelae.

STONE TREES TRANSPLANTED? CENTRAL MEXICAN STELAE OF THE EPICLASSIC AND EARLY POSTCLASSIC AND THE QUESTION OF MAYA "INFLUENCE"

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APPENDIX 1

CATALOG OF CENTRAL MEXICAN FIGURAL AND ASSOCIATED STELAE OF THE EPICLASSIC AND EARLY POSTCLASSIC

Tula

Stela 1 (Figs. 4-6, 121): 183 cm. H., 71 cm. W., and 32 D. (de la Fuente et al. 1988, 143).
Present Location: Museo Jorge Acosta at the site of Tula, where I examined and photographed it in January and July, 2005; March 2007.
Description: Roughly rectangular in shape; broken in two, apparently in antiquity, and since restored. Breakage obscures one of the ends of the headdress ribbons on the figure's left side.

The well-preserved relief, which takes up the full length of the stela, shows a standing male, facing front, legs apart, and feet pointing outward to the sides of the stone, carved is in low relief, but with the outline of the face deeply cut, creating the appearance of recession. The figure wears an enormous headdress consisting of, from bottom to top: six large ribbons of the type associated with bloodletting in Classic Maya art, though Dutton (1955, 245)—certainly erroneously-- reads this element as a butterfly; part of another ribbon is visible to the left. Above is a mask or helmet depicting a goggle-eyed, mustachioed supernatural with three volutes along each side of the face. Atop this mask is a semicircular crest, which Dutton interprets as a solar disc, adorned with feathers and three pairs of so-called "trapeze and ray" symbols.

Ornaments include a bar ornament through the nose and large circular ear ornaments with bar shaped pendants. A triangular element, covered with incised vertical lines, under his chin may be a beard. He wears a shirt or tunic (Dutton identifies it as quilted cotton armor of the type later worn by the Mexica) fringed with feathers at the bottom, and a short skirt or kilt. A broad, semicircular ornamental collar covers his chest, with a stepped trapezoidal form above it, possibly be another part of this pectoral (de la Fuente, et al. 1988, 144; Jiménez García 1998, 137). Below the collar hangs an ornament in the form of a bird viewed from above with wings spread, pointing downward. Caso (1941, 92) limited his discussion of the stela to noting the parallels between this ornament and those adorning carved figures at the Maya site of Chichen Itza in Yucatan.

The figure's left arm is festooned with five bloodletting ribbons; he carries a curved weapon, probably a fending stick, another stick or staff decorated with two ribbons and identified by Jiménez García as a scepter, and two atlatl darts. He bears an atlatl, or spearthrower, over his right arm. Three more ribbons adorn each knee (Dutton appears to be incorrect in describing these as knee pads), two on each ankle. On his left arm, the topmost ribbon straps a knife, partially visible, in place. Sandals topped by ornamental anklets, presumably of stone beads, cover his feet.

Context. Stela 1 may be one of only two of the Tula stelae with known archaeological context, unfortunately in a secondary deposit and lacking good documentation. Concurrent with or following the city's apparent violent destruction in the late 12th century, a trench was cut roughly through Pyramid B and a number of monuments, including the famous warrior atlantids, were dumped into it. Stela 1 wound up in this ignominious resting-place, as per Acosta (1956-57, 79) and Mastache, Cobean and

Healan (2002, 106-107). According to Dutton (1955, 245), the architect and artist Francisco Mujica y Diez de Bonilla, who published no written report at the time, rediscovered it in 1935. In their recent publication of drawings from an archive of Mujica's work in the Museo Etnólogico in Buenos Aires, Schavelzon and Tomasi (2006, 27, 32, 92) provide the correct year of Mujica's Tula expedition, 1933. They trace the error repeated by Dutton back to the work of Mujica's fellow architect, Ignacio Marquina (1951, 148). Unfortunately, Mujica left no writings on his work at Tula, or at least Schavelzon and Tomasi (2006, 42) could not locate any such material in the archives. They do state clearly, however, that Mujica did no actual digging, restricting himself to drawing surface materials (2006, 32). Nor were his attentions confined to the ceremonial center of the site. His drawings reproduce objects that he found in the modern town of Tula and in even more nebulously described locales like "in the vicinity of the site" (2006, 92).

De la Fuente does not note the context of Stela 1, nor do Acosta's earliest reports of his excavations of the Pyramid B trench mention it (1941; 1942-44). Nor is its context noted in an early account by Alfonso Caso featuring a photo of the stela (Caso 1941, fig. 8), but only discussing it in passing in his text (1941, 92). If Stela 1 was indeed accompanied in its resting-place by architectural sculpture from Pyramid B, this suggests it stood in close proximity to that structure, but a more precise original setting is impossible to determine. In fact, Acosta believed it was not a stela but a column relief (see also Jiménez García 1998, 135), though most subsequent commentators dispute this identification.

Stela 2 (Figs. 7, 122): While de la Fuente puts it height at 146 cm., Jiménez García gives H. 165 cm., maximum W. 53 cm., and 27 cm. D.

Present Location: MNA (Catalog 15-178); no longer on public display (as of 2005).

Description: In worse shape than Stela 1. De la Fuente attributes much of the damage to Stela 2 to the 20th century, since an early photo published by Caso shows greater visible detail (1941, fig. 7).[147] She blames its deterioration on damage caused by exposure to the elements for an undisclosed period of time after its discovery, another casualty of the relative lack of attention devoted to Toltec monuments. Earlier accounts, however (e.g., Dutton 1955), report that the carving of Stela 2 is less detailed than that of Stela 1. Its human figure is more abstract, simplified, and less naturalistic than its counterpart on Stela 1.

The stela shows a frontal depiction of an elaborately garbed male. The shallow relief of the body provides a sharp contrast to the deeply sunken relief of the face, and some of the costume patterns are incised. The headdress differs from that on Stela 1 in having only one bow at the base, lacking the trapeze and ray sign, and displaying a different supernatural mask. The round eyes are similar, but the mouth lacks a moustache and the snout is broader and volute-shaped. The mask is surmounted by a row of plumes (?), capped by two semicircular or arched elements and a panache of plumes at the top. The figure wears large circular ear ornaments. Incised lines visible behind the ear ornaments represent hair.

A possibly quilted tunic covers the torso over a short skirt like Stela 1; atop of the shirt is a triangular garment, covering the shoulders and chest, its downward point terminating

[147] De la Fuente and associates twice misidentify the date of this reference as 1944 in the catalog entry for this stela, though they get it right elsewhere in their text.

at the midsection. De la Fuente et al. (1988, 146) identify it as a *quechquemitl*, a garment worn mostly by women at the time of the Conquest, which lends another dimension of mystery to the stela. The figure bears a pendant in the form of a stylized butterfly, like the atlantids, insects representing the souls of warriors slain in combat, a symbolism that seems to go back to Teotihuacan (Taube 2000a). Caso (1941, 92) pointed out its occurrence at the Maya site of Chichen Itza. Another pendant, or perhaps a decoration on the triangular garment, is a downward pointing bird. On his left arm, he sports no less than six ribbons, and, as in Stela 1, the topmost attaches a knife to his arm. He carries an atlatl in his right hand, two javelins and a cudgel or throwing stick in his left. Knee ornaments, anklets, and sandals complete his attire. His feet point outward to the sides in an unnatural manner. This figure is stiffer, somewhat less naturalistic, and less detailed than Stela 1, though the last condition may be due to 20th-century damage.

Context: According to Dutton (1955, 245), this stela also was discovered and collected for the MNA by Mujica y Diez de Bonilla at the same time as Stela 1. Schavelzon and Tomasi (2006, 200, H14) located and reproduce an engraving of the stela—the oldest extant image of it—in the archive of Mujica's work in Buenos Aires, with a caption to his illustration labeled "Estela B." Unfortunately, the absence of written documentation, as well as the broad area explored by Mujica in the Tula region, does not help in fixing a firm location for this work. Mastache, Cobean, and Healan (2002, 142) seem to express doubt as to whether the monument actually came from Tula.

Stela 3 (Figs. 8-10, 123): M easured by de la Fuente and associates (1988, 147) as 264 cm. H., 51 cm. W., and 25.5 cm. D. Again, however, Jiménez García gives greatly

divergent measurements: 192 cm. H. and 31 cm. maximum D. (1998, 142).

Current Location: Sala Tolteca at MNA (Catalog 15-149), where I examined and photographed it in January and July 2005 and March 2007.

Description: More neatly rectangular than stelae 1 and 2, Stela 3 has a clearly defined relief border running around all four edges of the relief-bearing face. It also differs from 1 and 2 by having both narrow sides decorated with reliefs of upward-facing serpents, obviously rattlesnakes by the shape of their tails. Volutes emanating from their mouths may be breath, speech scrolls, or simply tongues, while small cruciform elements in front of their snouts may represent flowers (Jiménez García 1998, 143) or possibly symbols of the four cardinal directions.

The ruler portrait covers the entire face of the slab, and the pose is forward facing, feet turned out to the sides. His headdress appears to be a helmet in the form of a serpent-like creature with round eyes under heavy arches, triangular nose, and fangs. Only the upper jaw is portrayed, giving the impression of an open mouth framing the lord's face (de la Fuente et al. 1988, 148). Above the helmet mask, three knife-like objects surmount two trapeze and ray signs, emerging from the top of the larger trapezoid. Long, cascading plumes depend from the headdress. At center, on top of the headdress, is the head of a rabbit. While Kristan-Graham (1989, 265) finds no glyphic elements visible on the Tula stelae, in another context she notes that rabbit glyphs are related to accession in Classic Maya art (1989, 207).

The figure wears a simple bar shaped nose ornament, a second, lunar crescent nose ornament below this, obscuring his mouth, and round earspools with elongated pendants. Lines beneath the ear ornaments might represent hair. As in stelae 1 and 2, the face is

deeply recessed. Below the face is a collar or ornament similar to that of the Stela 1 effigy, but curved rather than stepped, forming a U-shape. Below (and possibly meant to be attached) to this element is a broad semicircular collar of bead-like components. The figure wears a short tunic and a loincloth with hanging sash in front. Bead anklets and knee bands, as well as possibly plumed sandals, complete his attire. Neither of the arms is portrayed in full. In his left hand, he holds a small round shield, with second circular outline inside the first, perhaps representing a painted border. Two long extensions, possibly plumes (Jiménez García 1998, 142), are fastened to the center of the shield. The points of two atlatl darts appear atop these plumes, close to the man's shoulder. In his right hand, he grasps a long lance tipped by a stone blade and decorated with a circular ornament affixed below the blade, from which depend three plumes.

Remains of pink pigment cover the surface, and extensive vestiges of stucco also adhere to the monument. This suggests possible secondary use as an architectural component, similar to Stela 6.

Context: Its original location at the site is unknown. Dutton (1955, 245) mentions four "warrior" stelae discovered by Mujica y Diez de Bonilla in 1935 (sic). She was able to view two of them at the time, stelae 1 and 2, but did not have access to the remaining two, either directly or by photos or drawings. Her description of these objects as "warrior stelae" suggests she is referring to de la Fuente's stelae 3 and 5. That these included Stela 3, at least, is bolstered by Schavelzon and Tomasi's publication of Mujica's drawing of one of the edges, with snake image, from the Buenos Aires archive (2006, 204, H25).

Stela 4 (Figs. 11, 131): 95 cm. H., 49 cm. W., 8 cm. D., according to de la Fuente et al.

(1988, 149). Because of its smaller size, Jiménez García (1998, 296-297) prefers to call Stela 4 a lápida (stone). Dutton (1955, 230) called it more neutrally a "tablet," while de la Fuente grants it full stela status.

Present Location: MNA (Catalog 15-171), but not on public display.

Description: Complete and unbroken. The low relief is quite legible except for a patch of surface damage obscuring the area of the right arm. Like Stela 3, it has a well-defined rectangular shape echoed by a raised border around the edges of the relief.

Stela 4 is also distinctive from the rest of the Tula group in showing its subject in partial profile. The torso is frontal and the feet point out to the sides. M ovement is indicated by the bent knees and lifted heel of the left foot. The one visible (left) arm is shown in profile, as is the face. In this contorted pose the figure looks, and seems to be advancing to its right. The headdress, described by de la Fuente et al. (1988, 150) as "large y extremely elaborate" is in profile and appears to be a theriomorphic helmet like those of Stelae 1-3, though no eye is visible. What de la Fuente identifies as a bird's beak and Jiménez García (1998, 296) calls a visor projects out over the wearer's forehead. A series of scales, feathers, or even flower petals (de la Fuente et al. 1988, 150) tops this beak-like element. The headdress is surmounted by a panache of feather plumes of two lengths (in Acosta's words [1941, 240] "a great panache of quetzal and eagle plumes). The longer ones cascade down toward the ruler's back on his left. Following his practice of interpreting Toltec art via retrospective readings from later, Mexica art, Acosta questionably relates this headdress to the Aztec god of flowers and music, Xochipilli. Dutton purports to discern a name glyph above the headdress, but this is not in evidence in any photo or line drawing.

The man's hair is indicated sketchily by a row of lines over the brow. His eye is portrayed frontally in contrast to the profile view of the face, and a bar nose ornament is awkwardly shown frontally in the profile nose. The rounded ear ornaments with pendants, however, are rendered in realistic profile view. What appear to be speech scrolls—a Central Mexican device for representing the act of talking since Teotihuacan times—are placed in front of his (closed) mouth. He wears a circular breastplate or pendant (shield? mirror?) on his chest, and a feathered cloak or perhaps a plumed back rack obscures his right arm. To Jiménez García (1998, 296), the arm has been amputated, and the visible plume forms represent gushing blood. His skirt features a heavy belt. A knotted sash or breechcloth hangs down between his thighs, ending in two swallow tail-shaped elements. What could be a knife is tucked into the sash on the ruler's left side.

The cuff of a gauntlet (Acosta 1941, 240; de la Fuente et al. 1988, 150), or perhaps a broad bracelet, is visible above the left hand, which holds an unknown object. On his left knee, what appear to be two disks or large circular beads are connected by a cord, from which another element hangs pendant to the calf. The right leg sports what look like bloodletting ribbons, although only one bow is clearly shown (in profile). They could also be a ballplayer's kneepad. The figure's fancy footwear is non-matching. The right foot is shod in a simple sandal with a small bead or plume over the instep, but the left has a complex sandal with openings in the straps and a much larger object over the arch, obscuring the tip of the foot. I have wondered whether this is an attempt to convey movement by showing the plume of the sandal in a different position than its counterpart the right foot, or even a visual evocation of the Central Mexican god Tezcatlipoca, traditionally represented with one foot replaced by a serpentine scroll and a disk, the

"smoking mirror" his Nahuatl name embodies. The earliest known image of this god occurs at Tula on a column relief from Pyramid B.

Because of its location in a ballcourt and the dynamic pose of the figure, Acosta (1941, 240) identified it as a ballplayer, comparing it to similar sculptures in Classic Maya ballcourts. Tozzer (1957, 141) agreed with the identification, as apparently does Cohodas (1974, 117), and, less conclusively, de la Fuente et al. (1988, ill. 101). The thick belt and possible gauntlet, parts of the protective gear used by ballplayers against the impact of the hard rubber ball, support this interpretation. Yet, this is obviously no ordinary ballplayer. The elaborate, towering headdress suggests a ruler. If this is an athlete, he is one of royal status.

Context: The stela with the best archaeological context of the Tula group, Stela 4 was uncovered by Acosta (1941, 240, fig. 1) in the west corner of Ballcourt 1, to the north of Pyramid B. The lower sections of two destroyed companions, bearing the legs of similar figures in relief, were found nearby. In Acosta's words, "In the west corner of the talud and over the stucco floor a sculptured slab was found in situ that has in low relief the legs of a figure that represents a ballplayer. Further along, on the same side, another of larger dimensions was discovered"[148] (1941, 240; see also Dutton 1955, 230). De la Fuente inconsistently classifies one of these fragments under "Figuras Humanas," separate from "Estelas" (de la Fuente et al. 1988, catalog 129, 197-188). Oddly, while Jiménez García correctly identifies the stela's provenience in her description (1998, 296-297), she classifies it under "Slabs without architectonic context."

One of the fragmentary companions of Stela 4 (Fig. 12) apparently went missing

[148] "En el ángulo oeste del talud y sobre el piso de estuco, se encontró una lápida esculpida 'in situ' que tiene en bajorrelieve las piernas de una figura que representa a un jugador de pelota. Mas adelante, en al

between the time of Acosta's excavation and de la Fuente's catalog, regrettably not an uncommon fate for materials from the site. The latter author and associates rely on the line drawing in Acosta's report, as does a drawing in Tozzer's 1957 book (fig. 491) on Tula and Chichen Itza. With no original available, de la Fuente cannot provide dimensions. We know from Acosta only that it was apparently smaller than Stela 4. The drawings show a less dynamic pair of legs than Stela 4. Both feet are flat on the ground, and while it appears the left leg is bent, it is considerably less so than that of the Stela 4 figure. Like Stela 4, the sandals are mismatched. The left foot is covered entirely in what seem to be rectangular beads, while the right has a more conventional open sandal with a small plume over the instep. On the left knee are two large beads or disks with dangling elements. The right knee features a horizontal band tied in a bow and an odd circular element at the front, passing under the band. Given the find site, and the proximity to Stela 4, Acosta's identification of the fragment as a ballplayer seems to be correct.

A somewhat more complete fragment (Figs. 13, 140) is still located in situ in the southeast corner of Ballcourt 1, where Jiménez García showed it to me in February 2007. She (1998, 309-311) classes it as a slab. The remaining portion of the monument is 53 cm. high and 57 cm. wide. Like the apparent ballplayer portrayed by the other fragment, this one wears a ribbon-like band with a prominent circular loop on his right knee, and a band of large round elements, two of which are visible, with a knot or pendant decoration at the front, on his left. Likewise, one foot wears a sandal with plume ornament over the instep, while the other is enclosed in a casing of trapezoidal elements. The fringed lower edge of a skirt remains visible on the figure's right thigh. On the same side, the lower portion of a round object, most likely a shield, is preserved. Emanating from this disc,

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mismo lado, se hallo otro de mayores dimensiones."

and presumably attached to it, are what Jiménez García (1998, 309) refers to as "various figures with undulations." These could represent cloth or feather shield ornaments, flowers or other vegetation (compare the flowers on the headdress of Quetzalcoatl in the post-Conquest Mexica manuscript, *Codex Magliabechiano*, folio 61r), or even blood (compare these forms to the blood flows from the ears of the Mexica rulers Tizoc and Ahuitzotl on the Dedication Stone, e.g., Pasztory 1983, 150, pls. 94-95).

These fragmentary carvings muddy the clear waters of de la Fuente's numbering of stelae. Perhaps we need to speak of the seven (six and two halves?) rather than the six stelae of Tula.[149]

Stela 5 (Fig. 14): 48 cm. H., 29 cm. W., 7 cm. D (de la Fuente et al. 1988, 151). *Present Location*: MNA (Catalog 15-862), but not on public display at present. *Description*: This is the least frequently reproduced stela from Tula. Jiménez García does not even discuss it. Only de la Fuente and company include it in their catalog, and cite no prior publications, as they do for their other catalog entries. There may be a number of factors contributing to the monument's lack of popularity. It is badly damaged and incomplete, with a repaired break across the middle and the lower portion of the slab completely missing. The remaining piece is small: it certainly does not make the grade as a stela by Jiménez García's standards, though it is larger than the Teotihuacan carving called a stela by Janet Catherine Berlo (1992, 143, fig. 17). Its original length is

[149] The inconsistency of de la Fuente's terminology shows up again in her treatment of a more recent discovery, a slab found in 1978 on the east side of Ballcourt 1 and presently in the Jorge Acosta Museum at Tula (de la Fuente et al. 1988, catalog 115, 170-171; see also Jiménez García 1998, 297-301, fig. 135). This tablet-shaped relief is 63 cm. high and 33 cm. across, which makes it smaller than Stela 4, yet larger than Stela 5. Yet de la Fuente calls it a lápida rather than a stela. The relief shows an elaborately garbed male figure in profile, apparently processing toward the right side of the panel.

uncertain.

Stylistically, this stela diverges more from any putative Maya analogs than the previous four. Like them, it shows a standing ruler in frontal view, but relative to the other stelae, the head is larger in proportion to the body, and the chest and abdomen look as if they have been vertically compressed. There seems to be some confusion on the part of de la Fuente and her colleagues concerning the arms. While the left arm of the figure is not clearly portrayed, they claim that "The right is irregular, separated diagonally from the body; with the hand, extremely thick and deformed, it holds a wand" (1988, 151).[150] The text is not clear, but suggests that they identify as an arm a projecting form extending downward from the figure's belt on his right side. In none of the other stelae do arms emerge from the human torso at such an anatomically impossible position close to waist level. In spite of the alleged crudity of Toltec art, I cannot find this manner of portrayal of arms in any other types of sculpture encompassed by their catalog. It seems to me, by analogy with their Catalog 115, that this diagonal form is a costume element, probably the end of a sash. A closer look reveals the right arm as a tiny stump-like appendage, bent at the elbow in a right angle, emerging from the shortened upper torso. The fingers are clearly visible in the accompanying plate grasping the "wand," with three wrapped around the shaft and the thumb visible on the opposite side. Even if they have erred in identifying the right arm and hand, de la Fuente and associates are correct in characterizing it as deformed in appearance.

The eyes are larger and more rounded than in the other Tula stelae, while the triangular nose and slit mouth is similar to them. Because the bottom section is missing,

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[150] "El derecho es irregular, se separa diagnalmente del cuerpo; con la mano, sumamente gruesa y deforme,

the impression of a squat and stout figure may be heightened by the missing legs However, it is not clear from the one published photo how long the missing limbs would be. The figure wears what can be read as a skirt or kilt with sash, or a breechclout. It is unclear whether bands of rectangular elements below the belt represent ornamental designs on a skirt or crudely depicted legs with beaded bands. That the hanging end of the sash seems to terminate above the breakage would support the second option, since on Stela 3 the sash terminates at mid thigh level, while on Stela 4 it dangles below the knee. With the exception of Stela 6, which may portray a female, none of the rest of the Tula stelae show skirts as long as this one, if it is in fact a skirt.

This figure's headdress differs from the helmet type of the other stelae. It appears to be a diadem-like band of rectangular, bead-like elements in three horizontal rows, topped by two stacks of trapeze and ray signs and the usual cascading plumes, which seem to overpower the figure. Also present are the standard issue circular ear ornaments with bar-shaped danglers, elongated nose ornament, and a large disk (breastplate? mirror?) hanging over the abdomen. The "rod" carried by the figure has its upper portions seemingly wrapped in folds of cloth, suggesting it is a furled banner or, perhaps, a spear with a cover.

Context: Its original archaeological context at the site is unknown. It may have been one of the four "warrior stelae" discovered by Mujica in his 1933 surface explorations of Tula according to Dutton and Marquina, but no drawings of it turned up in the archive examined by Schavelzon and Tomasi.

Stela 6 (Figs. 15): 39 cm. W., 26 cm. maximum H., and 7.5 cm. maximum D. (Jiménez

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toma una vara."

García 1998, 289).

Present Location: Currently stored in the bodega of the Museo Jorge Acosta at Tula, where it was most recently studied and photographed by Jiménez García in March, 2007.

Description: This monument found itself the victim of recycling in Toltec times, reused as a slab in the skeletons and serpents frieze of the *coatepantli* (Jiménez García 1998, 289). Its originally blank obverse side was carved with frets matching the borders of the frieze. Not surprisingly, the original image was described in 1988 as poorly preserved, cracked in multiple places, missing a piece from the left side, with the details of the face almost obliterated. Jiménez García most recent photograph shows that the deterioration of the carving has progressed even further than the state shown in de la Fuente's catalog illustration.

The badly eroded carved face of the stela depicts a standing frontal figure, feet out to the side like its counterparts from the site. It differs, however, in wearing a long skirt extending to the lower calves. Only the deeply cut mouth is clear in de la Fuente's photo (de la Fuente et al. 1988, 103), and, according to her text, was the only feature visible to her inspection. But the drawing accompanying Jiménez García's text shows traces of the nose and eyes in a broad, anonymous, mask-like visage, closely resembling the famed "funerary" masks of Teotihuacan (1998, figs. 127-128). The tall headdress consists of, from bottom to top: a broad horizontal head band; another band of rectangular elements, interpreted by Jiménez García as low plumes; a row of much larger plumes, and finally, two even longer feathers emerging from the vertex of the headdress, falling to either side. Two objects framing each side of the face, are identified as "surely" parts of the headdress by Jiménez García (1998, 289).

Epaulette-like forms over the shoulders represent the fringed edges of an upper-body garment. The necklace is a collar with a pendant consisting of two circular objects and what Jiménez García interprets as a plume. Below the necklace on either side of the "plume' are sections of another semicircular costume element, perhaps another necklace or the lower edge of a round pectoral like that worn by the figures on stelae 4 and 5. The long skirt is tied at the waist with a belt. The complex form of the hanging end of the belt in front may include a type of bag or pouch. In spite of the skirt, de la Fuente et al. (1988, 152) call this image "a masculine human figure," a reading in keeping with their interpretation of two long rectangular forms at the personage's left side as possibly two atlatl darts. Jiménez García (1998, 289) remarks that the figure "appears to be feminine." No secondary sex characteristics are discernible to resolve the issue.

Context: Found reused in the *coatepantli*, though Acosta does not specifically identify it in his 1942-1944 report on the *coatepantli* excavations. He discusses the object in his interpretive summary of his work at Tula (1956-1957, 93, 97).

Alleged Stela, De la Fuente Catalog 159 (Fig. 145): Dimensions not known.

Present Location: MNA (Catalog 24-1051) but it is not on display as of 2007.

Description: De la Fuente and associates label this rectangular carving "Stela with 2 Jaguar glyph in a circle surrounded by four petals."[151]

Context: Unknown. The information that it supposedly comes from Tula derives from Felipe Solís, now curator of the Mexica hall, by word of mouth, and seems confirmed by a drawing of the monument made by Mujica following his 1933 explorations at the site (Schavelzon and Tomasi 2006, 202, H13). The decoration is limited to a glyph: a jaguar

head in a circular enclosure with protruding leaves at the intercardinal directions. An added circle on top makes this the date/name Two Jaguar. Because it is non-figural, and not clearly a stela by narrow (or even most) definitions, it will not be discussed for comparison to Maya monuments.

Xico

The Xico Stone (Fig. 16): 67.5 cm. H., 24 cm. W., 9 cm. D.

Present Location: MNA, where I viewed and photographed it in July 2005 as part of the general anthropological exhibit. No longer displayed as of March 2007.

Description: Although de la Fuente et al. call this simply a "stone," its form corresponds to broad traditional definitions of a stela, carved on one side with a relief of an elaborately garbed female, and on the reverse, with a large glyph in a square cartouche. The position of the glyph at the top of the stela resembles Zapotec work, including the funerary stela of the "Oaxaca barrio" at Teotihuacan (see Chapter 4). The slab's size is within the range of the Tula pieces that de la Fuente labels as stelae.

On the figural side, a raised border around the edge surrounds the human image. The figure appears in profile, apparently walking, one foot advanced, towards the left of the monument. The face resembles the anonymous visages of Teotihuacan sculpture; a speech scroll emanates from her mouth. Her headdress resembles that portrayed on Tula Stela 6, supporting the suggestion that that personage is also female. What looks like a flap or cheek piece hangs from a plain band or diadem over the side of the face. From the top of the band are visible two interlaced trapezes, and behind these, plumes, including

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[151] "Estela con glifo 2 jaguar dentro de un circulo rodeado de cuatro petalos."

one bending down at the back and front of the head. The headdress is capped with a mass of large plumes, leaning toward the front of the head. Long hair falls down her left shoulder.

The woman wears a *quechquemitl* with raised border representing edge decoration and a long skirt. The right arm, bent in an acute angle at the elbow, projects in front of the body. Her right hand holds an unknown object, apparently a container with three smaller objects (beads? corn?) visible above its rim. Two strands of beads and a strip of cloth hang from the bottom of the object. Her left arm is bent in front of her chest and holds an equally enigmatic object. Under her *quechquemitl*, she appears to wear a large disc (mirror?) or sun emblem, from which project apparent rays, some resembling knife blades. Her long skirt, edged with fringe, reaches to the mid-calf level. She appears to be barefoot, unlike the Tula stela images.

The glyph on the reverse consists of several elements. At center is a roughly square shape, with a raised relief outline, containing a pattern of sinuous incised lines. Two other outlines of the same shape concentrically enclose this central figure, which de la Fuente and associates (correctly, in my opinion) identify as an eye (though not identical to the Reptile Eye glyph as it occurs at Xochicalco). At the base of the glyph thus formed is a small circle with two loops projecting from either side, resembling a bow. On either side of the glyph, two tendril-like forms project from the outer edge and turn under themselves like truncated spiral. The whole pattern is enclosed in a square cartouche. *Context*: Uncertain. First described by Seler in 1888 as coming from Xico in the southern Basin of Mexico.

Tlalpizáhuac

Stela of Tlalpizáhuac (Fig. 17): 74 cm. H, 30 cm. W, 12 cm. D (Tovalin Ahumada 1998, 79). The sculptured section covers 50 cm. in area.

Present Location: Uncertain. Excavated between 1987 and 1991. Tovalin Ahumada does not indicate whether it was removed to storage.

Description: This fragmentary slab, carved in local *tizontle* stone, preserves the lower half of a presumably male figure wearing a loincloth and ornate belt, walking to the left. What might be his elbow survives at the upper left. Above the belt, an outcurving volute and roughly triangular form seem to form part of a costume element that suggests the protective yoke associated with the ballgame. Owing to the condition and simplified style of the carving, it is not clear whether the figure is wearing sandals.

The stela had been covered in white stucco. On the reverse side of the slab, this stucco had been used by the carvers to mask a natural depression in the stone, indicating that the slab had been displayed in an upright position with both faces visible to viewers.

Context: Found in secondary context, one meter above the floor in fill in an Epiclassic to Early Postclassic residential compound, Room 21 (Tovalin Ahumada 1998, 79, 80, foto 19). Ceramic and radiocarbon evidence places the Epiclassic to Early Postclassic occupation of the site at c. 700-900 CE.

El Cerrito

El Cerrito Stela (Figs. 18-19): 98 cm. H., 34 cm. W., 4 cm. D. (Crespo 1991, 195).

Present Location: Currently displayed in the Museo Regional de Queretaro, in the Preguardianal hall of the Sala de Sitio, Convento Franciscano de Santiago (registration number 55860), where I viewed and photographed it in July 2005.

Description: Worked in basalt. The plain base comprises roughly a third of the total height. The upper two-thirds bear a series of remarkable images in light relief, which Crespo notes distinguishes this sculpture from the high and bas-relief work more common at El Cerrito (and puts some doubt into its provenience). These images are enclosed in a rectangular frame or cartouche composed of three lines in decreasing thickness from outer to innermost.

In the center, a large disk emits four rounded v-shaped rays with looped bases from points corresponding to the representation of the four cardinal directions. The rays emanating from the left and right sides of the disk break through and overlap the rectangular frame. The perimeter of the disk consists of two concentric circles formed by three concentric lines, the outermost thicker than the innermost.

In the enclosed space of the disk is a human figure in profile that Crespo (1991, 198) identifies as seated on a low banquette, though an alternative reading could take the "seat" as the figure's thickened left leg in profile. The apparently male personage wears a helmet in the form of a bird's head with open beak from which his face emerges. The avian eye is clearly portrayed by concentric ovals. Crespo identifies the bird as a raptor,

probably an eagle; Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz definitely recognize the latter (2005, 34). The top of the helmet has an irregular outline suggesting feathers, while long plumes crown the vertex. Crespo maintains that the figure wears no ear ornaments, but a rough circular form under the summarily rendered ear may be one, as Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz maintain. The figure's eye is rendered as an ellipse with pointed ends. No pupil is in evidence. The rounded nose appears to sport a bar ornament, here rendered in realistic profile view in contrast to the depiction of such an ornament in frontal view on the profile figure on Tula Stela 4. Crespo (1991, 198) reads a line on the cheek as the same bar in profile. In front of the nose hangs an apparent additional ornament consisting of a disk from which depends a U-shaped bar, and to the right, three small rectangular beads. The open mouth reveals a row of teeth.

The figure's torso is rather short. His visible right forearm wears a bracelet in the form of a stylized butterfly, twice as thick as the limb itself. The hand holds what Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz (2005, 34) identify as a baton or scepter with a round top emanating volutes. An alternative reading of this object might be the wooden handle of a sacrificial knife with leaf-shaped stone blade, a scrolling pattern resembling smoke or blood emanating from the hilt at viewer's right. At the base of the baton or knife is an irregular lobed or petalled form, identified by Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz as a flower. It also resembles a human heart, an impression not undermined by the flowing forms along its edge. A series of vertical pendant elements under the forearm seems to represent four plumes depending from the base of an arrow. The figure seems to wear a loincloth, depicted by a double line at the waist. A human skull is attached to the upper back or neck. A belt or back ornament that Crespo interprets as a (ritual?) bundle seems

to be attached to the small of the back. It consists of two horizontal elements—perhaps an attempt to show a discoidal object like a back mirror from the side—and four vertical pendants resembling plumes.

This figure sits on an object composed of four stacked irregular trapezoids with the longest serving as the base. Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz identify this as a curved seat on top of a banquette (2005, 36). They comment that the figure's foot is shown as very similar in form to the banquette. In any event, there is something peculiar about the right leg. From a knee ornament emerges a curving, scroll-like ornament, and below this a series of forms suggesting smoke, liquid, or even exposed bones. The base of these forms is obscured by, or rests on, a snaky element that undulates along the bottom of the disk. Bocanegra Islas and her co-author identify this rather unconvincingly as a ground line. It seems to me to be allusion to liquid, smoke, and/or a snake (see iconographic analysis in Chapter 2).

Arranged above the solar nimbus, as if floating in space, are three strange figures. The largest sprawls forward across the upper part of the monument, its damaged face at the viewer's right, foot touching the enclosing rectangle at left, waist or thigh grazed by the topmost ray of the disk. The head of this creature appears to have a projecting jaw with visible teeth. The circular eye is bordered at top by an irregular arched brow. Above this we see in turn a row of six small circular forms (the segmented body of an insect?) beginning at the top of the head and extending to the creature's neck or shoulder, where it overlaps with or supports a cluster of six or seven plumes or lobes (the wing of a butterfly, according to Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz). Curved lines across the entity's torso suggest emaciation, bare ribs, or the markings on a chrysalis. The bottom of

the rib cage seems indicated by two projecting lobes, identified by Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz (2005, 39) as flaccid breasts. The figure wears a short skirt with belt. Its legs are extended with knees bent, one foot is replaced by a plant-like form, and the other seems to be clawed. From between the creature's legs falls a row of four objects, identified by Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz as maize kernels.

To bottom right of this large figure is a much smaller human, apparently nude except for an ear ornament, lying on its back with the head pointing left. It looks like it is reaching out with a three-fingered hand to the protruding ribcage of the creature above it, like an infant nursing at the breast. Hair, eyes, nose and mouth are roughly portrayed. The right leg points down; the left is raised as though kicking. The right toes and left heel touch the rectangular frame, almost as if it were a ground line on which the being was walking or running. From the swollen belly of this human emanate a series of flowing forms which connects it to the mouth of the creature above it. One large connecting link touches the larger being's chest and twists before it terminates in a bifurcated end at the front of the jaws. A much thinner cord, seemingly twisted throughout its length and strongly resembling an umbilical cord, emanates from the small human's navel and merges with the thicker link just before the bifurcated end. Several irregular flowing patterns incised on the torso suggest birth much less than something of a rather more sinister nature.

To the left of the large floating being is another humanoid creature, positioned vertically in a fetal-like crouch, roughly the same size as the "infant." Its back runs parallel to, and is separated by only a short space from, the buttocks and thighs of the large entity. The body is nude like the human's on the right, but the abdomen is not

enlarged. This figure differs strikingly from the "nursing" being in having a skeletal head and two oversized three fingered hands that grasp (or pour?) a long object terminating at or below the large creature's foot. On the skull is a headdress composed of two facing, horizontal, roughly crescentic forms. From the back of this headdress extends a long train of plumes.

The lower third of the stela is decorated with a net pattern in relief. In each of the lozenges or rhomboids of the net appears a flower consisting of two concentric circles at the center and five to six irregular rounded petals at the edge. Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz (2005, 32) identify the flower in question as the hallucinogen *Turbina corymbosa*. At the bottom row of lozenges, where the net meets the carved rectangular frame of the stela, the flowers are replaced by (in three spaces) concentric circles and (in one instance) a half-circle, representing greenstone jewels (*chalchihuites*).

Context: Unknown. As at Tula, the history and provenience of the El Cerrito stela are uncertain. According to Crespo (1991, 193), the El Cerrito stela appeared among objects more definitely documented as coming from the site in a group of late 19th-century collections later acquired by the Museo Regional de Queretaro, including a chacmool and an atlantid. However, she notes that the stela itself "does not have secure provenience." Thus while she and authors drawing on her work (Braniff C. 2001) ascribe the monument to El Cerrito—a plausible enough assumption, given its style and its association in collections with sculptures more securely tied to the site—the certainty of this provenience is not absolute. Bocanegra Islas and Valencia Cruz (2005, 27) simply report that the object entered the museum before 1968, when it received its registration number. On the other hand, even without context, we can be more certain that this object was truly

a stela than in the case of some of the Tula specimens. The plain lower end of the monument is clearly designed for insertion into the ground (Crespo 1991, 193).

Cerro El Elefante

Cerro El Elefante Stela (Fig. 20): 1.52 m. H., 77 cm. maximum W., ranges from 15-20 cm. D.

Present Location: In situ at Cerro El Elefante as of 1994.

Description: The stela is tablet-shaped, with roughly rectangular outline and curved top. The material is vesicular basalt. The high relief figure is a headless male, simply clad in a loincloth and sandals, with a rectangular cavity in his abdomen. Martínez Magaña (1994, 145) describes it as decapitated. The severed neck touches the upper edge of the stela. Despite heavy erosion, traces are still discernible of an ornamental collar. The figure's hands are at his sides, feet separated and facing outward in opposite directions, recalling the Tula stelae. It is unclear from either the text of the salvage report or the single black and white photo whether there had been a three-dimensional head, now broken off, carved at the top of the slab, which would make it an atypical stela, or whether the figure is complete as carved in its present state. According to Jiménez García (personal communication, February 28, 2007), the latter is the case. In the excavator's words, the image "has great force in spite of crude workmanship" (Martínez Magaña 1994, 145), the coarseness of the carving perhaps the result of its never having been finished.

Context: Local looters encountered this presumably once-upright monument lying horizontally in an enclosure that the salvage excavator subsequently identified as a 16th-century Christian ritual structure. Quite obviously, this was not the original setting for this prehispanic monolith with its allusions to human sacrifice.

Xochicalco

The Saenz Triad

Stela 1 (Figs. 21-22): Restored dimensions: 180 cm. H., 34 cm. W., and 23 cm. maximum D.

Present Location: Currently exhibited alongside the other two members of the triad in the Sala Tolteca of the MNA.

Description: Broken into two pieces and restored. On the main or front face (Side A) of the slab, a frontal human face is framed by the jaws of a serpent that probably form a helmet. Two fangs bracketing four small teeth, appear over the brow of the human face, and a forked tongue hangs below its chin. Ear ornaments flank the headdress, and two long pointed objects protrude diagonally from the top. Hirth, following Saenz (1961) and Piña Chan (1977; 1989), maintains that these represent bone awls used for royal bloodletting. But López Austin (1997, 82) disagrees: "They could be two ribbons ending in a chalchihuite, but in no way could they be sacrificial thorns, essentially penitential objects, fundamental to Piña Chan's interpretation." Under the lower jaw of the serpent is a broad collar of rectangular elements of two sizes in two rows, the outer edge composed of the smaller elements. The attention given to the facial features suggests to Smith

(2000, 86) a clear case of individual portraiture. The mouth is open, which Smith interprets as representing speech.

Above the face, a Teotihuacan-style glyph with a bar and two dots appears to represent the calendric name and/or date 7 Reptile Eye or Eye of Reptile, an ancient Teotihuacan glyph of debated significance (see Kubler 1985, 269; Taube 2000a, 311-312). A feathered cartouche encloses the date. Below the human face, in place of a body, are a series of other glyphs. The topmost of these forms, roughly in the shape of an inverted letter U, seems to be supported by a pair of human hands. Smith (2000, 85) says that these hands "are holding a planetary band around a mouth and nose." According to Smith, this planetary band is constructed from seven smaller elements, three bundles of feathers alternating with X-shaped glyphs formed by trapezoids with their corners removed and a circular element at the center. This sky band encloses an image of a nose and a square mouth with eight teeth (four on top, four in the lower jaw), resembling human teeth rather than those of a serpent or other animal, though the broad nose is clearly that of an animal (jaguar? serpent?).

The reverse (Side C) depicts three glyph groups. At top is an image of a pyramid temple with an arrow, point down, at the top of the stairs. Below and slightly overlapping this glyph is a pair of human feet (or footprints) seen from above. In the middle register is the calendar glyph 5 Reed in a roughly square feathered cartouche, again with feet at the base that seem to be crossing a woven mat, traditional Maya and Central Mexican sign of rulership. The value 5 in this case is shown by 5 dots (Mexica and Mixtec style) rather a bar (Maya style) as elsewhere on the Saenz stelae. At the bottom is the date 9 Rabbit, this time with a bar and four dots, and the rabbit in a cartouche.

According to Smith and Hirth (2000, 24) one edge, Side B, "is carved with 6 glyphs within cartouches," while the opposite edge (D) "has four glyphic elements, two of which are enclosed in cartouches." The top glyph of B4 seems to be a variant of the trapeze and ray sign (Smith 2000, 87). Beneath this at B5 we see the date 6 Movement/Earthquake, followed at B6 by the date 9 House. The fourth sign complex from the top consists of a St. Andrew's cross, the Maya *kan* or sky sign, a bar and four elements interpreted by Smith as jades, and Tlaloc's moustache. Smith (2000, 87) discerns in this arrangement a Tlaloc jaw over a Venus sign, related to Teotihuacan war symbolism. Below this are stacked two further calendar glyphs, 5 Reed (B8) and 13 Rabbit (B9).

On the opposite edge, Side D, the date 7 Rabbit appears twice, in each case enclosed in a cartouche. Sandwiched between these identical dates is an image of house with a flexed human (a corpse?) lying inside on a mat (D15). The number four is indicated by dots. Another pair of feet or footprints, this time pointing downward, occurs between the house and the upper 7 Rabbit date. The lowermost glyph on Side D represents the clawed feet and tail of an unidentified animal resting on another woven mat. Two feet, again pointing downward, and framing a flower complete this compound glyph, in which Smith (2000, 88-89) sees a reference to royal accession via a mix of comparisons to Classic Maya and Mexica symbolism.

Context: Excavated by Cesar Saenz in the Temple of the Stelae. According to Hirth and Smith (2000, 22), Stela 1 "has been broken into two pieces. The carved section of the stela was recovered from a subfloor crypt in the center of the room; the smaller, uncarved, base was recovered on the floor of the east room outside the crypt."

Stela 2 (Figs. 23-24): 180 cm. H., 36 cm. W., 22 cm. D.

Present Location: Same as Stela 1.

Description: Broken into three sections in antiquity. The front shows a clear Tlaloc face, with that deity's characteristic ringed eyes, moustache, fangs, and a water lily emerging from his mouth, surmounted by a trapeze and ray headdress. Hair appears on the forehead, and the god wears two discoidal ear ornaments with bar or tube pendants. Above the face is the calendar date 7 Water—appropriate for a rain deity—enclosed in a square feathered cartouche. Underneath Tlaloc is a glyph consisting of a stylized image of the upper jaw of the same deity, complete with two fangs framing three additional teeth, from which projects a bifurcated tongue.

On the reverse (Side C), "two glyphs that incorporate the trapeze-triangle sign and two glyphs with bar and dot numerals" appear (Smith and Hirth 2000, 24). One of these (center) is "a composite glyph that features a dart with a Maya Cuuac symbol suspended from the shaft" (Smith 2000, 192). At the top of this composite group is another trapeze and ray sign and the date 13 Flint. "At the top of side C is another composite design made from a trapeze-triangle over a jeweled band and flanked by bloodletting awls, a Zapotec-style hill-glyph and the head of a bird that closely resembles a king vulture" (2000, 192). One might read the same bird as a turkey. This topmost glyph is enclosed in a double-outline, stepped frame. At the bottom of Side C is the date 9 Flint, with the flint sign enclosed in a cartouche.

On the lateral edge designated by Smith as Side B are four glyphs, the topmost being a slightly different rendering of the 7 Water date/name that appears on the front, in a less ornate cartouche. Below this is 13 Reed, also in a cartouche, with two downward pointing

feet or footprints framing the dot numerals for the three in thirteen. Underneath this date is a mysterious image of the lower body of an anthropomorphic figure who seems to be falling out of the air onto a woven mat. The bottom-most glyph represents the date 7 House.

On the opposite edge, Side D, the topmost image portrays a fleshed human head with closed eyes and two dots. Though it is not a skull, both Saenz and Smith read it as the date 2 Death because of its closed eye and open mouth. Below this is a half-star read by Baird (1989, 105) as a war/Venus sign with both Teotihuacan and Maya analogies. In turn, below this is another watery sign, appropriate for the stela's Tlaloc imagery, a reed with 8 circles. Smith (2000, 93), noting the lack of other instances of using eight dots to signify the same number in Mesoamerican usage, believes the circles are drops of water consistent with the marshy setting of the plant. She tentatively assigns this sign the meaning of a personal title, "Precious Reed." One could also speculate that this could be a place-name for yet another Tollan—Xochicalco itself? Under this is a mouth in a trapezoidal frame showing human-like teeth, similar (though not identical to) the mouth on the front of Stela 1. Either a speech scroll or flowing liquid (water or blood) extends downward from the mouth. Finally, at the lowermost part of the edge, is a flint glyph (#6) in a cartouche surmounted by a vessel or pedestal supports two unknown objects, plants according to Saenz (1964, 76), blood soaked paper or bloodletters used in autosacrifice according to Smith (2000, 93).

Context: Saenz found two of the three fragments in the same subfloor cache as stelae 1 and 3, while the top section lay on the floor.

Stela 3 (Figs 25-26): Pre-restoration measurements: 138 cm. H., 40 cm. W., 27 cm. D.

Present Location: Same as Stela 1.

Description: The face on the front, depicting a human with open mouth, closely resembles the carved visage of Stela 1. This resemblance is repeated in the saurian monster helmet framing the face at top and bottom. The mask differs from that on Stela 1 in lacking the projections read by Saenz and Smith as bloodletting awls. Saenz interpreted this omission as the result of insufficient space to depict the bloodletters, created by the length of the feathers. The collar worn by this figure also differs in configuration from that of Stela 1. It consists of two rows of rectangular elements, with the longer ones forming the outer edge. Above the face is the calendrical sign Four Movement in a feathered cartouche. In the lowest register is a skyband similar to that depicted on Stela 1, but instead of a mouth, this one encloses an image of a heart dripping three drops or streams of blood. Beneath this sanguinary glyph is a row of four small circles (beads? numbers?).

The text on the reverse consists of three composite glyphs or grouped signs. There seems to be a consensus that the topmost of these is a temple, supported by a talud-tablero platform, but debate over its significance (toponym? conquest sign?) remains unresolved. Below this are two upward-pointing feet half-superimposed on a mat pattern. Under these is the date 13 Reed, and below this we find another mat with two feet or footprints. The bottom-most glyph represents the date 10 Reed.

On Side B of the stela, we see at top the combination of a Tlaloc moustache and a Maya *kan* sign that signifies to Smith war under the baleful influence of the planet Venus. Below this, the date 2 Reed is repeated twice, and below this in turn, the Venus/Tlaloc

glyph turns up again. Below this second Venus/Tlaloc sign is a reed accompanied by dots that Smith reads here as on Stela 2 as a title "Precious Reed" (see above), only here there are twelve rather than eight circles. At the bottom of Side B is the date 9 House.

On the lateral edge designated Side D by Smith, at top is the date 9 Monkey in an ornate feathered cartouche. In the next register, is a jaguar, perhaps dead or as a skin costume. From its mouth extends what could be interpreted as a tongue, a speech scroll, or a flow of blood. Beneath the jaguar is a pair of downward-pointing footprints. Below this is a cacao pod pierced by an arrow, and finally, in the bottommost register, is the glyph 3 Reed.

Context: This member of Saenz's triad owes its current intact appearance to restoration, since the base was missing from both the cache deposit and the surrounding rooms. The remaining greater portion of the stela had been placed in the subfloor cist with the others.

The Seler Monument (Fig. 27): 72 cm. H., 62 cm. W., 27 cm. D.

Present Location: Cuauhnahuac Museum, Cuernavaca, Morelos.

Description: The "monument" is only a fragment, representing the middle section of the stela. Unlike the Saenz triad, this stela was carved only on one face, and shows only glyphs. At the top we see the face and open mouth of a serpent with forked tongue extended below two fangs framing two smaller teeth. This seems to represent the same entity depicted by the helmets of the figures on Xochicalco stelae 1 and 3, and fits comfortably in the range of representations of the War Serpent defined by Taube (2000a). Below this is a glyph in a trapezoidal cartouche, on the right side of which appears a profile human face. A speech scroll issues from the mouth, and is linked to a bundle of

reeds below. Above the speech scroll, the head of an animal (deer? rabbit?) is discernible. In the level below these images appear, from left to right, a hand emerging from a cartouche and holding an unknown object (a torch according to Smith and Hirth), a rabbit glyph in a double-outlined square cartouche resting on a bar numeral 5 with a dot below, and a foot in profile which seems to stand upon two looped cords over three cicular dots representing 13. At the bottom, the upper portions of volutes survive, truncated by the line of breakage.

Context: The Seler Monument was named after the pioneering German zoologist turned Mesoamericanist extaordinaire because he discovered it on the surface located "along the east side and at the base of Cerro Coatzin" (Smith and Hirth 2000, 24), one of the hills over which the site sprawls. Smith and Hirth label it Stela 4, adding it to the sequence begun with the Saenz group.

Monument 13 Reed (Fig. 28): Present dimensions: 30 cm. H., 39 cm. W. (Smith and Hirth 2000, 25; they do not provide a value for thickness).

Present Location: Morelos Regional Center, INAH.

Description: This object takes its name from the calendrical glyph it prominently displays, though Smith and Hirth call it Stela 5. It consists of the upper section of a rectangular slab, carved, like the Seler Monument, on one face only. At the top are first the remains of the upper part of a roughly rectangular frame or border. Beneath and enclosed by this form are, from left to right, a stepped form with double outline, resembling a temple platform in profile, from which a turkey head seems to emerge, and finally, the eponymous date in bar and dot numerals. Below these glyphs lies a truncated

triangle, resembling a pyramid divided into four levels by horizontal lines, with a shallow bracket or inverted U-shape at its base.

Context: The context of this stela is unknown since it was collected without a record of its location. Smith and Hirth recount its most recent "discovery": Saenz found it among stones stacked in Noguera's old on-site office during the 1966 field season. Hirth (2000, 73) speculates that Stela 5 "may have been erected on the summit of Structure X3-5." He provides no evidence for this beyond the analogous setting of the Stela of the Two Glyphs atop the Adoratorio and the observation that it bears two calendric glyphs which he links to "a major construction episode within the plaza."

Stela of the Two Glyphs (Fig. 29): 2.92 m. H., 65 cm. W., 45 cm. D.

Present Location: At the site, atop the restored Adoratorio in the Ceremonial Plaza

Description: This badly eroded monument receives the label of Stela 6 in Smith and Hirth's inventory of Xochicalco's monuments. It took its earlier appellation from the two calendrical dates carved on one side. It appears to have been subject to further degradation through weathering after its discovery, analogous to the fate of some of the Tula sculptures. It seems to be on its way to becoming a stela of No Glyphs at all. The signs that give the stela its name are confined to the upper half, placed one above the other. As Smith and Hirth (2000, 25) admit, "Its badly eroded condition makes identification of the glyphs uncertain." However, its excavator, Saenz (1968), who presumably saw the piece in somewhat better condition, identified the top date as 10 Reed. With less certainty, the lower glyph looks like 9 Eye of Reptile. In the placement of glyphic elements near the top of an otherwise blank face, Stela 6 resembles the stela

from the Oaxaca barrio at Teotihuacan (see Chapter 4), as well as the reverse of the Xico Stone (see above). According to Smith and Hirth (2000, 26), "The monument was originally coated with stucco, and traces of this material remain on the side opposite of the carving."

Context: Apart from the series unearthed by Saenz, the Stela of the Two Glyphs is the only Xochicalco stela with a firmly established archaeological context. Saenz excavated it in 1966 (1966, 32) atop the remains of a small platform, or Adoratorio, located at the center of the Ceremonial Plaza. As noted in Chapter 2, Hirth attempted to argue from this observation that all Xochicalco stelae originally stood on such platforms, but there is no other evidence for such a generalization.

The "Statue" of Miacatlan (Fig. 30): 91 cm. H., 41 cm. W., 20 cm. D.

Present Location: MNA, where I viewed and photographed it in July 2005. At that time, it was displayed as part of a special exhibit on women in the pre-Columbian world, but it was no longer on display in February 2007.

Description: In spite of its name and relatively three-dimensional carving, this figure emerges from and is solidly connected at its back to a steliform slab. The front and sides are nearly in the round, while the back is not shown. The figure's theriomorphic helmet represents the head and jaws of a creature with arched brows, circular eyes, upturned snout, and bifurcated tongue hanging from the lower jaw. This entity fits quite smoothly into the range of representations of the War Serpent defined by Taube (2000a), and has been identified explicitly as such by Taube himself (1992b, 103). Vertical plumes emerge from the top of the helmet, and more plumes project sideways on the right side of the

headdress. The face of the human figure, enclosed by the jaws of the helmet, is recessed, like those of the Saenz monuments. Discoidal ear ornaments with bar pendants frame the face at either side. The figure seems to be wearing a tunic with short sleeves terminating on the upper arms, as well as a long skirt. The hands are positioned over the abdomen and hold a disk shaped object with a hole in the center. The feet rest on a rectangular pedestal.

Context: Antiquarian Alzate y Ramirez, writing in 1791, "described a stone on the upper level of Xochicalco in 1777-1784 that is either this sculpture or [the Statue of Xochicalco]. In 1833, Gros also referred to 'a carved stone' in the field a short distance from the temple…that might be this sculpture" (Smith and Hirth 2000, 34). It seems to have been still located on Cerro Xochicalco in 1835, when it was referred to by an official Mexican government survey of Xochicalco by Renel de Pedreauville (Hirth 2000, 36-37). By the time Seler reached the site in 1887, local agricultural workers had removed the monument to Miacatlan for reuse as part of the roof of an oven for processing sugar! Apparently, it had been moved to another farm before winding up in this lowly state (Peñafiel 1890, 31). At Seler's request, "the administrator [Don Sixto Sarmina, according to Peñafiel] had had the kindness to have it taken down and and set up on the porch of the house. Inquiries gave the unanimous verdict that the image came from Xochicalco" (Seler 1991, 87).

The "Statue of Xochicalco" (Figs. 31-33): This stela is larger than the Statue of Micatlan: 120 cm. H., 48 cm.W., 26 cm.D.

Present Location: Museo Cuahnahuac in Cuernavaca, where I viewed and photographed it in July 2005.

Description: This stela is very similar to the equally mislabelled "Statue" of Miacatlan. It consists of a carved human figure with front and sides released from the slab at back. Like its counterpart, this figure wears a War Serpent framing its face, a tunic, and a long skirt. It holds a perforated circular object over its abdomen. The hands of this figure are placed lower down on the torso than its counterpart, and the skirt has a decorated border indicated by a line.

Context: The original position of the monument is not known. Because of its close resemblance to the Statue of Miacatlan, it may be this stela and not the Statue of Miacatlan that Alzate y Ramírez and Gros saw near the Pyramid of the Plumed Serpents (see previous entry). Whatever its location on the site in the modern era, I suspect that it met a similar fate at some point in antiquity to Stela 6 at Tula and was reused as building material. Extensive deposits of what seems to be stucco adhere to the surface of the stela, a fact which goes unnoticed by recent publications.

Cacaxtla

Possible Painted Image of a Stela. (Fig. 36) This figure from the Battle Mural of Building B is the fifth figure from the right on the west talud, a surface 1 .55 m. high.

Present Location: In situ.

Description: The plaster supporting the painting of the personage's headdress has fallen away, but the image is otherwise intact, and the colors still bright. The color scheme consists of red-brown for the flesh; "Maya blue" (created from a combination of indigo and atapulgite) for the plumes of the headdress and back ornament, ear and nose

ornaments, collar, arm and wrist bands, edging and decoration of the skirt, edging of the *quechquemitl*, sandal decoration and large pendant; yellow for the *quechquemitl* and the top section of the skirt; orange for the lower part of the skirt; gold for the belt; and red for the outlines of the designs on the *quechquemitl*, the edges of the collar, ties of the sandals, and spotting on the white bloodletting ribbons around the figure's legs.

The person represented appears with the body in frontal view but with the head in profile facing to its left, and the feet pointing outward as is the case on Tula stelae 1-3. The figure wears a bird helmet, with his face emerging from between the open avian jaws. In the ear are two ornaments, an earspool with bar pendant, and at the lobe, a square ornament. The corners of this ornament, as well as the narrow end of the spool and the tip of the bar pendant, are decorated with small white objects, probably shell beads. These beads also appear at both ends of the bar-shaped nose ornament. He/she faces the attacking jaguar warriors, one of whom thrusts a spear into his/her midsection, with a fierce expression, mouth open in a snarl and top teeth visible.

Blue quetzal feathers hang from the back of the headdress and extend from a backrack on either side of the figure. At the neck is a broad collar rendered in blue (jade?), edged at top and bottom in red. The lower red edge is divided into tiny circular elements (beads?), below which hang a row of small U-shapes in white (fringes or more shell beads?). A large, roughly ovate, blue pendant outlined in red appears over the chest, with a similar white fringe at the base. The *quechquemitl* covers the shoulders and upper arms and the narrow triangle falls below the figure's belt and over the skirt. It is edged in blue and decorated with concentric stepped cruciform designs. White and blue beads on the upper arms represent either ornaments or a fringed edge of the *quechquemitl.* The

personage's hands are crossed in front of its chest, left over right. A bracelet of blue and white beads and a tied white cloth (bloodletting ribbon or bond?) appear on the left wrist.

The gold belt or sash around the figure's midrift is divided by blue lines into four bands of geometric decoration. At the bottom of this garment is a fringe of tubular blue elements tipped by more apparent shell beads. The skirt, reaching to just above the knees, seems to be divided into two sections. At top is a presumably outer layer extending down roughly half the length of the garment, painted yellow with dark spots (jaguar hide, signifying status) and decorated with two St. Andrew's crosses in blue. At the bottom of this section is another fringe of blue tubular and round white beads or decorations. The apparent inner layer of the skirt, visible on the lower half, is painted a muddy orange, and decorated with two additional blue *kan* crosses. Between each of the crosses we see a blue decoration in the form of a blue disk, from which depends a bar or tube pendant with a white bead at the tip. A blue fringe marks the bottom edge of the skirt.

On each leg, from the top of the calf down to each ankle, the figure wears five bloodletting ribbons. Just in case we miss the significance of these, the artist has thoughtfully spattered them with red spots. The sandals, tied at the top with red ribbons, seem to bear feathered decorations outlined in blue.

What makes this image steliform is the white rectangular form, outlined in blue, framing the body up to around elbow level. It seems to represent a painted stela in front of which the figure is standing. It does not appear above the figure's shoulders, indicating the upper edge is hidden behind his/her back. This would therefore not represent a colossal stela, though one no doubt taller than some of the Tula specimens. At the edges are painted four eyes, two on each side, outlined in blue with black pupils, surrounded by

five-pointed red stars—a Venus symbol well-known from later Mixteca-Puebla manuscripts from the same region.

APPENDIX 2

CLASSIC MAYA STELAE: CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON ORIGINS, FUNCTION, AND MEANING

Before I introduce the unfamiliar, the stelae of Central Mexico, it may be necessary for me to review for some readers what is far more familiar, both to specialists and the general reading public, the Classic Maya stelae. If I am to ultimately compare the two groups, or at least reassess the comparisons already established in the literature, I must also provide for those readers unfamiliar with this material a brief overview of the definition, origins, function, and symbolism of the Maya material to establish a baseline of information for later discussion of both links and divergences with the monuments of the Central Highlands. Appendix 2 attempts to summarize of the state of the art regarding our knowledge of Maya stelae. In this period of rapid advances in the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphs, however, not to mention the results of ongoing excavations at many Maya sites, today's state of the art may be consigned to the rubbish bin of obsolescence tomorrow, with publication of the next journal article or site report. If the Maya stelae permanently mark the endings of periods of time in an orderly calendar cycle, scholarship concerning their significance erects much more ephemeral "monuments" that sometimes rapidly pass into oblivion in an unpredictable fashion as work progresses.

Definitions: From Within and Without

In Chapter 1, I addressed the European (and Eurocentric) origins of the stela term. With the rapid progress of decipherment of Maya hieroglyphs over the past thirty years, we now know what the Classic Maya themselves called the upright stones they erected in such great profusion. In the Cholan Maya language used in Classic Maya elite public discourse and memorialized in the hieroglyphic inscriptions, what modern scholarship calls a stela was *lakam-tun* to its carvers and its patrons (Stuart 1996). *Tun* signifies "stone"; *lakam* may refer to a banner, or may be an indicator of large size. In a modern Maya language, Yucatec, a *lakum-tun* is literally a big stone, certainly apt for many of the more spectacular examples. But "banner-stone" is a reading equally consistent with what we know of these sculptures, since they served as public "billboards" for royal portraits and as hieroglyphic records of the ritual, political, and military deeds of Maya lords. The pace of advances in Maya epigraphy has been rapid in the last few decades, with new readings rapidly superseded by even newer translations. Thus, this current interpretation, the work of David Stuart, replaces the standard reading in publications of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Linda Schele's translation of the glyphs for "stela" as *te-tun*, literally "tree stone" (e.g., Schele and Freidel 1990; Stuart 1996, 153-154). Although Schele's decipherment proved incorrect on a literal level, in symbolic spirit it still reflects a level of truth, since the symbolism of the stela form does seem linked with notions of cosmic trees, as I address below. From the inscriptions, the act of setting up or erecting a stela was expressed by the verb *tzap*. Representations of the accompanying ceremony--some self-referentially emblazoned on the stelae themselves--show it necessitated the burning

of incense and the casting of some spiritually charged substance, perhaps the king's own blood, toward a censer (Looper 2003, 15).

Moving from the words to the stony realities to which they point: regarding the range of shapes and surface decorations encompassed by the broad class of Maya stelae, the standard consensus holds that in most instances a proper Classic Maya stela has four sides of "…two broad faces and two narrow side faces. The stela would be set so one broad face carved with an image would be its front" (Clancy 1999, 6). Again, this generally accurate summation works well for most Classic Maya examples, but for earlier stelae both within and outside of the Maya region, the limits of the category become fuzzy. Some older monuments of cylindrical or columnar form are classified by some writers as stelae but forcefully banished from that classification by other pundits. In general, the "fronts" of most Classic Maya stelae bore relief figures of individual kings (*ajawob* or “lords”) or (much more rarely, in both art and life) regnant queens, with much of the space occupied by their towering feather headdresses and backracks. These rulers are presented as performing important acts unique to their royal office--trampling conquered enemies, ascending the seat of power at their inaugurations, conjuring visions of royal ancestors, or performing the rituals around the dedication of the monument itself. This last action includes the "scattering gesture," with the king scattering with his hand offerings of some precious substance--incense, corn, or even his own blood shed in ritual self-mutilation. Such ritual bloodletting, the drawing of blood from the genitals and tongue, is frequently alluded to in stela carvings, but never explicitly rendered in this format (Newsome 2001, 25), in contrast to some other sculptured monuments and other media such as ceramic figures and polychrome vase painting.

At Piedras Negras, Guatemala, each ruler erected a series of stelae to commemorate a traditional sequence of royal rites of passage, from accession to the taking up of arms; at other sites, the choice of memorialized events from royal careers varies considerably. The kings carry emblems of rank--various staffs, images of patron gods, a bar-shaped scepter in the form of a double-headed serpent representing the path of the sun and planets across the sky, or the so-called manikin scepter, carved in the image of K'awiil, the god of royal lineages, as well as of lightning and fertility. On many stelae, especially on Late Classic examples from Tikal, the figure of the king tends to be dwarfed or smothered by the profusion of feathered costume elements and royal regalia, as if the human body's main function was as a kind of armature, a living hat rack for the trappings of kingly office (see Fig. 149). Subsidiary figures--wretched contorted or pleading captives or (less frequently) elaborately costumed assistants or subordinate officials--may accompany the principal lord.

Most royal images are in standing positions; seated rulers on stelae (e.g., Tikal Stela 4, Fig. 150) are relatively rare. Completely frontal figures are scarce in the stelae of the first half of the Classic period. During the Late Classic, they comprise the majority of stelae at a few sites, like Copan (Fig. 146) and Tonina (Fig. 147), but were still relatively uncommon. Most Classic Maya stela figures are rendered in profile, but not in a fashion consistent with the canons of Western classical naturalism. To a viewer conditioned by the classical European tradition, Maya stela figures present a mix of profile and frontal views in their rendering of different parts of the human anatomy, an effect sometimes superficially evocative of ancient Egyptian conventions of figure drawing. Clancy (1999, 29-30) distinguishes two types of profile depictions in Maya relief carving. What she

calls the articulated-profile pose "shows a figure...with shoulders and torso displayed frontally, hips and legs in three-quarter view, and head and feet in profile." In the second, which she dubs the broad-profile stance, "the body parts are only somewhat articulated. The face, legs and feet are profiled, while the torso region is shown in three-quarters view. The sculptors have 'broadened' the profile body mass to create a better display of costume and regalia." Full profile depictions in the W estern sense are rare, and the majority of these represent non-royal persons, whose images presumably were not as rigidly bound by traditional canons and therefore allowed the artist greater flexibility in their rendering. Their existence, however, shows clearly that, earlier ethnocentric judgments notwithstanding, the Maya were more than capable of rendering "naturalistic" profile figures. Their choices for representing the pose of the human figure had nothing to do with technical limitations, but reflect instead cultural aesthetic preferences and values. By the fifth century CE, the principle profile figures on Maya stela were almost always depicted facing left (Miller 1999, 93).

Usually, the "back" or rear broad side and the two narrow edges of the stela, if not left unadorned, bore hieroglyphic inscriptions dating and describing the events depicted by the main scene. Occasionally, the inscriptions contain allusions to events in mythic time, projected millennia and even billions of years to the far-distant past or future, invoked as exemplars or parallels for the king's deeds in the present. Others record parentage or other aspects of the king's genealogy to underline the legitimacy of his claim to rule (Newsome 2001, 20), perhaps most particularly in cases where that legitimacy was most questionable in actuality. But even in the Early Classic there are exceptions to these general compositional trends. Tikal's Stela 31 has figures carved on three sides (King

Sihyaj Chan K'awiil in "front" and an image of his father Yax Nuun Ahiin on two sides) (Fig. 151). Particularly in the Late Classic period, and at sites at the southeastern edge of the Maya sphere, like Copan, some stelae had royal portrait figures on both the front and back (Fig. 152). At both Copan and Tonina, Mexico, the carving of these royal effigies approached and attained three dimensions. Clancy (1999, 17-18), focusing on the Early Classic (c. 200-600 CE), identifies four variants of composition based on the use of the planes of the stela (Fig. 153). The standard form, with the figure on one broad face only, she calls the panel stela. When figures occur all around the surface of the monolith, but are separated into clearly separate panels by frames, she calls the result the multi-panel compositional scheme. In wrap-around compositions, the carved scenes also extend around the slab but are not divided by frames. The last variant, which she calls "recto-verso," distinguishes stelae where "two opposing faces of the monument are carved with images, thus representing a pair of images that are physically but not visually connected," like the Copan stelae (Fig. 152).

Clancy and others are forced to expand and qualify their definitions of stelae based on decoration to include what seem to be uncarved, "blank," or "plain" stelae. Although photos of these ostensibly non-figural monuments do not make it into the folio volumes or coffee table tomes (nor even into most site reports), at some Maya sites they comprise the majority of surviving stelae. It remains an open and currently unsolvable question as to whether these seemingly undecorated slabs once bore painted scenes which the elements in the rain forest environment of the Classic Maya have long since destroyed without a trace. In one instance, a Late Formative plain stela, stuccoed on one side and stained with red ochre on the other, turned up in a tomb at Kaminaljuyu (Guernsey and

Love 2005, 39). An alternate (but equally unverifiable) suggestion holds that these uncarved monuments were ceremonially wrapped in textiles (Houston, Stuart, and Taube 2006, 84). From our current perceptual habits and aesthetic preconceptions, shaped as they are by the sight of ancient monuments from around the world in their present eroded and denuded state, it comes as a surprise to many avocational students of Maya art that the carved stelae were certainly painted as well, either covered in a uniform wash (red being a common choice) or with the details of the carved figures filled in with bright polychrome, shades of red, blue, or green (Newsome 2001, x).

Aside from form and decoration, any inclusive definition of Maya stelae must incorporate their physical location in its architectural context. In most instances, they are obviously sited for public prominence. As art historian Elizabeth Newsome states in her monograph on the stelae of King Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil at Copan, "stelae are the most visible features of Maya ceremonial environments" (2001, x). They were clearly intended to be seen by large groups of people, in contrast to other works of art, like the carved panels in the interior of the temples of the Cross Group at Palenque, which adorned areas only accessible to the highest ranking elites. The Maya usually set stelae in the open space of the plazas that formed the "theatrical" centers around which groups of royal temples and palaces were arranged, and from which the royal rituals and pageants performed atop these constructions could be viewed by the populace. It is possible that the upright slabs might have functioned in such spectacles as way stations, shrines, or directional indicators for the performance of worship and ritual processions by both the king and his subjects (Newsome 2001, xiii). Usually, stelae stood at the edges of the plazas, sometimes aligned with the stairs or doorways of the royal pyramid temples

beyond the plaza perimeter. Occasionally, they were set up on the lowest terraces of such pyramids (as at Piedras Negras), or, much more rarely, atop low pyramidal platforms (e.g., Structure A-3 at Ceibal). This preference contrasts with the placement of stelae outside the Maya area in the Mexican state of Morelos, where the stelae of Chalcatzingo (see Chapter 4) and Xochicalco (see Chapter 2) usually rested on such platforms rather than at plaza level. The "fronts" or royal images of Maya stelae usually faced the plaza, as if meant to engage the viewers there.

The Classic Maya often paired stelae with another kind of stone monument, low cylindrical forms known in the literature as “altars.” Although analogous monuments produced by earlier Mesoamerican cultures seem to have been used as royal seats (Grove 1970), both archaeological and epigraphic evidence suggests that the Maya "altars" may well have been just that, platforms for the offering of sacrifice, from incense to slaughtered elite captives of war. Caches of rich offerings of jade, shell, ceramics, and other materials, and occasionally human remains (perhaps the relics of royal ancestors), occur beneath many stela-altar pairs, probably deposited at the time of the monuments' dedication as part of the required ritual. Like their pendant stelae, altars may be carved with inscriptions and historical or ritual scenes in relief, or devoid of any decoration, at least in any surviving medium.

Finally, a definition of Maya stelae must situate these monuments in the context of time and the Maya calendar. Besides commemorating battles and accessions, stelae most frequently erected marked the endings of calendrical cycles of twenty years or *katuns*. Some Maya rulers also took the opportunity to mark intervals within a twenty-year cycle. Other stelae celebrated more locally significant dates, like the anniversaries of important

events in the history of the royal lineage. Others appear to allude to celestial cycles--the movements of the sun, the cycles of Venus (linked to war and malevolent influences by Mesoamerican peoples). Doubtless other reasons and occasions will be clarified as the work of hieroglyphic decipherment continues.

If they marked beginnings, stelae could also have well defined endings or terminations. Like the humans who created them, stelae could fall prey to conquest by enemies or by the ravages of time. Invading armies or usurpers smashed royal stelae at some sites, consigning them to the same fate as the defeated lineages that raised them. Stelae desecrated by invaders, damaged by the elements, or perhaps simply in the way of the building projects of later rulers, could be ritually "killed" by breaking or burning and then buried. This seems to be the case with Tikal's Stela 31. Some two centuries after its dedication, its broken pieces were laid to rest in Temple 33, like a human burial (Harrison 1999, 127).

Stelae Before the Classic Maya: Stone Roots

Although stelae are a diagnostic attribute of Classic Maya civilization, the archaeological discoveries of the last seven decades have firmly established the fact that in their ultimate origins, stelae are neither Classic nor ethnically Maya. Although I discuss a possible Central Mexican exception in Chapter 4, archaeologists and art historians generally agree that the earliest stelae in Mesoamerica were produced by a Gulf Coast culture of the Early to Middle Formative periods (c. 1500-400 BCE) and related cultures in Morelos and Chiapas. This Gulf Coast civilization, known only from

archaeological discoveries, became known in the archaeological literature from the early 20th century as "Olmec," named after a much later ethnic group occupying the same regions of the modern Mexican states of Veracruz and Tabasco. There is no evidence to link the archaeological culture of the Formative with the Epiclassic to Postclassic people from which its name is derived. As I will discuss, in Chapter 3, the later, historic Olmec loom large in some recent explanatory constructs for the nature of cultural and artistic interaction between Central Mexico and the Maya during the Epiclassic, including the presence of stelae in both regions. These latter-day Olmec may have spoken a Maya language, whether or not they served as the ubiquitous culture brokers they become in these theories. Present linguistic, epigraphic, and ethnographic research (e.g., Tate 1999) suggests that the Formative-period remains on the Gulf Coast were the work of speakers of a Mixe-Zoque language, probably completely unrelated to the historical Olmec.

Besides being historically and ethnically inaccurate, the entrenched moniker of "Olmec" for the Formative centers of Veracruz and Tabasco is controversial for another reason. Art from Gulf Coast sites like La Venta and San Lorenzo shares aspects of style and iconography, to varying degrees, with contemporary but geographically and ethnically diverse cultures across Mesoamerica. Previous interpretations, and some contemporary hold-outs (e.g., Diehl 2004), posit that these similarities were the result of a diffusion or spread of concepts from the Gulf Coast Olmec sites, via mechanisms ranging from warfare to a rather Eurocentrically constructed notion of religious missionary proselytizing to, in more recent versions, trade and exchange networks among elites. Because the Gulf Coast Olmec sites include some of the most monumental works in this style, proponents of this model hold that it must have originated there, making the

Olmec the creators of this, and since it is the earliest known, all subsequent Mesoamerican visual traditions. The Olmec become the "Mother Culture" (e.g., Covurraubias 1957) from which sprang all the key features of later Mesoamerican civilizations from Central Mexico to the Maya in this modern archaeological creation myth. In the past three decades, this model has been increasingly challenged by alternative views. In these newer theories, the motifs and forms previously ascribed to a Gulf Coast origin did not all stem from the Gulf Coast, but represent a widely distributed pan-Mesoamerican visual language, with different features and components contributed by a number of cultures (Sharer and Traxler 2006, 168, 175). Reilly (1995), for example, distinguishes the Gulf Coast Olmec from the larger visual tradition, which he dubs the Middle Formative Ceremonial Complex. While the Olmec heartland produced the biggest monuments, many regions and ethnicities participated in the formation and spread of the complex.[152]

Stelae first appear at Gulf Coast Olmec and related sites like Chalcatzingo in Morelos (see Chapter 4) during the Middle Formative (c. 900-400 BCE), when the site of La Venta in Tabasco culturally (and perhaps politically) dominated the Gulf Coast. A few writers (e.g., Guernsey 2006, 30) place their advent slightly later, in the transition between the Middle and Late Formative. La Venta was occupied into the late first millennium BCE and its stelae are difficult to date from archaeological context alone, but the archaeological dates for Chalcatzingo suggest that the Middle Formative dating is substantially correct (Grove 1984). Why the Olmec and their neighbors started producing monuments in this form remains the province of speculation. One interpretation holds that the original impetus for stelae with their carved panels was an attempt to simulate the

[152] For a recent summary of the controversy, and attempts at moving beyond it, for a lay audience, see Lawler (2007).

surfaces provided to sculptors by natural rock faces in a slightly more portable and certainly more controlled and regular form (Clancy 1990, 24; Guernsey 2006, 16, 32), or at sites (like La Venta) where there are no naturally occurring rock outcrops. While sculptures executed in Olmec style adorn natural rock outcroppings at Chalcatzingo and elsewhere, there is no evidence that these antedate the development of stelae, though the general notion of using such formations as the surface for incised or painted decoration dates back to the time of the earliest native cultures in North America. Another suggestion (Clancy 1990, 22; Guernsey 2006, 34) looks for the inspiration for the stela form in the natural faceted columns of basalt used in Olmec constructions at La Venta. Guernsey points to the existence of Middle to Late Formative columnar stelae in basalt in the highland Maya site of Kaminaljuyu, Guatemala, as evidence for this theory. She also notes (2006, 31, fig. 2.15) the presence of carved "columns" at the Early Formative Olmec site of San Lorenzo that she speculates "may be early stelae." In fact, in Chapter 4, I discuss a Central Mexican monument, from the Early Formative at Cuicuilco, that may be the oldest Mesoamerican stela known to date, and it is also columnar in shape. It antedates the Middle Formative (Clancy 1990, 22) or Middle to Late Formative (Guernsey 2006, 35) dates assigned to steliform monuments carved from natural basalt columns at Kaminaljuyu and elsewhere in Guatemala. Be that as it may, according to this hypothesis, Formative sculptors adopted the natural prismatic basalt columns because their naturally occurring separate surface planes provided multiple fields for continuous, wraparound or separate relief scenes.

Another speculative hypothesis looks for the origin of the stela form not in huge natural rock faces and basalt columns, but in a small man-made object, the stone celt or

axe-head (Clancy 1990, 2; Guernsey 2006, 35; Reilly 2005, 34). Originally a utilitarian implement affixed to a wooden shaft and employed for cutting wood to clear fields for maize preparation, for the Gulf Coast Olmec, celts became elite ritual objects, carved of jade and incised with sacred symbols and scenes. In a sweeping attempt at interpretation, anthropologist and iconographer Karl Taube believes that the Olmec equated the shape and color of jade celts with green ears of corn, the precious blue-green quetzal feathers worn by Mesoamerican elites, and the equally precious elite themselves (1996, 42-50). The outline of these ceremonial axe blades resembles that of many stelae, a long tapering trapezoid with a rounded top at the narrow end (the poll end of the celt). In several Olmec and related stelae, the resemblance is quite striking, like Chalcatzingo Monument 24, which Taube describes as "with a strong tapering butt resembling the narrow poll of a stone axe" (1996, 51). The iconography of several Olmec engraved celts also recalls stelae in both imagery and symbolic implications. They depict a ruler standing at the symbolic center of the cosmos, surrounded by the four cardinal directions, and bearing the attributes of a common pan-Mesoamerican mythic image, the World Tree (Fig. 154). In later Maya belief, the multiple levels of the universe--the watery underworld beneath the earth, the middle world of mortals, and the heavens of the celestial gods above the earth--were envisioned as connected by a supernatural tree which supported the sky and served as the vertical axis of the cosmos. It also served as a path via which gods, ancestors, and shamans could travel between levels (Fig. 155). Since the ideological trappings of Classic Maya kingship emphasized the ruler's role as shaman, mediating between this world and the supernatural realms for the benefit of his subjects, a number of Maya stelae, notably the series at Copan studied by Newsome, depict the king as the

human counterpart of this cosmic conduit. By extrapolating back in time from the better documented Maya beliefs to the iconography of Olmec art, Reilly (2005), Schele (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993, 136-137), Karl Taube (2000b), and others interpret the imagery of Olmec celts as reflective of similar notions about elite roles in the cosmos. Like stelae, celts were sometimes buried upright in the earth as offerings.

Archaeological evidence from La Venta supports a symbolic link between celts and stelae. In a miniature tableau of stone figurines buried as a cache, Offering 4, a miniature architectural background for the small figures takes the form of what looks like an array of stelae--formed by a group of upright greenstone celts (Guernsey 2006, 35) (Fig. 156). Several stelae at the site are carved from greenish stones, as if in a deliberate attempt to evoke the jade of the ceremonial celts. Like some Olmec jade celts, a group of celt-shaped stelae, half of them of green stone (Fig. 157), from the base of La Venta's great pyramid platform (Mound C) display a supernatural image identified by art historians and archaeologists as the Olmec Maize God (Taube 1996, 40, fig. 2; 2000b, 310, fig. 13d; Diehl 2004, 65, 70, 77, 115; Reilly 2005, 34). In later Maya iconography, the Maize God is equated with the ruler and with the World Tree. For Taube, these stelae, like Classic Maya examples, represented maize as the cosmic tree supporting the sky (1996, 51).

Whatever their origins, Olmec stelae tend to be more roughly shaped and preserve more of the natural configuration of the "parent" monolith than their Classic Maya progeny. Stela 2 at La Venta (Fig. 158), depicting a frontal figure of an ruler surrounded by floating divinities or ancestors, is carved from an irregular boulder falling far short of later neat tablets. One of its natural planes provides the bounded surface for the images (Guernsey 2006, 33). In fact, Clancy suggests that Mesoamerican stelae did not free

themselves from their parent boulder and basalt column forms to become tabular monuments until the Late Formative (c. 400 BCE--200 CE) (1990, 27). She admits that some more well-finished specimens, like an Olmec-style stela from Amuco in Guerrero discussed in Chapter 5, seem to date earlier on stylistic grounds (Gulf Coast Olmec traits) (1990, 28), but she does not mention the well-carved examples at Middle Formative Chalcatzingo. In function and imagery, however, Olmec stelae clearly anticipate their Maya descendants. Although the La Venta celtiform stelae display images of deities, other stelae from the same site, like Stela 2, depict royalty, dressed in elaborate headdresses and wielding an array of ritual implements, engaged in blood-letting rituals and conjuring ancestral visions (Newsome 2001, 17). Carved depictions of what look like cords or textile wrappings suggest that Olmec stelae may have been ritually "bound" or "bundled" like Classic Maya monuments (see below) (Reilly 2005, 34).

Although the Gulf Coast and related Central Mexican stelae may have been the first Mesoamerican monuments in this form, the practice of erecting stelae spread to the southern highlands of Guatemala and adjacent Chiapas by the end of the Middle Formative. The inhabitants of these regions included both Maya (to the east) and speakers of Mixe-Zoque languages (to the west). In fact, Guernsey (2006, 9, 14) speculates that part of the reason for the adoption of such monumental "billboards" in the southern highlands was the ability of their imagery to communicate messages across ethnic/linguistic barriers. Two stelae, more refined in shape than their Gulf Coast analogs, were erected at the site of Tzutzuculi, Chiapas, during the transition between the Middle and Late Formative (c. 400 BCE). Setting the precedent for later Maya practice, these slabs are paired with an altar. Stelae appear at Monte Alto, Guatemala, by 600 BCE

and at El Porton, Guatemala, by 400 BCE (Sharer and Traxler 2006, 197). Curiously, plain stelae seem to be earlier than decorated examples in the southern highlands (Guernsey 2006, 36). At the Mixe-Zoque site of Izapa, Chiapas, the convention of demarcating the celestial realm above and the earth below the scenes by symbolic bands makes its earliest appearance in the late first millennium BCE (Guernsey and Love 2005, 39) (Figure 159). In adopting the practice of raising stelae, the Maya and Mixe-Zoque peoples of the southern lowlands intensified it and put it to use bolstering the legitimacy of the rulers of the emerging local centers.

At El Porton and Kaminaljuyu (Fig. 160), we see the appearance of the Maya tradition of adorning stelae both with reliefs of rulers impersonating deities, performing rituals, and conquering foes, as well as hieroglyphic texts. In fact, though the Kaminaljuyu inscriptions remain incompletely deciphered, archaeologist Federico Fahsen and epigrapher Nikolai Grube identify the language of these Formative stela texts as the same Cholan Maya employed on later Classic inscriptions (Fahsen 2000, 90; Fahsen and Grube 2005, 78). Sharer and Traxler speculate that the inscription on El Porton Monument One "may be the earliest example of Maya writing thus far discovered" (2006, 197). By the Late Formative, highland Maya stelae featured the earliest Maya dates in the Long Count calendar system, based on the intervals of time elapsed since the last cyclical creation of the world in 3114 BCE. At Tak'alik Ab'aj, Stela 5 (Fig. 161) shows a Maya lord accompanied by a date corresponding to 126 CE, and Stela 2 from the same site may bear an even earlier glyphic date. Stelae seem to have been a part of the pattern of interrelated traits that characterize Maya civilization from its very beginnings.

At the same time that the southern highland Maya and their Mixe-Zoque neighbors

were erecting stelae to commemorate their rulers, the Maya of the lowlands of northern Guatemala--the future geographical focus of Classic Maya civilization--were also raising monumental architecture and sculpture. However, not as many stelae survive from these Middle to Late Formative lowland centers as in the highlands. The builders of the cities of Nakbe and El Mirador erected stelae and altars from the Middle through Late Formative, but many of these survive only in extremely fragmentary condition, perhaps as the result of deliberate destruction (Hansen 2000, 56; Sharer and Traxler 2006, 261). Only one Nakbe stela remains relatively complete, Stela 1 (Fig. 162). This shows two elaborately garbed males facing each other, perhaps the Hero Twins of later Maya myth (Hansen 2000, fig. 75). In style, this Nakbe stela is clearly related to contemporary examples in the southern highlands (Newsome 2001, 22), particularly El Porton Monument One, reflecting "a common artistic and ideological tradition" (Fahsen 2000, 89). However, at the huge lowland center of El Mirador, none of the fragmentary extant stelae show ruler portraits, though a few (e.g., Stela 4) have brief hieroglyphic inscriptions (Sharer and Traxler 2006, 269). This leads to the speculation that "this absence may indicate that the use of writing for public displays of power originated in the southern Maya area at sites like Kaminaljuyu, and that the uses of writing remained relatively rare at lowland centers until the Classic period" (Sharer and Traxler 2006, 261). In general, these early lowland stelae do not compare in quantity or complexity to their analogs to the south, and factors other than poor preservation may be involved. One prominent feature at early lowland Maya sites are huge stucco effigy masks of deities associated with royal power, decorating temple platforms. Possibly, these sculptures, rather than stelae, served as the primary monuments by which the rulers of these

Formative centers displayed their power and legitimated their claims to rule.

As both the highland Maya cities and lowland centers like El Mirador collapsed or lost their influence in the early centuries of the Common Era, other lowland Maya sites like Tikal and Uaxaktun in Guatemala rose to cultural and political ascendancy, marking the inception of the Classic era. The oldest Classic Maya stela, and indeed the oldest excavated monument bearing a Long Count date from the lowlands, is Stela 29 from Tikal, dedicated in 292 (Fig. 163). As Tikal grew in prestige and power of the next few centuries of the Early Classic period (c. 250-600), many more stelae were erected at this site and across the lowlands. In general, Early Classic stelae, in contrast to later examples but similar to their "Olmec" and southern highland precursors, "are irregular and asymmetrical in shape, evoking the impression that the stone from which they were carved was untouched and in natural state..." (Clancy 1999, 15). By the Late Classic, stelae not only took on the refined shape familiar to casual viewers of popular illustrated books on Maya art, but blossomed and ramified into great regional diversity in style and materials. At Tikal, low relief depictions of stiffly hieratic figures dwarfed by their outsized regalia represented a conservative aesthetic continuous with Early Classic traditions (Fig. 149). At Copan, the availability of easily carved volcanic tuffs provided carvers with the material basis for experimentation with high relief and three dimensional forms (Figs. 146, 152). At Quirigua, the stelae of the eighth century ruler K’ahk’ Tiliw (Looper 2003) tower above all rivals in height and colossal scale (Fig. 148), while at Palenque, for reasons unknown, stelae became a neglected art form at this major center, with only two extant examples.

Classic Stelae: Function and Meaning

The meaning of Classic stela and their relation to ritual behavior is complex and multi-layered, the complexity intensified by variations in practice among Maya polities. Many interpretations published in the last four decades, following the hieroglyphic decipherments that confirmed that the scenes on Maya stelae were historical and not purely esoteric in nature as previously held, highlight the role of stelae in proclaiming the power of Maya kings and bolstering their legitimacy to rule and quasi-divine status. Clearly, Classic Maya stelae constituted massive displays of royal power. The labor alone involved in quarrying, transporting, and sculpting these often massive slabs of stone reflected a ruler's ability to command human effort and resources on a grand scale, an act of conspicuous expenditure setting the king apart from his subjects and emphasizing his ability to out-compete both local predecessors and rival rulers at other sites in grandiosity. The images on stelae proclaimed that their royal patrons did all that the ruling ideology demanded of them in the religious, political, and military spheres--and in superlative fashion. As Newsome summarizes,

> In essence, stela compositions affirmed that an individual had performed the diagnostic rites of kingship, such as accession, as well as sacrifices that fulfilled the community's obligation to provide the gods with appropriate offerings. The stelae also promoted individual histories, providing leaders with a forum for a public 'cult of personality' that permitted them to exalt their exploits in war, display their piety in relation to the gods, or to publicize their display of the emblems of sacred and secular power. (2001, 14)

The same art historian both amplifies and contextualizes this line of thought:

> From the perspective of the political interpretations of the early 1990s, stelae were tools the elite used to promote and authenticate their claims to power. They accomplished this by manipulating ritual and religious symbols, such as those depicted in the imagery of stelae and other stone reliefs, to justify their status and

> right to domination. The monument itself was a vehicle for displaying iconography and inscriptions that asserted those claims in a propagandistic and sometimes legalistic mode, demonstrating that a successor's right to the throne was sanctioned by dynastic genealogy, divine approbation, and his ability to perform the diagnostic rites of office. Stelae were billboards or 'political posters' that created a lasting record of these justifications, a public record in stone that validated power throughout the life of the king who dedicated the monument and supported the claims of his heirs to the throne. (2001, ix)

The profusely rendered sacred symbolic costumes and regalia the king wears on many stela scenes, as well as the glyphic inscriptions themselves as far as the probably largely illiterate populace was concerned, represented the king's monopoly on esoteric knowledge (Looper 2003, 25). This kind of display of conspicuous consumption was crucial to chiefly and kingly power in the Americas (Helms 1979; Knight 1989). Since it seems likely that Maya rulers maintained their power more through ideological means rather than direct control or management of the economy, the importance of stelae and other public monuments as tools of domination was crucial (Demarest 2004, 207).[153]

Yet as Newsome and many other art historians, archaeologists, and epigraphers have come to recognize, this interpretation, while certainly true on one level, is incomplete, imposing as it does upon the ancient Maya contemporary Western notions of religion, cosmology, and politics as separate and mutually exclusive domains. For the Maya, stelae were not just monuments, but living entities, charged with sacred force or *k'uh*. Even their overt function as manifestations of the king's power goes far beyond European ideas of the relation of image to reality. Stelae bolstered the kings' influence and glory, but not just in the sense that modern political propaganda serves ruling groups. For the Maya, the stela was not just an image of a ruler, but a double, an extension and multiplication of his being in time and space. In fact, recent epigraphic work by Stuart and colleagues

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[153] For a review of theories on the nature of Maya kingship, see Rice (2004, 43-51).

(Houston, Staurt, and Taube 2006) demonstrates that stela and other royal portraits are referred to in some of the accompanying glyphic texts as the "body" (*baah*) of the ruler portrayed.

Monuments thus literally embodied the kings and gods portrayed, to the degree that the inscription on Monument 30 at Tonina records literally that the king himself, rather than the stela, was "stood up" or erected (Stuart 1996, 159-160). The stela contained the king's spiritual force, and extended his person into multiple locales on the landscape, as well as into permanent stone forms that outlasted the mortal fate that even god-kings ultimately shared with their subjects. Not that this (to a modern Western mentality) esoteric equation of image and ruler precluded what would today be pragmatically called political concerns. In fact, the proliferation of stelae at Late Classic sites may be the result of a kind of monumental "arms race" or "stela envy," as kings erected stelae in ever-increasing numbers to compete with their rivals, not just in prestige, but in the number of stony doppelgangers arrayed across the landscape. As Houston, Stuart and Taube phrase it,

> Maya lords may have found that displays of the royal self by rulers in neighboring polities, or by earlier lords within their own sites, necessitated repeated self-presentations in the form of monumental portraiture. Such competitive image making for esoteric spiritual ends may have functioned as one of the driving forces behind the system of Maya royal representations. This pattern was especially marked during the Late Classic period, when the number of stelae increased greatly, as did evidence for increased competition in war, alliance building, and royal visits, too apparently gained in importance and frequence. (2006, 101)

Besides giving Maya rulers the opportunity to extend their presence and power beyond the physical and temporal limits of their mortal frames, stelae also permanently fixed the calendrical period endings they marked and their associated rituals into concrete and enduring realities--and equated the sacred march of time with the king. For the

Classic Maya, "when a king commissioned a stela in his own image, his identity became conflated with a cycle of 360 days[154]...The stela allowed the king to be linked with the most fundamental definitions of space and time, thereby asserting his supernatural nature." (Looper 2003, 11). Stelae reenact the king's performance of ritual as long as their stone images endure. In addition to being the monumental "footprints" of ephemeral performance, stelae were also active components, even participants, in ritual (Stuart 1996, 149). They may have marked out processional paths for calendrical rites, by analogy with the practices of Conquest-era and contemporary Maya (Rice 2004, 147-149). The dedication rituals for stelae involved wrapping or binding the stones with cords or textiles, an action designated by the verb *kultun* in the texts and itself represented in some works (e.g., an incised peccary skull from Copan, in Houston, Stuart and Taube 2006, 81-82, fig. 2.21; Fig. 164). Houston, Stuart and Taube (2006, 83-84) parallel this action to the Mesoamerican practice of wrapping dead rulers in mortuary bundles: both serve to contain or reinforce the spiritual force inherent in sacred objects, guard it, and mark the end of a key interval, the commemorated time period or the ruler's life. They speculate that the ultimate model or prototype for this ceremonial wrapping of stone slabs lies in the shamanic practice, preserved among some indigenous Mesoamerican groups, of keeping small crystals and other stones, employed in divination, in sacred bundles. Both modern Maya divinatory practices and the ancient stelae are similarly tied to calendrical cycles. Art historian Matthew Looper (2003, 23) conceptualizes this ritual use of textiles to contain and strengthen the spiritual force of Maya stelae a "technology of ritual transformation," very different from any contemporary Western notions of

[154] The “vague year” or *haab* of the Maya traditional calendar consisted of 360 days divided into 18 months of 20 days, plus a “month” of the additional five days of the solar calendar.

"sculpture" or "performance art."

Inseparably linked to considerations of the function of stelae are interpretations of the symbolic significance of the form itself. Whether or not the original impetus for creating tabular stone monuments came from stone celts, at Copan and Quirigua at least, individual stelae were given names incorporating the glyph for "celt" (Stuart 1996, 155), indicating an equation of the stelae with these essential tools for Maya subsistence activities. I have earlier discussed the original interpretation of the glyph for stela as meaning literally "tree-stone." Although this reading has been superseded, the arboreal symbolism of stelae remains a viable hermeneutic option, at least in some cases. Images of the World Tree bridging the earth, underworld and sky, and equating the ruler with this sacred world axis, are common in Maya art and certainly are not limited or specific to the stela form. There is no iconographic feature shared by all stelae that identify them as trees (Looper 2003, 8), but Newsome's (2001) study of Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil's stelae at Copan demonstrates that the iconography of this series indeed reflects the symbolic equation of the stela and the body of the king with the World Tree. Her interpretations are supported by some features specific to Copan stelae, like cruciform foundation vaults, representing the four directions, with the stela set up in the center as vertical axis. Somewhat shakier as supporting arguments are her extrapolations back to Classic Copan of beliefs and practices around trees, stones, and wooden crosses documented for the Yucatan Maya at the time of the Spanish Conquest and for contemporary Maya peoples (see also Christie 2005). Meanings and symbols can change a lot over the course of eight to thirteen centuries, even in the same basic cultural and linguistic tradition, although decipherment of Classic hieroglyphic texts does indeed reveal much ideological

continuity with later developments.

On a more general level, stelae shared with the World Tree the function of portals between levels of the universe. This symbolism appears to be reflected in their architectural setting. Looper (2003, 11) comments about the association of stelae with temple platforms--in themselves symbolic cosmic axes: "Since their invention, stelae had been physically associated with mounds and pyramids. The universal Mesoamerican conception of mounds as effigy mountains and of mountains in turn as the abode of spirits and ancestors suggests a function of stelae as portals to the supernatural world." Such portals in Maya cosmology required the force believed to be contained in human blood and evoked in ritual to open them, and stelae may also have possessed such sanguinary associations. One Classic ceramic vase painting (Schele and Miller 1986, 287, pl. 117) appears to show a sacrificed child on a recumbent slab in front of a stela, corresponding to the position of the altars in stela-altar pairings. The sacrificial function of at least some Classic Maya altars is supported by the presence of grooves for drainage of fluids worked into the stone surface of an example paired with Stela 4 at Copan (Looper 2003, 13). Thus the association of at least some stelae with the *axis mundi* of Maya cosmology seems assured although the original epigraphic basis of the equation has been superseded by more recent translations.

The End of the Maya Stela Tradition

The end of the Classic period, the much-discussed "Classic Maya collapse," is defined on the basis of the cessation of key institutions, practices, and art forms, not least

the erection of stelae. But what often gets portrayed in the popular literature and media as an abrupt and apocalyptic shift, and the "disappearance" of a culture, if not the Maya people themselves (particularly in the accounts found on the shelves of the New Age section of mass market booksellers), was in fact a complex series of cultural changes that did not occur simultaneously but affected various lowland Maya polities at different rates and dates (Chase and Chase 2004). Although a large-scale depopulation took place in the southern lowlands by the end of the Classic, the Maya themselves did not disappear, as the ten million or so living Maya currently still residing in Guatemala and southern Mexico can readily attest. Rather, the office and cult of individual divine kingship and its trappings--including stelae and the practice of recording historical dates in the Long Count system--ceased as viable forms of governance and ideology. The Classic states ruling via this system suffered the disintegration of their legitimacy and were in many cases abandoned. The causes of this change have been debated for decades, and it seems likely that no single culprit can account for the Classic "collapse." Rather, the damage looks like the work of a gang, a combination of factors, including overpopulation and corresponding ecological degradation, the chronic and increasing warfare and competition among Maya cities and royal lineages, and drought, with different factors more salient in different areas (Webster 2002). Accelerating warfare played an important part in the collapse of Dos Pilas and Aguateca in western Guatemala (Demarest 2006), while the increased power of local nobles at the expense of the king might have hastened the downfall of Copan. Not all centers fell at once, or even at all: Dos Pilas was destroyed in 761, and Palenque and Bonampak in Chiapas recorded their last Long Count dates by the end of the eighth century, but Tikal survived well into the ninth, and the last Long

Count date, corresponding to 909 known to date comes from Tonina (Martin and Grube 2008, 189). On the other hand, the site of Lamanai in Belize remained inhabited through the end of the Classic until the Spanish Conquest and beyond into the 17th century (Pendergast 1985).

The period from c. 780-950, during which the processes of the "collapse" led to the transformation of Maya society into the Postclassic forms ultimately encountered and destroyed by the conquistadors, is known as the Terminal Classic. This phase witnessed the last manifestations of the Classic stela tradition, but many formal changes characterize Terminal Classic monuments from their precursors. In the northern Peten, in the Tikal area, Terminal Classic stelae are often asymmetrical in form, wider at the top than at the base. While retaining the standing posture of their royal subjects, and the depictions of the "scattering" ritual, their broadened upper registers are often crowded with baroque designs of floating ancestors and gods, the so-called cloud riders (Fig. 165) (Rice 2004, 152-153; Rice and Rice 2004, 134). In the Pasión River region of western Guatemala, Terminal Classic stelae also tend toward asymmetry, but here the tops of the slabs become narrower rather than broader. They also tend to be smaller than their Late Classic forbears (Rice 2004, 205). At the site of Machaquila, compositions tend toward greater simplification and legibility (Fig. 166), leading to their devaluation as decadent by conservative Maya art historians but making them attractive to viewers more imbued with a modernist aesthetic (Just 2006, 20). At another Pasión site, Ceibal, what look like Central Mexican costume elements, weapons, deities, and calendrical glyphs have led to claims that these stelae (Fig. 167) are the work of foreign invaders. I cover Ceibal in connection with Central Mexican stelae in Chapter 6, but suffice it to mention here that

such "Mexican" or "Mexicanized Maya" intruders have evaporated under the critical scrutiny of more recent archaeological analysis and epigraphic decipherment. The ruler portrayed on one group hailed from the Peten, not the west, according to the texts, while the Central Mexican imagery seems to be part of a widely-shared elite symbolic and aesthetic system prevalent across much of Mesoamerica, at this time of transition, an issue I cover in detail in Chapter 3. No physical migration of people need be invoked as an explanatory mechanism (Schele and Mathews 1998; Tourtellot and González 2004; Just 2006).

In the central Peten, many Terminal Classic stelae shift the focus of the "front" face scene from a single royal figure to two figures engaged in conversation, and the profusion of regal regalia tends to shift toward more minimal costumes (Rice and Rice 2004, 133). Both changes probably related to the diminution in status of individual rulers. In the Puuk hills of northwest Yucatan, cities built in an architectural style that has come to be known by the same name as its topographical setting, survived their southern lowland counterparts by fifty years to as much as a century. Although Puuk art decreased the Classic emphasis on stelae, it retained the practice of erecting such sculptures with innovative modifications in form (Carmean et al. 2004, 429-430). At the Puuk sites of Oxkintok and Sayil, stelae "have narrow, pointed tops...decorated borders and multiple registers" (Rice and Rice 2004, 133) (Fig. 168). The steep pointed upper ends of these Puuk monuments may derive from the peaked shape of Maya corbel vaults, and their multiple panels imitate painted scenes on the pointed walls of corbel-vaulted palaces.

The Puuk stelae represent the last flowering of the Classic stela tradition. By the mid-tenth century, the art form virtually disappears across the Maya world. There are a few

exceptions. At Flores, Guatemala, a stela (Fig. 169) discovered under the modern town church may date as late as the Early Postclassic (c. 950-1250) (Chase 1985, 196). Its carving shows a deity descending head first, the so-called "diving god" motif, common in Postclassic Yucatan. At the aforementioned long-lived center of Lamanai, the Postclassic inhabitants set up two platforms supporting plain stelae, though it is unclear whether these were reset Classic monuments or newly carved for the occasion (Pendergast 1985, 98-99). The Postclassic city of Mayapan, which dominated Yucatan for several centuries before its destruction around 1450 CE, saw a brief revival of stela carving, although with substantial differences from the Classic tradition. Rather than individual kings, who had long been superseded by coalitions of noble lineages as the main actors in Maya politics, the thirteen Mayapan stelae (Rice and Rice 2004, 136) (Fig. 170), with one questionable exception, depict deities and address what from a contemporary western perspective would be called more purely religious concerns (Miller 1999, 149; 2006, 202). Beyond this, the ghosts of the stela tradition may linger behind references in the colonial period Yucatec ritual manuscripts, the *Books of Chilam Balam*, to "stones" set up in Maya towns at the end of katuns (Stuart 1996, 150). The practice of making stelae ultimately fades entirely, petering out with a whimper rather than an apocalyptic "bang."

APPENDIX 3

THE XOCHICALCO TRIAD: A SUMMARY OF THE CONTROVERSY OVER MEANING

In general, the multifarious speculations about the significance of the imagery on the Saenz stelae can be divided into two broad camps. On the one hand, a succession of writers has attempted to argue since their discovery that the figures and glyphs refer to mythological events and persons. The Xochicalcans being dead and mute, the myths by necessity derive from other sources, usually Mexica lore transcribed in the early Colonial period. Depending on the subtlety of the argument, selected Aztec myths are applied literally or used as analogies to "read" the stelae. The subtlest variants of this approach cast a broader net in space but from a narrower frame in time, drawing on Classic Maya and Teotihuacan religious iconography for comparison. The problems created by a huge gap in time between Xochicalco and the Mexica, no doubt corresponding to a gap in meaning as well, are obvious for the first variation. They also apply to the second, since interpretations of other art traditions contemporary with Xochicalco also rely to varying degrees on analogies from historical religious beliefs. The other class of interpretations seeks to find in the images and glyphs of these stelae records of the lives of rulers, along the lines of their Classic Maya counterparts. I attempt here to critically review a range of representatives of both approaches, but I focus on the work of the Mexican archaeologist Roman Piña Chan and the American art historian Virginia Smith as examples of difficulties with religious and historical theories, respectively.

The late Roman Piña Chan's religious speculations grew out of the initial attempts at

explanation of the stelae by Saenz himself. Piña Chan's interpretations also stemmed in part from his identification of Xochicalco with a mythic locale associated with Quetzalcoatl from Nahuatl lore recorded in the 16th century, the paradisiacal Tamoanchan. He apparently derived this equation from the writings of the local bishop and antiquarian Francisco Placarte y Navarrete, who stated the case in a book published in 1911 (León-Portilla 1995, 48). Like the too-literal interpretation of Tula as Tollan by mid-20th-century scholars, this position led Piña Chan to use late ethnohistorical sources concerning the Feathered Serpent and associated deities as a procrustean framework into which he forced the iconography of Xochicalco. In the words of López Austin (1997, 81) he "glibly reconstructed the general sense of the stelae to support a preconceived history of Tamoanchan-Xochicalco, and of the hero Quetzalcoatl." The identification of Xochicalco with Tamoanchan is nowadays either rejected (López Austin 1997) or presented in a more nuanced form than Piña Chan's concrete approach (e.g., León-Portilla 1995, 51).

Furthermore, Piña Chan's writings reflect a tendency among anthropologists that was already well on its way to obsolescence even in his day, a preoccupation with explaining myths and iconography in astronomical terms. In part, this might reflect the lingering influence in Mexican scholarship of Eduard Seler, whose attempts to read the imagery of Mixtec and Mixteca-Puebla manuscripts in almost exclusively astronomical terms, at the expense of historical data, became an article of faith among early 20th-century German Mesoamericanists. One thinks as well of the Morley/Thompson consensus on the Maya, which also influenced the reading of Xochicalco's art in the mid-20th century—that is, the now mostly abandoned fantasy that the reliefs of rulers and warriors on the Pyramid of

the Plumed Serpents represent a pan-Mesoamerican conference of astronomers bent on calendar reform rather than conquest. Piña Chan published his work on Xochicalco across the span of two decades (Piña Chan 1972; 1977; 1989), and his interpretations vary in details over time. He seems to have altered his views, though without providing any stated reasons for his revisions.

Piña Chan (1977, 32), following Saenz (1964, 71), interprets the human face of Stela 1 as Quetzalcoatl emerging from the underworld, represented by the mouth of the serpent, or in astronomical terms, as Venus rising as Quetzalcoatl's avatar Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, the Morning Star. The Central Mexican calendric name 7 Reptile Eye he associates with Quetzalcoatl in his role as the wind and creator of the world. The manifestation of Quetzalcoatl connected with these functions in Mexica myth, is not Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, however, but the wind god Ehecatl, whose duck-billed mask is nowhere in evidence on these stelae or anywhere else in the art of Xochicalco. Piña Chan calls the U-shaped element below the face a "celestial bar" and sees it as a Venus symbol. The framing hands he interprets as a symbol of the action of giving. But López Austin is skeptical of this purported supernatural gesture of generosity. "This would be a possibility if the hands are shown palm up as in the iconography of bountiful goddesses and rain gods at Teotihuacan, but it is my no means clear from the carving that this is the case." (1997, 82)

Again following Saenz (1964, 72), Piña Chan (1977, 32) reads the mouth below the hands and bar as a jaguar maw, representing the underworld through which Venus, like the sun, must descend. But Smith (2000, 87) rejects this species identification. "I do not accept [Saenz and Piña Chan's] interpretations, however, because the mouth is shown

with blunt, human teeth." If this image truly represents the feline mouth of the underworld, its dentition is rather strange.

Piña Chan's interpretations of Stela 1's glyphs are equally problematic. He reads the calendrical dates on the sides of Stela 1 as referring to appearences of Venus as the Morning Star. In the temple with an arrow glyph on side C (Fig. 21), he sees the "burning temple" symbol for conquest familiar from Mexica art and interprets it as a reference to the conquest of the west (underworld) by Venus (1977, 32). These decipherments, like most of Piña Chan's other interpretations of the Xochicalco stelae, are made with no attempt at logical development or citation of evidence. In any event, the temple in question is not depicted as burning, nor is it pierced by the arrow as in later signs for conquest. Likewise, he reads a house glyph with a mummy-like figure inside as signifying Venus moving to the west and becoming Quetzalcoatl's canine twin, Xolotl, the evening star. Again, there is no attempt at adducing logical sequential arguments for this astral saga, nor any invocation of detailed analogies for support.

Piña Chan (1977, 33) asserts that "Stela 1 presents its message poetically," or "narrates poetically the Venus cycle" (1989, 36). This is arguably true for his visionary "interpretation" of the monument as well. The purported message is more clearly summarized in López Austin's critical review (1997, 65) as "The dawn emerged from the depths of the earth thanks to Quetzalcoatl's self-sacrifice." This "message" relates to Piña Chan's hypothesis that the cult of Quetzalcoatl in something resembling its Postclassic Mexica form supposedly originated at Xochicalco, based on calculations of the movements of Venus by the Classic Maya. This is speculation, in large part based on the questionable equation of Xochicalco and Tamoanchan and the astronomical obsessions of

a previous generation of scholars. Basing a reading of Stela 1 on it in turn amounts to erecting an edifice on a foundation of thin air. It does not help Piña Chan's case that in one of his treatments of this stela it is reproduced upside down (1989, 36, fig. 24).

With the "front" of Stela 3, for Piña Chan, we are again dealing with an image of Quetzalcoatl emerging from the jaws of a serpent representing an entrance to the underworld. In his interpretation, this monument refers to Conquest-era accounts of Quetzalcoatl's journey to the land of the dead to retrieve the bones of a former race of humans as the raw materials—along with his own sacrificial blood—to create the people of the Fifth Sun or present age. In fact, there is nothing specific about Stela 3's imagery or texts to link it to an Aztec myth to recorded seven to nine centuries later except Piña Chan's authoritative pronouncement.

The iconography of Stela 2, Piña Chan (1977, 34) admits, is "more complex and difficult to interpret" within his model, no doubt because its obvious Tlaloc imagery is harder to accommodate to his "Feathered Serpent-centric" view of the program of the three stelae. With confidence unsupported by the visible evidence, he hastens to add nevertheless that "it is also related to Quetzalcoatl." He admits that the visage of the deity on the stela "recalls Tlaloc." This is an understatement. It is clearly an image of this god. But, to his eye this representation depicts Quetzalcoatl in a variant manifestation as god of both rain and time. He reads an animal glyph on the side of the monument as a reference to the Mexica dog god of the Evening Star, Xolotl, and uses this to identify the frontal face as none other than that Aztec divinity, here uniquely associated with thunder and lightning. He further expands Xolotl's domain and attributes to include war and time. Again, he devotes no space to an ordered argument in support of his right to make these

additions to the ranks and functions of the already confusing roster of Central Mexican supernaturals—let alone to address questions of disjunctions of meaning over the four and more centuries separating Xochicalco from the Mexica. He concludes "without doubt" (and also without convincing evidence) that Stela 2 refers to Quetzalcoatl as "Lord of Time and Rain God."

López Austin (1997, 65-68, 81-83) has subjected Piña Chan's interpretations to a devastating critique. As he states, "Pina Chan …freely interpreted archaeological data…[His] interpretation of the Xochicalco stelae is a good example of that process…" (1997, 80). He notes multiple contradictions in the successive presentations of his predecessor's imaginative hypotheses—for example, reading Stela 1's inscriptions as indicating Venus' movement first as west to east in the 1970s, then as east to west in 1989. According to López Austin, Piña Chan forced the data to fit his theories. López Austin lists several overall objections to Piña Chan's reconstructions of the meaning of the stela triad. First, Piña Chan gives no rationale for his methods of interpretation, like why he chooses to read the signs and images in the order he selects to do so. Second, he is inconsistent in his interpretation of elements shared by all three stelae. Thus, on Stela 1, he chooses to ignore the number of the glyph at the top of Side A, while he incorporates the numerical component of the corresponding glyph on Stela 3 into his reading. He avoids interpretation of the glyph at the top of Side A of Stela 2. Third, besides selective readings of the glyphic elements, Piña Chan identifies some of the signs incorrectly. Perhaps most damaging, his interpretations change over successive publications with no rationale for the modified readings, reinforcing the impression that they are arbitrary. As López Austin points out,

> The temple on the upper part of the back of the 1st stela was seen [by Piña Chan] in 1972 as an eastern temple because of the architectural style; in 1989 as a western temple, because its architecture resembles Xochicalco's. Why should a temple signify a direction? What elements can clearly be identified as "eastern," Xochicalcan? (1997, 80)

Piña Chan's attempts to read the glyphs and images of the Xochicalco stelae in light of Mexica mythology sometimes involve "adapting" or rewriting the latter to better fit his interpretations of the stelae. For example, the pairing of an arrow with maize is said to refer to the Nahaua myth of Quetzalcoatl's obtaining corn for humans from a primordial Mountain of Sustenance. But López Austin observes that extant narratives of this myth do not mention arrows, but rather allude to the deity's breaking sticks in his harrowing of the source of maize. Finally, López Austin finds identifications like the equation of the obvious Tlaloc on Stela 2 with Quetzalcoatl unsupported and unacceptable.

Piña Chan's interpretations of the iconography of the Xochicalco stelae are reminiscent of other attempts by mid 20th-century archaeologists to uncritically frame their readings of art from Epiclassic and Early Postclassic Central Mexican sites like Tula and Xochicalco in terms of Conquest-era Mexica mythology. In many ways, Piña Chan's explanation parallels Jorge Acosta's interpretation of the Coatepantli frieze and Pyramid B reliefs at Tula as representing the Venusian vicissitudes of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli (Jordan 2005). In fact, first Saenz (1961, 331) and then Piña Chan derived the identification of the serpent helmets of the stelae as the underworld swallowing Tlahuizcalpantecuhtl, in part, by analogy to the erroneous identification by Acosta of a composite creature in the Tula reliefs as the same event (Jordan 2005)! While Piña Chan's presentation of his identifications is far more detailed and lengthy than Acosta's, both are subjective, not backed up by logical argument, and, almost certainly, incorrect.

But like the Feathered Serpent god himself, these ideas have a tendency to be reborn after their apparent demise. Thus, Aguilar (2002) recently revived the notion that the Xochicalco stelae represent aspects of Quetzalcoatl.

Mythological interpretations of the Xochicalco triad did not end with Piña Chan. In the 1970s, art historian Esther Pasztory read them as images of deities, a sun god (Stela 3), his wife, a lunar/cthonic goddess (Stela 1), and a version of the storm god related to the earth and the underworld (1976; 1978, 139-41). She compared this grouping of supernaturals to a cosmogonic myth extrapolated from the iconography and inscriptions of the Cross Group of temples at the Classic Maya site of Palenque. Supposedly, "The cycle focuses on the death of a sun god (Stela St3), his travel to the underworld (Stela St2) and his rebirth as the maize god" (Smith 2000, 83).

Unfortunately, Pasztory put forth these complex mythical interpretations before considerable advances in the epigraphy and iconography of Palenque.[155] The readings of the Cross Group she employed as comparative material are out of date from a present-day vantage point. The central relief panels in the inner sancta or *pib na* (symbolic sweathouses) of the Cross Group do not represent, as Pasztory could claim three decades ago, "major stages in the rule of Chan Bahlum [whose name is now read Kan Bahlam]…apparently compared to the death and rebirth of the Sun God of the agricultural cult" (1978, 139) The "[h]uman figures, one of whom may represent Chan Bahlum, assist[ing] at the different stages of the transformation," are now known via decipherment of the texts to be images of that ruler as an adult ruler and as a child heir to the throne. The mythic content of these political monuments refers to the birth of the

[155] E.g., Schele and Freidel (1990, 237-261), superseded in its turn by more recent work like Martin and Grube (2000, 169-170).

three patron deities of Palenque, only one of which has solar associations, rather the death and rebirth of the sun. The Maize God does feature as demiurge of the present world, after his resurrection from Xibalba, in the Cross Group texts, but he is a distinct entity from K'inich Ajaw or Ah Kin, the Maya Sun God. Neither of these divinities bears any resemblance to the human face on Xochicalco Stela 3; the distinctive features of the Maya sun gods (crossed eyes, "cruller" atop the nose, etc.) are lacking. Nor does the Stela 1 face seem to have any clear links with the purported progenetrix of the gods, dubbed "Lady Beastie" by Schele, referenced in the Cross Group Inscriptions.[156] Indeed, there is nothing about the Stela 1 image to begin with to suggest that it is female.

Following in Pasztory's footsteps, Karl Taube sees the set of three stelae as a unified program reproducing a creation myth of Teotihuacan origin, with Stela 1 the moon, Stela 2 the rain, and Stela 3 the sun in this cosmogonic trinity (2000a, 313). He bases his arguments in part on the correspondence, first noted by Saenz himself, of the "Four Movement" glyph atop the face of Stela 3 to the name of the present Sun or era in Mexica myth. The Nahua legends place the creation of the sun of our present era of cosmic time at Teotihuacan, courtesy of the self-immolation of the gods at the dawn of the Fifth Era. Because the Reptile Eye sign atop Stela 1 is associated with a lunar crescent on a Teotihuacan-related ceramic vessel from Escuintla, Guatemala, and with the lunar "stela" discovered in the early 1990s at Xochicalco (see Chapter 2), Taube identifies the Stela 1 face as the moon (2000a, 312, 313, figs. 10-24 d and e). The rectangular enclosures beneath the faces on Stelae 1 and 3 contain Maya sky signs (St. Andrew's crosses), but based on historic Mexica analogs as well as the use of the sign in Classic Zapotec and

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[156] Stuart (2005) has since identified this alleged "goddess" in the inscriptions as a version of the male

Veracruz art, Taube reads them here as fire symbols. But then he moves back to Classic Maya art to identify the same glyph as signifying the three-stone hearth (one stone for each stela?) at the center of the universe (2000a, 313-314). At this juncture in his paper, Taube leaves the stelae altogether to find images of the creation of the 5th Sun in Mixtec and (perhaps more plausibly) Nahua "Mixteca-Puebla" manuscripts. He does not return to the stelae again in the rest of the paper—they just serve as one of many links in a series of complex arguments supporting of his definition of the War Serpent. He thus does not address how Stela 2 with its Tlaloc image relates to the Mexica creation myth, avoiding a stumbling block over which Piña Chan and, as we will see, Virginia Smith, trip. Like Xochicalco's art style and trade connections, Taube's comparative material for his interpretations of the Saenz stelae (or two of them) ranges widely across Mesoamerica in space, not to mention in time as well. Taube's all too brief comments on the stelae in this paper are certainly brilliant, thought provoking, of great heuristic value, and based on well-developed arguments. But are they a definitive and conclusive reading of the iconography of these stelae? In the absence of additional evidence, it is impossible to confirm.

On the opposite end of the spectrum of opinions, Berlo (1989), Hirth (2000), and Smith (2000, 85-86) view the Xochicalco triad as historical monuments commemorating specific rulers, like their Classic Maya counterparts. As Smith provides the most detailed treatment of this hypothesis, I will focus on her interpretations in this critique. She states her views clearly and succinctly at the outset of her presentation:

> I believe that the three stelae commemorate specific political events related to kingship and warfare. All three monuments have prominently featured human heads, place names, and calendrical glyphs suggesting that they are historical records.

Maize God.

> Moreover, the main figures on these stelae depict specific rulers, while the carvings on the sides and back of the monuments portray events in their individual lives. (2000, 84)

Although her interpretation is historic rather than religious, Quetzalcoatl (or one of his antecedents) still plays a prominent part. In Smith's view, the calendrical glyph 7 RE above the face on Stela 1 names a ruler

> who is associated with the Feathered Serpent. The connection between the Feathered Serpent and the glyph is emphasized by the crown of seven feathers along the top of the cartouche. The same number of feathers makes up the crown of the huge serpents on the talud of the Pyramid of the Plumed Serpents. In addition, the glyph is the same as one of the Eye of Reptile glyphs found next to a person wearing a feathered serpent headress on the east talud of the pyramid. (2000, 85)

She applies the same argument to the feathered cartouche surrounding the "4 Movement" glyph on Stela 3. While the seated figures on the façade of the Pyramid of the Plumed Serpents do seem to represent elite humans rather than divinities (Berlo 1989; Hirth 1989; Nagao 1989; Hirth and Smith 2000) the feather elements in the cartouche, if they are the serpent's crown, could support the deity interpretation as much as Smith's royal reading.

Smith likewise identifies the saurian helmet of stelae 1 and 3 as an image of the Feathered Serpent, which she interprets on the basis of the Temple of the Plumed Serpents reliefs as the patron deity of the Xochicalco ruling class. The bloodletting awls attached to the headdress of Stela 1 (if that is indeed what they are) represent the king's duty to offer his own blood in autosacrifice, as documented for both the Mexica and the Classic Maya and, more specifically, the rituals of accession. "Motifs depicting secular themes such as accession to office are depicted by the bloodletting awls" (2000, 89). One wonders about the wisdom of her word choice: does "secular" have any meaning in Mesoamerican cultures where rulership and religion were so inextricably intertwined?

And although bloodletting played a role in the accession rites of both Maya and Mexica rulers, these were not the only occasions for which the king was required to perform this painful obligation. The putative ruler's open mouth indicates to Smith that he is speaking on behalf of his god, reminiscent of the etymology of the title of the Mexica sovereign, "*tlatoani*"—he who speaks. Elsewhere, she ascribes to the open-mouthed face with visible teeth a "fierce shouting expression" consistent with the hypothetical king's martial prowess (2000, 85).

Like Piña Chan, Smith interprets the inverted U below the human visage on Stela 1 as a reference to the sky in general and Venus in particular. But unlike him, she does not use it to identify the human figure as Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli. She relates it instead to Venus' alleged role as the celestial symbol of Mesoamerican kingship and the alleged use by the Maya of the movements of Venus for the timing of military engagements.[157] She also attempts to tie it to the iconography of accession in Classic Maya art. Rather than the jaguar mouth of the underworld, she interprets the mouth below the bar as a frontal representation of a glyph repeated on the tablero reliefs of the Pyramid of the Plumed Serpents. This sign depicts a set of human jaws devouring a disk. Berlo (1989, 33) reads this glyph as a toponym, while Hirth (1989, 73) interprets it as a representation of conquest and tribute, with the jaws of the Xochicalco polity gobbling a sign of "precious things." A few scholars still cling to an earlier interpretation as a glyph for a solar or lunar eclipse (e.g., Lebeuf 1995). Unfortunately for Smith, the disk, which seems to be an integral part of this glyph, whatever its reading, is not in evidence on Stela 1.

Smith interprets the glyphs on the edges and verso of Stela 1 as a chronicle of events in

[157] See Martin (2000b) and Aldana (2005) for more skeptical views of this oft-repeated claim for the Classic Maya.

King 7 Reptile-Eye's reign. Because the arrow in temple glyph on this stela is not shown on fire, Smith follows Saenz (contra Piña Chan) in understanding it as a place name rather than a sign of conquest. She even discerns a royal burial on one edge, in the form of a house glyph (d14) with its human occupant in flexed position with arms crossed over its chest, suggesting burial, and resting on a mat, a traditional Mesoamerican seat of royal office(2000, 88). In her view, this "death" scene might represent the passing of 7 RE's predecessor as ruler of the Xochicalco polity, or that of 7 RE himself.

The Tlaloc/Venus glyph on Side B Smith reads as the sign for conquest. Certainly the pairing of the Teotihuacan Tlaloc with Venus symbols signified martial matters in both Teotihuacan and Classic Maya iconography (see Chapter 6). But the problem lies in establishing a context for the meaning of individual signs in the form of the correct direction or sequence for reading the glyphs, which is by no means clear. Smith (2000, 90) admits there are no footprints to guide the reading order of the glyphs on side B—if, that is, the footprints really do have such a function.

Smith tries to correlate the calendar dates on Stela 1 to landmarks in 7 RE's life. She assumes that like the dated sequence of stela types erected by each Maya ruler at Classic Piedras Negras (see Chapter 6), the glyphs on the Xochicalco stela triad mark points of transition in the lives of individual rulers. However, Smith does not have the specificity of Long Count dates at Xochicalco to precisely and firmly correlate these dates to corresponding years in the Western calendar, though the time spans represented by what she reads as year glyphs on the stelae are consistent with events in the lifespan of an individual.

Yet, even within her set of assumptions, her conclusions do not always follow

logically. She notes that on Side C of Stela 1, the date 5 Reed occurs next to an image of feet on a mat. She correctly identifies this object as "an indication of accession or rulership" in both Maya and Central Mexican art. Yet, rather than interpret this as a reference to the date of her hypothesized ruler 7RE's taking the throne, she apparently arbitrarily reads this as recording his taking an additional name after a conquest:

> The Late Classic Maya, whose rulers are known primarily through their commemorative stelae, added titles as they participated successfully in warfare…I believe that an event that occurred in the year 5 Reed entitled the individual known here as 7 Eye of Reptile to take the year name as an additional name or title. Possibly the event was his conquest of a place represented by the Fire Drill Temple (C12), because attached to the glyph is a pair of feet on a mat… (2000, 90)

Granted, in many cases a new Maya sovereign seems to have been required to take a captive to confirm his claim to the throne (Martin and Grube 2008, 14), particularly when other factors weakened such claims.[158] However, for Xochicalco, without any independent oral traditions of events, precise correlations between these dates and corresponding years in Western calendrical systems, or phonetic written records, there is little to put checks on carrying this kind of reading far beyond the sorry state of our knowledge and the evidence. Smith's use of "believe" in the context of such scholarly contention over the stelae and so little evidence seems unwarranted. Without a psychic passport into the minds of the carvers, agnosticism seems to be the only viable attitude about any interpretation.

Continuing her interpretation of the glyphs on Side C, Smith likewise reads the date 9 Rabbit as not just an event but a new title: "Seven Eye of Reptile also received the title 9 Rabbit (c 10), but without reference to an event or conquest." This begs the question: if he acquired his previous title via an event on that date, how has he merited a second

calendrical honorific without such an action? For that matter, from its context, how can she know for certain that the date 9 Rabbit is a title? Her explanation seems to be a bridge built of speculation and the use of analogies:

> Nine Rabbit occurs thirteen years after 9 House, 7 Eye of Reptile's possible birth date. Seven Eye of Reptile may have been awarded this name/title 9 Rabbit in public recognition of his elite status. For instance, among the Aztec, boys were first taken to the battlefield at puberty…Perhaps 9 Rabbit is a title given to 7 Eye of Reptile upon his first participation in warfare. Since warfare and conquest are a major theme of Xochicalco's iconography, participation in warfare would have been an event to celebrate. (2000, 90)

The technical term for this process is guesswork, which would be a wonderful heuristic device if Smith's readings did not acquire a tone of certainty by the end of her account. Her wording no longer qualifies her interpretations as speculative; they are baldly stated as if facts.

Paralleling her take on Stela 1, Smith (2000, 94) interprets the 4 Movement glyph at the top of the front face of Stela 3 as a ruler's name, but gives it an added significance derived from the 16th-century Mexica. "The name/title Four Movement is significant in this context because Sahagun [sic]…wrote that persons born on this day were destined to take captives or to die in war, an excellent augury for a ruler who was also a warrior." This is true enough, though I suspect that the dying in war part might be less than auspicious for a king. But such an extrapolation backward from the Mexica to the inhabitants of Xochicalco in the Gobernador Phase would no doubt have drawn the criticism from the late George Kubler that such a large temporal gap between the two might correspond to as difference in meaning as well. As with its counterpart on the front of Stela 1, Smith interprets the inverted U-shaped frame below the face as a Maya sky band composed of elements associated with the planet Venus, enthronement and royal

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[158] E.g., Bird Jaguar of Yaxchilan (Schele and Freidel 1990, 285; Martin and Grube 2008, 130).

office, water, and blood.

As with Piña Chan, Stela 2, with its clear portrayal of Tlaloc, poses a challenge to Smith's interpretation (2000, 90-94). She understands the 7 Rain date above the deity's face as the name of a ruler because she assumes the Tlaloc figure is a king and not a deity. This identification is difficult to sustain from the iconography. I know of no Mesoamerican parallels to a king being simply portrayed as Tlaloc per se, as opposed to having aspects of Tlaloc or costume elements representing the god. She calls the deity image a partially disguised head of a human ruler. By that standard, every Teotihuacan and Mexica Tlaloc image could be a "disguised" human too. Trying to reconcile her interpretation with other signs on the stela she proceeds to argue that Tlaloc's characteristic headdress, staff, and rain-filled pottery vessel are absent, therefore the deity is not shown (2000, 91). But the omission of the god's staff and *olla* is not that surprising, given that it is just an image of the head. By the same logic, it could be argued that the figure cannot be a ruler, since having no body, he also does not hold staffs, atlatls, or other attributes. She continues: "Instead this figure is wearing the trappings of the pseudo-Tlaloc war deity found on the tablero of the Pyramid of the Plumed Serpents. These traits include the jeweled band, goggle eyes, and the trapeze-triangle headress." The reference here appears to be to the figures of warriors or rulers on the pyramid tablero (e.g., Hirth 2000, 255, fig. 11.2), but while they indeed wear the headdresses and goggles described, they nonetheless are clearly human, unlike the creature on Stela 2. Smith then goes on to argue that the person shown on Stela 2 is both ruler and warrior. But she has not in fact firmly established that it is a historical person and not a deity, rendering her succeeding arguments tentative at best.

Smith reads the knotted band over the Tlaloc mouth glyph at the bottom of Side A as a symbol for captive or capture, citing Joyce Marcus for Classic Maya parallels. But can Smith be sure it means the same thing in this context? It certainly has martial associations, but of course so does the deity himself, at Teotihuacan and among the Classic Maya. The pairing of the Tlaloc face with a Tlaloc capture sign could therefore be consistent with a purely mythological theme. But, certain of herself, Smith (2000, 92) moves to stating that the ruler 7 Rain is shown on Stela 2 with attributes of Tlaloc to show him in a martial context, the aforementioned headdress being insufficient to convey this aspect.. In fact, she has not succeeded in identifying the face as a ruler to begin with. To state the identification firmly in this fashion and then attempt a rationalization of why the ruler looks so much like a deity seems to me unjustified on the basis of the evidence, as well as a sign of circular reasoning. If the headdress was deemed insufficient to make the point in this context, why did the carvers not simply add the eye rings over an otherwise human face? That seemed to have been sufficient for the Pyramid of the Plumed Serpent ruler/warrior reliefs she uses for comparison.

The glyphs on Side B of Stela 2 Smith reads as a record of ruler 7 Water's death, but the signs and sequence are different from the glyphs on Stela 1 that she interprets as the death of 7 RE or his immediate predecessor. Two ambiguous objects on Side D get interpreted as yet more bloodletting awls or blood-soaked bark paper, marking the putative king's accession. However, if Saenz (1964, 76) is correct in reading the same disputed elements as flowers or reeds, Smith's interpretation collapses. On the same side, Smith interprets a glyph showing a reed flanked by what she calls water drops as a title, Precious Reed. However, there is no evidence that this is a title rather than a topynym. If

the latter, it could even refer to yet another incarnation of Tollan, perhaps Xochicalco itself. A marshy environment and water plants do not seem out of place on a stela dedicated to a rain deity, if that is the case. Yet Smith jumps to a reading of the Side D text as possibly "on the day 2 Death in the year 6 Flint, 7 Rain, in association with warfare or a Venus event, spoke as the voice of Precious Reed and then let blood" (2000, 94)! Who this personage on whose behalf the lord supposedly spoke was is left unanswered.

Smith's overall conclusion is that

> The stelae are monuments that express power and political behavior. They are also monuments dedicated to individual, militaristic rulers. Although it is clear from the preceding discussions that there are cosmological and religious aspects to each monument, these carvings are perhaps better understood as life histories of the rulers 7 Eye of Reptile, 7 Rain, and 4 Movement, who were commemorated by the recording of important events such as accession, conquest and the acquisition of titles. (2000, 98)

She thinks that these rulers needed to acquire their prestige by deeds rather than heredity (2000, 100)—but the Classic Maya kings relied on both for legitimization.

What I find most disturbing about Smith's readings is the certainty she displays in summing up her interpretations, as though they were no longer that—interpretations—but that elusive entity, "the truth." With so many divergent hypotheses suggested to account for the imagery of these stelae; with the vast temporal and cultural chasm yawning between the the carvers and their modern interpreters; and without Long Count dates, or a Xochicalco Rosetta Stone providing a reading of the glyphs, or even certainty as to what language was spoken at the site,[159] such authoritative statement appear unwarranted. Little wonder that Lopez Austin (1997, 81) takes a rather dim view of the project of

[159] Berlo (1989, 33) tentatively suggests Nahuatl, while Kaufman and his student Michel de Guerrero (2007, 82) maintain that the Xochicalco elite spoke a Mixe-Zoque language and claim to see "Mije-Zoque word order patterns" in the stela and other inscriptions at the site.

interpreting the Xochicalco stela triad. “There can be no true reading of them, simply because we do not yet have the tools needed to read the Xochicalco glyphs.” As with the El Cerrito stelae, in the current state of knowledge (or dearth thereof), agnosticism, critical distance, and considerable humility seem to be minimal requirements for any exploration of this material. All such interpretations must be treated as partial and provisional at best, as heuristic hypotheses rather than dogmas. The significance of the historical interpretive imbroglio over the meaning of Saenz’s three stelae for our purposes is that, besides serving as a distraction from other aspects of these monuments, it muddies the waters for clear comparisons to the ruler portrait stelae in the Maya area and at Tula.

APPENDIX 4

A (VERY) BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TULA/CHICHEN ITZA DEBATE/ACLE

Dramatis Personae[160]

In the discussion of Tula in Chapter 2, I briefly visit the history and historiography of the identification of that site with the Toltec capital, the Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl saga, and the more generalized mythic notion of Tollan. I also noted that Charnay, in the 1880s, identified the ruins of Tula with both the historical Toltec capital and the paradisiacal Tollan. To this colleague of Violet-le-Duc belongs the dubious credit for inaugurating the Tula-Chichen debates by calling attention to the artistic and archaeological similarities between the two cities. Chichen Itza[161] was already known to European and American audiences in Charnay's time, through the publications of travelers and illustrators both reliable (Stephens and Catherwood) and otherwise (e.g., Le Plongeon, of whom more below). Applying the utopian Mexica accounts of Tollan in a literal fashion to Tula, Hidalgo, Charnay privileged the Toltecs as "the fountainhead of all the high cultures of Mexico and Central America" (Jones 1995, 27) and principled abstainers from human sacrifice to boot. As a logical consequence of this position, he attributed all resemblances

[160] For more extensive historiographical treatment of the Chichen-Tula debates, see Kristan Graham and Kowalski (2007) and Gillespie (2007).

[161] The "well of the Itza"--an ethnic group associated with the site in post-Conquest Maya oral and written histories, whose precise identity has generated plenty of controversy in itself.

between the two sites to a Toltec invasion of Yucatan. To support this rendition of events, he enlisted the aid of ethnohistorical material collected by the 16th-century conquistadores and Spanish clerics in both Central Mexico and Yucatan. From the Mexican side, chroniclers alleged that Toltecs took over the Maya region after the collapse of Tula. Some post-Conquest versions of the legends of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl claim he led his followers to the east, or disappeared into the Gulf of Mexico (Nicholson 2001). From the Yucatec side, accounts collected by the infamous 16th-century inquisitor Bishop Landa alleged that a figure called Kukulkan, "feathered serpent," had invaded Yucatan and then returned home to Central Mexico where he was venerated as the god Quetzalcoatl (1978, 10-11). *The Books of Chilam Balam* (e.g., Roys 1967), survivals of Maya historical and prophetic lore committed to writing in the later colonial period, repeated similar accounts interpreted as evidence of a foreign invasion. For Charnay and many of his intellectual descendants, these post-Conquest accounts were "history" in a conventional, Eurocentric definition of that discipline: Quetzalcoatl = Kukulkan, and the Toltec invasion of Yucatan was "fact." QED.

Charnay's speculations were widely opposed in his day by Daniel Brinton and other Americanists who denied any historical reality to the Toltecs of the Mexica sources. Charnay's identification of Tula, Hidalgo, with the Toltec capital was also scouted by less rigorous but no less skeptical commentators who felt that the site did not make the aesthetic grade to be equated with such a mythic place of splendor, and believed Teotihuacan a better candidate for that honor. As seen in Chapter 2, it was Acosta's and Jiménez Moreno's work in the 1940s that shifted the splendid locale squarely back to Hidalgo. By the same time, a consensus had emerged among Mayanists like Sylvanus

Morley, J. Eric Thompson, and Alfred Tozzer concerning the nature and history of Chichen Itza. They observed that the architecture of the southern half of the site (Fig. 171) conformed to a variant of a local Yucatec Late Classic style, dubbed Puuk (Fig. 172), while the northern half showed features like columns in the shape of feathered serpents, reclining figures called chacmools, and atlantids-- strongly resembling the art of Tula. Like Charnay, they invoked the ethnohistorical sources to posit a historical connection, but a very different scenario. In their view, a Maya city of pacifist astronomers, represented by the southern sector of the site, was overrun in 987 by Toltec invaders from Tula (perhaps an exiled dissident faction) or simply "Mexicans" as Morley preferred to call them, and "Mexicanized" Maya allies led by Kukulkan/Quetzalcoatl. Rather than bearers of civilization as in Charnay's rosy view, these Mexicans were barbarians, (feathered) serpents in a Maya paradise, who introduced militarism, human sacrifice, and, to these scholars, a "grey," "unsympathetic," "harsh," "grim," and inferior artistic style. Eventually, however, these foreigners were tamed to some degree by assimilation of Maya ways.

This was the basic paradigm that prevailed from the 1940s well into the 70s and 80s, although by then extensive evidence for the war-like ways of the Classic Maya had reduced the villainous Toltec merely to bearers of bad taste. It still has a few adherents today, like Michael Coe. It was not without variations created by idiosyncratic interpretations of both the archaeological and ethnohistorical data. Some of these were downright convoluted, for example Tozzer's (1957) sequence for Chichen: first a pristine Maya city, then invasion by Toltecs. So far, this is the standard scenario, but on the basis of questionable identifications of the ethnicity of protagonists in relief scenes, Tozzer

added new chapters to the saga. In the sequel, after the Toltecs faded from glory, the local Maya rose up to dominate the city again, only to be vanquished in turn by the Itza, interpreted as a thoroughly Toltecized Maya group. Even Thompson (1959), a proponent of the invasion scenario, and himself hardly averse to invoking multiple migrations of peoples to explain the Tula/Chichen parallels, dubbed this elaborate epic of ethnic struggles "a brisk Virginia reel."

Cracks in the Mayanists' paradigm emerged by the 1960s. The most famous (infamous to his Mayacentric contemporaries) challenge was pioneer pre-Columbian art historian George Kubler's 1961 paper (see also Kubler 1984, 288-300), in which he pointed out that many alleged "Toltec" features at Chichen Itza, like effigy columns and friezes of processing jaguars, seemed to have antecedents in Classic Maya art. On the other hand, there was no evidence for the development of these forms in situ at Tula. Chichen's art also appeared to him more cosmopolitan, incorporating motifs from Teotihuacan and even as far afield as Oaxaca in addition to the features shared with Tula. Combining these observations with what he judged to be the crude quality of Tula's art, Kubler turned the reigning model on its head, at least as far as the origins of the "Toltec" features at Chichen were concerned. Rather than being forced on the Maya by their foreign oppressors, the features shared by Tula and Chichen Itza were developed by the Maya at Chichen, and Tula was a crude copy of the latter. Kubler did not deny a Toltec invasion of Yucatan to explain the links between the distant sites, but took the position that much of Toltec art was "acquired" from their Maya subjects. In this version, Toltec ideas were brought to Yucatan where they were given form by Maya artists, the resultant hybrid (in a pre-Homi Bhaba sense) art at Chichen Itza then serving as the model for the

sculpture and architecture of Tula, just as the invading Mongol dynasts adopted the art forms developed by their aesthetically sophisticated Chinese subjects. Although Kubler's paper provoked considerable controversy--Coggins (2002, 41) refers to it as "the shot that was heard around the small world of Mesoamerican archaeology, resounding still"--the departure from the old scripts here is not as radical a break as it was seen by Kubler's irate colleagues at the time. The Maya still get the all the best roles in the drama. Not only are they superior to the Toltecs, but they are artistic innovators and the civilizers of the Toltec barbarians. The art of Chichen is reclaimed for the Maya, but Tula is disparaged as a second-rate copy. If the Toltecs at least were grudgingly conceded their originality (albeit for creating bad art) in the Morley/Thompson/Tozzer variations, in Kubler's version even this is taken away from them. Maya score: one, Central Mexico: zero.

Kubler's paper met with fierce rejoinders from Mayanists (e.g., Ruz 1962), but other challenges to the standard version of the Tula-Chichen saga were not long in following. One variant theory came from Thompson himself. In 1970, he argued for an equation of the Itza with the Putun or Chontal Maya who inhabited what are now the Mexican states of Tabasco and Campeche on the western edge of the Maya littoral. At the time of the Spanish Conquest, these people functioned as long distance traders spanning the territories between Central Mexico and modern Honduras by sea and land. Because of their geographic proximity and intensive commerce with Nahuatl-speaking groups, the Putun acquired a number of characteristically Mexican cultural traits. Thompson, in a "Virginia reel" to rival Tozzer's, claimed that the Itza had invaded Chichen Itza on their own and introduced some "Toltec" traits, followed later by a mixed group of Putun and

Tula Toltecs. When the notion of a Toltec invasion of Yucatan fell out of favor in the 1980s, many Mayanists adopted a version of Thompson's scenario from which the Toltecs were removed, leaving the Putun as sole bearers of Central Mexican ideology and art to Chichen Itza.

The most sophisticated variant of this explanation remains that offered by historian of religion Lindsay Jones (1995). When extracted from the often dense matrix of continental philosophy (relying most heavily on Gadamer's hermeneutics) in which Jones embeds his suggestions, the core of his argument is that although the Putun builders of Chichen Itza drew upon architectural and artistic patterns from Toltec Tula, they did so as "active receptors" (1995, 372) rather than passive recipients of "influence." Having encountered and allied themselves with peoples across Mesoamerica in their far-flung trading and raiding, the Putun attempted to create a cosmopolitan capital for themselves by emulating the art of their prestigious contemporaries, of which Tula was the most important but by no means alone. Jones (1995, 384-385) follows Kubler in noting the presence of architectural affinities with Zapotec Oaxaca and Classic Veracruz at Chichen Itza. But these traits, just like the borrowings from Tula in Hidalgo, Jones envisions as actively recast and recontextualized by the Putun to meet their own ideological and propagandistic needs.

Though still popular in some circles, the hypothesis of Putun hegemony at Chichen seems to be contradicted by the Maya language employed in hieroglyphic inscriptions at the site, which are in the Chol language of the Classic Maya, not the Chontal spoken by the Putun (Coggins 2002, 72). More recent archaeological and epigraphic appraisals of Chichen cast doubt on a Putun presence at the site. Lincoln (1990) scouts the idea of

Putun settlement, while Schele and Mathews (1998) identify at least some of the Itza as diaspora from the Classic cities of the Peten rather than the Chontal region, based on inscriptional evidence.

In the late 1960s and 70s, a minority of scholars suggested parallels between Chichen Itza's "Toltec" relief sculpture and that produced in what the late Lee Parsons (1969; 1978) referred to as the style of the Peripheral Coastal Lowlands. This overarching rubric seeks to unite the sculptural styles of the "Classic Veracruz" tradition focused on El Tajin with the art of the Cotzumalguapan centers of the Guatemalan Pacific coast, and part of the sculptural corpus at Chichen Itza. Parsons, along with Marvin Cohodas (1974; 1978), initially argued on archaeological grounds and perceived Teotihuacan influence on these styles that they flourished during the Middle Classic, c. 400-700. This would clearly establish the art of the Peripheral Coastal Lowlands as anterior to Toltec art in chronology, removing Tula from the potential donor list for the un-Classic art of Chichen Itza. However, Chinchilla's (1996) more recent archaeological data in the form of both radiocarbon dates and ceramic analyses places the Cotzumalguapan sites in the Terminal Classic, overlapping with Tula Chico. Likewise, a Middle Classic date for Chichen Itza's floruit is contradicted by ceramic, radiocarbon, and inscriptional evidence for a Terminal Classic date (Ball and Taschek 1989, 192).

Movement of ideas and peoples from Cotzumalguapa to Chichen and from there to Tula also figured in the elaborate reconstruction of events proposed by Piña Chan in his book on Chichen Itza in 1980. Here these connections form part of a grand round trip of migrations and diffusion, with "influences" emanating from Xochicalco and reaching the south coast of Guatemala, where they gave rise to the Cotzumalguapa tradition. Ideas and

styles then spread to Classic Maya inhabitants of the Usumacinta drainage, who in turn migrated to Tabasco to become the Itza of the ethnohistorical sources, further identified with the Putun. These folk in turn, not the Toltecs, conquered Chichen Itza. In Piña Chan's version of events, based on his reading of both the Mexica and Maya historical sources, Kukulkan entered Central Mexico from Chichen as a Putun culture bearer, rather than the reverse, closing the loop initiated a couple of centuries before at Xochicalco (1980, 8-10). Tula becomes very much the passive partner in this interaction. As with his reconstruction of the meaning of the Xochicalco stelae, Piña Chan's contribution to the Tula-Chichen debate is certainly complex and detailed, and little touched by the principle of parsimony in explanation.

Nonetheless, these contributions widened the holes in the dominant theoretical edifice. By the late 1980s, it appeared to have crumbled, while a new generation of Maya art historians claimed victory for a more radical version of Kubler's suggestions. A thorough reappraisal of the extant ethnohistorical, archaeological, and art historical evidence gave rise to a new reigning consensus--among the majority of Mayanists, at least--that "Toltec" Chichen Itza never saw an actual invasion from Central Mexico (Kristan-Graham 1998, 5), but antedates the Tollan Phase at Tula by at least half a century (Schele and Mathews 1998; Smith 2007). Thus, however the resemblance between the sites is to be explained, it was not enforced at spearpoint by conquering Toltecs. Many Maya scholars now argue that Chichen's temporal priority gives it creative priority as well as the source of later Toltec iconography as well.

Key to this triumphant revisionism is the critical reassessment of the value and contents of Conquest era Mexican and Maya accounts of the "histories" of Topiltzin

Quetzalcoatl and Kukulkan. From Charnay's day into the late 20th century, these ethnohistorical data, interpreted in a rather literal fashion, were postulated as proof that Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, ruler of Tula, led an army of Toltecs into Yucatan, where he established a new capital at Chichen Itza. As already seen in Chapter 2, more recent scholarship tends to question the historicity of the Central Mexican accounts, discerning significant post-Conquest redaction and overlay to the Topiltzin story and stressing its propagandistic value in a Mexica context (e.g., Lafaye 1976; Gillespie 1989, 134-207; 2007; Townsend 2003a, 2003b), and that transcends of a simplistic reading as Toltec history. As Gillespie noted,

> modern scholars have had to confront many problems in dealing with the documents, including the presence of mythical or supernatural elements, idiosyncratic and regional biases of the different authors...Spanish misunderstandings, ambiguities in the native pictographic writing system, and simple error...Furthermore, European influences rapidly and profoundly penetrated Aztec culture and affected the form and content of historical documents...In addition, the surviving documents from this period represent only a fraction of the extant historical traditions, and they reflect narrowly selected viewpoints. (1989, xxi)

While some earlier scholarship treated these problems "as aberrations that can be eliminated by utilizing a critical methodology developed by ethnohistorians for distinguishing the truly historical elements from the fictional or erroneous details," this methodology itself is characterized by inconsistency and circularity:

> In the process of reconstructing the most likely sequence of past events, it has been necessary to discredit some of the versions of Aztec history--namely, those at variance with the single chronology thought to be the most correct...frequently only part of an account is considered erroneous or distorted...and the remainder accepted as likely to be accurate...There is left then, a residue, a discarded hodgepodge that includes the 'mythological excrescence'...the contradictory passages, the suspect documents, the Spanish influence, and the errors and biases. (1989, xxii)

As Michael Smith (2007, 579) puts it, “scholars need to abandon their attempts to

glean usable ‘history’ about Tula and Chichen Itza from mythological accounts like the books of Chilam Balam and the Aztec histories.” These considerations, combined with the vast disjunction between Mexica and European notions and uses of history, leave the factual basis for the Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl cycles in grave doubt. On the Maya side of the issue, the date for the entrada of the Itza, a group identified by some with the Toltecs, into Yucatan, as recorded in the post-Conquest *Books of Chilam Balam,* was the source for the claim that a Central Mexican invasion reached Chichen Itza in 987. Following a consensus for interpreting Maya calendric dates based on Thompson, Schele and Mathews (1998, 362) redate the arrival of the Itza according to the calendric cycles in the *Chilam Balam of Chumayel* to 692, long before the Tollan Phase at Tula (950-1150).

An early date for "Toltec" Chichen Itza relative to Tollan Phase Tula and its art style seems to be supported by radiocarbon dates. A wooden lintel from the Castillo or "Pyramid of Kukulkan," a large pyramid from the northern "Toltec" portion of the site, yielded a C-14 date of 830 +/- 75, coeval with another lintel from the Monjas group, a Puuk-style structure from the allegedly earlier "Maya" sector of the city, 830 +/-110 (Kristan-Graham 1989, 99). The contemporaneity of these structures harmonizes with the result of other archaeological approaches. Lincoln (1986; 1990), in a detailed settlement pattern analysis and mapping project prepared for his 1990 dissertation, debunks the traditional division of the site into "Maya" and "Toltec" sections of different ages.[162] He notes among other points that the "Toltec" sector is connected to "Maya" architectural

[162] More recently, Cobos Palma (2007, 324, 326) argues that the northern part of the site indeed postdates the southern half, but argues for only a relatively short lag between the two. Expansion of the northern buildings begins around 890, while most of the inscribed structures from the south date to c. 830-890. In addition, he agrees in placing the first phase of the Castillo at 830, and does not believe that the north represents a “foreign” enclave or invasion.

groups by traditional Maya causeways (*sacbes*), that "Maya and Toltec type structures usually stand on a single platform as part of a single set of buildings" (1986, 152); that the Puuk-style constructions are limited to one structural/functional type ("palaces" or "range structures") of the Maya architectural repertoire, and that Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions appear on five "Toltec" monuments (1986, 161). On the basis of these observations, Lincoln concludes,

> Chichen Itza is best interpreted as an integrated whole community, considering both the site plan and the organization of individual archaeological groups. The settlement pattern and architecture provide no evidence of ethnic heterogeneity at the site. Rather, the picture is one of a highly stratified and internally complex political society that was probably ethnically uniform and Maya. (1986, 153)

As further damning evidence against the standard two-stage, two-ethnicity interpretation of Chichen's history, Cohodas points out that the "Maya" Red House stands on top of a clearly "Toltec" ball court (1978, 89, pl. 3; 1989, 228)! Maya long-nosed god masks are used as architectural sculpture on “Toltec” buildings like the Osario or High Priest’s Grave (Schmidt 2007b, 177).

Ringle and associates (1998, 190-192; Bey and Ringle 2007, 416) cite C-14 dates of 886 and 891 CE from the Castillo, and Long Count inscriptions from within *katun* 10.3 of the Maya calendar (889-909) from the "Toltec" High Priest's Grave and "Maya" Caracol. They also point to recent revisions of the ceramic sequences of Chichen to suggest that the main phase of construction at the site had ended by 1000 and perhaps as early as 950 (Ringle et al. 1998).[163] This leaves only a fifty year overlap (at most)

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[163] The traditional position held by archaeologists during the mid-20th century held that one group of wares, Cehpech ceramics, was associated with "Maya" Chichen, while a separate ceramic complex, Sotuta, was contemporary with the "Toltec" constructions. It is now clear that early Sotuta ceramics are associated with "Maya" buildings like Las Monjas as well as "Toltec" architecture, and both ceramic groups are found in the early stages of construction at the Temple of the Warriors and the Castillo, indicating a partial or complete overlap in their manufacture and use. See Cobos Palma (2004) for a recent summary. For evidence against complete overlap, see the unpublished work of Eduardo Pérez as summarized briefly in

between Chichen Itza and the Tollan phase at Tula, which would appear to make the Toltec conquest of Yucatan an unlikely event, or, in Ringle and associates' words, a "near impossibility that Tollan-phase Tula stood as a donor culture. We therefore endorse Cohodas' (1989) contention that Chichen Itza was an Epiclassic city" (Ringle et al. 1998, 184).[164] More recently, they note that the "Toltec" style at Chichen seems to show "a greater time depth and developmental history" at that site than at Tula (Bey and Ringle 2007, 415, 418).

Schele and Mathews (1998, 358) also note similarities in art and architecture between Chichen Itza and Epiclassic sites like Cacaxtla and Xochicalco, supporting, in their view, this revised chronological placement of the Yucatec site Schele and Freidel (1990, 356) read the Long Count date on the High Priest's Grave, rendered by Thompson as corresponding to 998, as in fact 842, thus older than the earliest Long Count date on a Puuk building at Chichen Itza. As a consequence of the inscriptional and radiocrabon dates, Schele and Mathews firmly state that

> Present archaeological evidence indicates that the Itza constructed all the main ceremonial buildings at Chichen Itza before AD 1000. This means that Chichen Itza was older than its central Mexican counterpart at Tula, Hidalgo...If these chronologies hold, it means that the scenario of the Toltec conquest of Chichen Itza is highly unlikely because there is so little overlap in time between the two sites. (1998, 200)

As a consequence, they hypothesize that the visual parallels between Tula and Chichen are the result of Maya "influence" on Central Mexico during the Epiclassic.

Cohodas (1989, 228- 230) believes, on art historical grounds--stylistic and

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Kristan-Graham and Kowalski (2007, 37).

[164] See also Schele and Mathews (1998, 200) and Suhler et al. (2004, 456-458), though the latter believe that the site remained politically powerful until the Postclassic, declining around 1250.

iconographic parallels to the Epiclassic sculpture of Xochicalco and Cotzumalguapa and the style of murals from the nearby site of Mul Chic--that Chichen Itza's "Mexicanized style must have developed by the early eighth century." As a result, he interprets the disparity in style between the art of Teotihuacan and that of Tula as the "results of an evolution that took place at Chichen Itza." Such developments were then passed on to the Aztecs via the intermediary of Tula. The Toltecs have gone from being the invading bearers of bad art to the Maya, to being invading barbarians civilized by their Maya subjects, to being the distant recipients and murky mirrors of Maya aesthetic advances, only now deprived even of their amazing military abilities that enabled them to conquer part of distant Yucatan without leaving a trace in the intervening 800 miles.

Key aspects of Tula's material culture are also missing at Chichen Itza and vice-versa, weighing against the possibility of an occupation of Yucatan by Central Mexican invaders. Silho Fine Orange pottery was produced by Maya in the Putun region and widely disseminated throughout Mesoamerica during the Early Postclassic ((Beyer 1988). Diehl (1993, 270-271) uses this as one of the features of the archaeological record defining a "Toltec Horizon" encompassing the whole area. Yet, he is forced to admit that this ceramic type is rare at Tula itself, while common at Chichen (see Cobean 1990, 493-494). [165] Similarly, Central Mexican ceramics, with one or two exceptions, are not found at Chichen Itza, leading Bey and Ringle to conclude that “direct [ceramic] exchange between the two sites was almost nil” ((Bey and Ringle 2007, 391, 395). While the same authors suggest that the forms of locally produced ceramics at both sites suggest contact, direct imports are scarce to absent.

[165] The exception here is the obsidian workshop at Tula, excavated by Healan in the 1970s, which yielded over a thousand Fine Orange sherds (Bey and Ringle 2007, 386, 391).

So it's all settled, and the art of Epiclassic/Terminal Classic Chichen Itza is the source for the features it shares with Early Postclassic Tula, and, ultimately, with Late Postclassic Tenochtitlan, right? Not so fast. Part of the problem with this new consensus is that the art of the Epiclassic proper (c. 700-900) at Tula was known until very recently only from the very fragmentary remains of sculpture from La Mesa, discussed in Chapter 2. Mastache and Cobean (1989) argued that a fragment of relief showing a feathered headdress (Fig. 174) resembles those of the composite creature images on Pyramid B, and thus illustrates that the art of Tula Chico was stylistically quite similar to later developments at the site. Cohodas (1989, 225) saw the closest parallels to the relief fragments excavated by Mastache and Cobean in Teotihuacan art, while it seemed to Kristan-Graham very hazardous to make any generalized statements from such sparse and battered remains. But, as also noted in Chapter 2, Cobean has since published reliefs, including a reclining figure in a style very close to that of the Tollan Phase, from an Epiclassic context at Tula Chico, contemporary with or predating the “Toltec” art of Chichen Itza (Fig. 81). I suspect that this new material, once noticed and absorbed, will upset the apple cart of the current Mayacentric dispensation, and introduce further uncertainty into the never-ending debate. In addition, Sterpone's recent work, also discussed in Chapter 2, suggesting a 700-750 starting date for Pyramid B and its sculpture at Tula, also tends to throw a monkey wrench into the chronological workings of many current constructs of the Chichen/Tula relationship by possibly supporting the temporal priority of Tula (Kristan-Graham and Kowalski 2007, 45). The details of the early history of the Tula style must await further excavation at both Tula Chico and Tula Grande, but despite the triumphalism of some Mayanists, the case of the Tula-Chichen

question is far from closed, which has suggested to many that perhaps the wrong questions--particularly "Who's on first?"--have been applied to the material from the beginning.

And, from within the realm of Maya studies, voices of dissent sound against the consolidation of a new orthodoxy. Nikolai Grube, Schele's successor as the premier among Maya epigraphers, concurs with Thompson in reading the inscription on the High Priest's Grave as indeed 998 (Grube and Krochock 2007, 242). He finds this date to be one of "several features of the old model “that remain persuasive" (Martin and Grube 2008, 229), and several other epigraphers support this reading (Graña-Behrens, Prager, and Wagner 1999). Peter Schmidt (2007b) accepts this date, though he also agrees with Ringle that most monumental construction at the site had been already completed by this time, and puts the final decline of Chichen’s power shortly afterwards in the mid-11th century. In addition, Michael Smith (2007, 581) criticizes the revisionist views of Chichen Itza, as well as its predecessors and rivals, for a lopsided reliance on epigraphic and art historical evidence in the absence of (and because of) gaps in the archaeological evidence.

Overall, there seems already to be somewhat of a weakening of what little and rare consensus on the Tula-Chichen issue as seemed to prevail just a few years ago. While almost no one is considering reviving the unsupported hypothesis of a Toltec invasion of Chichen, Karl Taube continues to argue for some sort of Toltec presence there, and world systems models leave room for such direct contacts in the form of diplomatic visits, pilgrimages, and trade. Ringle’s view of Chichen Itza as a center from which elites received legitimizing endorsements and insignia of their authority, like Cholula in Late

Postclassic Central Mexico, leaves the door open for the presence of foreigners in this Maya center. Green obsidian from Central Mexican sources controlled by Tula certainly made its way to Chichen Itza, suggesting strong, perhaps direct, commercial ties between the “twin cities”. The discovery of turquoise at Chichen reinforces this suggestion. The ultimate source of the stone was the Anasazi region of the U.S. Southwest, but it traveled through trade routes across northern Mexico, where it was highly prized by the Toltecs. Both finds of turquoise and depictions of turquoise regalia in paintings and sculpture point to a Toltec connection. Classic M aya elite ornaments were of jade, not turquoise (Taube 1994, 233-239).

That summarizes in all-too-brief form the "who" of the Tula-Chichen debate as traditionally framed. As a preface and supplement to Chapter 3's review of some alternative constructions that attempt to sidestep polarities of priority, let us look at the artistic "what" at the heart of the conflict: those artistic features shared by the troublesome "twin cities" of Mesoamerican studies. What follows are an attempt at summarizing the state of the question in brief for each of these shared traits, though again it would be either a very brave or very foolish researcher who would assert that any of the reigning interpretations has an excellent prognosis for surviving next year's excavations or even next month's journals. As Kristan-Graham and Kowalski (2007, 66) comment, in the past “scholarly debates at times mirrored the militancy of the battling Toltecs and Mayas,” and hostilities have by no means ceased.

Chichen/Tula A-Z

Atlanteans and Figure Columns. The anthropomorphic atlantean columns encountered atop Pyramid B at Tula (Fig. 173) are matched at both that site and Chichen Itza by smaller figures, dressed in diadems, plumes, and elaborate garments that function to support altars or benches (Kubler 1982, 102-103) (Fig. 175). Kubler argued in his riposte to the dominant view of 1962 that these sculptures are conceptually cognate to the Maya *bakabs* or mythological world-bearers, as well as formally similar to anthropomorphic columns at the Puuk site of Oxkintok, in Yucatan. The columns with relief depictions of elite figures atop the same Tula edifice have their counterparts in pillar reliefs at the similar colonnaded pyramid, the Temple of the Warriors, at Chichen. Kubler found precedent for their martial imagery in the same "warrior stelae" of Piedras Negras compared to the Tula stelae, as well as reliefs of the Maya rulers Shield Jaguar (Itzamnaaj Bahlam) and Bird Jaguar at the Classic center of Yaxchilan in Chiapas. Rather than Toltec "warriors," however, Kubler ultimately concluded that the smaller atlantids represented governors or representatives of the various areas ruled by Chichen, literally pillars of the presumed collective government of that polity. A modern-day political representative, British Tory MP turned ethnohistorian Nigel Davies (1977, 131), added to Kubler's Classic Maya analogs Stela 4 at Ukanal, bearing a Long Count date of 849, showing an individual bearing an atlatl and darts reminiscent of Toltec "warriors," and Stela 12 at Oxkintok with a figure similarly garbed to examples from Tula and Chichen. At the time of Kubler's initial publication, Mexican archaeologist Alberto Ruz (1962) responded by pointing out that all of the Maya depictions are of named individuals, while

the atlantean columns at Tula are anonymous. The issue of whether the forms and costumes revealed by the Tula/Chichen atlanteans and pillar reliefs are of ultimately Mexican or Maya origin is rendered murkier by the subsequent demonstration by Stone (1989) that the Piedras Negras stelae represent a revival of Teotihuacan imagery and, to a lesser degree, stylistic traits (e.g., frontality) by the Late Classic Maya rulers of that city-state. Schele (Schele and Mathews 1998, 358) has identified much of the costuming of warriors depicted in the art of Tula as close to what she calls "Venus-Tlaloc" war garb sported by lords in Classic Maya art. However, as the costume elements in question, as well as the alleged warfare cult they were part of, derive from Teotihuacan, they may have been borrowed from Teotihuacan by both the Chichen Maya and Toltec without any contact with each other. In fact, Schele and Mathews (1998, 200, 362) identify some of the figures previously identified as "Toltecs" in the art of Chichen Itza as indeed Central Mexicans, but not Tula Toltecs. Rather, they represent diaspora from Teotihuacan following the city's destruction around 650.

Back Mirrors. Among the allegedly Toltec costume elements depicted in relief sculpture at Chichen Itza is an ornament called in the literature by its Nahuatl name, *tezacuitlapilli*, or by the descriptive term "back mirror." This refers to stone disks bearing an inlaid iron pyrite or obsidian mirror, worn at the small of the back by male figures depicted at both sites, including the atlantean warriors atop Pyramid B (Fig. 176). But these ornaments are not documented first at either Tula or Chichen, but instead represent a Teotihuacan trait (Kristan-Graham 1989, 158; Taube 1991, 172-177). Actual examples have been excavated at Teotihuacan and in Early Classic contexts at the Maya site of Kaminaljuyu,

Guatemala, which had strong political and trade connections with the former metropolis. There is even a silver example from western Mexico, now displayed in the Guadalajara Museum of Archaeology. Its appearance in Maya art may have resulted from an actual entrada of Central Mexicans into the Maya area, but not the hypothetical Toltec invasion of Yucatan. David Stuart (2000) suggests, on the basis of his translation of Early Classic texts from Tikal, that an actual invasion of Teotihuacanos is the most likely explanation for the appearance of Teotihuacan costume and iconography in the Early Classic Peten. One of these texts, that on Stela 31, is accompanied by two images of the Tikal ruler Yax Nuun Ahiin--whom Stuart speculates was the son of a Teotihuacan king--wearing a back mirror. Though the details of Stuart's reconstruction of these events is disputed (see Chapter 3) and contradicted by some evidence, it is clear that Teotihuacan had a great impact on the iconography of Early Classic Maya kingship in the lowlands, and that some sort of sustained elite interactions occurred between the two areas. Burials in positions characteristic of the Maya region and Maya-style jade ornaments are among the recent discoveries by Sugiyama and associates in their excavations of the Pyramid of the Moon at Teotihuacan. Back-mirrors and other costume elements shared by Tula and Chichen need not therefore have been introduced from either site to the other.

Ballcourt Reliefs. At 212 feet long, the aptly christened Great Ball Court of Chichen Itza is the largest structure created for the ritual ball game in Mesoamerica (Fig 177). It is so large, in fact, that its size may have precluded its functionality--it may have been too big for actual play. Adorning the walls of this colossal court, a series of reliefs depicts the bloody aftermath of the game: a defeated player decapitated, blood in the form of

serpents and vegetation (both symbolizing the fertility and renewal paid for by sacrifice in Mesoamerican thought) spurting from his truncated neck (Fig. 178). The traditional view alleged that these scenes reflected the violent practices introduced to and practiced on the pacific Maya by the dark invaders from Tula. However, in both theme and style, these reliefs resemble more closely the art of Parsons' Peripheral Coastal Lowlands and especially the ball court reliefs of the Late Classic to Epiclassic center of El Tajin in Veracruz, as indeed acknowledged by Ruz (1962), Parsons (1969; 1978), Cohodas (1974; 1978), and Jones (1995), among others. The imagery of snakes issuing from a severed neck occurs on a Classic Veracruz stela from El Aparicio. These observations reinforce Kubler's and Jones' emphasis that not everything seemingly reflecting foreign contacts at Chichen Itza pertains to Tula. However, whatever eclectic elements the builders of the Great Ball Court selected from in creating this monument, its form and iconography embody traditional Maya ideas of the ball court as symbolic entrance to the underworld and represent the saga of the death and rebirth of the Maize God consistent with Classic Maya mythology (Schele and Mathews 1998, Chapter 6).

Bench Friezes. At both Tula and Chichen Itza, several structures are equipped with stone benches bordering the walls, presumably the seating arrangements for dignitaries employing these buildings for government and/or ritual business. Along these seats for actual rulers and nobles, carved relief images of similar elite figures form processions, enacting in stone the rites and pageants conducted in the buildings in life. At Tula, Acosta and later workers excavated remains of such friezes of frozen files of dignitaries in the ruins of the South Vestibule of Pyramid B, in Building 4 directly to the east of the South

Vestibule, and in the Palacio Quemado (Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002, 107-127). Some of these richly-attired figures carry weapons, while others carry less martial accoutrements like fans, staffs, and banners. Different costume elements may signify different ranks or functions. Kristan-Graham (1993) interprets the Toltec VIPs depicted in the South Vestibule bench frieze as elite merchants similar to the historic Mexica *pochteca*, by comparison with the ceremonies of this social group documented for the Mexica. On the other hand, some figures are accompanied by S-shaped plumed serpents, suggesting rulers under supernatural projection. Serpents also move in their own files on some of the cornices of the benches, above the humans marching below. In one of the Palacio Quemado bench friezes, armed humans march behind Tlaloc or an impersonator of that deity (Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002, 124, fig. 5.37). At Chichen, the building called (probably erroneously) the Mercado contains similar bench friezes.

The processing figures of the Tula and Chichen bench friezes are a feature shared by both sites with Teotihuacan, where processions of armed and unarmed ruling class figures unfold in frescos across the walls of elite residential compounds, sometimes also accompanied by serpents. Taube, in a personal communication to Mastache, Cobean, and Healan (2002, 108), identifies one image in a mural in the residential complex called Techinantitla as a painted representation of a bench decorated with feathered serpents. If the roots of the Tula/Chichen bench friezes begin in Classic Teotihuacan, the tradition also extends in time beyond the collapse of both Chichen Itza and the Toltec capital. Bench friezes are one of the Tula art forms emulated and imitated by the Mexica in their pursuit of the ideal of *toltecayotl* at Tenochtitlan. They also were imitated by the Late Postclassic Mixtec in Oaxaca, as mentioned in Chapter 5 (Blomster 2008b). Thus, what is

shared in this instance by the "twin cities" turns out to have wider distribution in space and time, but in this case, all of the precedents and descendants seem to be Mexican, not Maya.

Chacmools. The term chacmool is applied for better or for worse, to a type of free-standing stone sculpture in the round, found at Tula and Chichen Itza as well as at Late Postclassic Mexica and Tarascan sites. It depicts a male figure reclining on his back, knees bent, and his head twisted to face one side in an anatomically improbable or at least profoundly uncomfortable fashion (Fig. 179). The "for worse" refers to the term's dubious origins. The 19th-century French antiquarian and eccentric Auguste Le Plongeon claimed to have obtained a saga of Chichen's past rule by a group of brothers, one of them named Chac Mool, from the local Maya and thus came to baptize the reclining figure he excavated at Chichen by that monicker, for no better reason than an active and romantic imagination. (He also attributed to the ancient Maya the development of railroads and telegraphy as well as tying Chichen Itza's history to lost Atlantis and the Sphinx of Egypt.) As many chacmool figures have either a flat area or a receptacle on their abdomens, they seem to have functioned to hold sacrificial offerings, perhaps even representing a type of messenger to symbolically convey these sanguinary gifts to the gods.

For most of the 20th century, the chacmool was identified as a Toltec innovation transferred to Yucatan by invasion. Even Kubler (1984, 303) seems to have accepted this position. On the other hand, Mary Miller (1985) makes a convincing formal and historical argument for the origins of these strangely contorted figures in the Classic

Maya iconography of bound captives. This hypothesis would appear to be confirmed by Peter Schmidt's subsequent discovery of a chacmool displaying the nudity and ropes of a bound prisoner at Chichen Itza (Schmidt 2007b, 167, fig. 12; see also Schele and Mathews 1998, 358). Miller (Miller and Samayoa 1998) has since extended her hypothesis to propose an origin for the posture of chacmools and Classic Maya captives in the iconography of the Maya Maize God. As an alternative, Lincoln (1990, 199) derives these reclining figures from the posture of the God K'awiil in Classic Maya art, though chacmools lack any of K'awiil's distinctive attributes like his long nose or one leg replaced by a serpent. On the other hand, the Belgian archaeologist Marie-Areti Hers (1989, 63-85; 2001, 138) looks to the north of Mexico for the antecedents of the chacmool, which she interprets as representing not a captive trussed up for slaughter but a high-ranking cleric or oracle who, for reasons not clearly argued, ritually assumed such an awkward posture. At the Classic Chalchihuites site of Cerro del Huistle, she excavated a roughly carved sculpture she interprets as a proto-chacmool (Fig. 180). Since archaeological, architectural, and ethnohistorical data all support a northern Mesoamerican origin for a portion of the population that created Tula, the chacmool in Hers' scenario was indeed a feature ultimately introduced to the Maya by a Toltec invasion of Yucatan. However, the very crude Cerro del Huistle sculpture of an anthropomorphic figure reclining on its back bears little resemblance to the chacmools of either Tula or Chichen Itza. The drawings and photos that Hers provides (which contradict each other regarding the configuration of the facial features) show an amorphous lump of a carving quite dissimilar to the Toltec and Maya chacmools illustrated alongside it. Its head faces up rather than to one side (1989, figs. 7-12; 2001,

138). Nevertheless, Weaver (1993, 375) and López Austin and López Luján (2000, 25, 27) have adopted Hers' hypothesis of a northern Mexican origin and Central Mexican diffusion to the Maya region for this dubiously christened sculptural type.

Colonnades and Columns. The use of roofed, pillared halls or galleries is another feature of the built environment prominently shared by Tula and Chichen Itza. At Tula, this trait is exemplified by the colonnaded halls giving access to the stairway of Pyramid B (Fig. 173, above) and in the adjacent Palacio Quemado (Fig. 181). A very similar arrangement occurs at the Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itza (Fig. 173, below). The shared conceptions of space reflected by these arrangements underline the strong connection between the two sites. Colonnaded halls are also known from sites of the Classic Chalchihuites culture (c. 500-850) in the Chichimec lands of northern Mexico (Diehl 1983, 50; Hers 1989, 149-179; Jones 1995, 326; Kristan-Graham 2007). At both Tula and the Chalchihuites center of La Quemada, colonnaded halls are paired with sunken courtyards, as Kristan-Graham points out. This trait represents a far stronger candidate than the chacmool for a case of diffusion from the north to Tula and finally to Yucatan. At least the Chalchihuites columned halls are unmistakable as such. However, Maya antecedents have also been sought for the use of columns at Tula. In particular, Mary Miller observed, in a personal communication to Schele (Schele and Mathews 1998, 358), that columns also occur in Early Classic architecture in the state of Quintana Roo on the eastern side of the peninsula. Wherever the concept came from, it was present at Chichen Itza by the 9th century. One colonnaded building at Chichen, the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jambs, bears an inscribed Long Count date corresponding to 832 (Grube

and Krochock 2007, 214).

The Composite Creature. Among the few stone reliefs adorning Pyramid B at Tula and other structures that escaped the predation of the Mexica are frontal images of a curious hybrid being, often designated in the literature by a laundry list of those species judged in the perception of each writer to be "donors" to its patchwork anatomy. Hence cumbersome labels like the man-bird-serpent creature, or Kubler's (1984, 110) choice, the "jaguar-serpent-bird composite," have emerged (Figs. 182, 186). The most neutral and parsimonious name is that suggested by Kristan-Graham in her doctoral thesis, the composite creature. This motif depicts what Schele and Mathews, using an affectionate epithet with a long pedigree in Maya studies for zoomorphic images, call a "curious feathered beastie combining the head of a snake with bird legs and feathers" (1998, 214). A human figure emerges from its mouth. Acosta (1943) originally identified this image as the Mexica deity Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, the planet Venus in its aspect as the Morning Star,[166] but as Mastache, Cobean and Healan (2002, 134) note, "it is not clearly associated with Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli's iconographic traits."[167]

The same figure occurs at Chichen Itza (Fig. 183), where Baird (1985, 128) interprets the human in the creature's jaws as the Evening Star rather than its morning counterpart, based on associated Venus signs. If the recent dates for "Toltec" Chichen withstand the test of time, the Maya version of the composite creature is clearly earlier. Some of the Tula specimens seem to be of Tollan Phase vintage, and some in fact date to the last

[166] See Chapter 4 for discussion of this deity and his iconography in connection with the stela at Tlalancaleca.

[167] See Jordan 2005 for a detailed critique of this and other attempts to “find” Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli in the

phase of construction of Pyramid B (Mastache, Cobean and Healan 2002, 96). Schele and Mathews (1998, 48-49) interpret the composite creature as a legged variant of a Maya mythic monster, the so-called Vision Serpent, which represents a type of shamanic portal between the world of gods and ancestors and the terrestrial realm in the iconography of Classic Maya royal ritual. Giving these ophidians legs was an innovation known from Classic Maya sculpture at Copan (e.g., Baudez 1994, 79, fig. 33).

So this is a Maya rather than Central Mexican trait, right? Not quite. Since Sterpone (2007) now assigns some of the reliefs at Pyramid B to between 700 and 960, chronological priority for Chichen may not be as clear as previously suggested. Both Schele and Mathews (1998, 214) and Karl Taube (2000a) have identified the composite creature specifically with the War Serpent, a Teotihuacan precursor of the *xiuhcoatl* or fire serpent of Mexica mythology. The Classic Maya appear to have "borrowed" this zoomorph from Teotihuacan and consciously retained its association with the prestigious Central Mexican metropolis. For example, Schele (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993, 208) and Taube (2000a, 274) concur in identifying the Vision Serpent portrayed on Lintel 25 from Yaxchilan as the War Serpent. The supernatural figure emerging from its mouth displays Teotihuacan costume elements, as indeed do also some of the analogous frontal humans in the jaws of the composite creature at Tula. Taube (2000a, 286, fig. 10.11) traces the composite creature, as a distinctive variant of the War Serpent, back to Teotihuacan, where it is clearly depicted in painted ceramics and modeled clay incense burners. Kubler (1982, 110, 115) had suggested the same, in a less fully-developed form, almost twenty years before Taube's publication. As with the comparisons between the stelae of Tula and Piedras Negras, not everything shared by Maya and Toltec art need

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sculpture of Tula.

derive ultimately from either of these traditions, but may reflect the cultural legacy of Teotihuacan to both areas--this in spite of the fact that Taube holds strongly to the notion of a literal Toltec presence at Chichen, though he rejects the idea of invasion and believes that the Maya of Chichen, like their Classic precursors, were active borrowers of Central Mexican iconography (1994, 244).

Feathered Serpents. Perhaps the most conservative current adherent of the paradigm of a Toltec invasion of Yucatan is Michael Coe. In his most recent treatment of the matter, he emphasizes as support for his version of the Morley/Tozzer model the appearence of feathered serpent imagery at both Tula and Chichen, both in the form of monumental effigy columns (Figs. 184-185) and low relief:

> The greatest novelty for the Maya area is the Feathered Serpent imagery so ubiquitous in Toltec-related Chichen Itza. This is specifically a rattlesnake covered in quetzal feathers, a concept totally unknown among the Classic Maya, but ancient in central Mexico...It really breaks the rule of Occam's razor to see this as anything other than the direct intrusion and imposition of a major cult coming directly from Tula of the Toltecs, along with a host of other traits, and that this had been brought by...Toltec warriors. (Coe and Koontz 2002, 172)

For some of his fellow Mayanists, it would be Coe who is here not wielding the Earl of Occam's implement effectively, since the presence of feathered serpents in Classic Maya art was recognized half a century ago by Coe's colleague Tatiana Proskouriakoff. Commenting on a feathered serpent image from Copan, Proskouriakoff (1950, 39) notes that it is "a conception usually associated with the late cult of Kukulkan (the Toltec Quetzalcoatl) in Yucatan, but which apparently was not unknown to the Classic Maya". Interestingly, the Copan feathered serpents are not accompanied by Long Count dates but Calendar Round dates like those employed at "Toltec" Chichen Itza (Coggins 2002, 70-

71). Referring to painted and relief scenes in the Temple of the Jaguars at Chichen Itza, Schele and Freidel noted that "The role of the Feathered Serpent as it writhed between the victims of sacrifice and the hovering ancestor above was clearly derived from the Vision Serpent" of Classic Maya iconography, a motif originally defined by Schele herself. Schele and Mathews (1998, 372) found numerous depictions of feathered serpents in Classic Maya contexts long antedating both Chichen Itza and Tula. "Feathered serpents appear frequently in the art of Copan, especially in the art of [King] Yax Pasah, and a huge one circles over Ruler B on Lintel 3 of Tikal Temple IV. Perhaps the most intriguing example...comes from a polychrome pot excavated at Waxaktun" in Guatemala, with a Long Count date corresponding to 396. "Thus we can say with certainty that Kukulkan and the feathered serpent is far older in Maya imagery than Chichen Itza."

Speaking specifically of the serpent columns at Chichen Itza, Kubler (1984, 300) remarked that they "are prefigured not only at Teotihuacan, but in Late Classic Maya sculpture by effigy columns like those at Oxkintok." However, serpent columns per se are not found in either Classic culture, and Kubler (1984, 303) conceded that the specific content of the Chichen column sculptures may have been brought from Central Mexico by the Toltecs. Schele and associates, however, found such concessions to the traditional model unjustified, and argued (Schele and Freidel 1990, 394; Freidel, Parker and Schele 1993, 158) that the serpent columns at both Chichen Itza and Tula are derived from Maya Vision Serpents, some of which are similarly feathered and have the cognate symbolic function of bridging realms of the cosmos. As the Vision Serpents serve as a portal between the underworld of the dead and the land of the living, so the serpent columns

represent conduits between sky and earth, bringing life-giving water (Kubler 1984, 80). In this respect, they seem to constitute a three-dimensional counterpart to feathered serpents painted in a similar position alongside elite or divine figures at Building A at Cacaxtla, where Foncerrada de Molina (1993, 95) saw these Central Mexican images as the antecedents of the serpent columns at Tula, at least.

A difficulty with this comparison is the very different artistic contexts between these two classes of representations. Vision Serpents occur in narrative contexts involving named participants, while the feathered serpents at Tula and Chichen Itza are anonymous, and certainly in the case of effigy columns, not depicted in interaction with images of other entities. Schele asserted that these differences are related to changes in the nature of Maya rulership in the Classic to Postclassic transition. With multiple or coalition rule replacing the Classic Maya cult of the individual king at Chichen Itza, the Vision Serpent ceased to be the instrument of the individual divine ruler used to communicate with his ancestors, becoming instead a more abstract symbol of the divinity of the state (Schele and Freidel 1990, 394). More recent epigraphic studies at Chichen (Grube and Krochock 2007) have put the hypothesis of multiple rule at that site in grave doubt, but the fact remains that individual royal portraiture was downplayed in the city's art.

However, feathered serpents are both more widespread and more ancient in Mesoamerica than a narrow focus on the Toltec and Maya reveals. Ringle and associates (1998, 192) compare the Chichen Itza serpents to Epiclassic representations at Xochicalco, Cacaxtla, and El Tajin which antedate Tollan-phase Tula but, they argue, are contemporary with the art of Chichen Itza. All of these sites, they suggest, participated in a far-flung cult of the feathered serpent that spanned and to varying degrees culturally

unified Mesoamerica during the Epiclassic in an analogous fashion to the spread of Islam in the Near East at the same time. Depending on how fully-fledged a reptilian representation needs to be in order to make the grade as genuinely feathered, the feathered serpent may go back to the Middle Formative (c. 900-400 BCE) at the Olmec site of La Venta in Veracruz, and more clearly, at the contemporary site of Chalcatzingo in Morelos. It also features prominently in the iconography of the aptly designated Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent at Teotihuacan, and occurs as a motif in the borders of fresco scenes at the same site. Both associations suggested by Schele for the Chichen feathered serpents--as bridges between realms of the cosmos and association with the state--have also been proposed for this creature at Teotihuacan (e.g., Millon 1988, 158; Sugiyama 2005, 58-67). Pasztory (1993b, 31, 60) suggests that the apparent association of feathered serpents with rulers and elite lineages at Tula, Xochicalco, and Cacaxtla may derive directly from Teotihuacan, while the creature itself "may be largely a Teotihuacan creation." This last view is supported by Nicholson (2000, 146). The apparent connection of this supernatural with elite warfare and human sacrifice, directly represented at Chichen and implied at Tula, extends forward in time to the Mexica (Nicholson 2000) and also seems to have been part of its meaning at Teotihuacan (Sugiyama 2005, 62-65). Although feathered serpent columns do not occur at Teotihuacan, the use of this image as an architectural component, specifically as balustrades, and as relief decoration on bench cornices, is shared among the Classic city and Tula and Chichen (Sugiyama 2005, 61). Again we are reminded that not every image that figures in the priority contest between Tula's advocates and those of Chichen Itza need have originated in either of the "twin cities."

Processing Quadrupeds and Birds of Prey. The so-called Platform of the Eagles at Chichen Itza and the remaining friezes of Pyramid B at Tula share the motif of horizontal registers of processing carnivorous animals--clearly jaguars at Chichen, ambiguously jaguars or coyotes (or both or neither) at the Toltec capital (Figs. 186-188). Kubler long ago pointed out the similarities of the processing jaguar reliefs on the surviving decoration of Pyramid B at Tula to Classic Maya reliefs of jaguars at Tikal. More recently, Peter Schmidt has excavated a similar frieze of processing jaguars in the Northeast Colonnade at Chichen Itza, similar other "Toltec-Maya" examples, but with their heads turned to face the viewer like the jaguar thrones of Classic Maya kings—an equation strengthened by the royal *ajaw* glyph borne by some of these figures (2007b, 165-167, fig. 9). This discovery supports a Maya origin for the motif and thus the primacy of Chichen in its origin. Here, however, the waters are muddied by the fact that processing jaguars again occur in the mural art of Teotihuacan, which increasingly appears to have exercised--directly or indirectly-- a seminal influence on both sites. More suggestive of a direct connection are threatening avian representations in profile among the marching mammals at both Chichen and Tula, eagles and vultures munching bloody hearts. But here, too, profile birds and the motif of raptors devouring human hearts also have precedents at Teotihuacan, if not in precisely the same form.

Round Structures. Underlining the falsehood of stereotyped contrasts between the north and south sectors of Chichen Itza, one building freqently invoked as evidence of Central Mexican "influence" at the site lies in the "Maya" half of the city. This is the Caracol,

named in Spanish for the spiral snail shell its interior structure evokes. This edifice consists of a round building on a square supporting platform (Fig. 190). The round section resembles a modern observatory, and indeed seems to have functioned as such (Aveni 1980, 258-267). Round structures are common in Postclassic Central Mexico, where many were constructed in Mexica territory as temples to Ehecatl, the wind god. The round contours of the sanctuaries permitted the divinity in question to pass easily around the building. At Tula, a temple platform in the section of the site known as El Corral (Fig. 189), integrates circular with right-angled forms and may have supported a round temple, presumably also dedicated to Ehecatl (Diehl 1983, 64, fig. 15). Yet the concept of round structures is probably not indigenous to Central Mexico either. The form may be part of the northern Mexican heritage of the Toltecs, or alternatively, it may reflect both Toltec and Maya trading contacts with the Huasteca of northern Veracruz, who also constructed circular temples. Again, not everything at Chichen Itza or Tula need be directly derived from either's "sister" site.

Skull Racks. This term is usually applied in Mesoamerican archaeology and architectural history to low platforms supporting wooden posts or beam constructions used to display the decapitated heads of sacrificed war captives. Also referred to by the Nahuatl name *tzompantli*, the skull rack was a feature of Postclassic Mexica architecture that made a strong impression on the invading Spaniards, especially when the remains of their comrades became incorporated into the decorative program. At Chichen Itza, a low stepped platform near the city's Great Ball Court bearing friezes of skulls in relief was christened a *tzompantli* in the 20th century (Fig. 192). The suggestion that it served this

function, at least symbolically, was by no means undermined by the discovery of two burials of human skulls in the structure (V. Miller 1999, 352). Since in the Morley/Tozzer paradigm the inoffensive Maya could not have conceived of such a sanguinary construction, its presence at the site could only be seen as the work of Toltec invaders. Though notions of the Classic Maya as pacifist astrologers have long since collapsed under the weight of evidence to the contrary, the Chichen *tzompantli* remains for some a prime candidate for attribution to outsiders from Tula. For example, Hers (1989, 89-118) excavated an adobe and wood skull rack at Cerro del Huistle whose existence c. 500, she argues, supports the idea that like chacmools and colonnaded halls, this trait originated in the far north of Mexico and diffused south to Chichen Itza courtesy of the Tula Toltecs. Larger constructions used to display skulls and other human remains occur at larger Chalchihuites sites in Classic northwest Mexico, like Alta Vista in Zacatecas (Fig. 191).

Ironically, however, in contrast to the traditional model, the skull rack in unambiguous form is not a feature of the built landscape at Tula itself. A skull rack in the main plaza at the site may be a later Mexica construction (V. Miller 1999, 354-355; see Mastache, Cobean, and Healan 2002 for contra). A platform carved with reliefs of skulls in the El Corral sector of the site has been associated with the *tzompantli* concept by Virginia Miller (1999, 355), but it appears to have been an altar for an ancestral cult (Healan 1989, 147). Although an apparent image of the display of crania from a tree appears in the Toltec rock paintings at Ixtapantango (V. Miller 1999, 345), no indisputably Toltec skull racks exist to form the necessary link in the chain of connections posited by Hers. It also appears that the skull rack is an ancient form in Mesoamerica, antedating the Chalchihuites sites. Charles Spencer (Redmond and Spencer

1983, 120) excavated a possible Late Formative Zapotec antecedent at La Coyotera in Oaxaca, in the form of 61 skulls scattered in front of a temple platform. He interprets this discovery as the remains of a collapsed skull rack. Virginia Miller (1999) argues, on the basis of representations of severed heads in Classic Maya art, caches of crania at Classic Maya sites, and the existence of platforms decorated with reliefs of skulls and bones at the Puuk site of Uxmal in Yucatan, that the skull rack at Chichen Itza represents a Maya tradition. Congruent with the opinions of Charles Lincoln and Mary Miller, she suggests that Chichen Itza was the origin of this and other features of Mexica architecture.

Tlaloc. The distinctive goggle-eyed, fanged and mustached Central Mexican rain god appears in many other contexts at Tula apart from the stelae we have examined. His distinctive visage also adorns numerous ceramic effigies (Fig. 193), and his image is rendered in three-dimensional stone sculpture. In the area around Chichen, ceramic braziers contemporary with the occupation of the city and clearly depicting this aquatic deity were interpreted during the mid-20th century as further evidence of Toltec migrants (Fig. 194). But, as seen from the discussions of Tlaloc motifs in Chapter 2, this ancient Central Mexican deity was clearly a prominent part of the pantheon of Teotihuacan, perhaps even the chief deity (Paulinyi 2006). Like many other Teotihuacanoid traits, Tlaloc imagery shows up in Early Classic lowland Maya elite art. Again, what was interpreted for years as evidence of Tula's domination of Chichen (or vice versa) may represent manifestations of a shared Teotihuacan heritage. It is possible that the Yucatec examples antedate the Tollan phase at Tula, since radiocarbon dates associated with Tlaloc braziers from the Balankanche cave near Chichen Itza (Fig. 194) place them in the

mid-ninth century, 860 CE +/- 100 years (Diehl 1993, 277). More recently, these dates have been recalibrated to 970-1010, reopening the possibility of Tula as donor (Bey and Ringle 2007, 396).

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INAH Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia
MMA Metropolitan Museum of Art
UNAM Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico

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